

**Imaging Identity: A study of Aljazeera's Online News  
and its Representation of Arabness  
with particular attention to "Arabs in Diaspora"**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis studies the relations between media image, online news design, and the framing of identity. It scrutinizes current images of Arab identity and their representation in Aljazeera Net in order to examine how Aljazeera Net constructs the 'reality' of Arabs. The dissertation begins by defining Arabness in terms of ethnic, cultural and postcolonial identities. It proposes and assesses the sources of Arab identity and examines Arab identity as a source of meanings for Arabs. Likewise, it evaluates the sources of Arab identity in the Arab diaspora. Through the lens of a remediation approach, the study explores newly emerging practices in the representation of news, and investigates how the design of Aljazeera Net alters the construction of meaning in news representation. The frames that govern the representation of Arab identity determine the complexity of the image of Arabness, and reveal the differences between the acknowledged perspectives and evolving identity of Aljazeera. The study conceives Aljazeera Net as a space for the reciprocal relationship between Aljazeera and Arabs in diaspora, and as a site for the overlapping between the local and the global in media representations. Finally, it considers how Arabs in the North American diaspora, particularly Arab media experts, academics and community leaders, perceive their identity, and how they evaluate Aljazeera as a Pan Arab media.

## **RÉSUMÉ**

Cette thèse est une étude des relations entre l'image des médias, la conception des informations en ligne et l'encadrement d'une identité. Elle sonde les images actuelles de l'identité arabe ainsi que leur représentation dans Aljazeera Net afin d'examiner la façon dont Aljazeera net construit la « réalité » des Arabes. La dissertation commence par une définition de l'arabité relativement à l'identité ethnique, culturelle et postcoloniale. Elle propose et évalue les sources de l'identité arabe en tant que source de sens pour les Arabes. De plus, elle évalue les sources de l'identité arabe dans la diaspora arabe. Selon l'approche de représentation, l'étude explore les plus récentes pratiques apparues dans la représentation des informations et enquête sur la façon dont la conception d'Aljazeera Net altère la construction du sens dans la représentation des informations. Le cadre qui gouverne la représentation de l'identité arabe définit la complexité de l'image de l'arabité, et révèle les différences entre les perspectives reconnues et l'identité en développement d'Aljazeera. L'étude conçoit Aljazeera Net en tant qu'espace aux relations réciproques entre Aljazeera et les arabes de la diaspora, et en tant que lieu de chevauchement entre le local et le global dans les représentations médiatiques. Finalement, elle examine comment les Arabes de la diaspora nord-américaine, en particulier les experts en médias arabes, les académiciens et les leaders communautaires, perçoivent leur identité et comment ils évaluent Aljazeera en tant que médias panarabe.



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## INTRODUCTION

Any significant examination of Arabs as a collective ethnic entity cannot fail to take into account the exceptionable contribution of Edward Said. His work has consistently sought to examine the misrepresentation of Arabs through media images, and it offers a succinct account of how derogatory images against Arabs are: “enforced every day by the media, which – whether constitutively or out of ignorance or laziness – perpetuate these images” (Said, 2003, p. 83). Certain images perpetrated against Arabs are not merely encountered in Western media coverage, but also in the travel books targeted at both adults and children. The more persistent stereotypes depict Arabs as ignorant, superstitious, silly, lazy and dirty, irrational, cruel, and violent; moreover, they are, according to the more overt kinds of caricature, inclined to hate Christians, mistreat women, and even to engage in the slave trade (Little, 1998, pp. 264: 266).

In the wake of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the recent analysis of three news networks in the United States - NBC, ABC, and CBS – indicates that these networks have sought to establish a ‘frame of hate’ in portraying the dominant media image of Arabs. One of these frames, which are ostensibly constructed to identify and describe the roots and causes of terrorism, bluntly states: “they hate us because we’re great” (Ibrahim, 2003, p. 208). Additionally, Western media often describe Arabs as “a group of people who are backward, uncivilized, ruthless, cunning, untrustworthy, dogmatic, and fanatic Muslims, and are either terrorists or support terrorism” (Madani, 1999, p.3). The impact of derogatory images against Arabs would appear to be formidably damaging, since it has proven difficult to create a positive impression of Arabs, Muslims and Islam in such a hostile media environment (AlKathani, 2002, p.152).

Furthermore, Arabs themselves are often responsible for portraying negative images targeting Arabs, and it is often as a by-product of denouncing the actions of others that the weaknesses of the Arab world are described. For instance, sharing the same view as many Arab intellectuals, Edward Said portrays an unconstructive and debilitating image of the assumed condition of Arab nation. For instance, following the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Said wrote:

The result today, after the invasion of Iraq, is an Arab nation that is badly demoralised, crushed and beaten down, less able to do any thing except acquiesce in announced American plans to redraw the Middle East map to suit American and obviously Israeli interests (Said, 2003, May).

Clearly, negative images portrayed by Western media, or by Arabs themselves, can impinge on the domain of Arab identity. While there have been adequate examinations of the contexts that produce disheartening images of Arabs, there have been no critical investigations of the images Arab media produce about Arab identity, its sources, and its construction in the postcolonial period.

Theoretically, the postcolonial condition began with the upsurge of liberation movements across the Arab World in the early 1950s, but most of the decisive initiatives were taken as long ago as the beginning of the twentieth century. This has contributed to the emergence of new phenomena. Of the post-colonial phenomena that surfaced in mounting a challenge to imperialism, and attempted to resist the endeavours of colonial powers to regain their hegemony in the Arab World, the rise of Arab Nationalism was foremost in this struggle, since it addressed Arabs at large. The postcolonial condition of the Arab World has been conducive to the growth of a further phenomenon, namely, the proliferation of Arab Diasporas. Colonialism, Arab war initiatives, and the continuation

of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, as well as the occupations of Lebanon, and recently, of Iraq, have brought about unstable conditions, which have noticeably increased the pressure on Arabs to leave the Arab World. Though not intended as a means of escaping from the pressures of occupation, the Arab Diasporas have nonetheless been significantly augmented through the attempt to find more stable places, where Arabs can enjoy better economic and political situations.

The dramatic events Arabs went through in the early 1990s led to the creation of new powers in the Arab region, however, they did not exert a significant influence on Arab media, which continued to operate as a mouthpiece for Arab governments. The radical transformation of communication technologies during the 1990s has not merely helped Arab media reach Arabs on a Pan-Arab or global scale, but it has also transformed Arab media into public spaces, and has opened new frontiers for freedom of expression in the Arab World.

Of all the emerging Pan Arab global media, Aljazeera and its network, Aljazeera Net, have entered the sphere of Arab media with a distinctively different agenda, radical new strategies, and the courage and vision to debate the emerging experience and status quo of Arabs. Aljazeera Net has recently enjoyed a peak of half a million visitors per day (Half, 2005, September), and not only has it become a space for Arab users to express their views, but it has additionally proven to be an outstanding source for online news. In adopting the same motto as its sister television channel, 'The opinion and the other opinion', Aljazeera Net seems to have a much more identifiable 'multi-voiced' profile than other websites of Pan Arab online news, and compared with Western online news networks that target Arabs around the globe. The distinctiveness of Aljazeera Net is not



due to the increasing number of its visitors, but rather to its sustained attentiveness to ongoing events, its content that draws on its sister Aljazeera television network, and its strategies of news representation.

The gradual escalation in the significance of online news media, including Aljazeera Net, has created a web of networks between the Arabs in the Arab World, and Arabs in the Diasporas. These networks “make it possible for communication and information to flow among global actors in real time” (Harrison, 2002, p.251). One of the results of the burgeoning developments in electronic global communication and the receptiveness of Arabs in the Diaspora to this form of communication has been the blurring of the borderlines between the local and the global, and consequently, the momentous increase in the influence of Arab global media. The blurring of boundaries between the local and the global affects the way in which Arabs in the Diasporas “make sense of their relationship with ‘place’ and the other, and how they define themselves” (Tsagarousianou, 2002, pp. 211-212).

This study examines the image of Arabness as it appears in Aljazeera Net. It formulates a proposal for defining Arab identity, based on the sources that underpin the development of Arab identity in the last fifty years that followed the long colonial period. The study proposes to undertake the study of the sources that characterize Arabs in terms of their ethnic, cultural, and postcolonial identities, and more particularly, the sources that continue to shape Arab identity, such as Pan Arabism, ongoing Arab conflicts, the Arabic language, religion, Arab women, media, and Arab cultural traits. This, together with an examination of the strategies used in the remediation of the news and an investigation of the construction of meaning in Aljazeera Net, will provide the

prerequisites for the investigation of Aljazeera's representation of Arab identity that is to follow. The study additionally explores the contexts and sources of Arab identity in the Diaspora, particularly in North America, and examines the reciprocal relationship between Aljazeera and Arabs in Diaspora. Finally, it considers how Arabs in the North American Diaspora, particularly Arab media experts, academics, and community leaders, perceive their identity, and how they evaluate Aljazeera as a Pan Arab media.

### **Literature Review**

This review will undertake a reinterpretation of prior studies in the field, and it aims to capitalize on the main directions of research in online journalism, Arab Nationalism, the Arab Diaspora, and Arab media. The intricate dovetailing of issues concerning Arab identity dictate that the literature review, in order to avoid needless repetition, will avoid discussion about each individual source proposed for Arab identity, especially as the first chapter serves as the main context through which the sources of Arab identity are examined.

#### **a) Mapping the studies of online news and online journalism**

Most studies of this nature continue to explore basic issues concerning online journalism, such as the agenda of online journalism, and the framing of online news content (Sung, 2000, & Althaus and Tewksbury, 2002, & El Tuhani, 2003). The issue of interactivity has been another area of major concern among those who have studied online journalism. Hyun Ban (1999) and Terry Wimmer (2000) examine the change in the concept of interactivity and its impact on public confidence and trust. A third group of studies looks at the phenomenon of online news media, their reporting styles on the Internet, and the differences between traditional media and online media (Tsai, 1998, &

Wu, 2001, & Mensing, 2001, & Yoo, 2003). The consumption and perception of online news provides the focus for a fourth major set of studies (Sethuraman, 1995, & Swamy, 1997).

These studies are undoubtedly useful and instructive and will be taken into account in this study of Aljazeera Net. In its principal orientation, the literature review of online news suggests that it is: (1) a hybrid product of traditional and online media, a new genre or merely a temporal stage in the evolution of a new medium for news dissemination (Wu, 2001, p.1), (2) it reduces the number of prominent stories conveyed to the reader and limits the common perception of what is traditionally considered important for readers. Thus, it could reduce the potential for more adventurous agenda setting, (3) it gives more space and attention to opinion and commentary than did newspapers, and provides more mediated content, such as the quotations from government candidates (Mensing, 2001, p.164), and finally, (4) it offers more interpretative and thematic views than those propagated in the traditional news (Mensing, 2001, p.165).

#### **b) The literature of Arab nationalism: Arab history through narration**

This section will pay greater attention to how Arab nationalism is investigated and viewed. Investigations of Arab nationalism have generally centered on three prime areas: firstly, in narrating the history of Arab nationalism and its evolution both as an idea and as a movement (Marlow, 1961, & Ismael, 1967, & Gogoi, 1994, & Yaqub, 1999, & Dawisha, 2003). Secondly, these investigations have developed a critical assessment of the idea of Arab nationalism and its emerging issues, such as the study of Arab unity and Arab identity (Ibrahim, 1980, & Tibi, 1990, & Hopkins, 1997, & Kramer, 1993, & Said,

2003, May). Finally, they have offered a scrutiny of the charismatic vision of Gamal Abdel Nasser (Stephens, 1971, & Nutting, 1972).

Studies of Arab Nationalism have undergone a transition from being focused on a reality that can be narrated to constituting an aspect of the imaginary. In other words, if one were to borrow Benedict Anderson's conception of 'imagined communities', Arab Nationalism has become a notional image that lives only in the minds of the Arabs that entertain it (Anderson, 1983, p.6). In accordance with Benedict Anderson's view, Edward Said tends to believe that Arab nationalism is ubiquitous, even though it is not present as a political reality (Said, 2003, May). Additionally, this bias often shapes ongoing evaluations of Arab nationalism, wherein Arab nationalism is seen either as victimized and abused, (Said, 2003, May), or as a mistaken identity, due to its manifest failure to achieve power for Arabs (Kramer, 1993).

#### **c) Studies of Arabness in the Diaspora: Retaining and experiencing diasporic identity**

Studies about Arab identity in the Diaspora focus on the ethnic, religious, and cultural identities of Arabs. Most of these studies look at the attributes that signal the retention of identity, and the degree of the assimilation of this identity through successive Arab generations in the Diaspora. For instance, the studies conducted by Ajrouch (2001) and Eid (2002) indicate that a second generation of Arab immigrants has retained most of the attributes of Arab identity. Among the cultural traits that contribute to the retention of Arab identity are popular cultural forms such as dance and music, which are significant manifestations of a collective identity (Hay, 2000, p. 107).

Other studies conducted by Arab scholars highlight the relationships between ethnic and cultural identities on one hand, and the self-esteem of Arab American Muslim adolescents (Mansour, 2000), or the academic achievements of Arab-American students, (Shalabi, 2001) on the other hand. These studies indicate that there is a significant correlation between the affirmation of belonging and self-esteem (Mansour, 2000, p. 41), and a pronounced relationship between the level of interest of Arab-American students in retaining their distinctive Arabic cultural identity and their academic achievements (Shalabi, 2001, p. 142).

Issues relating to the connection between identity and diasporic experiences (Hay, 2000), and aspects of integration into the host society (Nagel, 1998), have been among the chief concerns of a third group of scholars, who have generally explored these issues from a variety of organizational, societal and subjective perspectives. From an organizational perspective, the production and maintenance of identity appears as one of the Arab organization's paramount goals (Hay, 2000, p. 20). The maintenance of identity was one of the key objectives of the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF) study, which was carried out as recently as 2002, and aimed to address the needs of Canadian Arabs by developing a comprehensive understanding of the Arab community. The study conducted by the CAF concludes that despite being proud as Arabs and Canadians, and despite their successful efforts to become successfully integrated within the dominant currents of Canadian life, "the rosy picture of a proud and integrated community contrasts disturbingly with the dark reality of the racism and discrimination it faces" (The Knowledge, 2002, p.43).

From a more socio-cultural view of the diasporic experience, Jenny Wannas-Jones (2003) scrutinizes the dissonant and hybrid identities of Arab Canadian youths, and explores the process of identity formation “in the light of the socialization forces of the home, the school, and globalized mass media” (p. 2). She finds that reducing exclusionary practices among youths “could be avoided through greater societal and educational awareness of the Middle East in general” (Wannas-Jones, 2003, p. 6).

The subjective experience of Arab women in the Diaspora reveals that exiled Arab women writers have shared similarly horrific experiences in their collective unconscious (Al-Samman, 2000, p. 240). The study conducted by Hanadi Al-Samman (2000) finds that the diasporic narrations of Arab women perform more functions than solely that of identifying and retrieving personal spaces in which Arab women can prosper. “Rather, they reclaim the nation for all citizens by calling for an immediate restructuring of individual Arab identity, tradition, and national politics, and for overall advancement of the universal Arab self” (Al-Samman, 2000, p. 250).

#### **d) Studies concerning the development of Arab media and Aljazeera**

The development of Arab media is perceived by most postcolonial scholars as a response to the penetration of cultural imperialism that, in turn, has led to the overwhelming of Arab countries by Westernized cultural products. Ali Mohammadi’s study (1998) defined the Arab electronic empires as being rooted in the “the legacy of colonialism and the continuing response to the incursion of Western modernity” (p.257). Of the studies that discuss the rise of the new generation, and the latest trends in Arab life, one of the most interesting is that undertaken by Leo Gher and Hussein Amin (1999), which charts the development of Arab national media, and traces the multiple

perspectives pertaining to the development of the infrastructure of cyberspace and the technologies that support the information superhighway in the Arab region (Gher, 1999, p.60). Gher and Amin conclude that the new technologies have already affected Arabic peoples in new and compelling ways (p.86).

Although Aljazeera appears as a stimulating and challenging media, and has consequently enticed many scholars to write about it, the available studies about Aljazeera are comparatively few in number, set against the unprecedented fame of the network. The studies focused on Aljazeera have examined the content of Aljazeera television through empirical investigation (Mazid, 2002), evaluated its role in public discourse and media diplomacy (El-Nawawy, 2003), and studied the demographics of its audience (Auter, 2004), as well as its political influence among Kuwaitis (Jamal, 2004). Adel Iskandar and Mohammed El-Nawawy (2003), and Hugh Miles (2005), have conducted a more strictly critical analysis of Aljazeera. Those scholars who have studied Aljazeera intensively note the fame of Aljazeera Television among the various Arab publics, but they have not paid anything like adequate attention to Aljazeera Net.

### **Theoretical approaches**

This study utilizes three key theoretical approaches, examining Aljazeera Net through the methodological lens of an agenda setting theory, and through employing the postcolonial and remediation approaches.

#### **a) The agenda setting theory**

Apart from using agenda setting theory as an alternative way to look for individual levels of response and appreciation and directional media effects, which formed the first major trend in Agenda setting studies, the agenda framework is employed to focus on the

issue of the framing of Arab identity. The legacy of agenda setting studies can be traced back to the original study of McCombs and Shaw, and suggests that, “at a given point, or over a certain period of time, different media place a similar salience on a set of issues” (Dearing, 1996, p.90). The similarity in prioritization does not necessarily mean that all media are saying exactly the same thing at the same time. Agenda setting theory does not focus on what media say, so much as on what they have to say about a particular issue. However, it does not aim at influencing the reader through news content. Rather, it is a social process of construction “through which individuals interpret clues from the media and from their environment to determine the salience of an issue” (Dearing, 1996, p.91). In other words, media may refer to what individuals think about it. However, recent trends in agenda setting focus on how to think about an issue, and not merely what to think about it, thereby linking the notion of agenda setting to the notion of media framing. As Werner Severin (1997) puts it, setting the features that “represent how an event or issue is presented in the news medium, is very similar to the notion of media framing” (p.269).

Based on the literature reviewed above, two major assumptions are seen to underlie the most recent research in agenda setting: “(1) the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive certain issues as more important than others” (Agenda). The Agenda setting operates in this study to ascertain whether or not Aljazeera Net shapes and filters Arab identity, and to evaluate how Aljazeera Net constructs the reality of Arabs.



## **b) Postcolonial approach**

It is hardly possible not to entertain doubts as to the viability of the postcolonial approach, at least insofar as it is used to explain the significance and scope of the study of identity. Skeptical scholars point to the ambiguous, and even contradictory nature of the term 'postcolonialism'. The question as to 'where' and how to situate the postcolonial, and the validity of claims as to the universality of the postcolonial approach, make it difficult to locate the postcolonial on a global map (Dirlik, 1997, p. 7). Likewise, the question as to when the era of postcolonialism began, as well its problematic nature as an indicator of temporality, means that it lacks chronological specificity. This means that the definition of the postcolonial remains radically uncertain, at least in terms of its semantic and historical connotations. As Ella Shohat (1997) points out, the postcolonial equates the early independence achieved by the settlers of colonial states with those states whose populations struggled to achieve independence from Europe (p. 325).

In a general sense, the postcolonial approach works to make the relations between the colonizer and the colonized more visible, with the ultimate goal of undermining them (Schwarz, 2000, p. 4). As such, the postcolonial approach entails a sustained engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies, as well as at the level of more general global developments. Although post-colonialism was gradually introduced as a term to replace the designation 'Third World' in the early 1980s, scholars use the term to encompass the cultural affects of the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present moment (Ashcroft, 1989, p.2). In a more strictly theoretical sense, the postcolonial approach intervenes "in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic

‘normality’ to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples” (Bhabha, 1992, p.171). Postcolonial engagement provides a theoretical framework to understand the way in which cultures are constituted and contested (Shome, 2002, p.262). As Ella Shohat puts it, the term postcolonial would be more precise if it were to go “beyond a relatively binaristic, fixed, and stable mapping of power relations between ‘colonizer/colonized’ and ‘center/periphery’” (Shohat, 1997, p.329).

Despite the doubts about the definition of the term postcolonial and the overriding vagueness of the concept in grappling with the issues it purports to address, the guiding premise of the postcolonial approach is nonetheless useful in the study of the representation of Arab identity. In what follows, I seek to specify the unique contribution of the postcolonial approach to my study: First, it is necessary to take stock of the monumental work of Edward Said, especially in *Orientalism*, which has had a seminal influence in the field of post-colonialism and continues to be influential in the study of theories of representation. Likewise, the study of representation concerns the constitutive power of images, and especially those that question or determine the reproduction of depictions of the ‘Other’, and it seeks to account for the cumulative effect and power of these images (Shome, 2002, p. 265).

Secondly, the postcolonial approach can offer, if not the requisite historical depth of understanding of cultural power in the Arab World, then, at least an adequate contextualization of the issue of Arab identity within the configuration of geopolitical arrangements in which it is implicated (Shome, 2002, p.252). It also enables us to deconstruct and to account for the interconnections between power, experience, language

and culture (Shome, 2002, p.263). The postcolonial approach facilitates the “authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance” (Bhabha, 1992, p. 6), and permits enquiries into: “how the West and Other are constitutive of one another in ways that are both complicitous and resistant” (Shome, 2002, p. 264).

Thirdly, research conducted under the auspices of the postcolonial approach has catalyzed an extended discussion of the experience of various kinds of Arab migration, marginalization and resistance. Likewise, these discussions reflect the growing concern with Third World diasporic circumstances in postcolonial states, especially as they exist in the United States and Canada (Shohat, 1997, p.323). The postcolonial refers to the actual contradictions, ambiguities, and ambivalences prevalent among the numerous Arab Diasporas.

### **c) Remediation approach**

In 1999, Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin identified new concepts to study the news media. In their work, “Remediation: Understanding New Media,” Bolter and Grusin state that remediation concerns the representation of one medium through another. They argue that it is a definition characteristic of the new digital media, thereby displaying specific features, such as (1) the refashioning and borrowing of the content of older media, (2) the transparency of new media at the expense of the content of older media, or rather, the transitory sense of the hypermediacy of new media in order not to abandon the older media altogether, and (3) the aggressive and thorough absorption of older media (Bolter, 1999, pp. 45:49).

## **The scope of the study: Reconsidering the postcolonial approach and identifying the Arab Diaspora**

The study of the image of Arab identity and its representations at Aljazeera Net can be seen as an examination of how the 'postcolonial' project produces images concerning Arabs, Arabness and otherness. Since postcoloniality is a sort of helpful "reminder of the persistence of 'neo-colonial' relations within the 'new' world order," (Bhabha, 1992, p.9) this study explores how aspects of 'neo-colonialism' influence the representation of Arab identity in Aljazeera Net, and subsequently, how certain features of resistance are framed at Aljazeera Net.

While aiming to examine how Aljazeera Net represents Arab identity as a collective identity, and critically examining the claims made on behalf of what has been termed the 'one true self' that reflects common historical experience and shared cultural codes (Hall, 1997, pp. 110-111), this study will seek to go beyond what is 'true' of Arab identity to identify the ambivalences and contradictions that productively shape its meanings (Bhabha, 1992, p. 22). Therefore, the study debates the 'essential' discourses that govern Arab identity, and identifies the tensions and conditions that colonialism created in the Arab World. The sources of Arab identity in this sense appear as spaces regulating the proliferation of meanings in the postcolonial condition. The study rejects essentialist notions of Arabness, choosing rather, to evaluate the sources that strengthen and Arab identity through its historical contextualization, and additionally, it examines those aspects germane to a study of its fragmentation.

The notion of the Diaspora is as problematic as the term postcolonialism. While referring to the situation of any body of people living outside their traditional homeland,

beyond this basic definition, the term 'Diaspora', at least as understood in the context of the Arab Diaspora, tends to be interpreted in two contrasting ways: Arif Dirlik and William Safran may be taken to give representative definitions. Thus Arif Dirlik (1997) defines 'Diaspora' as:

A complex range of social groups, from political refugees to those driven to emigration out of economic necessity to highly educated and wealthy professionals who are cosmopolitan by education, outlook, and their ability to function across cultural spaces (p. 8).

In a different vein, William Safran's model suggests specific conditions through which Diasporas can be produced, beginning with:

Expatriate communities: (1) that are dispersed from an original center to at least two peripheral places; (2) that maintain a memory, vision or myth about their original homeland; (3) that believe they are not and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host country; (4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return when the time is right; (5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland; and (6) whose consciousness and solidarity as a group are importantly defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland. (Safran, 1991, pp. 83-84; quoted in Hay, Kellie, 2000, pp.9-10)

While offering a surprisingly wide range of definitions of Diaspora, so that we are left to wonder what or who falls outside its parameters, Arif Dirlik's definition at least recognizes Diaspora as a phenomenon that continues to occur beyond the settled notions of place, displacement and forced departure. Safran's model is particularly helpful in the study of specific Arab Diasporas, such as those of the Palestinians and Lebanese. However, the model is problematic since it deals with the related notions of home/host in an unduly reductive binary structure (Hay, 2000, p. 10). The model refers to another

characteristic of Diaspora, the feeling of exile and the notion of enforced departure from the country of origin (Hay, 2000, p. 10).

This study considers that colonialism is among the factors that have created Arab Diasporas. However, since the question of what creates such Diasporas requires intensive critical interrogation, the study recognizes that Arab Diasporas are created through multifaceted migrations, undertaken for a variety of different reasons. Arabs in the Diaspora are forced to leave their countries of origin because of the ongoing effects of colonialism, or due to despotism, and the realities of economic pressure. They are not totally removed from the countries they come from, nor do they seek to be entirely assimilated into the countries where they migrate (Hay, 2000, p. 14). This study aims to explore the Arab Diaspora in North America in light of the nationalist consciousness of Arabs, claiming that the Arabs in the Diaspora still retain the imaginary state of the one true collective self. Since Arabs in the various Diasporas identify themselves as ‘host-Arabs’, regardless of the country they come from, then their hybrid identification is more likely to be related to the domain of Arab identity than to the country they fled from.

#### **The key questions posed by the study**

The different questions posed by this study, while articulated at a number of different levels in terms of a wide range of theories and methodologies, are centered around two main questions: How is Arab identity represented in Aljazeera Net? And how does the representation of Arabness at Aljazeera Net contribute to the construction of the ‘reality’ of Arabs?

Briefly, my study raises seven related sub-questions:

- What are the appropriate current contexts for an examination of the image of Arab identity in the postcolonial history of Arab countries and in the Arab Diaspora?

- How does Aljazeera Net alter the construction of meaning through its design, and how does Aljazeera remediate the production of news?
- What are the key strategies of news remediation at Aljazeera Net?
- Do the main features of the remediation approach influence the representation of online news, thereby affecting the context of representation of Arab identity?
- How do representation, perspective, and framing intersect in Aljazeera Net?
- Does Aljazeera Net shape and filter media images portraying Arab identity? If yes, in what contexts are Arabs, Arab identity and the “Western Other” framed?
- How do Arab academics, media experts, and community leaders perceive Arab identity in the Diaspora, and how do they evaluate Aljazeera as a Pan Arab media?

### **Approaches and methodologies for examining identity**

The study employs two key approaches for understanding Arab identity, and four principal methodologies. It utilizes the approaches Gust Yeb (2004) offers in an attempt to understand collective identity: namely, ‘the critical approach’ and ‘the interpretative approach’. These approaches have proven useful in the analysis of the representation of Arab identity, since, through the light of the lens of the critical approach, Arab identity is created, produced, reproduced and debated in a variety of symbolic, political, socioeconomic and historical contexts (Yeb, 2004, pp. 75, 76). In this sense, Arab identity is marked by what distinguishes it from other deeply rooted relationships that are more contingent in origin, for instance, the structure of family relations. Nonetheless, ideological dimensions are at the core of the structures that govern our relations with others (Yeb, 2004, pp. 75, 76). In addition to the critical approach used here, a more purely interpretative approach has proven significant for the study of Arab identity at Aljazeera Net, as well as in the Arab Diaspora, since it looks at identity as the core of

symbols that work through the communication of messages that can be co-created, exchanged, contested, and negotiated (Yeb, 2004, pp. 74, 75). In this context, Arabs in Arab countries and those who live in the Diaspora – whether they are visitors, viewers, or guests at Aljazeera - negotiate their local and global identities through the exchange of messages conducted over the Aljazeera website, or through the exchange of roles mediating the local and global.

To turn now to the methods employed to analyze the representation of Arab identity and the construction of meaning at Aljazeera Net, the analysis of the image of Arab identity occurs at three different levels. The first level adopts the *web-design criteria* so as to understand the strategies of remediation of news representation in Aljazeera Net in relation to the most basic ‘formal’ constructions of meaning, as implicated in the design of the news site. A comparative approach is used here to highlight the differences between the design of Aljazeera Net pages and the design of other websites of Pan-Arab online news that target Arabs, such as Middle East Online, or other Western online news networks that aim to reach Arabs through the Arabic language, such as ‘BBC Arabic’, and the Arabic version of CNN.

The second level of analysis examines the image of Arab identity through the identification of perspective and through framing. *Perspectival* analysis looks at the image of Arab identity at the surface of representation, thereby highlighting the point of view of Aljazeera Net through the analysis of the tone and style of the content and through the various lexical terms employed (Ensink, 2003, p. 10). By contrast, frames operate to shape and inform the content. *Framing analysis*, accordingly, explores the relationship between content, ideological structure and institutional context (Ibrahim,



2003, p. 55). Since it articulates the relations between power and ideology, framing “involves the construction of meaning through structured discourse” (Ibrahim, 2003, p. 55). Framing analysis, in this sense, does not deal with the surface of images of Arab identity; rather, it goes beyond the surface of images to inspect depth representations, and to examine the issue of delegation and ideology in representation.

This study does not merely consider framing as a central idea that contextualizes news content and suggests what is at stake in a given issue through selection, emphasis and elaboration (Severin, 1997, p.320), nor is it satisfied by using frames to identify the dynamic storyline and the unfolding narrative (Gamson, 1992, p. 385); rather, the study looks at frames as a tool for media analysis in order to represent the struggle between different collective identities, and as a site through which these identities become different components of the constructed reality of Arabs (Gamson, 1992, p. 385).

At a third level, the study uses both *telephone interviews*, and *face-to-face interviews* to represent the views of Arabs in the Diaspora - particularly Arab media experts, Arab academics, and Arab community leaders - concerning Arab identity and Aljazeera. The comments of Arabs in the Diaspora aim to offer a context through which Arab identity can be seen to fluctuate from a state of relative cohesion to utter fragmentation and dispersal and, more particularly, this context plays a crucial role in examining diasporic identity both, in itself, and as mediated by Aljazeera.

### **Research design: measurement, gathering data and sampling**

Distinct from the quantitative approach, this study undertakes a textual and visual analysis in both framing and perspective based on a qualitative approach. As indicated above, lexical choices, together with the style and tone of the content, provide two useful

measurements for the analysis of Aljazeera's perspective. Frames are analyzed through an examination of the ideas that form the basis of the arguments in Aljazeera. Likewise, pictorial images, such as pictures and cartoons are just as useful as language and rhetoric in examining identity, in that they aid the researcher in tracing the iconographic and imagistic elements in the construction of Arab identity, thereby helping to determine what might be termed a less official, or unreconstructed, image of Arab identity. Additionally, there are five contexts of observation that might help to determine what is at stake in the dynamic interplay of each frame: (1) Introductory statements, and the questions and comments of Aljazeera's news anchors and reporters, (2) the responses of Aljazeera's guests, (3) cartoon animations, (4) the interaction between words and drawings in Aljazeera cartoons, and (5) Aljazeera polls.

The data gathered for framing analysis originated from the Aljazeera Net archive, and through a daily scrutiny of the content to be found at Aljazeera Net. The most efficient method of assessing the content proved to be that of conducting a 'keyword'<sup>1</sup> search over the archive at Aljazeera Net. Through identifying every keyword that might bear some relation to Arab identity, I make extensive use of all the responses that emerge from the multiple keyword searches conducted on the archive of Aljazeera Net.

A number of criteria were used for selecting the interviewees from among Arab academics, media experts, and community leaders, and they were brought into dialogue

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<sup>1</sup> Among the multitude of keywords I use for this analysis are the following: Arab, Arabs, Arabic, Arabi, Alarabi, Alourobah (Arabism), Nation, Nationalism, identity, Umma, Arab leaders, conflict, demonstration, strike, the United States, America (Ameriki), Israeli, Israel, Intifada, resistance, war, Islam, religion, Muslim(een), Muslim(oun), Christianity (Maseehyah), Christians (Al-Masseehyoon – Al-Masseehyeen), language, rhetoric, media, Aljazeera Net, Aljazeera, women, honour (Sharf, ird) values, traditions, immigrants (Almohajeeroun, Almohajereen), Diasporas, culture, imperialism, colonialism, resistance, despotism, publics, reform, referendums, polls, Sheikh Yusef Alqaradawi, Islamic, Arab league of States, the Arab League, Art, food, McDonalds, Hamburger, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, songs and music (Tarab).

through face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews. Some of them were well known because of their published studies, others were nominated by previous interviewees, and a third group was chosen through a random search over the Internet concerning Arab scholars in the United States and Canada.

This study seeks to assess Arab identity both in itself, and in relation to the remediation of this identity at Aljazeera Net. In so doing, it has drawn on approaches that have proven to be almost as challenging as the concept of identity itself. Whereas the retention of Arab identity in the Diaspora is often examined in studies that deal with Arabs as if their identity had already been well defined, this study offers an investigation of Arab identity in the light of the respective definitions offered in light of the various ethnic, cultural, postcolonial, and communication approaches. Distinct from studies of online news that focus on issues of interactivity, and the difference between traditional media and new media, I suggest a model for 'constructing' an online news narrative based on a reconsideration of hypertextuality as it relates to the structure of the news story. The framing analysis adopted in this study goes further in relating frames to the construction of the reality of Arabs, and in this manner, it purports to examine Aljazeera's identity.

I was notably constrained by the challenge of getting responses for the study questions within a reasonable degree of time. During an entire year and more of attempting to establish a footing of correspondence with Aljazeera, despite its promises to address some of the issues I raised concerning news production values and media representations, the team at Aljazeera Net has not, as yet, show any serious willingness to

answer my enquiries and to cooperate with this research. The change of managers at Aljazeera means that their longstanding promise to communicate stands even less chance of being fulfilled in the foreseeable future. Secondly, and in a similar vein, Arab academics in the Arab world and in North America initially expressed a great deal of interest in registering their responses to my first introductory emails, however the busy schedules of some of those I chose to target did not permit them to answer any of my enquiries. Others promised me a response, but beyond this initial interest in my queries, no further communication transpired.

### **Chapter outlines**

Three long chapters constitute the body of this dissertation. The first chapter offers a historical context for the examination of the representation of Arab identity, whose first manifestations on the world stage could be observed even before the national liberation movements had become effectively rooted in Arab countries during the early 1950s. As stated above, the first chapter identifies and assesses the sources of Arab identity, and examines Arab identity as a source of meanings for Arabs. Likewise, it evaluates the sources of Arab identity in the Arab Diaspora. Moving in a parallel direction, the second chapter begins with a discussion about the social construction of Aljazeera and how it has refashioned some of the key issues in news production. It additionally explores newly emerging practices in the representation of news, and investigates how the design of Aljazeera Net alters the construction of meaning in news representation. Finally, the third chapter begins with an examination of the relationship between representation, perspectives and framing. The groundwork for an investigation into the frames governing the sources of Arab identity is then set out. The chapter goes on to consider how Arabs in

the North American Diaspora, particularly Arab media experts, academics and community leaders, perceive their identity, and how they evaluate Aljazeera as a Pan Arab news media.

## CHAPTER 1

### Communicating with Arabness: Definitions and Frames of Reference

#### 1.1 Introduction

Any study of collective identity will seek, ultimately, to define the sense by which certain groups of people strive to identify themselves, and conversely, how they identify other groups. Likewise, the study of Arab identity is the attempt to identify what it means to be an Arab<sup>2</sup>, which is inextricably linked with the question of how Arabs have been identified. Many scholars define Arabs in terms of linguistic and geographical factors. They describe Arabs as “people who speak the Arabic language, identify themselves as Arabs, and are nationals or residents of member countries of the league of Arab States” (Hopkins, 1997, p. 1). For other scholars, place and geography are not inclusive principles for identifying Arabs, and therefore, they extend their definitions to include those people who speak Arabic but live outside the Arab World.

In addition to geography, identification through religion, particularly Islam, is perceived to be a perennial factor in labeling Arab identity, and it accounts for the enduring sense of Arab identity, as understood down through the ages (Dawisha, 2003, p. 16). When characterized in terms of Islam, Arabs are all those “for whom the central fact of history is the mission of Muhammad and the memory of Arab empire” (Rejwan, 1998, p. 79). However, there is a ready consensus that being an Arab does not essentially connote being a member of a specific religion (Hopkins, 1997, p. 1), since there are

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<sup>2</sup> Scholars distinguish between an Arab, and an Arabian, wherein the latter is invariably an ethnic term. Many Arabs are of Semitic origin, but cannot be defined as Arabian (Nydell, 2004). The term Arab refers to the people who inhabited the Arabian Peninsula and Syrian Desert in Pre-Islamic times (Patai, 2002, p.12). However, modern conceptions of Arabs do not necessarily refer to their distant origins.

hundreds of thousands of Christians who are as intensely Arab in their feelings as any Muslim Arab (Patai\*, 2002, p. 13- See page p. 87).

Because geography and religion do not offer a comprehensive definition as to the identity of Arabs, some scholars are content to describe Arabs as those who speak the Arabic language. For example, an American Christian in Cairo who grew up speaking Arabic is an Arab whether he chooses to be or not (Nydell, 2004). Yet, with the increase in Arab migration to foreign countries, scholars are less likely to rely on the Arabic language as the sole criterion, since some members of the second generation of Arab immigrants may not speak Arabic, however, they still have the sense of being Arabs. Thus, it is more accurate to define Arabs as those who have, or come from Arab origins, and have developed a sense of belonging that identifies them as Arabs.

Obviously, the attempt to describe what it means to be an Arab constitutes an essential part of our understanding of Arab identity. However, our understanding of Arabness also warrants precise differentiation between the terms (Pan) Arabism and Arabness. Terminologically, there is an overlap between Arabness and Arabism, wherein both terms are perceived to be semantically symmetric. Though Arabness and Arabism are seen to be innate, Arabism (Alorubba) “is a movement for unification among the Arab peoples” (Pan Arabism). The key meanings ascribed to Arabism are derived from such issues as Arab cooperation (Alta’awon Alarabi), Arab unity (Alwhedda Alarabia), and Arab integration (Altakamol Alarabi).

The term Arabism is usually hyphenated, and the term Pan is used to refer to “the anti-Imperialist nationalist movement among Arab peoples preceding World War I” (Pan Arabism). The semantic overlap between ‘Arabism and Arabness’ appears in Bassam

Tibi's attempt to define Arabness as the goal of: "developing a new design for inter-Arab relations: an interstate structure of sovereign states based on mutual respect" (Tibi, 1999, p. 94).

Despite Bassam Tibi's attempt to situate Arabness as a strategic implementation of Pan-Arabism, Arabness, by contrast, has been defined as the sense of the identification of the past, present, and future ambitions of Arabs (Nydell, 2004). It is "one of the most complex, varicolored and historically and politically contested designations" (Rabbat, 1996). Although millions of Arabs believe in Arab identity, or at least yearn for it, it is impossible to achieve a genuine consensus concerning it (Rabbat, 1996). It is proposed to assemble all the Arabs within one nation. However, there is no overarching political movement that can currently bring this about (Rabbat, 1996).

Arabness is both real and imagined. It lives on in the minds and hearts of Arab people, both in Arab countries, and among Arabs who live outside the Arab World (Rabbat, 1996). On the one hand, Arabness is real because it depends on real foundations based on language, shared heritage, shared family and religious values, and shared territories (Nehme, 2003, p. 39). On the other hand, it is imagined because Arabs, including those who live in foreign countries, feel that they belong to one nation. Most of them do not know their Arab fellows, neither have they met them, nor have they heard from them; yet, in the mind of each one of them the image of their nation lives on (Benedict, 1983, p. 6).

This chapter seeks to shed more light on both historical and current images of Arab identity. It examines Arabness as a source of complex meanings (Castells, 1997, p. 7). To elaborate a comprehensive critical framework, this chapter will examine the various



definitions assigned to Arabness as an ethnic, cultural, and post-colonial identity. This comprehensive definition of Arabness will be followed by a proposal outlining the chief sources used and the range and kind of interpretations ascribed to them. The closing section of this chapter will focus on sources of Arabness relating to the Arab Diaspora. In a broader context, this chapter will epitomize the main frames of reference that contextualize Arabness, both in the past and the present.

## **1.2 Arabness as an ethnic, and cultural identity**

Arab identity is perceived by most scholars to be capable of definition in both ethnic and cultural terms. It is ethnic because it distinguishes between Arabs as a group and other ethnic groups. Ethnicity appears “as a political and social force on the national and international scenes” (Jeffres, 2000, p. 500). From an ethnic point of view, Arab identity, which constitutes the collectivity’s sense of being (Jeffres, 2000, p. 500), refers to Arabs as a people who share, and feel they belong to, a common and distinctive culture, a collective history, and a dominant religion (Fong, 2004, pp. 4-5).

Following an established line of ethnic scholars, such as De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1982), Orbe and Harris (2001), Edward (1997), Coiller and Thomas (1988), and Cohen (1974), Arabness is a marker of belonging that indicates a shared heritage (Fong, 2004, p. 5). In the eyes of a second cluster of ethnic scholars, such as Van Den Berghe (1981), Martin and Nakayama (2000), Arab identity can be seen “as an emotional bond that unites people together, that is rooted in the past, and that people are born into” (Fong, 2004, p. 5). It sums up the entire complex of feelings of the Arab people (Royce, 1982, p. 18). On a more inspirational level, Arabness is a source of motivation, and a fundamental principle of action (Fenton, 2003, p. 181).

As a cultural identity, Arabness stands for shared Arab representations, collective norms, and a shared cultural system of verbal and nonverbal behavior. It provides Arabs with certain distinctive vocabularies, concepts, and meanings. In short, Arabness is the identification of the reality of Arab communication (Fong, 2004, p. 6). Yet, speaking of Arabness as an ethnic and cultural identity is more problematic, since it leads us to speak of collective identity, and to engage in a discourse that might well incur the charge of 'essentialism'. Nonetheless, Arab identity has survived as an essential, primordial identity that is stable, hegemonic, relatively unchanging, and based on shared experiences (Mohanty, 2000, p. 30 & Song, 2003, p. 7). Among the essentialist approaches that highlight the importance of Arabness as a prerequisite for the realization of the goals of Arabs, and as a key political dimension for the survival of Arab identity (Sciortino, 2000, pp. 12, 25), are those of the Nasserists<sup>3</sup>, Bathists<sup>4</sup>, and Arab Nationalists<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Nasserists: Nasserism is a movement that strives to formulate Arabs' aspirations. Nasserism, as a movement, was initiated and proclaimed after the death of Jamal Abd-Alnasser, who died in September 1970. Nasser was recognized as an exceptionally charismatic and ardent leader, and no Egyptian leader before him had strived for the freedom and independence of the Arabs as a whole. He was one of the most significant, if not the greatest, proponent of Arab Nationalism. Nasser's major objective of Arab Nationalism focused on the attainment of Arab unity, and the strength and stability of Arabs everywhere. Although his ideas were not especially new, he transformed the idea of Arab unity into cohesive plans of action, and translated it into a tangible reality. By 1958, and because of his inspiration of Arabism, Nasser spearheaded negotiations with Syria that led to the creation of the 'Arab Union,' which collapsed in 1961. The defeat of the Egyptian army in 1967 weakened Nasser's position and incurred attacks on Nasserism as a result. In general terms, Nasserism succeeded in becoming a popular trend among various Arab movements, yet it failed to vindicate itself when it became institutionalized (Ismael, 1976, p. 81).

<sup>4</sup> Bathists: The Bath party was established in 1947 in Syria. However, the resurgence of the Bath party was supported by three founders: Zaki Alarsuzi, Michel Aflaq, and Salah Aldin Bitar, though Aflaq was considered as the party's chief philosopher. The Bath party aimed to rejuvenate the Arabs' will, and became the living instrument for the creation of 'one Arab nation' (Dawisha, 2003, pp. 153-154). It shared Nasser's political views about Arab unity, and wedded to the ideas of Arab unity and Arabism, was the assertion of an ongoing Arab history, and the vigorous representation of a new Arab generation (Gogoi, 1994, p. 137). The Bath party's principal objectives include: (1) freedom, which can be achieved through the struggle against foreign colonialism, (2) unity, which is attained by establishing solidarity among all of the various Arab groups, and (3) socialism, which aims at the revolutionary transformation of the endemic corruption in the economic, social, and political domains of Arab life (Gogoi, 1994, p. 140).

Ideas disseminated under the influence of the essentialist view of Arab identity sought to convince the Arab masses that Arab countries can master the local environment when they act together, and thereby create a better system of defense and security for the entire Arab region (Nehme, 2003, p. 22). In a more emphatically cultural context, essentialist approaches have been perceived as an attempt to establish 'an adequate self-image' for Arabs. By the mid 1950s, Von Grunebaum pointed to the fact that the Arab World had not, up until then, been able to conceive a satisfactory self-image. It was evident that by the mid 1950s, Arab thinking had entered a new phase, during which the Arab masses were fired with the importance of extolling Arab culture. The masses were reminded that the content of Arab culture, its fundamentals, and its overall unity, are issues that must not be taken for granted (Rejwan, 1998, p. 87).

Nevertheless, essentialist approaches fail to address the dramatic mutation in Arab identity. Most of the criticisms that the essentialists faced were due to their perception of identity as fixed and unchanging. Accordingly, Arab essentialists have been criticized for

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<sup>5</sup> Arab Nationalists: The roots of the Arab Nationalist movement, the argument goes, can be traced to the nineteenth century. Modern Arab Nationalism emerged as a reaction to the failure of the ruling family in Istanbul to defend Islamic civilization against Western economic, cultural, and political penetration (Gogoi, 1994, p. 84). Articulated through the Islamic reformist movement, Arab Nationalists questioned the apparent reasons for the weaknesses of the Islamic World. Abd-Alrahman Alkawakbi (1849-1902), and the Islamic reformists, blamed the Turkish administration for the disastrous mismanagement that led to the corruption of the entire Islamic World (Gogoi, 1994, p. 87). By the middle of June 1916, there was a remarkable manifestation of the resurgence of Arab Nationalism, at the moment when Sherif Hussein declared the 'Arab Revolt'. Enthused about the independence of all Arabs, Sherif Hussein was concerned with both religion and nationalism. The development of Arab consciousness led to the emergence of the Arab Nationalist Movement, which was formed in 1951 under the leadership of the Christian Palestinian George Habash, who was loyal to Nasser and his brand of Arab Nationalism. Like Nasserism, Arab Nationalism was socialist in the sense that it gave preference to social and public interest issues over those of individual freedom. It was both revolutionary and progressive, because it adhered to the concept of revolution, and looked ahead to achieve its nationalistic objectives without ignoring the past. Moreover, Arab Nationalism was positive, as well as spiritually rooted. Its positive orientation derived from its fundamental aim to cooperate with all nations, and to strengthen its ideals through an infusion of modern ideas. Spiritually, Islamic tenets, and religion in general, were very much evident in its program (Gogoi, 1994, p. 77), yet despite its comprehensiveness, and its democratic nature, Arab Nationalism failed to keep its promise of achieving power, and proved unable to unite Arabs into one nation (Kramer, 1993), yet, it is still the major historical touchstone for Arabists.

their focus on the issue of unity, while ignoring more important issues, and for their inability to address inter-Arab conflicts. Recently, Michel Nehme's book, Fear and Anxiety in the Arab World, emphasizes the crisis of political identity that the Arabs are now experiencing. He believes that repeated regional conflicts have led to population dislocation, devastation, and distrust among Arabs, which in turn, have made Arabs feel less certain of their proclaimed identity (Nehme, 2003, p. 38). Inter-Arab conflicts, the argument goes, have been a major threat to Arab identity. As Raphael Patai (2002) puts it:

Despite the ideal of Arab unity, to which lip service is constantly being paid by Arab leaders in all their public pronouncements, the fact is that ever since World War II, which marked the beginning of full Arab political consciousness and intense Arab political activity, the relationship between governments, and parties has been dominated by bitter rivalry. At best, this rivalry lay dormant for a while; at worst, it burst into the open in the form of fiery denunciations, plotting of assassinations, attacks or threats of attacks across borders (p. 235).

Overestimation of the issue of Arab unity is a second flaw that inheres in essentialist approaches, which conceive Arab unity as an urgent and pervasive public demand, indeed, as the main priority for Arabs. Although it has been said that Arab unity is an Arab public requisite, the preoccupation with the issues of Arab nationalism and Arab unity have been the exclusive concern of Arab politicians and Arab elites. It is evident that the various Arab publics have been excluded from participation in the activities most relevant to Arab unity (Ibrahim, 1980, p. 111). A recent study, implemented by the Arab Thought Foundation in 2002, questioned 3,800 Arab adults from eight countries: Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco, Jordan, The United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. The study, which posed 92 questions concerning Arab values, their political concerns,

their mood and outlook, and their definition as to how they view the world, found that the issue of Arab unity is not in fact a key priority among Arabs. Most Arab respondents gave priority to the personal concerns that affect them most directly, such as the quality and security of their daily work, their devotion to their faith, and their obligations to their families (Zogby, 2002, p. 7).

When asked about their political preferences, the Arabs surveyed pointed to their 'civil and personal rights'. Surprisingly, the issue of the 'general Arab situation' was ranked as ninth in importance (Zogby, 2002, p. 34). However, the study found that 'being Arab' proves to be the most frequently cited source of identity (Zogby, 2002, p. 50). The country where an Arab lives and his religious faith are ranked as the second and third sources of Arab identity, respectively (Zogby, 2002, p. 50).

In socio-cultural terms, the perception of Arabs as a homogeneous people constitutes a third critique of the essentialist position. Among the critics of Arab homogeneity is Bassam Tibi, who emphasizes that Arabs are heterogeneous, even though they have a common religion and language. In the eyes of Bassam Tibi (2002) "Muslim Arab Kuwaitis and Muslim Arab Moroccans are not of the same culture, and do not perceive themselves as such, even though they speak the same language and worship within the same faith" (p. 129).

Based on a critique of essentialist approaches, this study seeks to examine Arabness as a situational identity, which is never unproblematic or transparent, "always in process," and always transforming its own identity (Hall, 1997, p. 110). Arabness, in this sense, can be perceived as a collective true self, concealed inside many others, and subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power (Hall, 1997, p. 112).

### 1.3 Arabness as a postcolonial identity

Approaches to Arab identity, whether essentialist or situationalist, seek to identify 'who the Arabs are', and 'the nature of the Other'. That is to say, our identity or sense of who 'we' are is incomplete unless it is contrasted with 'Otherness', or in Erik Hobsbawm's phrase, 'without outsiders, there are no insiders' (Papastergiadis, 1998, p.31). In comparing Arabness with Otherness, Arab identity emerges as a postcolonial identity.

The long history of colonialism the Arab world has endured and the expansion of global capitalism has helped to reshape Arab identity, constructing it as an identity of resistance. The identity of resistance, as described by Manuel Castells (1997), can be claimed by those "actors whose positions are devalued or stigmatized by the logic of domination, and who thus build trenches of resistance" (p. 8). When refracted through the lens of postcolonialism, Arab identity is perceived as a response to the challenge of Western colonialism and domination. Forging a postcolonial and resistant identity has been the major preoccupation of several Arab scholars, and poets, since the 1950s. In the 1950s, Sati' Alhusri<sup>6</sup>, one of the influential mentors of Arab Nationalism, wrote:

We rebelled against the English; we rebelled against the French.

We rebelled against those who colonized our land and tried to enslave us (Dawisha, 2003, p. 286).

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<sup>6</sup> Sati Alhusri (1882-1968), born in Yemen in 1882 into a Syrian family, was considered as the leading exponent of secular Pan-Arab nationalism. Alhusri developed a systematic and coherent approach to Arab nationalism; he was described as the man who did the most to popularize the notion of Arabism. He called for the separation of religion and Arab nationalism. In the eyes of Alhusri, Arab unity does not necessarily depend on a collective religious identity, and religious differences do not impede the realization of Arab unity. More importantly, he believed that Arab states are the artificial creations of the imperialist powers (Dawisha, 2003, pp. 3, 49, 50; Rejwan, 1998, p. 82).

Similarly, in his poem entitled 'Identity Card', the Arab poet Mahmoud Darwish (1964) noted the strong bond between the concept of resistance and being an Arab.

Mahmoud Darwish wrote:

Record!  
I am an Arab  
And my identity card number is fifty thousand  
.....  
Record!  
I am an Arab  
You have stolen the orchards of my ancestors  
And the land which I cultivated  
Along with my children  
And you left nothing for us  
Except for these rocks.  
So will the State take them  
As it has been said?! (Darwish, 1964).

#### **1.4 Sources of Arab identity**

The problematic nature of Arabness and its paradoxes call for the restoration of the main components of Arabness, and the deconstruction of the sources of Arab identity. Distinct from the notion of fixing Arab identity, the reassessment of the sources of Arabness must take into account 'the continuous play' of Arabness, and attempts to portray an image of Arab identity that matches the Arab reality. Among the chief components of Arab identity are Pan-Arabism, conflicts, religion, language, media gender, and cultural traits.

##### **1.4.1 Pan-Arabism revisited: imagination versus reality**

Pan-Arabism is premised on the ideology of establishing one Arab nation<sup>7</sup>. During the 1950s and the 1960s, the promise of one Arab nation, and one Arab identity was

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<sup>7</sup> In this study, the concept of the 'nation' is defined as a collective distinguished by "human solidarity, whose members believe that they form a coherent cultural whole, and who manifest a strong desire for political separateness and sovereignty" (Dawisha, 2003, p. 13)

increasingly proclaimed so that ultimately “no Arab regime in twenty-two states has dared formally to go against this proclaimed national self-identification” (Hopkins, 1997, p. 4). In a more ideological sense, Pan-Arabism, as the Middle East historian Bernard Lewis puts it, “was a sacrosanct ideological principal in all the Arab countries, some of which even incorporated it in their constitution” (Dawisha, 2003, p. 11).

Since World War II, the gradual acceptance of the idea of Pan-Arabism has been accompanied by several attempts to achieve Arab unification. The first positive attempt was the formation of the ‘League of Arab States’ (Jama’t Aldowal Alarabia) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, 1945, which aimed at strengthening relations between Arab states, organizing political plans, and protecting their collective and individual independence and integrity (Gogoi, 1994, pp. 194-195). However, the first real proactive attempt at unification was the union between Syria and Egypt (February 1958 - September 1961). During the 1973 war, this sense of solidarity was a defining factor in Syria’s decision to enter the war alongside Egypt against Israel. It marked the first occasion when the Arab states decided to limit the supply of oil to the West so as to strengthen Egypt’s position during the war. During the 1980s, various groups of Arab countries began to form clusters of economic cooperation councils, such as the ‘Gulf Cooperation Council’ (GCC), made up of the six Gulf states; the ‘Arab Cooperation Council’ (ACC), composed of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen; and the ‘Arab Maghrib Union’ (AMU), formed by Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya (Hopkins, 1997, p. 4).

Despite several attempts at Arab unification and various signs of cooperation, a tendency toward Arab disunity has been a persistent obstacle. Of the several manifestations of Arab disunity, the most significant were: the Arab civil wars in



Lebanon (1975-1985), Sudan (1956-1973, 1983-1996), Iraq (1964-1975, 1991-1996), and Yemen (North, 1964-1976, and between North and South, in 1996) (Hopkins, 1997, p. 6); inter-Arab conflicts, such as the boycott between Egypt and Arab countries as a response to Egypt's unilateral decision to negotiate with Israel; border conflicts between Bahrain and Qatar; and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August of 1990. This latter inter-Arab conflict, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, revealed the weakness of the League of Arab States, which was hampered by the lack of an institutional framework for conflict management (Tibi, 1999, p. 93). Arab civil wars and inter-Arab conflicts have tended to prevent or thwart the resurgence of the notion of Pan-Arabism, and have led to more damaging charges, such as 'localism'<sup>8</sup> and 'Islamic Fundamentalism'<sup>9</sup>.

More importantly, the chief consequences of Arab civil wars and Arab inter-conflicts are manifest in the widely perceived reality of Arab stagnation during the 1990s,

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<sup>8</sup> Localism (Koutryia) connotes a local nationalist sentiment hostile to Pan-Arabism. The failure of Pan-Arabists to acknowledge the localities of culture, and the ethnicities related to them, has contributed to the strengthening of authentic local identities (Tibi, 2002, p. 129). Although localism does not preclude union, it nonetheless remains a source of disunity (Gogoi, 1994, p. 190).

<sup>9</sup> Islamic Fundamentalism: in the recent past, the first Islamic movement that has been perceived as politically oriented was the Muslim Brotherhood (Jamaa't Alikhwan Almouslimeen), which was created by Hassen Albanna in 1928. The Muslim Brotherhood has been seen as a non-violent movement, even though a number of scholars claim that it sowed the first seeds of Islamic fundamentalism. About 42 years later, Islam reemerged as a substantial force in Arab politics during the 1970s, and 1980s, and continues to affect the contemporary political context (Gogoi, 1994, p. 212). Islamic movements exist in many different forms; the Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt and Jordan are non-violent movements, while the radical ones are 'Takfir Wal-Hijira' (Excommunications and Flight), and 'Aljihad Alislamy' (The Islamic Jihad), and 'Aljama'a Alislamyia' (The Islamic Group). Whereas some of these movements, such as 'Takfir Wal-Hijira,' have disappeared, the prominent voices of other movements are often heard, and regularly resumed, particularly in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and the invasion of Iraq on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2003. Most Islamic movements share similar ideological principles. For example, they conceive Islam as a total way of life; contend that the pervasive adoption of Western lifestyles has led to the deterioration of Muslim society; and proclaim that to re-achieve power, it is necessary to return to the Islamic Sharia (Islamic Law). Their views as to the Western way of life are wedded to their primary beliefs about the West, which has been seen as the personification of evil from the time of the Crusades, through to colonialism, neo-colonialism, and Zionism (Gogoi, 1994, p. 212). Many critics believe that the negative stereotypes directed against Islamic fundamentalism are the product of the Western media. In these critics' eyes, Islamic fundamentalism is an inaccurate, misleading, counterproductive echo of the Western paranoia about Islam (Ba-Yunus, 1997).

particularly in regard to the lack of a coherent Arab ideology. This has led, in turn, to the undermining of the notion of Pan-Arabism. The current near eclipse of Pan-Arabism as a significant force poses an all but impossible challenge to the imagination: to glimpse beyond its present failures of will and vision so as to anticipate its resurgent possibilities. The failure to achieve a tangible coalition to protect Arab interests has undermined the notion of Pan-Arabism. Given the failures of Pan-Arabism it is widely accepted that “Pan-Arabism is temporarily going through a bad phase, and is at its lowest ebb” (Gogoi, 1994, p. 190). In a rather more pessimistic mode, Martin Kramer believes that “Arabs have suspended their belief in the Arab nation, and now openly doubt whether there is a collective Arab mission” (Kramer, 1993).

To conclude, the realities of inter-Arab conflict and Arab formal stagnation have meant that the notion of the Arab nation has been widely perceived as a form of wishful thinking rather than a realistic vision of a credible, albeit future, reality. The attempt to imagine the Pan-Arab nation, and what might have been its accomplishment, has meant that two interconnected nostalgic notions have gained currency among Arabs:

(1) The notion that Arabs would have been participants in a better reality if only they had lived in the relatively glorious past, because at this moment the Arab world is perceived as shameful, wretched and sad, whereas the past had been perceived as great (Nassar, 2004 & Gogoi, 1994, p. 113).

(2) The related idea that Nasser was a personal incarnation of such greatness, such was the magnitude of his charisma; and thus, wedded to the notion of living in the past, is the ritual public commemoration of Nasser. Jamal Abd-Alnasser is always perceived as the ‘unifier of the Arabs’, a man who promised the world, and dared to deliver, despite

the consequences (El-Noshokaty, 2001 & Rabbat, 2002). His charismatic aura began to fade gradually after 1967; however, in the eyes of many Arabs, if Nasser had remained in power, the face of the Arab world would have been dramatically transformed. According to Adeed Dawisha (2003), Nasser would have remained in power not only as the confident, vibrant hero, but also as the preeminent symbol of the will to resist (p. 283).

The notion of 'living in the Arab past and recalling its symbols' influences our notions of Arab identity, which seems to place more emphasis on the 'pastness', both of its achievements and grievances, than on its 'presentness', because 'pastness' invokes something to be proud of, and provides a basis for future aspirations (Nydell, 2004).

#### **1.4.2 Arab conflicts with others: galvanizing Arab identity.**

The long history of Arab conflict could be dated back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the early beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Arabs faced colonial exploitation in the form of the expansionist policies of England, France, and Italy. Since 1948, and before their emergence from colonialism, Arabs have faced a new kind of conflict with Israel. Arab-Israeli conflicts have become much more complicated, especially in light of the consolidation of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The absolute political and military support that Israel has always received from the United States has magnified the issue of Palestine in the Arab world. As Shibley Telhami has noted of James Zogby's international poll findings:

the Palestinian issue remains an 'identity' issue for most Arabs.... Most Arabs are shamed by their inability to help the Palestinians and feel personally insulted when the Palestinians seem slighted. The way the United States behaves toward Palestinians is taken as a message for all Arabs (Brynen, 2004, p. 135).

The recent occupation of Iraq, headed by the United States and England, has strongly awakened, in the minds of Arabs, similar memories to those they experienced during the period of colonialism. In the collective Arab memory, Arab conflicts, commemorated through firmly rooted habits of historical recollection, are often seen as a repeat performance of the Arabs' experience with colonialism (Sid-Ahmed, 2000). The continuing conflicts that Arabs are engaged in account for why they are in a more or less perpetual state of belligerency, which has affected, in turn, Arab social and political life, thereby making them more emotional and increasingly skeptical about the goals of others.

Scholars have argued that the various emotional outpourings of Arabs can be ascribed to the ongoing state of conflict. Critical observations about Arab emotionalism are made in Sania Hamady's article, "The temperament and character of Arabs," which states that Arabs "communicate by shouting, accompanied with signs of anger" (Patai, 2002, p. 170). When hurt, they talk and complain openly, and manifest their sufferings in an undisguised manner. As for anger, Arabs are depicted as susceptible, once their anger is aroused; indeed, the Arab's wrath has no limits (Patai, 2002, p. 170). In a similar vein, Tarek Heggy, the author of "Critique of the Arab Mind," believes that Arabs have become less forgiving, and more or less incapable of tolerating criticism (Heggy, 2001, pp. 15-22, 63-68). Yet, from another rather more exceptional perspective Arabs are not necessarily seen as emotional they have distinct forms of speaking styles, and gestures from Westerners, also a different concept of how feelings may be expressed (Nydell, 2004).

More importantly, Arabs believe that they face external conspiracies (mu'amarat) as a result of the multitude of conflicts they have encountered (Tibi, 1999, p. 92). Scholars' attempts to unravel the roots of conspiracy theory have led them to remark upon the difficult nature of the challenge faced by those who aim to convince Arabs not to believe in the notion of conspiracy. On the one hand, Arabs do not create vague enemies; they do not accept random evidence with which to accuse their enemies; rather, they focus on what accords with their beliefs and do not leave sufficient space to account for all of the probabilities pertinent to a given situation. The hope that Arabs would abandon their pervasive belief in conspiracies was succinctly expressed by Abd-Almaunim Said, the director of the Al-Ahram Research Center in Egypt, when he argued:

We thought that by the end of the 20th century, the Arab mind would be open enough not to explain everything with a 'conspiracy theory'...the biggest problem with conspiracy theories is that they keep us not only from the truth but also from confronting our faults and problems...This way of thinking relates any given problem to external elements, and thus does not [lead] to a rational policy to confront the problem (Stalinsky, 2004).

Obviously, conflicts with others can work to galvanize Arab identity through the expression of emotions such as anger, and yet these same conflicts can also be adduced and subsequently interpreted in light of conspiracy theories.

#### **1.4.3 Religion: imagining the Umma.**

As shown in the discussion of the first two sources pertaining to Arabness, the failure of the project of Pan-Arabism, and the enmity between Arabs and Others, as a consequence of the long history of colonialism, continued into the 'postcolonial' era, a vacuum has been created within which religion appears as a cohesive bond in the definition of Arabness. In general terms, religion was, and for the traditional majority in

all Arab countries, has remained, the central focus in life (Patai, 2002, p. 153). In his article, "Arab Christians as symbols," Hilal Khashan (2001) stresses the importance of religion in the Arab region. He writes: "this is a region where religion largely defines not just faith but also personal identity, so that how Muslims and Christians see each other affects politics, economics, and much more" (Khashan). Despite the representation of different religious groups in the Arab world (Christian, Bahai, Ahmadi, Druz, and Judaic), it is Islam that predominates in 90% of the Arab world, whereas other religions are distinct minorities (Hopkins, 1997, p. 1).

To highlight the connection between Islam and Arabness, it is instructive to examine the competing definitions of Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism now prevalent. It is generally understood that "Arabism virtually is inseparable from Islam, and that the doctrines of Pan-Arabism, and Pan-Islamism are thus closely related aspirations" (Rejwan, 1998, p. 78). It is obvious that the fusion between Islam and Arabism was primarily a historical matter. Undoubtedly, during the period of colonialism, or imperialist domination, Islamists and Arabists tolerated one another, and even cooperated with each other (Dawisha, 2003, p. 84). Yet, with the end of colonialism, it became more difficult for Arabists to repeat the refrain of demands for integration between Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism. The loud voice of Islam heard from the majority of people in the Arab World conceived Arabists as permanent rivals.

The Pan-Arabist attempt<sup>10</sup> to disarm Islam by incorporating it as the primary element in Pan-Arabism has failed (Kramer, 1993). The failure of the notion of Pan-

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<sup>10</sup> Pan-Arabism mentors have attempted to highlight the solid bond between Islam and Pan-Arabism. For Michel Alflaq, for example, the power of Islam has been restored nowadays under the new form of Arabism. Similarly, Sati Alhusri argued that the concept of Islamic unity is broader and more inclusive than the concept of Arab unity (Kramer, 1993, & Rejwan, 1998, p. 83).

Arabism has subsequently facilitated the Islamists' critique. Islamists criticize Pan-Arabism for being a misleading myth. They believe that if the Prophet Mohamed, the prophet of the Muslims, had wished to create a Pan-Arabist movement, he would have undoubtedly been capable of inaugurating it (Kramer, 1993). Islamic identity, as the argument of the Islamists goes, is the only identity that seems able to bind the different types of people into one mosaic (Dawisha, 2003, p. 32).

When responding to the Islamists' critique, Arabists make a very clear distinction between the respective missions of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Arabism. According to the Arabists, the main task of Pan-Islamism is to establish an Islamic 'Umma', and an exclusively Islamic identity, but emphatically not an Arab nation and an Arab identity (Rejwan, 1998, p. 83). Additionally, Arabists believe that Islam is one faith among other faiths, and consequently they disagree with Islamist views that conceive Islam as a total way of life. Arabists accept the social values of Islam, however, and they criticize those aspects of Islamic history that were politically void of councils, communes, parliaments, or any other kind of elective or representative assembly (Sadowski, 1997, p. 35).

Despite the extreme difference of views between Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism, Islam paradoxically remains as one of main source of Arabness. On the one hand, Islamists always challenge Pan-Arabism, thereby urging Arabists to take action on behalf of Arab unification. On the other hand, Islamic identity has evolved along lines not so dissimilar to those ascribed to Arabness. Both Islamic identity and Arab identity share the concept of the 'Umma'<sup>11</sup> (Nation). Despite ongoing debate about the concept, the concept of 'Umma' in discussions of Arabness is more specific in relation to defining the borders

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<sup>11</sup> The Umma refers to disparate groups of people, religious entities, the historical dimension, or the quality of uniqueness. It allows ideas to move across borders, and can generate emotions wherever Muslims live and practice their faith (Ahmed, 1999, p. 8, & Gogoi, 1994, p. 82).

of an Arab Umma. Parallel with the concept of Umma, Arabists have developed the concept of 'Watan'<sup>12</sup>, which is both tangible and amorphous in meaning. In regard to Islamic identity, the concept of Umma is intangible and possesses spiritual overtones (Ahmed, 1999, p. 8). In accord with the claims made for Arab identity, Islamic identity places a similar emphasis on 'pastness'. For Islamists, history is not just an object of inspiration, but a reality within which they live.

During the last twenty years the meanings assigned to Islamic identity have been more efficiently disseminated within the Arab Muslim world than ever before. The radical transformations in communication technology have resulted in a vastly extended field of application, especially in regard to multimedia products. Moreover, the World Wide Web offers opportunities for Islamists to create an Islamic web, through which Muslims can significantly increase their knowledge of Islam (Anderson, 2003, p. 46). The new applications of communication technology, particularly in the creation of the World Wide Web, have given millions of Muslims unfettered access to primary texts, and new perspectives, nurturing a healthy online religious debate (Islam, 2002, March).

#### **1.4.4 The Arabic language: the heart and soul of the Arab nation**

Language use functions as a means of communicative expression, and as a marker and indicator of the speaker's ethnic and cultural identity. Additionally, it influences, reflects, and sometimes misrepresents one's identity (Fong, 2004, p. 11). When examining the sources of Arab identity due credit is always given to the unrivalled power

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<sup>12</sup> Watan denotes a certain place or region where people already live and are firmly established.



of the Arabic language<sup>13</sup>. For Arab nationalists, language is perceived as the heart and soul of the Arab nation (Barakat, 1993). The extraordinary esteem given to the Arabic language is due to its dynamic nature. The Arabic language “has an unusually large vocabulary and its grammar allows for the easy coining of new words” (Nydell, 2002, p. 117). Because of the power ascribed consciously or unconsciously to words, Arabic words “can, to some extent, affect subsequent events” (Nydell, 2002, p. 122).

The capabilities of the Arabic language may explain why Arabs are extraordinarily fond of it. For Arabs, the Arabic language “is their greatest cultural treasure and achievement, and an art form that unfortunately cannot be accessed or appreciated by outsiders” (Nydell, 2002, p. 117). Arabs’ appreciation of, and enthusiasm for, their language is reiterated in the comments of the historian Philip Hitti, who wrote: “no people in the world has such enthusiastic admiration for literary expression, and is so moved by the word, spoken or written, as the Arabs” (Rugh, 1987, p. 20).

Obviously, Arab identity is influenced by several attributes of the Arabic language. Among the characteristics that directly affect Arabness are the vocabulary’s peculiar richness, and its powerful rhetoric. The richness of the vocabulary “makes it possible to express a wide range of nuances, which in other languages often have to be paraphrased” (Introduction, 2002). More importantly, the Arabic language is powerfully rhetorical, and has an extraordinary capacity for assertion and emphasis, notably through repetition,

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<sup>13</sup> The Arabic language is one of the Afro-Asiatic languages. Since the Koran is written in Arabic, it is considered as the main language of Islam. When linguists refer to the Arab language they generally have classical Arabic in mind. While the written Arabic language is homogenous across Arab countries, the spoken Arabic language is exceedingly heterogeneous, with a number of strikingly different accents, such as the Egyptian accent, the Lebanese accent, the Gulf accent, and the Moroccan accent. Another overview of the Arabic language classifies the Arab language as follows: (1) classical (Modern Standard) Arabic, which is used for all writing and formal speeches and discussions, (2) colloquial Arabic, which is usually used for everyday spoken communication, but not for writing, and (3) formal spoken Arabic, which is usually utilized by educated people (Nydell, 2002, pp. 116-117).

metaphor, and rhyme. As Raphael Patai, the author of “The Arab Mind,” puts it: “no language ...comes even near to Arabic in its power of rhetoricism, in its ability to penetrate beneath and beyond intellectual comprehension directly to the emotions and make its impact upon them” (Patai, 2002, pp. 50, 51). Because the principal features of Arabic rhetoric (mubalagha) and assertion (tawkid) are employed in the persuasion of media consumers, the images Arabs use to portray their identity may include exaggerated statements (Patai, 2002, p. 52), or appear as rhetorical declarations presented as clear-cut facts.

#### **1.4.5 Arab media: Re-empowering Arabness**

The complex relationship between Arab media and Arab identity has led to a prolonged and deeply nuanced debate over the precise nature of this dynamic. On the one hand, Arab media scholars are united in their view that the Arab media has made a significant contribution to reflecting, and constructing Arab identity. On the other hand, the attempts of Arab scholars to contextualize Arab media in light of recent political and economic trends indicate that the relationship between Arabness and Arab media seems to be politically charged and paradoxical.

Any adequate engagement with such ostensibly contrasting views must start by acknowledging that despite the modern transformation in communication technologies within the Arab world, “the Arab world remains impeded by old political divisions, static economic models, and poor media structures and performance” (Amin, 2001, p. 24). Conversely, it is noted that recent political, economic, and technological trends in the Arab world have induced significant transformations in the Arab mass communication

sphere, thereby providing Arab audiences with a considerably more diversified and interactive access to information (Ayish, 2001, p. 111).

To understand the slippage between the two paradoxical views mentioned above, an examination of the evolution of Arab media during three parallel phases is necessary. The first phase, which examines the censorship imposed on Arab media and the theories and principles governing expression, seeks to shed light on the media atmosphere within which a sense of Arab identity is disseminated. The creation of a technological paradigm that was accompanied by a gradual demand for a Pan-Arab media during the 1970s and 1990s will be discussed in the second phase. The third phase will assess the online Arab media and discuss its influence on Arab identity.

### **Phase 1) Arab media and censorship: the strained survival of Arab identity**

Historically, Arab media have undergone different sorts of censorship. During the period of Turkish domination and Western colonialism, Arab media were placed “under a range of social and political controls that adversely affected their freedom” (Ayish, 2001, p. 122). With few exceptions in the Arab world, newspapers and magazines “were used as the mouthpieces of ruling authorities, seeking to propagate their views and policies” (Ayish, 2001, p. 122). Similarly, most radio<sup>14</sup> stations were operated, from the very beginning, by government agencies. Some Arab countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, depended on foreign companies to establish their broadcasting systems. In Egypt, for example, radio was operated from 1934 to 1948 by the British Marconi Company, and in Tunisia, by the French authority, beginning in 1939.

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<sup>14</sup> Radio took about five decades to be established in all Arab countries. It was established in Morocco in 1928, Iraq in 1936, Lebanon in 1938, Libya in 1939, Sudan in 1940, Syria in 1941, Somalia in 1943, Yemen in 1947 and 1954, Jordan in 1948, Saudi Arabia in 1949, Kuwait in 1951, Mauritania in 1956, Palestine in 1964, Oman in 1970, and the United Arab Emirates in 1971 (Gher, 1999, p. 62).

During the colonial era, all attempts to sustain private radio stations that were based on commercial objectives and funded by individuals or corporations had failed. Examples of private radio stations were to be found in Algeria (1925), Egypt (1926), and Tunisia (1935) (Amin, 2001, p. 29). At its inception, television<sup>15</sup> broadcasting, which began in the 1950s and took about three decades to be established in all Arab countries, was subject to government control.

Media censorship forms range from issuing laws and legislation to control media licenses, through to filtering media content. As noted by the Arab Press Freedom Watch (APFW), Arab media have been subject to restrictive laws and codes, which dramatically determine the role media can play in addressing issues of political reform in Arab countries (The role, 2004). Various forms of censorship that affect both local Arab newspapers and transnational Arab media have created a climate of fear among Arab media practitioners who “have for a long time tended to censor themselves in their coverage of certain issues” (The role, 2004). The negative effects of self-censorship appear in Jihad Khazen’s article (1999), “Censorship and State Control of the Press in the Arab World.” Jihad Khazen, the editor-in-chief of Dar Alhayat, one of the Pan-Arab newspapers, wrote:

Sitting at my desk, I feel at times that I’m not so much covering the news as covering it up. Editors know the dos and don’ts of their trade, so when I am shown a story, it is often to shift responsibility from the editor concerned, to me, should the paper get banned the next day. We can afford to be banned in Sudan, where the currency is almost worthless, but if we are banned in Saudi Arabia, we stand

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<sup>15</sup> Television was established in Morocco in 1954, in Iraq, Algeria and Lebanon in 1956, Egypt and Syria in 1960, Kuwait in 1961, Sudan in 1962, Democratic Yemen in 1964, Saudi Arabia in 1965, Tunisia in 1966, Jordan in 1967, Libya in 1968, Qatar in 1970, Bahrain in 1973, and in Oman and Yemen, in 1974 and 1975, respectively (Gher, 1999, p. 63).

to lose tens of thousands of dollars in advertising revenue (Khazen, 1999).

During the postcolonial era, Arab media sacrificed their freedom for the sake of national and domestic unity. The need to secure national unity from possible colonial attacks was accompanied by oppressive measures toward dissenting opinions. Despite the direct and indirect censorship that the Arab media underwent, issues pertaining to Arab identity often came under Arab media scrutiny during the 1950s and 1960s. Increasingly, the promotion of a sense of one Arab spirit became not merely the duty of radio and television programmers, but rather, the principal agenda of several Arab movies and songs.

Nonetheless, it is evident to Arab scholars and Arab audiences that the increasingly important issue of Arab identity has been articulated within the constraints imposed by totalitarian regimes. The incubation of the concept of Arabness by undemocratic governments has strained the sense of Arab identity, defining it as increasingly void of the legal and institutional safeguards of freedom and democracy. The interconnectedness between Arab identity and an undemocratic environment is apparent in the response of the Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to a question about whether issuing a paper is currently permissible:

It is permissible within certain measures. What is the aim of the paper? This is the basis. Does it serve the national and pan-Arab line? There is an old printing law that allows the publication of newspapers, and it is under review, and there will be principles that aim to make the mass media contribute to the development process (Interview, 2001).

This comment by President Al-Assad can help us to examine the “theory” that governs the Arab media system. As indicated by William Rugh (1987), “the prevailing

Arab attitude toward mass communications appears to be more akin to the authoritarian view” (p. 27). Clearly, up until the 1990s, Arab media operated to “support the policies of the government, which controls the media either directly or indirectly through licensing, legal action, or perhaps financial means” (Rugh, 1987, p. 25).

Yet, it has become evident that Arab media often function in accordance with libertarian and social responsibility theories. In a very few cases, Arab media operate through a “self-righting process,” entailing the free competition of information and ideas, or if they are placed sufficiently far away from government control, they can thereby provide audiences with precise and objective information. However, it is evident that those Arab media that reflect some of the features of both libertarian and social responsibility theories are undermined by the fact that “these features tend to be in the effects of the system rather than in the underlying philosophy or purpose” (Rugh, 1987, p. 27).

Despite recent technological developments in the Arab World that have led to the achievement of certain kinds of diversity, the Arab Human Development Report of 2003 (AHDR), issued by the United Nations, stated that Arab media “operate in an environment that restricts the freedom of the press and freedom of expression and opinion” (Mass, 2003). Most Arab media systems continue to function as a mobilization tool through which Arab regimes can gain support for their political programs. Of the features that describe how Arab media operate as a mouthpiece for Arab governments, the most notable is the concern for safeguarding the inviolability of the aura of Arab leaders. Small numbers Arab media criticize their government leaders. Negative

information about the character and behavior of powerful rulers never finds its way into print, radio, or screen media (Rugh., 1987, p. 33).

### **Phase 2) The demand for a Pan-Arab media-identity (1970s-1990s)**

The first attempts of Arab countries to set up a joint satellite, which would serve the entire Arab region, date back to the 1960s when the Arab States Broadcasting Union was established in 1969. Yet, the Pan-Arab satellite remained a dream, due to political differences, and inadequate technical and financial resources, until the establishment of the Arab Satellite Communication Organization (ARABSAT) in 1976. ARABSAT was the Arab's response to "the New Information and Communication Order, promoted by Non-Aligned Movement, which condemned the unequal circulation of information and communication flows, the unbalanced distribution of the means of communication" (Guaaybess, 2002).

Arab countries took one more decade to launch ARABSAT into outer space. By the end of the 1990s, three more satellites were launched to cover the entire Arab region: NILESAT, INTELSAT, and EUTELSAT. In the eyes of Arab media critics, ARABSAT failed to counter the tide of Western cultural products, not merely because it became one more satellite among many, but also because Arabs put more "stress on being present on the broadcasting scene, than on responses to social or ideological issues, and even more stress on broadcasting entertainment programs than educational ones" (Guaaybess, 2002). Since the 1990s, the Arab presence within the satellite broadcasting system has increased. Broadly speaking, Arab satellite broadcasting has two essential mediums of operation:

**1) Sky contest:** The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 had significant consequences for the Arab broadcasting system. During the Gulf war in 1991, Arabs realized that the

penetration of CNN, which operated a twenty-four-hours-a-day service on a conventional terrestrial system throughout Bahrain was such that the CNN signal could be received throughout Saudi Arabia and in the other Arab countries (Mohammadi, 1998, p. 264). The Arabs' response to CNN came first from Egypt, which launched the Egyptian Space Channel (ESC) at the end of 1990, and the Nile TV station in 1993. Less than a year after the start of ESC, Saudi Arabia established the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) (Mohammadi, 1998, p. 264). Since the Gulf War, Arab states have continued to launch television satellites. A recent list produced by the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) showed that Arab states operate 49 public satellite channels, and 66 private channels. Despite the rapid growth of satellite broadcasting, this proliferation of media outlets has not been accompanied by complete freedom of expression. Of 115 satellite channels in the Arab World, more than 70 percent are officially under government supervision (Mass, 2003).

**2) Terrestrial contest:** The rapid increase in satellite channels has prompted some Arab countries to enter a more sophisticated phase, working to establish Media cities that are designed to function as information cities. For instance, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates launched Cairo Media City and Dubai Media City. These cities managed to attract media professionals and multinationals, such as Reuters and CNN, which opened regional offices there. Additionally, some Arab television Satellites, such as MBC and ORBIT decided to leave Europe to set up their offices there too. Egypt, notably, has been able to attract Aljazeera Television to its Cairo Media City.

The rapid development of Pan-Arab channels has significant implications for Arab media. Obviously, the competition between different Arab Satellite channels has



progressively led to the modification of the content of the programs. Arab television channels have become increasingly critical in the discussion of political issues, and new debates are now being conducted around certain social issues that are considered very sensitive for Arabs, such as gender issues. Arab audiences, in turn, have gained more free access to the media, and have become correspondingly capable of participating in global discourses.

Nonetheless, the positive implications of Arab satellite channels have been paralleled by a number of negative consequences. Arab television channels continue to favor the consolidation of national identities rather than to promote the cause of Pan-Arab identity. More critically, instead of operating to strengthen Arab culture, Arab satellite channels have been opened up to foreign influences; many Arab entertainment programs are essentially Arabic versions of existing Western programs. Of the many programs that have enjoyed a huge success before the Arab public, programs such as 'who wants to be millionaire?' which was introduced to the Arab public by the MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Center) seem to typify the erosion of cultural concerns through capitulation to the commercial interests served by the media (Guaaybess, 2002). Yet, despite the imitation of foreign programs, a few Arab television channels appear to defend the Pan-Arab ideology, such as Aljazeera, and Alarabia televisions.

### **Phase 3) Arab media and the technological paradigm**

In accordance with the demands of satellite technology, the introduction of new technological applications, such as the World Wide Web, have extended media spaces beyond the local, regional and national realms (Hafez, 2001, p. 1). Distinct from the Arab television satellites, access to the Internet has empowered the Arab public, and it has

helped to erode the imposed controls of government on the flow of information. Examples demonstrating how the Internet has empowered Arabs are ample and well documented:

- Arab human rights organizations that have often encountered difficulties in getting their reports published in local Arab media outlets can now disseminate controversial information more effectively than ever before.

- Arab, French and English printed newspapers and magazines that had been censored in Arab countries have launched online versions over the past decade, or simply posted banned stories online.

- Arab users can find information online that is either nonexistent elsewhere or presented through a one-sided perspective in the local news media. Moroccans, for example, can find an abundance of information posted on the Web by the Polisario Front and other groups whose objective is to challenge the official Moroccan position regarding the Western Sahara. Similarly, Algerians and Egyptians can visit the various websites of Islamist groups that have been officially banned or have no legal status.

- The World Wide Web 're-mediate' the configuration of time, place, and space found in the traditional media, so that Arab users can find publications that are either expensive, locally unavailable, or out-of-date by the time of arrival. By the end of 1997, Arab electronic publications had proliferated to such an extent that they then comprised over thirty online daily newspapers, and eighteen weekly magazines. By 2004, this

number had jumped to 294 online Arab newspapers<sup>16</sup>, among them 125 titles that appear in the Arabic language, and represent the online version of printed publications.

Similarly, the number of Internet users has dramatically increased. By 1997, there were about 73,200 Internet Subscribers<sup>17</sup> in the Arab World (Ayish, 2001, p. 121). However, the number of Internet users had jumped to 2 million by 2001, then to 3.54 million by 2002. A parallel investigation made by the AHDR (Arab Human Development Report) during 2000-2001, showed that Arab residents who then had access to the World Wide Web represented only 1.6 percent (4.55 million) of the total Arab population (284 million). In October 2002, the Madar Research group predicted that the number of Internet users would rise exponentially to 25 million by 2005 (Rinnawi, 2001-2002), (See appendix A).

The dramatic increase in Internet users in the Arab World implies a corresponding influence on the construction of Arab identity, and the creation of a new kind of Pan-Arabism, a sort of virtual Pan-Arabism (Rinnawi, 2001- 2002). Pan-Arabist thought<sup>18</sup> that had once been the exclusive property of Arab elites has now become available online for the benefit of the Arab public. Additionally, prior to the expansion of television satellites and the Internet, Arab media have traditionally worked as 'tribal media' so as to secure

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<sup>16</sup> The total number of online Arab newspapers has been obtained from different websites that provide information about online newspapers such as [www.newspaperonline.com](http://www.newspaperonline.com), and [www.al-bab.com](http://www.al-bab.com).

<sup>17</sup> The total number of Internet subscribers does not denote an accurate figure for the number of Internet users in the Arab World. Usually, each subscriber shares Internet access with his family or peers.

<sup>18</sup> Among websites that propagate the cause of Arabism are: the Arab Nationalist Thought (Alfekar Alqawmy Alarabi) <http://www.alfikralarabi.com>, The Arab Position Magazine (Elmawkef Alarabi Magazine) <http://www.elmawkefalarabi.com/>, The Rise (Altolo) <http://members.lycos.co.uk/altolo/nuke/html/>, The Nasserist Newspaper (Algarida Alnasseryia) Online <http://alnaserynewspaper.tripod.com/>, The Arab Road (Altariq Alarbi) Online <http://www.attarik.org/>, The Voice of Arab Nation (Sot Alumma Alarabia) Online <http://www.arab-nation.com/>, The Arabism. (Alorouba Net) <http://www.3orooba.net/>, The Arab Union. (Aldawla Alarabia) Online <http://www.arab-union.net/>. The Arabi <http://www.alarabimag.net/>.

and delimit each Arab state border, and provide a secure foundation for the socio-cultural and political orders (Rinnawi, 2001-2002). The Internet presented a challenge to the traditional nature and content of the Arab media when they came to produce their online versions.

The World Wide Web “de-legitimizes discourses about Arab regimes, especially through converting traditionally private conversations into public discussions” (Rinnawi, 2001-2002), thereby creating a sort of Arab public space. The public spaces that Arabs have opened up through the Internet not only enable Arabs to communicate and convey textual and visual messages, but also to explore “new interpretations that apply intellectual techniques developed elsewhere than the texts themselves” (Rinnawi, 2001-2002).

Briefly, since the 1990s, Arab media have regrouped in a new paradigm, namely the technological paradigm, which now empowers the entire range of Arab media. Through Arab television satellites and websites, Arabs are capable of resisting the penetration of Western discourses, reflecting a Pan-Arab view of the world. Yet, the rosy image conveyed by the technological paradigm concerning the Arab media is often countered by Arab governments’ attempts to censor the content of media, or to ban certain kinds of communication technologies. Syria, for example, has put severe restrictions on the possession of facsimile machines and PC owners must register with the military authority (Kirchner, 2001, p. 148). Other Arab countries, such as Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain, the united Arab Emirates, and Kuwait “have chosen to install screening devices to filter unwanted materials” (Ayish, 2001, p. 125).

Additionally, the level of technological development is not homogenous in the Arab World. The availability of infrastructure necessary for communication differs from one Arab country to another (Kirchner, 2001, p. 141). In a rather more critical view of the technological paradigm, the rapid transition toward advanced media technology that has led to a complete transformation in the media landscape in Arab countries can be said to have swept away the old paradigm ascribed for Arab media through the prism of its role in social development (Guaaybess, 2002).

To refer back to the paradox articulated at the beginning of this discussion about Arab media, it is evident that the technological paradigm has had decisive consequences for the Arab media. Yet, Arab media have been unduly constrained due to such factors as political stagnation, inadequate infrastructure development, and the lack of a clear Arab voice to speak out on behalf of the progressive and indeed, revolutionary role of the new media in the Arab world.

#### **1.4.6 Arab gender: transformative agendas**

Arab gender constitutes a fundamental feature of Arabness. The debate about the status of Arab women, while reflecting the reality of Arab gender concerns, has undergone a significant shift in emphasis from issues related to nationalism and development to those stressing the gender dimensions of socio-economic change (Al-Hegelan, 1980). This section will seek to shed light on the ideology of gender in the Arab World, the political participation of Arab women, the significance of socio-economic status in the determination of Arab gender, and finally, the new agenda set by Arab women.

Arab gender differentiation is right at heart of the Arab family's conception of honor. Upon the shoulders of Arab women lies the responsibility for raising children and ministering to the needs of each family member. Arabs traditionally depend on a woman's nurturing devotion on behalf of her family as the *sine qua non* of moral and educational development. Moreover, Arab women are responsible for the reputation, and consequently, the honor of the family.

The 'honor of the woman' (*sharaf*) is a quintessential part of the 'honour of the Arab man and the family' (*ird*) (Patai, 2002, p. 128). The preservation of the Arab woman's honor is bound up with the vindication of 'ird'. 'Ird' often refers to the "social standing of an entity larger than the family, usually the community and its defense and protection" (Peteet, 1993, p. 51). In Arab culture, safeguarding the Arab man's 'ird' affords women protection in the Arab territories. Arabs express the connection between *ird* and territorial prerogatives through the slogan 'Alard abl al ird' (the honor of the land has priority over the *ird*).

Historically, the Arab ideology of gender has always conceived women as a principal means of defense of Arab identity against Western interpretations of gender. The perception of Arab women as political targets has always informed the position of Arab conservatives and traditionalists on women, who seek to show how Arab women refute the meaningless charges of Western discourses concerning the status of women in Arab culture and undermine the ready-made stereotypes brought against Arab-Muslim women by simply being themselves with all the dignity that a positive self-conception

implies. An idea of the discourses of Arab Women conservatives can be derived from Nouha Al-Hegelan's article, "Arab Women: Potentials and Prospects," where she writes:

In simple terms, Westerners will never achieve a human awareness of the Arab woman if they continue to peer through the frosted glass of a single image, a narrow definition of what every woman should be (Al-Hegelan, 1980).

In a rather more challenging mode, Nouha Al-Hegelan provides a spirited response to standard Western critiques of Islamic women:

Long before Western women even considered themselves as a group, let alone a group deprived of its rights, the Islamic woman had begun her emancipation. From the beginning of Islam, 1400 years ago, the Moslem woman was born with all the rights - cultural and spiritual - due a human being (Al-Hegelan, 1980).

In a similar vein, postcolonial feminists argue that Arab women were subject to colonial critiques as a means of enforcing the colonizing mission. Scholars who write from a postcolonial perspective describe Western feminism as "colonial feminism." Leila Ahmed, the author of Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate, and an Arab activist, describes what is meant by "colonial feminism." According to Leila Ahmed, there was a tendency among Colonial officers to champion Muslim women's rights, while fiercely opposing women's rights in their own countries (AbuKhalil, 2000). This view of Leila Ahmed finds an echo in the writings of the Franz Fanon who asserted that interference in the conditions of Algerian women during the period of colonialism was meant to disturb the 'old paternal assurance' and to undermine the native's patriarchal hegemony in respect to native women, so as to make the native patriarch lose "his balance" (Olwan, 2004). Franz Fanon pointed out the hidden implications of the colonial promise made to Algerian women, who were granted greater

freedom and rights in order to better colonize Algerian men, and “break an already fragmented Colonized society” (Olwan, 2004).

Early attempts to debate the status of Egyptian women, and introduce Western ideas about women include the writings of the Arab social reformist, Qasim Amin (1865-1908), the Egyptian author of the Liberation of Women (1899), and The New Women (1900). Although published a century ago, these two books of Qasim Amin provide a key point of reference for understanding the Arab feminist movement. Recent Arab feminist movements delimit, and even criticize the notion that Arab women constitute a political target for Western ideas. Women activists such as the Egyptian Nawal Alsadawi, and the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi, disagree with the view of Nouha Al-Hegelan about Islam. Nawal Alsadawi, while considering “Islam as having progressive potential for women” (Graham-Brown, 2001, p. 31), criticizes Islam for its “conservative interpretations, which cast women only in subordinated roles” (Graham-Brown, 2001, p. 31). Likewise, Fatima Mernissi charges religious institutions for legitimizing patriarchal power (Graham-Brown, 2001, p. 31). Mernissi argues that, “Islam regards female sexuality as active, but therefore potent and dangerous” (Graham-Brown, 2001, p. 31).

In making the connection between Arab women and Arabness, Arab women activists blame the patriarchal construction of Arab identity for constituting an obstacle to their gender goals, implying that Islam poses a parallel threat. The Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi asserts that, “‘Arab identity’ has been conceived in a way that regards change as threatening to the moral order, and thus impedes the development of both democracy and the emancipation of women” (Graham-Brown, 2001, p. 31).



Politically, despite the limitations imposed upon the activities of Arab women, gender has been a key driving force in social change. During the colonial period, for instance, women in Egypt and Algeria were “able to carry out underground political activity because the authority did not see them as political” (Joseph, 2001, p. 36). Arab women, however, have not yet received adequate political recognition. They are still prevented from voting in several Arab countries. Gulf States, with the exception of Kuwait, do not acknowledge women’s right to vote. Moreover, gaining the right to vote does not necessarily mean that development in the overall status of women can be guaranteed. Women can easily become ballot fodder for political parties; they can also be pressured into voting for candidates chosen by their male relatives (Graham-Brown, 2001, p. 27).

Arab women rights have been fought for at global conferences<sup>19</sup> concerning women’s issues since the 1970s. As for Arab women, the United Nations Agenda has focused on the socioeconomic status of women. For example, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has an agenda that is seeking to achieve three main objectives, including: (1) strengthening women’s economic rights, (2) engendering governance and leadership, and (3) promoting women’s human rights (Arab Women). In December 2000, the Arab States Regional Office of UNIFEM established a network for Arab women, which is called ‘Arab Women Connect’ (AWC). Arab Women Connect

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<sup>19</sup> Issues concerning women have gained increasing attention since the 1970s. The United Nations has organized four World conferences concerning women; The World Conference of the International Women’s Year (Mexico City, 1975); the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development, Peace (Copenhagen, 1980); the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women (Nairobi, 1985) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) (Arab Regional, 2004).

(AWC) aimed to build a website containing studies, statistics, and reports about Arab women (Arab Women).

Broadly speaking, the socioeconomic status of Arab women remains a challenge. The recent report of 2004, issued by the 'UN Development Fund for Women' found that "only 28 percent of Arab women are active in the work force" (UN Wire, 2004). Recent statistics, issued by the databases of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) show that the unemployment rate of Arab women is higher than that for Arab men. For example, the rates of unemployed women were 11.8% versus 5.2% for men in Bahrain in 1991, 19.9% versus 5.1% for men in Egypt in 1998, 21.0% versus 12.3% for men in Jordan in 2000, 5.2% versus 1.8% for men in Qatar in 1997, 7.1% versus 3.5% for men in Iraq in 1987. During 1999, the unemployment rate for Arab women was lower than the rate for men in a few countries, such as Kuwait (0.7% for women versus 0.8% for men), Lebanon (7.2% for women versus 8.6% for men), and Yemen (8.2% for women versus 12.5% for men) (Gender indicators, 2004).

In a similar vein, Arab women were found to be more illiterate than men in most Arab countries. Statistics gathered by UNESCO in 2000 showed that the rate of illiteracy among Arab women who were above the age of 15 was 17.4% versus 9.1% for men in Bahrain, 15.7% versus 5.1% for men in Jordan, 20.4% versus 16.1% for men in Kuwait, 33.1% versus 17.0% for Egyptian men, 7.0% versus 2.8% for men in Lebanon. Iraq registered the highest rate of illiteracy among women (70.9%) versus (40.7%) for Iraqi men (Gender indicators, 2004).

Paradoxically, the ratio of women to men in terms of university enrolment reflects the changing status of Arab women in higher education as compared to the illiteracy and

employment rates registered for women. During the period between 1998 and 2000, the number of Arab women enrolled at the university level was found to be greater than that registered for male students. The enrolment ratio of Arab women students versus men was 31.1% versus 19.6% in Bahrain, 30.6% versus 26.8% in Jordan, 30.0% versus 13.0% in Kuwait, 46.2% versus 13.7% in Qatar, 25.4% versus 19.6% in Saudi Arabia, and 38.2% versus 35.2% in Lebanon (Gender indicators, 2004).

The report made by the Gender Statistics Program in Arab countries explains the seeming contradiction between the increased rates of unemployment among Arab women, and the expansion in the number of Arab women students registered at the university level, which should lead, in consequence, to an increased number of university graduates in the labor market. When engaged in economic life, Arab women are expected to face unfavorable labor market conditions, cultural stereotypes that favor men, limited opportunities for career promotion, and wage discrimination (Gender issues, 2004). The statistics pertaining to the status of Arab women warrant an agenda calling for an improvement in their socioeconomic status.

Recently, Arab women have sought to re-integrate the notion of Arabness within the parameters of the salient realities faced by Arab women. This entails a reconsideration of the context of political instability, occupation, and military conflict within which issues pertaining to Arab gender must be broached. The integration effected between Arab identity allegiances and Arab women issues is emphasized by the Arab Women Organization (AWO), which calls for an effective and unified strategy for Arab women. The strategy “stresses the importance of achieving the solidarity of Arab women as a cornerstone for Arab unity to guarantee joint Arab action regarding women” (Arab, 2004,

July). According to the AWO's director, Wadouda Badran, synchronizing Arab women's issues with the key developmental policies in Arab countries is a significant priority (Arab, 2004, July).

Similarly, Nora Al-Suwaidi, the president of the Arab Women Organization (AWO) indicates the need for a new strategy and new modes of thinking in order to address perceived threats to Arab societies and cultural identities (Arab, 2004, July). The implementation of the new strategy of the Arab Women Organization, which has been put forth within the framework of a four-year plan (2004-2008), will be effected by employing tactics such as fostering Arab cooperation, and by drawing on the shared experiences of women in different Arab countries through engaging in research projects, seminars, workshops and pertinent activities within governmental organizations (Arab, 2004, July). Instead of focusing merely on the socio-economic status of Arab women, the new plan of the AWO aims to reinforce the roles Arab women might play in the development of the Arab region through a concerted effort to improve Arab women's socio-economic status in conjunction with the goals outlined in the four-year plan.

In a broader context, the latest forum about Arab gender, was the 'Arab Regional Forum Ten Years after Beijing: a Call for Peace', organized by the Beirut-based United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) in July 2004, and launched by more than 400 Arab women ministers, parliamentarians, and non-governmental representatives to reconsider the political and ideological contexts within which Arab women must live.

The Arab region is exposed to harsh conditions as a result of instability, occupation, war and economic embargo. These conditions hinder growth and progress and, in

particular, the progress of women and their empowerment (Arab Regional, 2004).

Arab women suffer the most from the impact of war in a region in which instability, armed conflict, occupation and economic embargo prevail and they demand to take their position alongside men in rebuilding, rehabilitating and taking action to unleash peace and security through effective political participation at various levels (Arab Regional, 2004).

#### **1.4.7. Cultural traits: Renegotiating imperial pleasure.**

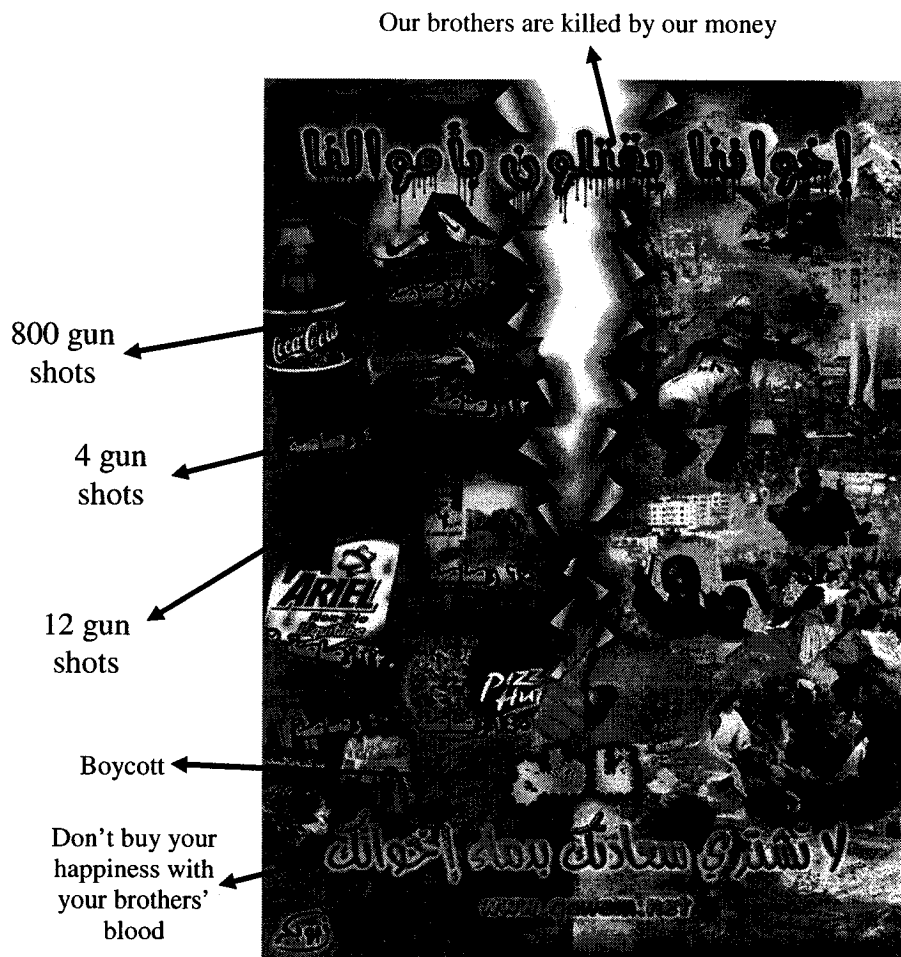
Arab cultural traits are representations of Arabness. Most Arabists and Islamists believe that these cultural traits are subject to what cultural imperialist theorists term 'cultural imperialism', 'ideological imperialism', and 'economic imperialism' (Mattelart, 1994, & Schiller, 1976). Theoretically speaking, these terms are used to explain and describe the strategies by which the large multinational corporations of developed countries seek to dominate developing countries (White, 2001). Though Armand Mattelart cautions against interpreting notions of ideological domination too literally or imprecisely (Morley, 2000, p. 471), it should be noted that cultural imperialists believe that "there is a fixed reality that exists alongside an individual's or an organization's own created meaning of reality" (White, 2001).

When applying the cultural imperialist approach to Arab cultural traits, for instance, the consumption of Arab food, it is nonetheless difficult to resist the argument that such specific cultural traits have become a target for cultural invasion. The Arab food system has been subjected to the progressive onslaught of fast food products, particularly by such multinationals as McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken. In the eyes of Arabists and Islamists, fast food is perceived as a tool to undermine Arab identity and it has become a major factor in family disagreements.

Similarly, Tori Haring-Smith complains that the likes of McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken, are extensively co-opting, and thereby undermining, the culture of contemporary Arab countries, and "that along with this cultural loss has come a loss of identity and sense of self" (Variations, 2002). She believes that we are living in a "world threatened by the spread of a culture which, by reason of its mere economic strength, is able to impose itself on others" (Variations, 2002).

Attempts to warn the Arab public about foreign brand-name products, as with Mattelart's call to examine the specific realities of a particular milieu which resist or favor cultural penetration (Morley, 2000, p. 471), have tended to become polarized into the following realignments of position: Arabs are urged either to propose a boycott of foreign products manufactured in Arabic countries, or to create their own counter-products. Significantly, those who insist on the boycotting of foreign brand-name products often use ongoing Arab conflicts as a pretext to reject foreign brand-name products. Figure no. 1-1 indicates how the rejection of foreign brand name products has assumed noticeably complex dimensions, though the sense of Arab identity, conceived in broad socio-cultural terms, is invariably invoked as a call to resistance.

A second aspect of the boycotting of foreign brand-name products is the commonly invoked strategy of producing the Arab counterparts of such products. Taufik Mathlouthi, an Arab investor, provides an exemplary instance of such a counter challenge, in this case, to well-known coke products. He purports that his product, Mecca Cola, has been characterized in such a way as to retain a specifically Islamic and Arab sense of identity. Sustained by mottos, such as 'drink with commitment', 'drink Halal', 'shake your conscience', Mecca Cola, declared by its owner to be a charity organization, is perceived



Source:  
<http://www.yahoooh.com/vb/history/topic/3125-1.html>

Figure 1-1. Boycott as a tool for cultural resistance.

as a viable alternative to its Western brand-name competitors and, as such, constitutes a definite “no” to backing American imperialism” (See figure 1-2).

Some of the strategic attempts to interpret why Arabs have increasingly resorted to using foreign brand-name products have received critical attention in Edward Said’s Culture and Imperialism (1993). In this work, Edward Said reiterates some of the perspectives with which Cultural Imperialist theorists must contend, arguing that large

groups of people believe that “aesthetic and psychological pleasure is made possible by...imperialism” (Said, 1993, p. 161), and this “over time seems to have made imperialism much less unpleasant” (Said, 1993, p. 18). Thus, the creation of counter cultural products, such as Mecca Cola, can be perceived as part of a concerted attempt to renegotiate the imperial pleasures created by consuming brand-name Coke products.



Source: <http://www.mecca-cola.com/>

Figure 1-2. Mecca Cola as an Arab counter product

### 1.5 Arabs in North America: negotiating a third space of identity

Arabs in North America are “as diverse as the national origins and immigration experience that have shaped their ethnic identity” (Samhan, 2001). The Arabs who migrated to North America are principally located in the United States and Canada. They share broadly similar identities in terms of religious faith and cultural values, and they are subjected to a broad range of negative stereotypes disseminated by American and Canadian media.



Given their specific self-designation as Arab Americans<sup>20</sup>, it would seem that Arab Americans are well integrated into American culture and society. The position Arabs hold in political life indicates the extent of their integration. Arabs hold positions in public office, and four have served on the US Senate. Additionally, they have served in Cabinets and other high offices in both the Republican and Democratic administrations. Moreover, there have been Arab governors of both Oregon and New Hampshire. At least thirty Arabs have been mayors of US cities (Samhan, 2001). In social and cultural life, many Arab Americans have made their mark in America. For example, in the field of entertainment, "Arab-American stars have included the comedy actor Danny Thomas, actress Kathy Najimy, and Tony Shalhoub, singers Paul Anka, Paula Abdul, and Casey Kasem 'American's Top 40' disc jockey" (Samhan, 2001).

Turning now to Arab Canadian immigration, Arab migration to Canada existed more than a century ago, and since then there have been marked variations in the stream of immigration, occasionally reduced to a trickle during periods when restrictive measures were applied by the Canadian government. Since the Second World War, the wave of Arab immigration has been diverse in terms of religion, country of origin, and educational and occupational characteristics. The Arab-Canadian community spans four to five generations. It now comprises immigrants and the descendants of immigrants (Abu-Laban, 1999, p.143).

From a sociological perspective, the Arab community in Canada<sup>21</sup> is one of the least studied of the major Canadian ethnic groups. The lack of interest in studies devoted to the

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<sup>20</sup> Recently, three million Americans stated that they were of Arab origin (Samhan, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> According to the census of 2001, Statistics Canada estimates that there are 347,955 Canadians of Arab origin, and the majority live in Ontario and Quebec. The number of Arabs who live in Ontario are

Arab in Canada is due to the customarily perceived image of Arabs as just too different, too problematic, or just plain “alien,” to warrant academic scrutiny (Abu-Laban, 1999, p.284).

This section seeks to examine Arabness in the case of the Arab in North America, particularly Arabs in Canada, where Arab identity is more effectively maintained and negotiated. The question of Arab identity calls for a primary discussion of the theories that frame the Arab in diaspora. A reassessment of the chief sources of Arabness discussed above will be required in the light of this investigation into the theoretical framing of Arabs in North America. The role of Arab organizations and Arab media will also be examined.

The phenomenon of Arab migration to North America can be examined within two comprehensive frameworks: the diasporic framework, and the postcolonial framework. The diasporic definition “has become the key term in contemporary theorizing about migration, ethnicity, and identity” (Sreberny, 2000, p. 179). It seeks to destabilize some of the assumptions relating to the geographical confinement of ethnic experiences, the singularity of ethnic identity, and the obliteration of ethnic history and memory (Sreberny, 2000, p. 179).

Additionally, the diasporic approach reflects a basic concern with place and displacement. “In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused and the private and public become part of each of us” (Bhabha, 1992, p. 9). However, the blurring of the boundaries between the home and the world, or the local

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estimated to be 149,490, constituting 42.9% of the total percent of Arabs living in Canada (See appendix B). Quebec has a slightly less numerous Arab population, estimated to be 135,750 (39.01%) of the total Arab population in Canada (See appendix B). The total number of Arabs who speak the Arabic language is 199,940 (See appendix B).

and global, while substantially reducing the geographical distance that separates the components of pre-modern and early modern diasporas, highlights the dialectical character of the process of globalization. The rapid progress of globalization has affected migrant communities, and “the way in which individuals and social groups within them make sense of their relationship with ‘place’ and the other, and how they define themselves” (Tsagarousianou, 2002, pp. 211-212).

Embedded in the context of place and displacement are the notions of ‘identity as space’, and the concept of the home as a ‘mythic and discursive site’. Arabs in the diaspora seek to re-territorialize and re-embed their identity in other imagined spaces, wherein identity is seen as the necessary site through which Arabs can counteract the dominant discourses (Karim, 2003, p. 9). The recreation of a space for Arab identity has been simultaneously accompanied by the de-territorializing of home, or the site of the origin. Obviously, the notion of home is at the heart of Arab-Canadian memory, where home becomes a ‘mythic’ place of desire in the diasporic imagination (Brah, 1996, p. 192), a place of no-return even when it is possible to visit the geographical place of origin. When referring to the imagination, the idea of home is found to be often associated with the idea of history, particularly when home is conceived as the historical ‘object’ as well as the ‘subject’ of history (Roy, 1995, p. 104). In other words, home as the historical object is about our roots, yet when it is reflected in the lives of real subjects, it constitutes our routes (Brah, 1996, p. 192).

However, while the notion of home forces upon us the stability of the origin in our imagination through a nostalgic understanding of the respective communities of the private and public selves, this stability brushes up against the highly dispersed nature of

home as a historical construct (Roy, 1995, p. 104). Accordingly, Gayatri Spivak argues that home is the place for 'un-learning our privileges of loss'. That is to say, the loss of stable points of reference, as identified in the notion of home, means acknowledging the presence of this 'un-homely subject'. Therefore, instead of ignoring this site as a redundant or merely nostalgic space, home is perceived as a 'discursive' site (Roy, 1995, p.104).

The notion of home as a discursive site is reaffirmed in the case of the Arab in diaspora. Arabs relocate their homes within spaces of solidarity, where they can mobilize and manifest their cohesion when they feel that Arabs countries or communities are in trouble (Patai, 2002, p. 221). Aspects of this manifestation of solidarity are the demonstrations that flare up in foreign cities when Arab homes are endangered, and the fundraising campaigns to support suffering Arabs at home.

Scholars writing from the diasporic perspective tend to orchestrate their discussion of ethnic communities within a postcolonial framework. The postcolonial approach to diaspora studies is capable of according "a historical and international depth to the understanding of cultural power" (Shome, 2002, p. 252), and it views the Arab diaspora "as ranged against global and national structures of dominance" (Karim, 2003, p. 5). A continuous engagement of the postcolonial approach with the diasporic perspective is capable of re-contextualizing the key issues of the Arab diaspora "within the geopolitical arrangements and relations of nations and their inter/national histories" (Shome, 2002, p. 252). Obviously, the Arab diaspora has taken place within the parameters of national history and the socio-cultural power that characterizes the colonizer-colonized relationship. Not only has the Arab diasporic phenomenon been caused by different

forms of colonization, such as the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon (June 1982-2000) and Palestine since 1967, but it has also been influenced by the cultural legacy of the colonial forces, as mediated by language.

By the time most of the Arab countries had achieved liberation from British and French colonial powers, the Arabs who decided to migrate chose to reside in countries where the languages spoken are either English or French. In the case of Arab immigrants to Canada, for example, the influence of language as a colonial tool has structured the residency of Arabs in the Canadian provinces. Evidence provided by the Canadian census of 2001, and reported in January 2003, showed that Arabs who were under French colonialism<sup>22</sup> favored residence in Quebec where the official language is French. Official estimates of the number of Arabs who live in Quebec, classified by their national origins, show that the Arab population is composed as follows: Moroccans (17,540), those of Maghribian origin (39,685), Algerians (13,545), and Tunisians (4,325). In considerably lower numbers, the numbers of Arabs who are affiliated to the same national origin and live in Ontario are 2,970, 6,275, 1,310, and 845, respectively (See appendix B).

Significantly, the postcolonial framework has proven to be effective in protecting Arabs from misrepresentation and providing resistance to the readymade stereotypes propagated against ethnic communities. Studies of Arabs in North America by Amal Madani (1999), Saleh Alaswad (2000) and Ali AlKahtani (2002), found that Arabs have been subject to a variety of negative depictions. As shown in these studies, Arabs and Muslims have been predominantly and persistently portrayed in the US media through negative stereotypes (Madani, 1999, p. 3). US and Canadian media outlets commonly

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<sup>22</sup> France occupied Arab countries in the Maghreb or that part of North Africa west of Egypt; namely, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

misrepresent Arabs as, “the main agents responsible for international terrorism” (Zogby, 2000). The negative stereotypes that prevail in the US and Canadian media, which are conflated within a single representational system, encumber and distort Arab and Muslim attempts to fight against anti-Arab stereotyping and to present a cogent challenge to the dominant system of representation (Eid, 2002, p.274).

### **1.5.1 The resurgence of Arab organizations**

The damage caused by negative media images purveyed against Arabs in North America has galvanized the Arab community to see itself as a unified or ‘co-responsible community’, whose sense of responsibility must be expanded to mount an able defense of Arab culture in general (Werbner, 2002, p. 251). In this respect, Arab organizations in North America conceive their responsibilities in terms of presenting a positive agenda for change: to monitor and resist negative depictions of Arabs, and to create effective counter-images as a strategy of defence.

Arab organizations in Canada, particularly the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF)<sup>23</sup>, and the National Council on Canadian Arab Relations (NCCAR)<sup>24</sup>, operate cooperatively to resist negative representations against Arabs in the Canadian media. Negative images of Arabs are particularly prevalent in the “biased reporting against Muslims and Arabs in

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<sup>23</sup> The Canadian-Arab Federation (CAF) has been serving Arabs since 1967. It has spearheaded campaigns to fight the negative stereotyping of Arabs, ensuring that Arab Canadians have a public voice concerning all matters that affect the community, both foreign and domestic, and it represents the Arab Canadian community at the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government. The CAF has formed a partnership with various organizations at the national, provincial and city levels. It has formed partnerships with the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Canadian Ethno-Cultural Council, the Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants, Canada’s Volunteer Initiative (Anti-Racism), (Media Relations), (Government Relations).

<sup>24</sup> The NCCAR was established in 1985. The NCCAR aims to increase Canadian awareness and knowledge of the Arab world, and to encourage the expansion of cultural, educational, and commercial links between Arab and Canadian institutions. The objectives of NCCAR are based on the belief that Canada and the Arab world share aspirations for World peace, have a common interest in increasing trade relations, and desire expanded cultural and educational ties.

CanWest Publications, particularly the National Post and Ottawa Citizen.” Moreover, both the National council on Canada-Arab Relations and the Canadian Arab Federation have made demands requesting the Ontario Press Council to investigate the insertion of the word ‘terrorist’ into a Middle East story reported by the wire service agency Reuters, which substituted the word "terrorist" for such words as "militant" and "insurgent" in an Associated Press story (NCCAR in the Media).

In his comments on the bias against Arabs and Muslims, published in The Globe and Mail in September 2004, Mazen Chouaib, the NCCAR’s executive director, wrote:

The practice of vilifying Arabs and Muslims doesn’t stop there. A recent Citizen front-page headline announced: “Ottawa Muslims accused of terrorism”. The story related to an Ottawa-born man arrested by police on allegations of associating with suspected terrorists in London. He has yet to be proved a terrorist. The Post, in a recent editorial, speaks of “the barbaric standards of the Arab Middle East” (Chouaib, 2004).

Additionally, the creation of counter-images concerning Arabs is among the foremost objectives of Arab organizations in North America. The attempt to create positive images concerning Arabs has become particularly important in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. When the Arab American Institute issued a booklet, entitled “Arab Americans: Making the difference,” written by Casey Kasem, the well known American musician, the booklet included a bibliography outlining the contributions made by Arab Americans at various cultural, social and political levels (See appendix C). The creation of positive images is a corrective attempt to diminish the misunderstanding in the West concerning Arabs, and seems to be a prerequisite for the Arab community. As James Zogby, the founder of the Arab American Institute, puts it: “a long and difficult road remains before us, but today, at least, Arab Americans have been incorporated into

the American process. Our inclusion helps to close the gap in understanding that has existed for so long” (Zogby, 2000).

### **1.5.2 Arabness in the Canadian context: retained yet confused.**

Arab identity in diaspora does not operate in a vacuum; rather, it derives from the principal factors that define Arabness: Pan-Arabism, religion, conflicts, language, media, Arab gender, and Arab culture.

In general terms, Arabs in Canada have a strong awareness of their ethnic and cultural identity. Studies examining Arab identity show that Arabs in Canada prefer to identify themselves as Arabs or Arab Canadians (Hayani, 1999, 293, & Eid, 2002, p. 265). In responding to a question about Arab identity posed by the Canadian Arab Federation’s study concerning Arabs in Canada, most respondents, “strongly agree that they are proud of being Arab” (80.6%), or they are “proud of being Canadian-Arab” (69.6%). However, the sense of Arab identity becomes even clearer when 75.5% of the respondents report that they strongly disagree with the statement claiming that they ‘do not feel Arab’. Also, a strong strain of multicultural thought is prevalent among Arabs, so that 70.9% of the respondents strongly agree that they like to be considered as ‘both Arab and Canadian’ (The Knowledge, 2002, p. 9).

Examination of the sources of Arab identity in diaspora reveals that **the Pan-Arab** notion is both more imaginative and utopian in diaspora, yet also more persuasive, and thus, more optimistic about the Arab future. Obviously, the notion of a single collective identity is highlighted by the Arab organizations in Canada, thereby representing the Arab community as a united and cohesive community. The notion of Pan-Arab collective identity is reproduced whenever Palestine, and recently Iraq, is mentioned in discussion.



Whereas Arab unity is a subject for constant debate in Arab countries, the Arab sense of unity has become a necessity of political survival for the Arab community. Despite the vast differentiation and heterogeneity characterizing the way it manifests itself, the Arab community in Canada is often represented as a united community, especially at the political level. As noted by the CAF and NCCAR, Arab organizations continue to exert strenuous efforts to ensure that the concerns of the Canadian Arab community are heard and responded to (National, 2004).

As a principal source of identity, **religious affiliation** has been found to affect the sense of identity among Arab-Canadians, especially among the second generation. Studies discussing the role of religion in the construction of Arab diasporic identity show that Christian Arabs were more disinclined than their Muslim ethnic peers in using the label 'Arab' as a meaningful referent of identification (Eid, 2002, p. 265). One reason for these differences in using the label 'Arab', as between Muslims and Christians, is the Christians' will to "dissociate themselves from a label which in Western popular imagery, is often synonymous with a socially compromised identity, that of Islam" (Eid, 2002, 265). Although, a lesser percentage of Christians use the designation 'Arab' than Muslims, it is strongly suggested that both Arab Christians and Muslims of the second generation "tend to be enmeshed in pan-Arab consciousness, transcendent over sub-group differences" (Eid, 2002, p.265).

As noted in several studies concerning the Arab in Canada (Abu-Laban, 1999, Eid, 2002, The Knowledge Center, 2002), the influence of religion on the construction of Arab identity reveals the validity and prominence of the religious factor. To say that religion is key for Arabs suggests that religion has become less taken for granted, albeit

contrasting with the pluralistic and secular conditions prevalent in North America. Religion, which is nominally assigned at birth, has become an active object of persuasion (Warner, 1998, p. 17). Arabs, in turn, have become more conscious of their religious allegiances, and often more determined about their transmission (Warner, 1998, p. 17).

The prominence of religion among Arabs in Canada finds an echo in the reflections of Raymond Williams on the experience of immigrants from India and Pakistan in 1980:

Immigrants are religious – by all counts more religious than they were before they left home – because religion is one of the important identity markers that help them to preserve individual self-awareness and cohesion in a group...religion is the social category with the clearest meaning and acceptance in the host society, so the emphasis on religious affiliation is one of the strategies that allows the immigrant to maintain self-identity while simultaneously acquiring community acceptance (Warner, 1998, p. 16).

The contribution of religion as a source of Arab identity differs according to the pressures of place and community. Religion, particularly Islam, which constitutes a rival to Arab nationalistic thought in Arab countries, strongly supports the sense of Arab identity in diaspora. Arabs whose religious affiliations are heterogeneous unite in order to manifest one Arab view in conflict with another. The fusion of the different religions of the Arabs into one melting pot is invariably manifested during the demonstrations Arabs organize against deportations, wherein both Arab organizations and religious associations and organizations represent cohesive Arab action.

The **conflicts** Arabs face in the Middle East continue to constitute a source of Arab identity in diaspora. The effect of conflict on the construction of Arab identity varies according to different interpretations of the causes of conflict in the Middle East. While

most Arabs in diaspora tend to believe that Arabs have been the objects of several conspiracies, others prefer to explain conflicts in the light of the misunderstanding between Arabs and the West. Both views of conflict inspire a sense of Arab identity, and create a feeling of Arab solidarity.

Yet, the pressure of the conflicts in the Middle East can negatively affect Arabs in diaspora, thereby leading Arabs to export unhelpful images about themselves. One example of the negative consequences of the Middle East conflict can be found in the response among Arabs to the speech of Benjamin Netanyahu in Concordia University on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002, when Arab students militated to prevent Netanyahu from giving his speech. The Arab students' action against Netanyahu's speech was denounced by Canadian officials, as well as by the Canadian media. Former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien made his apologies at a meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu the next day, and the corporate media was quick to describe the protest as "a grave attack on the right of free speech" (Charron, 2003).

When talking about **language** as a source of identity, the retention of ethnic language is always perceived as a strong marker of the sense of belonging. Evidently, the Arabic language inspires a sense of Arabness in the diaspora. Yet, the question of language is more problematic than this. On the one hand, Arab immigrants have been found to have a good command of the Arabic language, even though proficiency in the use of the Arabic language decreases through the generations (Eid, 2002, p. 263) On the other hand, while most Arabs who were born in Arabic countries would be expected to speak Arabic, but not necessarily to read it, only half of those who are Canadian born can speak Arabic, and only a sixth can read it (Hayani, 1999, 259). At a rather more

problematic level, the gap between written and spoken Arabic has become wider in the diaspora, while Arabs employ several accents of spoken Arabic.

Arabs in the diaspora are very aware of the links between the Arabic language and the postcolonial context, and consequently manifest a very distinctive form of resistance to the absolute use of the English and French languages. In order to convey the essence of the Arabic spoken language in spoken and written interactions, Arabs have begun to re-contextualize the use of English letters<sup>25</sup> and numbers<sup>26</sup> in verbal expression.

As a source of identity, **Arab media** in the diaspora are important in terms of the sense of connectedness and cohesiveness they provide. Yet, Arab diasporic media function within a severely limited orbit. Whereas diasporic news media (newspapers, magazines, radio, and television) seek to meet the information and entertainment needs of their communities (Tsagarousianou, 2002, p. 210), Arab-Canadian media are still far from satisfying the needs of Arabs living in Canada.

Arab media in Canada exist in different forms; there are printed, audio-visual, and online networks. Arab-Canadian newspapers provide forums for parochial objectives, and evince little evidence of good journalistic skills. Instead of looking for a more significant role in the diaspora, Arab newspapers are largely occupied with persuading Arab investors to advertise in their pages. Professionally, the efforts of journalists in these

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<sup>25</sup> Arabs use English letters to create terms such as, 'Alslam Alikum' (peace upon you), 'Amel Eih?' (how are you?), Allhadmulallah (thanks be to god), 'Fi Aman Allah' (in the safekeeping of Allah), 'Bism Allah' (in the name of god), and so on; a vast number of Arabic words are expressed through the English language.

<sup>26</sup> Some Arab Canadians intermix English letters and numbers, simply because certain English numbers have a shape similar to Arabic letters. Expressions such as '3ki' where 3 is a symbol of the letter A (my brother), '7ellw3' (sweet), and a multitude of other expressions are now almost commonplace forms of communication among the various members of the Arab speaking community, whereas the numbers 3,5,6,7 refer, respectively, to the English letters, A, Kh, T, H.

newspapers are almost exclusively devoted to the selection of news stories from different resources. Though the greatest number of news stories is devoted to news events in Arab countries, Arab newspapers do not have ostensibly political agendas for the selection of news stories. More perilously, most Arab Canadian media, with few exceptions<sup>27</sup>, do not speak on behalf of a clear constituency, even though they represent different segments of the Arab community. The lack of a cohesive Arab ideology undermines the meaningful roles Arab-Canadian newspapers can play. Additionally, news stories published in Arab-Canadian newspapers lag behind in terms of up-to-the-minute news. Most Arab-Canadian newspapers are published monthly, or bi-monthly. Misguidedly, they continue to publish news stories generally assigned to daily newspapers. In addition to printed newspapers, few radio and television programs<sup>28</sup> reflect the richness of cultural traits notable among the different Arab nationalities. Some Arab television programs include contents that address the Arab audience in general, yet they are set up exclusively for entertainment, social and cultural contents.

The gradual escalation of communication technology has enabled the Arab community to create micro Arab networks and newsgroups. As noted by Karim Karim (2003), “diasporic websites are assembling global directories of individuals, community institutions and businesses owned by members of diasporas” (pp.13-14). The various Arab networks are capable of creating a sense of cohesiveness among Arabs. In sum, the Arab-Canadian media function and operate as:

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<sup>27</sup> The exceptions to be found among Arab printed newspapers are the Alhjjira (The Emigration), and Sada Almashreq (The East Echo), published in Montreal, Albilad (The Countries), wherein Alhijira reflects an Islamic perspective, and Sada Almashreq and Albilad tend to be Pan-Arab in its coverage.

**Ethnic and cultural sites:** despite the lack of seriousness in Arab-Canadian newspapers and radio-televisions programs, they constitute an ethnic and cultural space where Arabs can be connected. Arab-Canadian media create small networks of readers, listeners, viewers and advertisers, thereby keeping the sense of community alive.

**Sites for representing Arabs:** Arab-Canadian newspapers and radio-televisions programs evince a concern to talk about news events in Arab countries and to discuss the cultural traits of the Arabs. They make a significant and occasionally imaginative contribution to the members of the Arab speaking community in Canada, providing the community with sources and referents that enable it to maintain its identity, and more significantly, they present a multiplicity of images of what many consider to be home to this community.

Yet, Arab-Canadian newspapers, radio and TV programs do not generally respond to more than two questions. However, such questions as -- 'In what ways are Arabs becoming themselves?' 'How will Arabic media operate to open up a cultural space to negotiate between the desire to positioning the self in the host country and the demand to maintain an original cultural identity?' -- remain a challenge to the community. An attempt to represent Arabs was made in the documentary film of Mahmoud Kaabour, entitled 'Being Ossama'. The film succeeded in portraying Arabs named Ossama in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and by extension, contrived to represent an entire community (Katadotis, 2004).

Among the sources of identity that Arabs strongly retain are **Arab cultural traits**. Arab cultural traits, though taken for granted in Arab countries, play an active role in the Arab diasporic context. The cultural features that have been incorporated most actively

into Arab Canadian life are the Arab restaurants and cafes, and Arab musical venues that provide social and artistic outlets for members of the community. Whereas the former provide spaces where Arabs can gather and talk freely, the latter are “probably the most familiar aspect of the Arab world in the Western world today” (Introduction). The prominence given to Arab culture is a continual motif in the festivals organized by Arab organizations. During the 2003 Canadian Arab Heritage Day, at least four sessions displayed uniquely Arab forms of cultural expression.

While Arabs in the diaspora significantly retain many aspects of their identity, the role played by **Arab gender** is still the most uncertain factor in the maintenance of a traditional sense of identity, and it is a confusing and sometimes disorienting source of identity in North America. Arab women currently face two main challenges: to adapt themselves to North American culture, and to maintain their distinctive sense of cultural identity (Henry, 2004) in North America and to defend it (Joseph, 2004). In the eyes of Arab feminists in North America<sup>29</sup>, the divided loyalties of Arab women are manifest in the struggle between the need to defend their culture and religious convictions from hostile and often political bias, and the commitment they have made to criticize the inequality of Arab women in relation to men, and among themselves, in relation to class. Indeed, the struggle to incorporate Arab gender into the larger North American and global women’s movements – have silenced some Arab feminist critiques (Joseph, 2004).

The inequality characteristic of Arab gender relations is documented in several studies that have discussed the contribution of gender to the construction of Arab identity

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<sup>29</sup> The Arab American Feminist movement has gained ground since the 1970s, particularly in the wake of the defeat of the Arab nation in 1967. Both the immigration of more educated and politicized Arabs and the advent of the women’s movement have inspired Arab feminists. Some women’s organizations have been started to defend Arab women’s rights such as, The Union of Palestinian Women’s Association in North America, and the Arab Women’s Solidarity Association of North America (AWSA-NA).

in the diaspora. As noted, Arab women do not have the same freedom that men enjoy within the family context (Ajrouch, 1997, pp. 246-247). Often the right of women to press for more freedom is interpreted in terms of a clash of values, rather than as a struggle for equality between Arab men and women (The Knowledge, 2002). The study of Christine Ajrouch, "Ethnicity, gender and identity among second-generation Arab Americans: Growing up Arabic in America," indicates how this sense of inequality affects the formation of Arab identity. Ajrouch's study (1997) found that "Arab families are holding onto their Arab identity through their daughters, yet strive to attain the American dream through their sons" (p. 250).

Arab women are subject to several negative stereotypes that portray them as being reluctantly or forcibly veiled; moreover, they are represented as being socially mistreated by their spouses. The misrepresentation of Arab women has seemingly led to their marginalization, or even absence, from discourse so that they might be said to remain, in Yasmin Jiwani's words, unspoken in the prevailing "code of silence" (Jiwani, 2001, p.5). Their exclusion from discourse practically brings about an increased obligation of attentiveness on the part of Arab families to protect the reputation of the community from any unforeseen deviations in their conduct (Jiwani, 2001, p.5).

An attempt to explain the Arab view of gender can be found in the film of Jennifer Kawaja, entitled "Under One Sky." Jennifer Kawaja, media producer and director of the film, represented, "the viewpoints of women who wear hijab and those who do not" (Zaidman, 2000). The Arab women who participated in the film "see the hijab as an expression of fidelity to Arab culture, to Islam, and as a statement against imperialism and colonialism. They view it as a matter of choice and refuse to be buttonholed as



certain type of person” (Zaidman, 2000). Arab non-veiled women indicate their acceptance of the hijab even though they do not wear it. They believe that “in order to act against racism and imperialism, it becomes necessary for them to defend the right of women to wear something they believe is oppressive” (Zaidman, 2000).

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter elaborates a panoramic view of Arab identity. It defines Arabness as a spectrum of meanings that is derived from ethnic and cultural catalysts. Arab identity in this sense entails a sort of common orientation among Arabs who join together to fulfill their mutual needs, interests and goals in the interests of joint action (Barakat, 1993). More importantly, Arabness appears as a resistant identity that operates against Western intrusions. Many vehicles sustain Arab identity, such as Pan-Arabism, awareness of ongoing military conflict and occupation, religion, language, Arab media, cultural traits and Arab gender, all of which have made different contributions to the construction of Arabness.

Pan-Arabism, while constituting a tangible project during certain historical periods, is currently a utopian or ongoing ‘imagined’ project that has not had a decisive impact on advancing the cause of a collective Arab identity. The history of Arab nationalism reveals an overestimation of the various attempts at unification, while providing a necessary corrective against the tendencies of parochialism and localism. The current failure of Pan-Arabism to accomplish Arab unification has given an impetus to those who would seek to re-empower Arabs through an invocation of past Arab achievements and examples of charismatic leadership. Pan Arabism failed to cope with the realities of inter-Arab conflict and external Arab conflict. The conflicts Arabs currently face have created

a fund of sympathy among Arabs, and they have strengthened the sense of Arab solidarity. Yet, for the same reasons, Arabs have become less tolerant and more prepared to perceive and interpret conflict according to conspiracy theories.

Religion, the Arabic language, and the Arab media provide forums or sites where Arab identity continues to be debated and maintained. Religion, particularly Islam, has played a dual role. On the one hand, Islamists support the essentialist idea of one Arab nation (Umma), and highlight the shared Arab heritage and the future aspirations of the Arabs. On the other hand, they criticize Arabists for their lack of a solid viewpoint, and the failure to engage in the kind of joint action that can only be found through allegiance to an Islamic identity. Whereas the Arabic language continues to provide Arabs with a rich and vital vocabulary, and an enormously varied range of rhetorical devices, Arab media have not only promoted the cause of Arab identity during the period when Pan-Arabism was victorious but became increasingly capable of reflecting Pan-Arab ideas through Arab satellite television and websites.

Arab gender issues cannot be addressed from an ethnocentric perspective that fails to take into account the affirmation and respect granted to women in Arab culture simply because the nature of this respect fails to accord with the observer's own cultural bias. Rather, women in Arab culture are envisaged at the very core of the Arab family and community. Such is the value placed on women that the defenders of Arab culture feel the need to affirm their own conception of gender in the face of attacks that ignore the specificity of the socio-cultural tradition that is the very source of their identity, however differentiated across gender lines. The new agenda of Arab women is concerned with improving the socioeconomic condition of Arab women through ensuring their

participation in the lengthy process of cultural and social development. The Arab women's agenda increasingly stresses the need for solidarity with other Arab women. Arab women are actively engaged in a reconsideration of their political and economic plight, since the instability of the conditions under which they live and work negatively affects their socioeconomic status and their ability to advance, say, the kind of agenda that western feminists can afford to proclaim through an evaluation of their own cultural and political specificity.

Briefly, this chapter aims to contest the tendency toward an idealized concept of identity as something that is completely formed at the outset or taken for granted under an essentialist mask. Rather, it examines Arab identity through the dialectical relations and development implicit in the evolution of Arabness. The chief components in the construction of Arab identity reveal the factors that support and strengthen the Arabs' sense of their collective identity, as well as the historical contingencies that have resulted in the fragmentation and diminution of that identity.

The latter section of this thesis focuses on the Arab diaspora, examining the social context or milieu of Arabness in North America. It shows how Arabs have retained most of the attributes of their identity. Yet, while being politically confident about Arabness, Arabs in the diaspora are socially confused because of the gradual erosion of the Arabic language through successive generations, and through an increasing awareness of the attendant risks and opportunities that threaten to undermine the traditional roles assigned to Arab gender.

The attempt to understand Arab identity cannot be made without an awareness of the reasons why Arabs have constructed the Other in their own guise. This discussion of

Arabness has signaled some of the reasons that account for xenophobic feeling among Arabs; namely, the long colonial history, the current state of conflict, and the negative images the Western media chooses to disseminate about Arabs. Conversely, the Other's animosity towards Arabs has opened up a chasm between Arabs and the West, which has in turn led Arabs to believe that the West will not happily contemplate the specter of a united Arab world, nor will it cease to perceive Islam as a threat, or desist from describing the Arab media as biased.

To conclude, contemporary images of Arabness show that while Arab identity is a historically fractured identity it nonetheless contains the potential to draw on its own internal contradictions as a paradoxical source of strength. Its capacity for retaining and revivifying its 'Pan' identity depends on its capacity to cope up with the continuous transformations in the Arab world, and to be capable of, and ready to, negotiate with the Other through facing up to its own self-contradictions. Such a thoroughgoing self-examination will enable Arab men and women both here in the diaspora and elsewhere in the Arab world to engage in the process of identifying their unique opportunities and mediating a Pan Arab vision and identity that is capable of going beyond the current imperatives of resistance.

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\* I am aware that the book of Raphael Patai, The Arab mind, is deeply contested, and problematic with respect to its essentialist perspectives and claims.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Re-mediating Pan-Arab Media: News Construction and Representation in Aljazeera Net**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The debate about how Internet technology brings about fundamental shifts in online news production has now become less problematic, since one can hardly broach a discussion about online news without highlighting the effects of Internet technology and its concomitant creation of new modes of communication, together with new modes of news distribution. Most scholars agree that new technology applications, and particularly the World Wide Web, facilitate enhanced and improved modes of news gathering, news production and delivery, and they offer structures and interfaces that are sufficiently flexible and responsive to the rapidly changing needs and tastes of readers (Herbert, 2001, p. 9 & Hall, 2001, p. 4 & Kawamoto, 2003, pp. 4-5 & Gunter, 2003, p. 65).

Yet, the debate about online news<sup>30</sup> becomes more problematic when discussion about the clear points of convergence between the Internet and news representation becomes focused on issues relating to the identity of news organizations, and how they represent the news. As shown in my first chapter, the complex realities of the Arab media

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<sup>30</sup> My study suggests that online journalism has influenced the ongoing definition of 'news'. The pragmatic view of news, as proposed by The Random House Dictionary and The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, defines it as "a report of recent events" (Mayer, 1987, p. 67). MacDougall proposes a similar definition when he suggests that news is the account of events (Hall, 2000, p. 645). Tony Silvia summarizes the pragmatic definition of news more emphatically: "News is what we say it is; they [people] don't know what's news until we tell them" (p. 4).

In my study, I claim that news, considered as the accounting and reporting of events, is inadequately defined. The advent of online journalism has altered the definition of news. Online news has become extensively institutionalized (Hall, 2001, p. 41); its trustworthiness is governed by "a set of values which are as much constructs of the media industries as are genre, style and form" (Hall, 2001, p. 41). News in this institutional context has not merely become 'what we say to people, or what to tell people about events, rather it becomes how to tell people'. News, as I define it, is an attempt to package content, and it comprises breaking alerts, spot stories, short stories, long stories, in-depth analyses, and reports about specific events; it affords a frame that includes different journalistic genres whose aim is not only to tell people about an event but, more importantly, to affect the way people might perceive the event.

make the debate - about how online news re-mediate news which belongs to a complex model of Pan-Arab media, particularly Aljazeera - even more challenging.

On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2001, Aljazeera television launched its Arabic website: Aljazeera Net. The resounding success of Aljazeera television has enabled Aljazeera Net to gain considerable attention both inside and outside the Arab World. In contrast to its sister TV channel, Aljazeera Net offers an online version of what is being aired on television, and furthermore, it has its own special news sections and content.

Distinct from studies that are driven by a gate-keeping approach, this chapter adopts postcolonial and remediation approaches to examine the representation of news in Aljazeera Net. The second part of the chapter will examine Aljazeera Television, since a comprehensive understanding of Aljazeera must start with a discussion of the social construction of Aljazeera Television. The third part examines the structure of Aljazeera Net, and examines issues that transform the construction of meaning. The closing section indicates the re-mediation strategies of Aljazeera Net, and the newly emergent communication practices of the network. Throughout the chapter, the discussion of re-mediation strategies in Aljazeera Net will be compared with the practices and strategies of other Pan-Arab and non-Arab websites that target the Arab public, such as Middle East Online, and the Arabic versions of the BBC and CNN.

## **2.2 The social construction of Aljazeera**

The gradual expansion of Arab television satellites during the 1990s has been achieved through global changes in transnational media and news production. Though transnational media emerged “in the nineteenth century in the form of news agencies” (Karim, 2003, p. 7), the rapid developments in communication technology have

facilitated news flow from north to south, “further reinforcing Northern world views” (Karim, 2003, p. 7). Pan-Arab television satellites, operating in the Arab region, such as MBC, ART, ESC, and Orbit, emerged in response to the penetration of Western cultural production, and the dominance of CNN in the Arab region.

However, while applying modern television journalism, Pan-Arab television satellites were far from satisfying the eagerness of the Arab audience for news. Affiliation with ruling Arab governments constrains the purview of Arab television satellites (Sakr, 2003). Though they have more freedom than printed media, Arab television satellites are subject to different forms of government monopoly. Legislation concerning Arab television stations is ostensibly under government control. For instance, strict laws control Arab television networks in Egypt and in Saudi Arabia. Law No. 13 of 1979 and Law No. 223 of 1989 gave the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), which is operated under the supervision of the Ministry of Information, “a monopoly over broadcasting in Egypt, and challenges to this monopoly during the 1990s were brushed aside” (Sakr, 2001).

In a similar vein, article no. 39 outlines the basic intention behind Saudi Arabia’s legislation governing media expression:

Information, publication and all other media shall employ courteous language and the state’s regulations, and they shall contribute to the education of the nation and the bolstering of its unity. All acts that foster sedition or division or harm the state’s security and its public relations or detract from man’s dignity and rights shall be prohibited. The statutes shall define this in detail (Sakr, 2001).

In 1995, the Saudi-owned company Orbit Communication signed a deal with the BBC to provide Arabic newscasts for Orbit’s main channel in the Middle East. The BBC

aimed to offer an objective Arabic language news coverage based on editorial independence, which was at odds with the willingness of the Saudi government to allow the reporting of controversial views (Gambill, 2000). In April 1996, the BBC broadcasted “a story on human rights in the kingdom which showed footage of the beheading of a criminal” (Gambill, 2000). The disagreement between the BBC service and the Saudi owners regarding the question of editorial independence led to the withdrawal of the Saudi investors (El-Nawawy, 2003, pp. 30-31).

The stage was set for Aljazeera, when the new Qatar<sup>31</sup> Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who took over the government on the 27th of June 1995, allocated 500 Million Rial (\$137 million) to Aljazeera, with the intent that the station should be self-sustaining within five years starting from November, 1996 (Zednik, 2002). However, it has been difficult for Aljazeera to make the transition toward self-financing, because the station has been unable to attract enough advertisers (Gambill, 2000). Aljazeera’s inability to attract investors has been due to its persistence on the question of editorial independence and its severe criticism of Arab governments. The editorial autonomy of Aljazeera has forced the station to face “an economic embargo by regional powers that has convinced major advertisers to utilize less viable media,” Jihad Ballout, Aljazeera’s communication and media director, reported (Wolff, 2003).

The relationship between Aljazeera and Qatar has been characterized by what might be called a “media/state tolerance.” The mutual tolerance between Aljazeera and the

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<sup>31</sup> Qatar is a monarchy whose political system does not include parties or elections. It is one of the smallest states in the world, with a population of only 690,000. The Qatari emir, who holds absolute power, aims to democratize his state. In 1999, he called for a legislative committee to set up a new constitution. Later, in 2004, Qatar launched its first written constitution, which will come into force in 2005. However, the new constitution guarantees the absolute power the emir now possesses.



government of Qatar has been purposeful on two significant levels: the domestic level, and the diplomatic-international level. Domestically, Aljazeera was one of the emir's prime moves towards democracy and the freedom of the press. However, free speech, freedom of the press, and public criticism of the ruling family in Qatar have generally been restricted (El-Nawawy, 2003, pp. 75-76). Clearly, Aljazeera is not ready to address the views of Qatari political dissidents who oppose the monarchy, nor is it likely to launch severe criticism of politically sensitive issues in Qatar (Gambill, 2000). When we now turn to the diplomatic-international front, 'the global fame of Aljazeera'<sup>32</sup> has "made tiny Qatar a kind of Arab power" (Williams, 2001). In return, Qatar has endured diplomatic clashes with Arab governments<sup>33</sup>, which have escalated as a consequence of Aljazeera's style of reporting.

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<sup>32</sup> Aljazeera's global fame has been attributed to its hidden agenda and to its identity. Jihad Balout, the communications manager of Aljazeera relates: "We've been called the mouthpiece of bin Laden, the channel of Saddam Hussein, the channel of Israel" (Cohn, 2003). Others believe that the CIA and Mossad fund Aljazeera (Wolff, 2003). Aljazeera seems to have attained an unpredictable measure of global fame. Sheik Hamad bin Thamer Thani, chairman of the network's board, reports: "we never expected to achieve global celebrity" (Williams, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> In April 2000, Libya rapidly withdrew its ambassador when Aljazeera broadcasted an interview with a Libyan opposition figure. Shortly afterwards, Saddam Hussein's government complained to Qatari officials when Aljazeera severely criticized the enormous expenses incurred by the celebration of Saddam Hussein's lavish April 28 birthday. On May 2 of the same year, the ambassador of Tunisia launched similar criticisms concerning a program on Aljazeera that criticized his government for the violation of human rights. A week later, a conservative newspaper in Iran accused Aljazeera of disseminating false news about Khamenei, after it reported that Khamenei desired the annulment of the parliamentary elections in Iran. In his article, "Qatar's Al-Jazeera TV: The Power of Free Speech," Gary C. Gambill reported that Qatari diplomats have received over 400 official complaints from other Arab countries about Aljazeera's news coverage and its overtly political and controversial political commentaries (Gambill, 2000). In 1999, Kuwait arrested an Aljazeera correspondent, then closed an Aljazeera bureau in November 3, 2002, when Aljazeera reported that the American military troops had occupied one third of Kuwait. Similarly, in 2000, Egypt reprimanded Aljazeera for what it considered unfair coverage of the Arab Summit in Cairo (Mazid, 2002, p. 16). In October 2002, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) recommended that the Gulf States should boycott Aljazeera, as a consequence of its distorted news and programs (Ministers, 2002). Recently, in August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the Iraqi authority closed an Aljazeera bureau in Baghdad after accusing Aljazeera of provocative violence.

Aljazeera has grown unexpectedly<sup>34</sup> in a very short time, and has attracted an increasing number of Arab viewers, now numbering 35 million. Recently, in 2004, *The Washington Post* reported that Aljazeera is currently the most viewed television channel in the Middle East. In a survey that examined viewers of 120 television channels operating in the Middle East, 51% of the respondents reported Aljazeera as their favorite channel (Poll, 2004). Accordingly, Aljazeera, the founder of Aljazeera television, was named by TIME magazine as “one of 100 of the world’s most influential people” (Aljazeera , 2004).

### **2.3 Aljazeera Net’s structure: key issues in the construction of meaning**

Aljazeera Net was inaugurated on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2001, and was rejuvenated on September 14th, 2004, recruiting 36 online editors, journalists and researchers and 26 technicians (Grenier, & Mazid, 2002, p. 14). Due to its comprehensive coverage of the war in Afghanistan, particularly during October and November of 2001, Aljazeera Net was extensively navigated, securing 70 million page-views per month. The number of visitors<sup>35</sup> jumped from 9 million during the first 7 months of its operation in 2001, to 161 million visitors by the end of 2002 (46 million). During 2003, Aljazeera Net’s coverage of the occupation of Iraq secured one billion visitors and 14 million page-views (One billion, 2004).

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<sup>34</sup> At its inception, Aljazeera broadcasted for six hours daily, subsequently prolonged its daily schedule to a period of twelve hours, and then in January 1999, maximized its transmission to twenty-four hours daily. It has recruited 500 people (Zednik, 2002), including 60 journalists and technicians in the newsroom, 40 correspondents, and 32 bureaus all over the world, among which there are 15 in the Arab world (Mazid, 2002, pp. 40, 226, 227, & Williams, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> Most of Aljazeera’s visitors are Middle Eastern (54%), with a substantial minority of North Americans and Europeans (39%).

Accordingly, the outstanding quality of its coverage of the invasion of Iraq had the effect of promoting its ranking so that it became the 45<sup>th</sup> most visited site in the entire World Wide Web, whereas it was ranked as one among 444 of the most visited websites before the beginning of the war (Abd Elatti, 2003). Recently, on September 30, 2004, Aljazeera Net was the winner of the PoliticsOnline and the 5<sup>th</sup> World Forum on e-Democracy award. In its survey that included 40,000 subscribers, who were asked to name the most significant organizations that had changed the world of the Internet and politics, PoliticsOnline announced that Aljazeera Net “has been the symbol of free expression in the Middle East...the world’s foremost uncensored Arab news service” (Noble, 2004).

### **2.3.1 Aljazeera Net’s basic structure and design**

Aljazeera Net follows the same values and objectives as Aljazeera on TV, yet it produces its own content, and it has its own editors. The reporters of its sister organization, Aljazeera TV, were found to be too busy working the camera to have time left over to edit stories for the website (Grenier). According to Mahmoud Abd-Alhadi, Aljazeera Net’s former general manager, Aljazeera Net re-edits news stories obtained from news agencies and from their correspondents. It also utilizes the news reports and video files of Aljazeera Television (Grenier). Additionally, the website makes use of the scripts for Aljazeera’s TV programs and publishes them without any supplementary editing (Grenier).

In addition to the scripts of the television programs, Aljazeera Net provides sections for political news, economics, sports, entertainment, medicine and health, reports and analyses, art and culture, and e-marketing, and permits its users to follow the latest

coverage of Arab and global newspapers. Distinct from Pan-Arab news sites, such as Middle East Online, and Dar Al hayat, and non-Arab news sites that target Arabs, such as the Arabic versions of CNN and the BBC that often specify a single issue for intense coverage, Aljazeera Net offers in-depth analysis of current issues and events through offering different sections for special coverage, special files, analyses, and point of views. Aljazeera Net reserves a section for book reviews that includes Arab and foreign books. Aljazeera Net claims that these sections serve as gateways for making people more knowledgeable.

More importantly, Aljazeera Net utilizes the capabilities of what is called “the sacred tenet of the Internet,” namely, Internet interactivity (McGovern, 2002). To understand how Aljazeera Net characterizes interactivity it is first appropriate to examine the concept of interactivity. Interactivity is a compelling, yet contested term; some scholars, such as Morris & Ogan (1996) and Pavlik (1996), suggest that interactivity “is a critical concept in computer-mediated communication because it is seen as the key advantage of the medium” (Gunter, 2003, p. 61). Conferring privileges on the supposedly chief characteristic of the medium has led a second team of scholars to argue that interactivity is an overused term, and yet remains under-defined (Ganz, 2003, p.2). In the eyes of these scholars, interactivity does not and could not exist on the Internet, since it is defined by mere ‘point and click’ functionality (Ganz, 2003, p. 2).

Other scholars, such as Williams, Rice and Rogers (1988), Steuer (1993), Ha and James (1998) believe that interactivity should be defined according to the reciprocal process between communicators and users, and the level to which users can have control over the content, exchange roles in mutual discourse, and participate in modifying the

form and content of mediated environments in real time (Steuer, 1993, p. 14, & Dholakia, 2000, p.5). This third cluster of scholars believes that true and meaningful interactivity engages active human or machine participation in the process of seeking and sharing information (Kawamoto, 2003, p. 4).

Whereas most scholars define interactivity according to the degree of the involvement of the participants, a fourth group of scholars, such as Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997) describe interactivity in the light of the flow and rotation of messages. For this group, interactivity is: “the extent to which messages in a sequence relate to each other, and especially the extent to which the last message recounts the relatedness of earlier messages” (Dholakia, 2000, p. 5).

When turning now to Aljazeera Net, users of websites engage in two different levels of interactivity. The involvement of the users of Aljazeera Net is undertaken at a (1) reactive level, and at an (2) interactive level. At the first level, **the reactive level**, users of Aljazeera Net draw on the ‘point and click’s technique so as to respond to Aljazeera Polls that place questions relating to hot political issues. The results of Aljazeera Net’s polls are often employed to support discussion during the on-air programs of Aljazeera television. The new version of Aljazeera Net allows users to arrange the appearance of news on the screen, since it gives users the choice to open/close some news lists. At a more **interactive level**, users of Aljazeera participate in forums that allow users to reply to the theme of the forum, and to exchange messages with other participants as well. In accordance with Rafaeli and Sudweeks’s definition of interactivity, the messages in

Aljazeera's forums<sup>36</sup> often move in sequence and, consequently, the number of replies to messages from other users exceeds the number of messages that respond to the themes of the forums.

Despite the various features of interactivity, fully interactive communication does not yet exist in Aljazeera Net. While allowing its users to communicate with each other Aljazeera net is reluctant to permit users to create their own forums of discussion, nor does it facilitate communication with an online editor. Following the same formula used by the BBC Arabic news, Aljazeera Net conducts the forum through an introduction, and raises questions concerning the participants that inspires Arab users to talk.

### **2.3.2 Homepage design and news presentation: from content drive to design drive**

Before moving on to examine how the design of Aljazeera Net influences its agenda, it is essential to track the basic model that contextualizes the flow of news in Aljazeera Net. Obviously, Aljazeera Net follows a bilateral model, namely the Push-Pull model. Push technology signifies the concept of delivering information to users who can specify the content they want to be presented, as well as the regularity of transmission (Lasica, 1997). In the case of Aljazeera Net, news and information are "pushed" to users of Aljazeera Net through news summaries by e-mails, or SMS Mobile messages<sup>37</sup>. Additionally, Aljazeera Net plans to launch a multimedia messaging service (MMS), and to push news via landline telephone transmission. As part of its e-marketing plan,

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<sup>36</sup> Aljazeera Net currently possesses 116 forums, 73 of which are devoted to political themes. The number of messages that respond to the forum themes averages 160,747, among which, 84,661 are replies to messages from users, and 46,086 are responses to the theme of the forums.

<sup>37</sup> SMS Mobile Service aims to allow subscribers of the service to receive breaking news through their mobile phones. Subscribers may choose to receive Arabic or English messages in the following areas: politics, sports, and the economy.

Aljazeera Net pushes news to its subscribers through a 'syndication' service. Subscribers to this service can get breaking news from the network, and post headlines and news items from Aljazeera Net on their websites. To take advantage of pull technology, the user must go to Aljazeera Net, however Aljazeera users can receive a degree of personalization through individual logins on the website.

Now turning to design issues, the design of the web pages of Aljazeera accords with a variety of web design conventions. In scrutinizing its design, the web pages of Aljazeera Net reflect a functional and fully consistent design strategy. In terms of functionality, the pages of the old version and the new version of Aljazeera do not distract the viewer with graphic treatments of text that might otherwise cause confusion or fragmentation. When a user looks at the screen, neither flashes nor animations are there to confuse him; rather, the design reflects "the usage and basic functionality of the content" (Thakur, 2004). Conventionally, Aljazeera Net adopts a strategy called 'design according to common usage', through which Arab users are capable of scanning pages and searching for more appropriate news (Thakur, 2004).

In addition to functionality, Aljazeera has a consistent design, wherein the position of certain elements in the website, such as the logo, navigation menus, search bar, and Aljazeera's poll, are permanently placed. The consistency of Aljazeera's design goes beyond the permanent elements found on the web pages. Distinct from Pan-Arab news sites, such as Middle East Online, Aljazeera extends its design consistency to the layout of whole site pages (See figures 2-1, 2-2, 2-3). The design of Aljazeera Net, particularly the old version, comprises four columns, three of which have the same width, and operate as navigation menus. The fourth column always devotes entire pages to the body of the

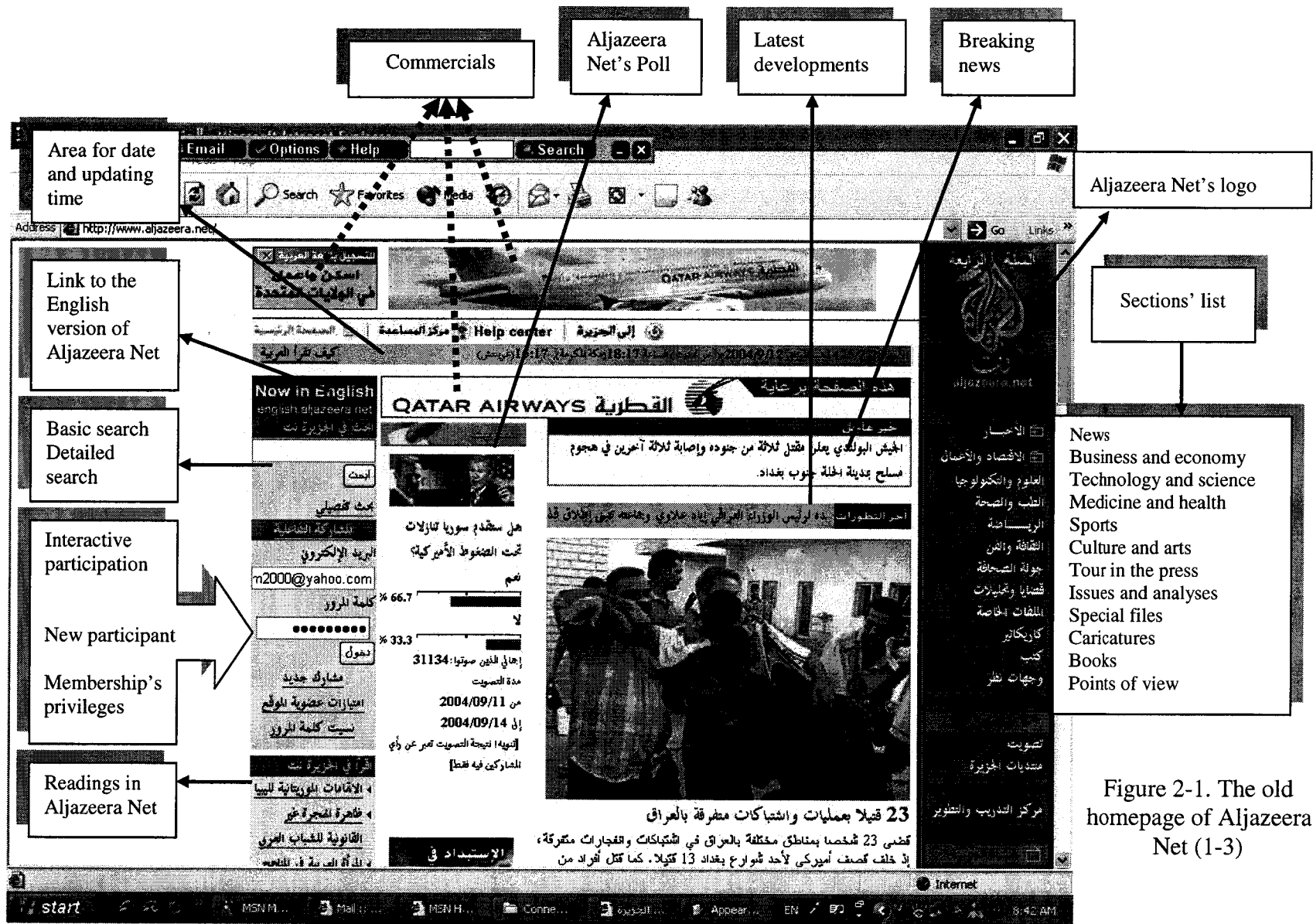


Figure 2-1. The old homepage of Aljazeera Net (1-3)



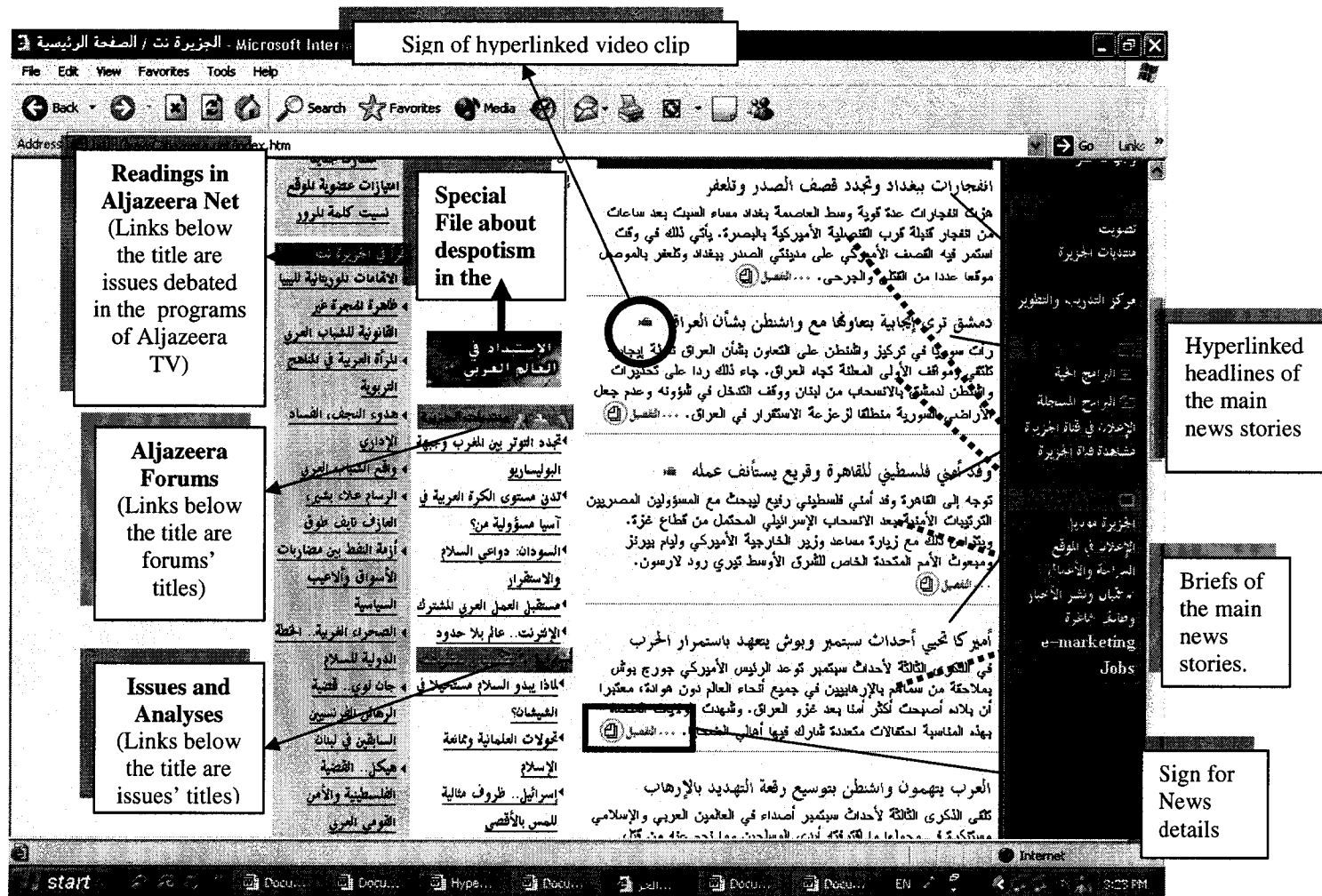


Figure 2-2. The old homepage of Aljazeera Net (2-3)



news story, which is usually accompanied by some supporting graphic elements, such as photos, or images.

Similarly, the new homepage of Aljazeera is built upon three columns, where one column serves as a navigation menu and the second column features headlines and pictures of the main news items. The third column includes a list of headlines related to recent news stories (See figure 2-4). Aljazeera Net extends its design consistency to the layout of the individual sections of the pages (See figure 2-5) Obviously, the design of each section follows the same design as the homepage. In terms of web design conventions Aljazeera Net follows the blue color links, which are universally accepted, as are the position of the search bar and the familiarity of the fonts, which are easily identifiable throughout its pages (Thakur).

To understand how the layout of the homepage shapes the agenda of Aljazeera Net, it is necessary to scrutinize the homepage design of the old and new versions. Aljazeera Net's old version follows a vertical layout that borrows its design concept from traditional newspapers. The vertical layout Aljazeera follows is a common design feature in most Arab news sites. One of the examples of the Pan-Arab sites that adopt the same style of layout is the Middle East Online (See figure 2-6).

Not only does the vertical layout facilitate the efficient scrolling of the computer screen, but it also enables Aljazeera to design its homepage according to the importance of each news item, thereby making some news stories more salient than others. More importantly, the old homepage's design had a modern layout, a road map through which the route makers were the main headline, key photos, and headlines accompanied by news summaries (Lowery, 1999, p. 14). That is to say, the design of the old homepage

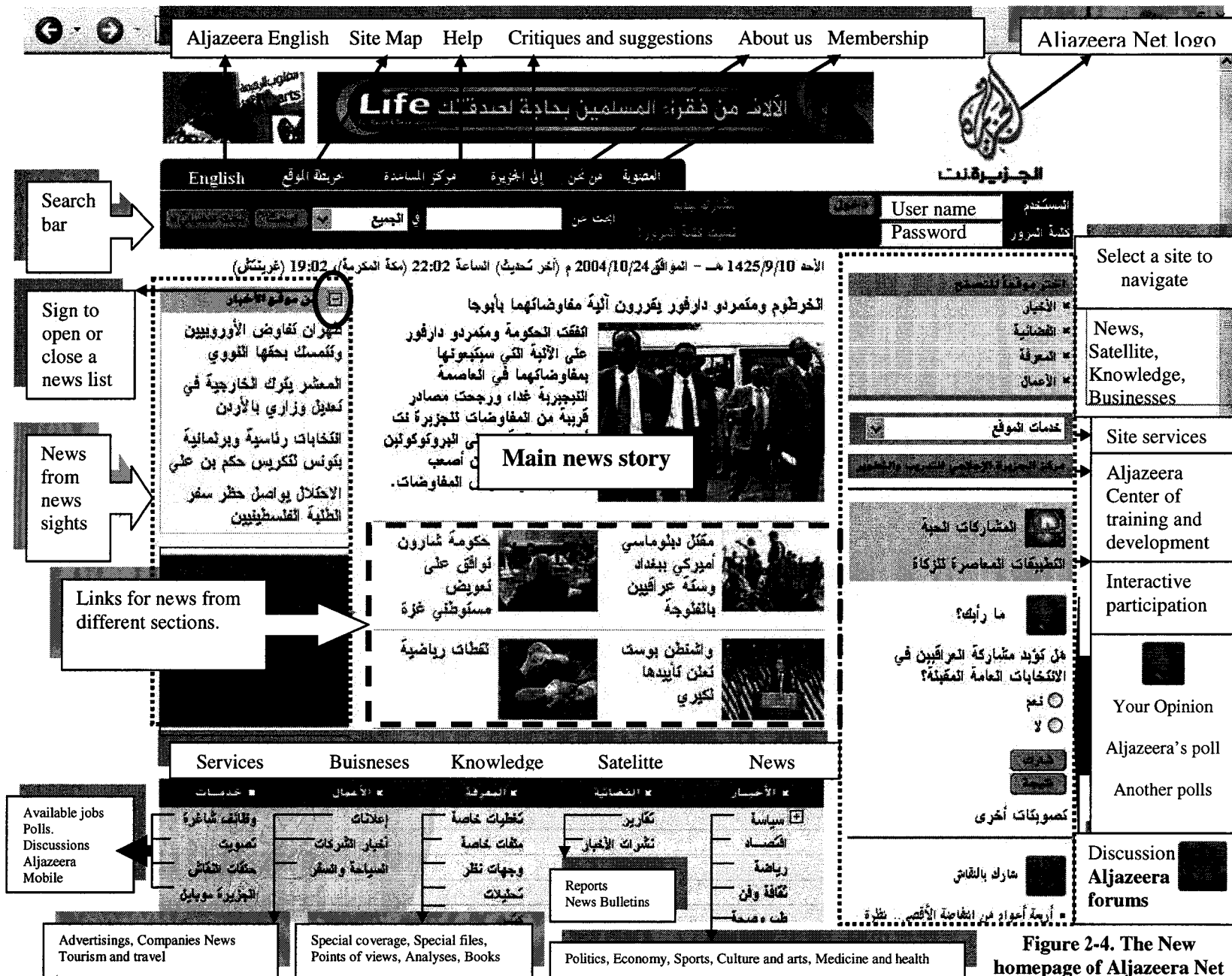


Figure 2-4. The New homepage of Aljazeera Net



Figure 2-5. The consistency of layout in Arab news section of Aljazeera Net



Figure 2-6. Resemblance between the design of homepage of Middle East Online, and the old homepage of Aljazeera Net

aimed to tell the reader to start in the customary place, and to make sure that the readers did not stray too far from the correct editorial path (Lowery, 1999, p. 14).

Most professionals and web designers support the idea that content should drive design. However, they also believe that design and content should be efficient and succinct (Lowery, 1999, pp. 16, 18). The old homepage had an established route through which to guide the reader, featuring five headlines and news summaries. Obviously, the design of the old version enabled Aljazeera Net to set its homepage agenda through giving each news story a different degree of prominence (See figures 2-1, 2-2, 2-3).

When Aljazeera Net made a fundamental change in the layout of the website, the new version introduced a change in the layout and design strategies and, consequently, a shift in the way of setting out its agenda. According to Aljazeera Net, the new design aimed to change the layout of the website so as to present the content in such a way as to facilitate the user's navigation skills, as well as to assure faster and easier ways to locate information. Additionally, the new design has a flexible structure that confers on Aljazeera Net the autonomy to add or remove content at will (Within, 2004).

Clearly, Aljazeera Net has launched a shift in its homepage design in order to focus on visual features rather than textual ones. To increase the saliency given to one of its main news stories, Aljazeera Net retains one lead out of the five leads that had accompanied the main news stories in the homepage of the old version. Small pictures now replace the four leads. In so doing Aljazeera Net appears to be following the basic design of the Arabic website of the BBC (See figure 2-7).

The new design of Aljazeera condenses the textual representation through only presenting the titles of the main sections. As shown in figures 2-3, and 2-6 the old version



Figure 2-7. The new homepage of Aljazeera Net (right) imitates the visual representation in BBC Arabic (left).

of Aljazeera included two headlines below the title of each section, in contrast to the new version of Aljazeera, which extracts the headlines. That is to say, a reader who had been accustomed to scrolling down the old homepage to identify the new headlines that were continually added to the homepage now has to access the section he/she wants to read through, in the new version, in order to find out about recent news items.

The shift in the design of the home page of Aljazeera Net signifies a change in the representation of news at Aljazeera Net. Whereas hyperlinks in the old homepage referred merely to hard news<sup>38</sup>, particularly to news centered on Arab 'hot button issues', the new homepage of Aljazeera has begun to feature some soft news items<sup>39</sup> among its hyperlinks. Certain news features posted on Aljazeera's new homepage are not even the immediate concern of the Pan-Arab public. Additionally, Aljazeera has adopted a

<sup>38</sup> Hard news is the sort of news that deals with conflicts, wars, and crises, such as the Arab-Israeli conflicts and the occupation of Iraq.

<sup>39</sup> Soft news includes news about sports, science and technology, arts and entertainment.

strategy of “musical chairs” to eliminate news stories that have remained for a certain number of hours on the homepage. As displayed in figures 2-4, & 2-7, below the main news story, hyperlinks accompanied by small pictures are arranged in order of priority in a circle; therefore, readers can recognize that certain hyperlinks have become less important than others when he/she repeats their visits on the website.

The design of the homepage of Aljazeera Net influences its agenda. News about Pan-Arab issues is mingled with news about international affairs, and with soft news items that are selected from sections such as sports, medicine and health, and arts and culture. In other words, whereas the design of old version’s homepage allowed the content to dictate the design, the new homepage puts more stress on the design per se so that it merely renders the content, and is even assimilated with it.

### **2.3.3 Professionalism, objectivity and neutrality: key issues in news production revisited**

Any attempt to understand the significant contribution of Aljazeera Net necessitates the re-discussion of issues concerning the remediation of news production and representation. Such a discussion should be initiated by a consideration of how Aljazeera has re-embodied itself as a press institution. When looking at Aljazeera through the lens of James C. Scott’s Domination and the Arts of Resistance, it appears as a manifestation of disobedience to the main discourses that prevail in Arab media.

Any Public refusal, in the teeth of power, to reproduce words...and other signs of normative compliance is typically construed – and typically intended – as an act of defiance (Scott, 1990, p. 203).

Thus, James C. Scott alerts to Aljazeera’s rejection of what many of its most powerful critics would have it be: namely, a tool to reproduce the logic of hegemonic



discourses. In Scott's terms, not only has Aljazeera broken with the erstwhile silence that has prevailed in the Arab region, but it has also appeared as a form of political electricity, or as an inflammatory catalyst that has ignited the various Arab regimes (Scott, 1990, p. 206).

Khadija Ben-Qenna, one of Aljazeera's team, a reporter who once worked for Swiss radio, characterizes how Aljazeera was perceived as a kind of journalistic and political shockwave. Khadija reports: "We have provoked a journalistic earthquake. Arab regimes are not used to honest and direct information" (Williams, 2001). Jihad Ballout, Aljazeera's communication and media director, concurs with Khadija's view, and perceives Aljazeera as "mini-revolution" (Faine, 2003). In a similar vein, Yosri Fouda, an Aljazeera investigative correspondent and London bureau chief, believes that Aljazeera emerged as "the rebel," as a channel that tackles the reluctance of Arab regimes to face new realities (Fouda, 2001). In the eyes of Fouda, Aljazeera has challenged the fact that Arab oral cultural has been for decades "incapable of lending its beautiful treasures to a predominantly pragmatic businesslike age" (Fouda, 2001). Whereas Yousri Fouda points to a fundamental change in Arab oral culture, Samir Khader, senior producer with Aljazeera, concisely summarizes the main features of this change:

We see ourselves at Al-Jazeera as the manifestation of the change that should happen in the Middle East. We introduced free speech, pluralism, and openness to the Arab world. We were the first and only network to cross red lines. To break taboos (Kim, 2004).

Malek Tirki, one of Aljazeera's London-based presenters, specifies two emerging roles for Aljazeera. He explains that the network "has played a leading role in furthering the cause of Arab political development and in liberalizing Arab political culture" (Deen,

2004). Similarly, Hussein Abd-Alghany, an Aljazeera correspondent and Cairo bureau chief, highlights two distinguishing features of Aljazeera; firstly, he believes that Aljazeera has broken through the normative conception of Arab media, which represents Arab governments or opposition parties. Aljazeera, as Abd-Alghany perceives it, propagates the idea of the independent news medium. Secondly, it reaffirms the right of Arab people to knowledge about what most concerns them, and conceives this right as the basis of building responsible public opinion in the Arab region (Abd-Alghany, 2003).

Aljazeera Net echoes the views of the producers and correspondents of Aljazeera TV, and assumes a charismatic niche for Aljazeera, thereby claiming that, “when Aljazeera speaks, the world listens and reads” (About, 2004). In accordance with the views of its team members, Aljazeera Net exalts the tasks of the website, and the objectives and common attributes of its journalists:

The website promises to raise traditionally sidelined questions and issues. It upholds the same philosophy as the mother organisation: “The right to speak up.” This translates into allowing everyone to express their opinion freely, encouraging debates, viewpoints and counter viewpoints (About).

Journalists at Aljazeera have “multi-national educations and diversified backgrounds” (About, 2004). The diversity of the backgrounds of the journalists is deemed an important aspect of the Pan-Arab attitude of the network (Mazid, 2002, p.49). Professionally, Aljazeera journalists are alleged to share a common set of characteristics: “objectivity, accuracy, and a passion for truth” (About, 2004). This conception of Aljazeera as a professional and objective media leads to the consideration of a cluster of issues concerning news production and representation, particularly the issues of

professionalism, objectivity, and neutrality, and to the re-examination of these issues in the light of Aljazeera Net's communicative practices.

### **2.3.3.1 Professionalism**

Recognizing how Aljazeera re-mediate the concept of professionalism it is necessary to distinguish between four distinct definitions of the term. The first view of professionalism conceives the environment of journalism as, first and foremost, the site of a 'profession'. Marshall McLuhan (1967) argues that professionalism is environmental, and merges the individual into aspects of the total environment (p. 93). Eliot Freidson further develops McLuhan's view, contending that when a journalist is blended into the professional environment, he partakes in "a unique form of occupational control of work well-suited to providing a complex, discretionary service to the public" (Aldridge, 2003, p. 548).

One of the factors that increase occupational control, and increase the level of professionalism, is training. For a sociologist, such as Talcott Parsons, professional training should cultivate an appropriate balance between the self and the interests of the collectivity (Aldridge, 2003, p. 548). Traditional approaches interpret professionalism "as a means of occupational change and control" that should be developed by training (Aldridge, 2003, p. 548).

Meryl Aldridge and Julia Evetts (2003), offer a second definition of the term, and contest in their article, "Rethinking the concept of Professionalism: the case of journalism," the validity of interpreting professionalism as a set of professional traits and modes of occupational control in journalism (p. 548). They argue that the characterization of professionalism as an occupational project and an occupational enhancement has never

been applied to journalism (Aldridge, 2003, p. 548). Meryl Aldridge and Julia Evetts (2003) argue that professionalism is neither a structure nor “an array of institutional protections, nor a checklist of ‘traits’ being used in places of work as mechanisms to facilitate and promote occupational change” (p. 548). Rather, they believe that professionalism, understood as a discourse, has now become a slogan in advertising to attract consumers, and in political campaigns, to persuade voters. Editors and journalists employ the term as a powerful mechanism of occupational identity and self-control (Aldridge, 2003, p. 555). Professionalism as a discourse is motivated by “effective mechanisms of occupational socialization and identity formation and maintenance” (Aldridge, 2003, pp. 555-556). As noted by most scholars, socialization is a crucial indicator of the level of professionalism, particularly as “professionalism can not exist in a social vacuum” (Herbert, 2000, p. 7).

For a third group of scholars, such as Thomas Marshall (1950) and John Herbert (2000), professionalism is functional. It operates as a “bulwark against threats to stable democratic processes” (Aldridge, 2003, p. 548). Thus, professional journalists should work as “the watchdog of democracy and freedom” (Herbert, 2000, p. 6). Gaye Tuchman (1978) proposes another pragmatic view, which defines professionalism as the ability of editors “to rework reporters’ sentences so as improve upon their intent and to locate still unanswered questions” (p.106). This fourth view of professionalism considers the commitment editors and reporters enforce to follow their organization’s style (Tuchman, 1978, p. 106).

In any assessment of the professionalism of Aljazeera, one of the key points of reference is the study of Rahim Mazid (2002), Al-Jazeera channel and TV satellites’

competition. Mazid's study focuses on and elaborates seven indicators of professionalism in Aljazeera: (1) The connection between the salary of the members of Aljazeera and their commitment to their work, (2) the extent to which the administration in Aljazeera intervenes in the work of the Aljazeera team, (3) the degree of freedom that the Aljazeera team enjoys when they deal with news items, (4) the freedom of the employees at Aljazeera to leave work, (5) the degree of satisfaction found among people in Aljazeera about the reputation of Aljazeera, (6) the news preferences of the people at Aljazeera, and (7) the preferences of the members of Aljazeera concerning the use of news from world news agencies (Mazid, 2002, pp. 70-83).

The study found that many respondents expressed their dissatisfaction about the salary they got as a reflection of their efforts (32%). Only 20% of respondents agreed that their salary was well calculated to remunerate their efforts. When asked if the administration of Aljazeera was likely to intervene in their professional work, the majority of respondents (76%) reported that the Aljazeera administration did not interfere with their work. However, many respondents to the study stated that the administration at Aljazeera often interfered in their work (24%), whereas all the participants in the study replied denied that Aljazeera's administration always intervened in their work. Similarly, the greater part of the study's participants (64%) reported that they enjoyed absolute freedom in their work. Moreover, only 28% of respondents expressed a willingness to leave Aljazeera, and 36% of them stated that their resignation would depend on the working conditions and privileges they would be likely to obtain in a position outside Aljazeera (Mazid, 2002, pp. 70-77), suggesting a relatively high level of job satisfaction at Aljazeera.

Among the indicators of professionalism Rahim Mazid used to assess the level of professionalism at Aljazeera he evaluates certain environmental factors, such as the freedom employees enjoy in their work, the satisfaction of journalists and editors with their salaries, and their relative levels of content with the administration. However, the pragmatic indicators that Rahim Mazid has adopted do not seem to be adequate to the task of determining the degree of professionalism to be found at Aljazeera. Although the study found that 72% of respondents favor political news, and 56% of them prefer to use news from Reuters rather than news from AFP (20%) (Mazid, 2002, pp. 79-82), Rahim Mazid has made no attempt to correlate such news preferences with the key question of professionalism.

In this reconsideration of the theoretical approaches that address the question of professionalism it is helpful to revisit some of the underlying concepts of professionalism. One of the basic factors that affect an appraisal of professionalism at Aljazeera must inevitably be the degree of experience of the journalists. Hussein Abd-Alghany, Aljazeera correspondent and Cairo bureau chief, reports that Aljazeera only hires professional journalists who have considerable work experience, and they are almost always trained by independent press organizations (Abd-Alghany, 2003). Having trained and worked in professional institutions confers on journalists at Aljazeera exceptional degrees of autonomy.

Aljazeera also takes care to implement occupational control and change through intensive training. Wadah Khanfar, the managing director of Aljazeera states:

We have already defined a limited number of policies for the next phase. The first policy is "professionalism," not just as a slogan but as a commitment that will be implemented. And this is why we have started the Al

Jazeera Center for Training and Development to provide our journalists with the best methodologies and techniques of media work (Khanfar, 2004).

The comment of the managing director at Aljazeera reflects the fact that professionalism has become a recognized discourse at the managerial and editorial levels. Its efficacy as a discourse is reiterated by Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al Thani, the chairman of Aljazeera, who describes professionalism as one of the key qualities in the success of Aljazeera (Schleifer, 2001).

Aljazeera challenges the normative view of professionalism as an environmental mechanism governed by the political system, and rooted in the political economy of the media. In a region where restrictive political systems and government control over the media are commonly experienced, as in the Arab region, it is evident that the skills and professional standards of journalists will be negatively affected (Carver, 2000). Nonetheless, Aljazeera has shown a persistent determination to maintain professional standards in the face of political restrictions, and a concomitant quality of resistance to the social powers that govern media in the Arab region. For example, although the televised reportage of Aljazeera is perceived as a threat by Arab regimes, Aljazeera Net has recently introduced a new guide for using cameras in the field. In his comments on the new guide, Wadah Khanfar, the managing director of Aljazeera, emphasizes that the accumulated experience of the cameramen of Aljazeera can be perceived as an index of the high standards of professional organization that Aljazeera implements (New, 2005).

Obviously, the network aims to create what Gaye Tuchman (1995) termed 'organizational specialization' in news (p. 297). Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al Thani

made it clear that the attainment of a professional organization was one of Aljazeera's deeply held operating principles from the very beginning:

The idea of Al-Jazeera came about in the beginning when we observed that there were many types of media, with specialized sports and news and entertainment programs, in the West. This type of specialization wasn't found in the Arab world. So the idea arose to start a channel specializing in news that would serve many viewers in the Arab world (Schleifer, 2001).

In a new phase of 'organizational specialization', Aljazeera instances two different levels of professionalism: technological and ethical. Firstly, Aljazeera has consistently advanced the use of technology, as when it launched its news wire service to provide subscribers with the latest news through SMS messages. In so doing Aljazeera Net is currently the only Pan-Arab news media to have introduced the SMS service to its chosen audience.

Secondly, in keeping with its willingness to assure its professional development, Aljazeera has promoted a strict code of ethics, accompanied by a guide for professional behavior that subscribes to the criteria of credibility and objectivity in reporting and editing (See appendix D). Not only does the code of ethics reflect the adherence of Aljazeera to the pursuit of global journalistic standards, but also bears witness to its pioneering commitment to the initiation of new journalistic conventions among Pan-Arab news media.

### **2.3.3.2 Objectivity, neutrality, and neo-objectivity**

The argument about the objectivity of journalism has dramatically changed in character. Consequently, scholars do not commonly discuss the degree to which journalism is objective, but rather, how far journalism remains from its purported goal of



objectivity. As E. J. Dionne argues in his book, They Only Look Dead, journalism faces contradictory challenges: to be investigative yet neutral, to have influence but to remain disengaged, to be challenging but to retain an edge (Cunningham, 2003). Therein lies the dilemma of objectivity.

In his monograph on objectivity and bias, Robert Hackett notes that objectivity is debatable as a conceptual tool for the analysis of the media. He believes that communication scholars often speak of 'objectivity' without questioning its value as a concept (Miller, 2000, p. 30). Anderlyn C. Moss (2004) suggests that modern journalistic objectivity has two distinct connotations. The first concept is epistemological, and "defines real things that can be known, believed or felt" (p.19). The second concept is operational, and "involves a personal stance toward the world of objects" (p. 19).

For scholars, such as Peter Golding, Philip Elliott, Barbara Phillips, and Everette Dennis, objectivity remains the major goal of most day-to-day journalism, and contributes to balance and fairness (Golding, 2000, p. 640, & Miller, 2000, p. 40, & Everette, 1996, p.113). In a different vein, other scholars claim that objectivity attempts to neutralize conflicting views, and to conceal the truth. Objectivity is also perceived as being elastic, illusionary, superficial, and even as an ideologically loaded term (Gauthier, 1993, & Miller, 2000, p. 40, & Bagdikian, 1983, p. 182). Ideologically, objectivity seems to be "based on a moral foundation that perpetuates the public's false perception of trustworthiness" (Moss, 2004, p. 22).

Michael Rayn (2001) assumes that objectivity is a myth, because absolutes of knowledge or values do not exist (Moss, 2004, p. 25). In Online Journalism: A Critical Primer, Jim Hall (2001) proceeds to clarify Rayn's notion of mythic objectivity, and

clearly suggests that journalists have the capacity to manipulate the news, operating “somehow from moral or intellectual high ground which provides a critical distance from world events, and their repercussion” (p. 43). In a further development of Michael Rayn’s view, James Carey agrees that the ongoing critique of objectivity has had the effect of distancing journalism from its historical conception. Carey’s key point is that “journalism began not as a profession and critical democratic institution, but rather as a branch of literature” (McGill, 2004). In Carey’s view, there has been a fundamental shift in the journalist’s principal job, which “transformed journalism from an artistic and interpretive role into essentially one of translation and simplification” (McGill, 2004). Accordingly, objectivity appears to be perceived as a passive value that has turned the journalist into a ‘technical writer’ and professional communicator, someone who twists complex matters into simple, palatable compositions called stories (McGill, 2004). Karim Karim, recasts Carey’s opinion, believing that we cannot speak of objectivity and accuracy in journalism, but only in disciplines such as mathematics (Karim, 2004).

The conflicting views about objectivity have led to two practical implications that reflect the current perspectives of scholars. Firstly, some scholars, such as Brent Cunningham and Dennis Everette, believe that objectivity is attainable, and should be pursued for a number of valid reasons, the most significant being that nothing better can be substituted for it. More importantly, the belief in objectivity as an important value is a persistent attitude among many journalists who conceive it as an essential goal of their work (Cunningham, 2003, & Everette, 1996, p.113). Objectivity in this sense appears as a method of presenting news, and as a touchstone, that helps journalists to understand their biases, to understand what the accepted narratives are, and to work against them as much

as possible (Cunningham, 2003, & Everette, 1996, p.113). Dennis Everette (1996) points to three key advantages that make objectivity a desired goal: (1) the isolation of fact from opinion, (2) the maintenance of balance and fairness, in devoting equal periods of time to contested views, and (3) the assurance that news items are presented with emotional detachment (p.113).

Controversially, the second common conception among scholars suggests that journalists should be less objective, because objectivity exacerbates the tendency of journalists to depend on official sources. Official perspectives often unduly influence the views of journalists embedded in certain political institutions. For example, Andrew Tyndall's report, examining the coverage of NBC, ABC, and CBC on the war in Iraq, found that the majority of stories presented by these networks owed their provenance to the White House, Pentagon, and the State Department. Of 414 stories on Iraq, only 34 stories were collected from an alternative source (Cunningham, 2003). As a result of this second consensus of opinion, in 1996 the Society of Professional Journalists acknowledged the dilemma of pursuing 'objectivity' and dropped the term from its code of ethics (Cunningham, 2003). The pursuit of objectivity is deemed unnecessary, or even superfluous, in an attempt to arrive at the truth. Among the scholars who applaud this trend is Robert Jensen, who writes:

The real problem is that reporters aren't biased enough, honestly. The journalistic norms of neutrality and objectivity so constrain reporting that much of the news ends up seeming - or actually being - contradictory or incoherent. The solution: We need journalism that is more biased to help readers get at the truth (Jensen, 2000).

In presenting his views about the importance of objectivity, as cited above, Brent Cunningham corroborates Robert Jensen's opinion, in asserting that journalists should

acknowledge that they are far more subjective and far less detached than the pursuit of objectivity would seem to imply (Cunningham, 2003). In a corresponding view, John Merrill argues that: “in no way can a journalist be detached, unprejudiced, unopinionated, unbiased, and omniscient” (Everette, 1996, p.112). More strikingly, because of the lack of information available to a journalist, Merrill is doubtful about the capability of reporting truthful information, especially when the search to find it is unavailing (Everette, 1996, p.112).

The dilemma posed by the pursuit of objectivity becomes even more problematic when communication scholars fail to make distinctions between the concepts of objectivity, balance and neutrality, thinking of them as if they bore a symmetrical relation to each other. In Westerstahl’s model of journalistic objectivity, for example, the term ‘objectivity’ stands for factuality and impartiality, which themselves implicitly bespeak truth, balance and neutrality (Miller, 2000, p. 39). This semantic blurring of objectivity and neutrality becomes even more perplexing, when scholars such as John Herbert attempt to locate the margin of overlap between the two terms. Herbert (2000) emphasizes that journalists must believe in the neutral, objective approach, yet they should also be aware that they do so within the parameters determining the three principal roles of journalism: the dissemination of information and news, the interpretation of information and news, and the investigations of newsmakers and politicians to arrive at the truth (p. 7).

Other scholars criticize the notion of neutrality, and attempt to differentiate it from objectivity. Srajan Ebean’s article, “Objectivity Vs. Neutrality,” attacks the concept of neutrality for its fear of “getting involved...taking a stand...and making mistakes”

(Ebaen), and for its noncommittal cowardice. That is to say, neutrality is one of the symptoms of self-censorship. To explain the difference between the two terms, objectivity and neutrality, Budziszewski (1999) and Thomas Sowell (2004) suggest that to be objective means to entertain certain presuppositions, which posit the truth, whatever its nature and regardless of its implications. As for neutrality, if it were possible to be neutral, this implies the ability to dispense with presuppositions, or to achieve a “preconceived balance, which subordinates the truth to this preconception” (Budziszewski, 1999, & Sowell, 2004).

If we now examine how Aljazeera re-mediate the issue of objectivity, it is important to examine the critiques Aljazeera has so far received. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Aljazeera receives constant reproofs from Arab governments. Yet, critiques of Aljazeera assume global significance when they come from the West. Obviously, the parameters of the Western critique of Aljazeera are often stretched beyond their usual bounds during the coverage of what may be called ‘the hot button issues’, namely, affairs of war and political struggle. During the war in Afghanistan, Al-Jazeera was the only station broadcasting on the ground from the time when the United States began its bombing operations (Martin, 2002). Aljazeera gained the enmity of the US administration for its critical coverage of the war in Afghanistan, and especially after broadcasting interviews with Osama bin Ladan and other leaders of Al Qaeda (James, 2001), and later, because of its coverage of the occupation of Iraq.

More importantly, Western media analysts, and officials in the US administration have condemned Aljazeera for its ‘inflammatory’ news coverage. In the eyes of Richard Boucher, the former US spokesman, it misconstrues, inflames things, and jumps to the

wrong conclusions (US Disturbed, 2003). In a similar vein, Colin Powell has criticized the absence of an editorial line in Aljazeera, and its “way of presenting news that appeals to the Arab public” (US Disturbed, 2003). He added that Aljazeera “was portraying the invasion of Iraq in a negative light” (US Disturbed, 2003). During the G-8 summit in June 2004, President’s Bush national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, accused Aljazeera of “purely inaccurate” reporting, and she blamed the network for presenting a biased account of conflicts in the Middle East (White, 2004).

US Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, engaged in a parallel critique of Aljazeera, claiming that the network “has a pattern of playing propaganda over and over and over again” (Semitsu, 2004). Senior military spokesman, Mark Kimmitt, advised the Iraqis who saw civilian deaths<sup>40</sup> on Aljazeera to “change the channel to a legitimate, authoritative, honest news station” (Fair, 2004). He added that the “stations that are showing Americans intentionally killing women and children are not legitimate news sources. That is propaganda, and that is lies” (Fair, 2004). Additionally, Aljazeera has attracted criticisms from the general public in the West. In the wake of the invasion of Iraq, and particularly after airing some clips concerning the capture of U.S. PWOs in March 2003, *Onegoodmove*<sup>41</sup>, *Crusor.org*<sup>42</sup>, and *The Command Post*<sup>43</sup> conducted two leading debates about Aljazeera.

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<sup>40</sup> The thematic analysis I conducted about photos used in 100 news stories, relating to the issues of the occupation of Iraq, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and published on Aljazeera Net during October 2004 showed that Aljazeera has responded to the criticism of images of death casualties by reducing their number. Only 17% of the photos published in Aljazeera Net portrayed death casualties. The network put more emphasis on documenting events in Iraq, and consequently increased the percentage of ‘sight scene’ photos to 108%. When compared with photos related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the use of photos about death casualties was found to be pervasive (82%). Aljazeera Net maintained its strategy of publishing more than one ‘sight scene’ photo in each news story about the conflict, which likewise increased the percentage of sight scene photos to 108%.

<sup>41</sup> Onegoodmove.org is an anti-war organization.

Cursor.org talked about the 'good, bad, and the very ugly of Aljazeera'. Likewise, *The Command Post* launched a debate that questioned whether Aljazeera is 'evil or just different'. Recently, *America's Debate*<sup>44</sup> raised a question on the part of its users concerning the influence of Aljazeera. Similarly, CNN argued that the bigger story beyond civilian deaths, which Aljazeera extensively displays, is "what the Iraqi insurgents are doing" to provoke a U.S. response (Fair, 2004).

Arab scholars and journalists have launched severe critiques of Aljazeera. For instance Iylaf, an Iraqi newspaper, recently published an ultimatum signed by 120 Iraqi poets and members of the cultural elite calling for the closure of Aljazeera, and claiming that Aljazeera stands for unprofessional, radical and rebellious values that are harmful to Iraq, and have had the effect of provoking violence and bloodshed among Iraqi citizens (Ghylan, 2004). In similar vein, Koba'a Aloutayby, the editor-in-chief of the online Modern Discussion, has critiqued Aljazeera for hysterical propaganda that has deceived the Arab public (Aloutayby, 2004). Finally, Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi Arabian journalist has revisited the issue of objectivity, and has likewise critiqued Aljazeera for its ostensibly populist or demagogic tendencies: "Al-Jazeera has a big problem with objectivity...They [Aljazeera] are being led by the masses, they don't lead the masses.

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42 Cursor.org mingles the original contents of daily-updated media with politics. It is a Weblog that comments upon and responds to the work of major news organizations, as well as to critical, unconstrained voices available on the Internet. It contextualizes daily news in a broader perspective than that offered in the mainstream media.

<sup>43</sup> The Command Post, [www.command-post.org](http://www.command-post.org), was created on the 20th March 2003 by a group of bloggers who sought to post recent professional news, provided links to original sources, and encouraged users to follow certain news sites. It opened up debates and dialogues about media issues, and promoted the idea of 'open-source citizen journalism'. The site creators aim to create a historical context for the topics posted, so that historians are able to make use of it.

<sup>44</sup> America's Debate, [www.americasdebate.com](http://www.americasdebate.com), hosts many constructive political debates on the Internet.

They know the taste of the Arab street, and the Arab street is anti-American” (Waxman, 2001).

Roger Hardy, a Middle East specialist for the BBC World Service in London, observes that despite fervent criticisms of Aljazeera, it is “undoubtedly a new trend in Arab media” (Martin, 2002), and he notes that it has prompted an interesting ongoing debate about objectivity and neutrality. In order to understand how Aljazeera reevaluates issues related to objectivity, it is helpful to examine the criteria Aljazeera sets out in its guide to professional behavior, especially in regard to the two operating assumptions about objectivity developed through the journalistic practices of Aljazeera. In its guide to professional behavior, Aljazeera has provided a checklist of 16 criteria for objectivity and credibility (See appendix D). Briefly, Aljazeera Net highlights its adherence to the ideal of reporting honest, accurate, fair, and clear information, and to avoiding coverage that contains distorted images, stereotypes, bias, and ethnic prejudice (Aljazeera, 2005). The criteria of objectivity and credibility are motivated by Aljazeera’s editorial policy, whose four operating principles are the pursuit of objectivity, newness and factuality, accuracy and authenticity, and a wide-ranging discourse (Aljazeera, 2005). While the criteria of objectivity ostensibly assures Aljazeera users that the network’s aim is the provision of objective and neutral reporting, the actual practices of Aljazeera lead us to propose two major assumptions:

**Firstly, objectivity is an institutional ‘slogan’ and/or goal that generally conflicts with actual journalistic practices.** In Aljazeera Net’s introductory statement, the network boldly states its intention to provide coverage of “boiling topics and heated debates along with objective news reporting” (About, 2004). More importantly,



Mahmoud Abd-Alhadi, Aljazeera Net's former general manager, explains that the news policies of Aljazeera "depend on objectivity and freedom" (Grenier, 2004). He adds that: "We are trying to introduce a professional media in the Arabic region based on objectivity and neutrality" (Grenier, 2004).

During the war in Iraq, when Aljazeera aired images of dead U.S. servicemen, the term 'objectivity' was used as a pretext to show these images. "In the interests of objectivity, we felt we had to share them with you," an Aljazeera spokesman reports (Cohn, 2003). Hafez Almarazi, a former reporter for the BBC and the Voice of America, is Aljazeera's Washington bureau chief, and he admits, "that some of the criticism leveled at the station is valid" (Fahim, 2004). Almarazi states that there is a tendency in some field correspondents and reporters to editorialize (Fahim, 2004). The contrast between the above stated views of Hafez Almarazi, and Mahmoud Abd-Alhadi indicates that while the news organization might well speak of 'objectivity', it is often quite another matter to maintain such standards in the field.

**Secondly, Aljazeera purports to stand for neo-objectivity, a concept based on three prescriptions: balance with perspective, accuracy without embellishment, and fairness without mediation.**

'Neo-objectivity', the newly hyphenated halfway term for objectivity, has been coined almost as a disclaimer, or disavowal, of the possibility of objectivity, and invites attention in terms of how Aljazeera's practice has entailed the abandonment of normative views of objectivity. The newly emerging concept that Aljazeera practically endorses is based on three rules: balance with perspective, accuracy without embellishment, and fairness without mediation.

**Balance with perspective**<sup>45</sup>. Aljazeera's motto, 'The opinion and the other opinion', reflects Aljazeera's aim to present both sides of the truth. Often, the network is charged with being too balanced. Amy Jasperson and Mansour El-Kikhia's study, CNN and al Jazeera's media coverage of America's war in Afghanistan, criticized Aljazeera because "it is never sure of its position, and constantly playing a balancing act over the edge of a sword" (Jasperson, 2003, p. 130). However, the editorial balance of Aljazeera is applauded by many scholars, such as Jessica Reaves, a TIME magazine reporter, who wrote that Aljazeera has been appreciated by Western media, including TIME, for its courageous reporting and for its concern to give equal time to dissenting voices (Reaves, 2001). In a similar vein, Muftah Alsuwidan, Aljazeera's London bureau executive director, explains that Aljazeera struggles to maintain free, independent, and balanced perspectives, wherein the common denominator always remains the people's right to know and the freedom of journalists to express themselves (Jayasekera, 2003). Other members of Aljazeera have justified the exemplary balance of the network. Ghida Fakhry, Aljazeera's correspondent in New York and at the United Nations, and Hafez Almarazi, Aljazeera's Washington bureau chief, have significantly endorsed the classic paradigm for measuring journalistic balance. They believe that if the furor is coming from all sides and makes all sides unhappy, then the network is clearly doing something right (Gabriel, 2002, & Fahim, 2004).

Aljazeera Net recognizes the fruitful tension that operates between balance and perspective. Joanne Tucker, the manager of Alajzeera Net, implies, in her answer to a question about objectivity, that every media network has an implicit perspective. When

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<sup>45</sup> Perspective is always embedded in discourse, and it is defined as a 'point of view' (Ensink, 2003, pp. 9-10).

asked about whether journalists at Aljazeera are capable of being objective about the war in Iraq, Joanne Tucker responded thus: "I will answer the question by asking a question: are any U.S. journalists objective about this war?" (Noujaim, 2004). Samir Khader, an Aljazeera senior producer, differentiated between perspective and bias, when he commented on the decision of Aljazeera to publish images of Iraqi children killed by American attacks: "We want to show that any war has a human cost. If this is bias, this rationale is certainly no more biased than the decision by Fox News, for example, to not air such footage" (Semitsu, 2004). Mohammed El-Nawawy and Adel Iskandar (2003), the authors of Al-Jazeera : The Story of the Network that is Rattling Governments and Redefining Modern Journalism, explained that having perspectives in news reporting does not necessarily mean that Aljazeera is biased (El-Nawawy, 2003, p. 54).

Hussein Abd-Alghany, Aljazeera correspondent and Cairo bureau chief, by way of applauding the views of the practitioners and scholars outlined above, explained that objectivity means to be balanced, but not necessarily to be neutral. He added that Arab audiences who read Aljazeera Net are right in feeling that the network has a Pan-Arab perspective (Abd-Alghany, 2003). Accordingly, Mohammed Jasim Alali, the managing director of Aljazeera, emphasizes that Aljazeera has its own distinctive ideas and its own perspectives (El-Nawawy, 2003, p. 53).

**Accuracy without embellishment:** Aljazeera claims that its balance is wedded to its accuracy. Jihad Ballout, Aljazeera's communication and media director, states: "What we are trying to do is to provide a comprehensive picture of what's happening in as much of a balanced way as possible" (Sharkey, 2004). Faisal Bodi, an online editor in Aljazeera Net, frankly stated that Aljazeera's coverage is accurate because its editorial line

represents the war in Iraq as an “illegal enterprise” (Bodi, 2003). On a similar note, Sheihk Hamad bin Thamer Al Thani made it clear that the images the network presents describe “what takes place on the ground” (Fair, 2004). His point of view is that it is the duty of journalists to report on the “destructive nature of the war, and the human cost of such conflict” (Aljazeera, 2004). He proceeded to characterize how the accuracy in Aljazeera’s reporting has been achieved in reporting the grim face of war:

Some people say we are taking the nightmare into people’s houses and we are putting too much blood on the screens. If we don’t report the ugly face of war, would that mean we abided by the criteria? Would we be embellishing the face of the war? (Aljazeera, 2004)

Now, to conduct a more comprehensive analysis of how Aljazeera accounts for its mission to enforce journalistic accuracy, it is important to focus on Aljazeera’s coverage of the war in Iraq. During the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Aljazeera’s coverage was perceived as a radical redefinition of the value of accuracy. While most of the world’s media reported the uprising in Basra and the occupation of Umm Qaser, just a few hours after the beginning of the battle, “Aljazeera reported differently and correctly” (Index, 2003). As Faisal Bodi puts it, Aljazeera reported “the horror of the bombing campaign, the blown-out brains, the blood-spattered pavements, the screaming infants and the corpses” (Bodi, 2003). Joanne Tucker, the manager of Aljazeera Net, succinctly summarized the remarks of Faial Bodi, saying: “let the people understand that this is a war, and people are dying. It is not a clean war; it is a messy war. It will continue to get messier” (Noujaim, 2004).

Controversially, critics of Aljazeera believe that while its reporting is accurate, timely and daring, it is also “aggressive, selective, demagogical and gruesome” (Young, 2004). Other opponents, such as William Fisher, praised the Iraqi government’s decision to prevent Aljazeera from operating in Iraq. In his article, ‘Shooting the Messenger’, he claims that Aljazeera’s absence, while creating a news vacuum, will be shortly filled by other media outlets (Fisher, 2004).

Aljazeera’s bare reporting has created much confusion among media observers. Examples of such confusion can be found in the opinions of ABC reporters, Charles Gibson and Ted Koppel. While the former believes that showing dead bodies is “disrespectful,” the latter considers that it is “an obligation to remind people in the most graphic way that war is a dreadful thing” (Alter, 2003).

**Fairness without mediation:** The issue of fairness at Aljazeera is as problematic as the issues of accuracy and balance. For Andrew Marr, the BBC’s political editor, the balanced coverage of politics is not sufficient. Decent political coverage requires fairness as well (Marr, 2005). Defenders of Aljazeera not only believe that the network is fair, but also invite, or even challenge, the Western media to be as fair as Aljazeera. Their point of view is that the Western media operates according to a double standard, or, at the very least, is unfair. Faisal Bodi, Aljazeera Net’s editor, undermined the British media’s decision to condemn Aljazeera’s choice to conduct a report about two dead British soldiers. He argued that “this is simple hypocrisy” (Bodi, 2003), since the British media did not react similarly when they showed images of Iraqi soldiers either being captured, humiliated, or killed (Bodi, 2003).

An assessment as to how the U.S. media, particularly CNN, might have evaluated Aljazeera's choice to publish images of dead civilians in Iraq has been proposed by FAIR<sup>46</sup>: Fairness & accuracy in reporting. FAIR's report comprised a message for CNN, urging the network to examine Aljazeera's reports from the ground, which described hundreds of civilians being killed by U.S. forces, and it admonished CNN to enquire into the accuracy of these accounts, reflecting that the organization would be better served by asking whether the footage "corroborates those accounts -- not badgering Al Jazeera's editor about why he doesn't suppress that footage" (Fair, 2004).

The appeal challenging CNN to be as fair as Aljazeera leads us to examine the views of media critics who are skeptical about the fairness of the Western media in general, particularly regarding the publication of Bin Laden tapes, and in depicting images of casualties of war.

Michael Moran is a senior producer for special projects at MSNBC.com, and he argues that criticizing Aljazeera for publishing the Bin Laden tapes is unfair. He offers an instructive comparison between the enthusiasm of Bin Laden for Aljazeera, and the parallel actions on the part of the rebel Irish Republican Army, or Saddam Hussein. Michael Moran aptly asks:

Did the rebel Irish Republican Army send coded messages to the BBC and the Reuters news agency claiming responsibility for its bombings because it thought British journalists would be sympathetic? Did Saddam Hussein choose CNN as a conduit for his own propaganda during the Persian Gulf War because he took a shine to Peter

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<sup>46</sup> FAIR, the national media watch group, has been offering well-documented criticism of media bias and censorship since 1986. It works to invigorate the First Amendment by advocating greater diversity in the press and by scrutinizing media practices that marginalize issues of public interest, as well as minority and dissenting viewpoints. As an anti-censorship organization, it exposes neglected news stories and defends working journalists when they are muzzled.

Arnett? Of course not, though some — most memorably former Republican Sen. Alan Simpson, claimed so at the time (Moran, 2001).

Additionally, the Western media seem to be unfair when they blame Aljazeera for posting, and broadcasting images of death casualties. In its introductory statement on the forum of *The Command Post*, which raised a question about whether Aljazeera is evil or just plain different, the forum questioned why Western networks regularly show images of dead people from other parts of the world, especially from the Middle East, while attacking Aljazeera for showing pictures of dead American soldiers (Al Jazeera, 2003). As *The Command Post* puts it, Aljazeera merely represents the views of its viewers and users, as do the U.S. media. The forum then posed a rhetorical question for its users, asking whether it is fair to criticize Aljazeera for doing what seems natural and normal, even when the images it presents are disgusting and reprehensible (Al Jazeera, 2003).

## **2.4 Strategies of news remediation in Aljazeera Net**

The question of how Aljazeera Net alters news representation requires an analysis of the strategies of news representation and navigation, together with an examination of the emergent practices in Aljazeera Net. This section will theorize news re-representation on Aljazeera Net, and looks into how Aljazeera Net refashions and creates new sorts of representation.

### **2.4.1 Refashioning features of news representation**

#### **a) Re-thinking homepage layout: from simple discursive catalog to simple surprise catalog**

As described in previous sections of this chapter, the design of the homepage of Aljazeera Net has moved from textual to visual representation. The old version of

Aljazeera Net, as shown in figures 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3, was based on a '*simple discursive catalog*'. Eric S. Fredin (1997) explains that the essence of discursive format is to break the page into small sections, where each section has its own subhead, and headlines (p. 11). The discursive format is employed to encourage nonlinear modes of reading, and helps users to go to the specific section he wants to browse (Fredin, 1997, p.11). Additionally, it enables users to compare the contents of each section. Because the design in digression format is a road map, this format does not leave any room for confusion. In comparison with news sites that offer similar content, it appears that the CNN Arabic website matches the 'simple discursive format'.

The new design of Aljazeera Net follows what Eric S. Fredin calls the '*simple surprise catalog*' (Fredin, 1997, p.13). Aljazeera Net often alters the arrangement of pictures on its home page. During a striking or challenging event, Aljazeera Net modifies its homepage design to increase the saliency of the event, thereby assigning extra space to the main news story. More importantly, as shown in Figure 2-8, hyperlinked headlines attached to the main news story lead the user to visit various sections that he/she may not intend to access. Figure 2-9 shows a compelling example of a surprise format. Prior to the Iraqi elections, Aljazeera Net's main story included a headline and four sub-lines, wherein the main headline leads to a section about Arab news and the other four sub-lines lead to different sections. The first sub-line, concerning the Iraqi election of 2005, refers to comprehensive coverage of the Iraqi elections (See figure 2-9).

Surprises may also occur when the user clicks on one of the iconic photos and/or hyperlinked headlines that constitute the central part of the homepage design, so that he/she may find himself once again in a section he/she is not willing to visit.





As described by Eric S. Fredin (1997), surprise “occurs when the person’s expectations turn out to be misleading, incomplete, or wrong” (p. 13). Though often confusing, the surprise format may encourage the reader to navigate the website, improve recall, and to give it more careful consideration (Eric, 1997, p. 13).

**b) Hybridizing journalism: Re-adapting news genres to the online environment.**

Hybridity is an elusive term that can be defined in many different ways. It is celebrated as being both powerfully interruptive and yet commonplace and pervasive (Werbner, 1997, p.1). Its meaning, which has undergone dramatic modifications, is derived from biology and refers to the selective cross-breeding or cross-fertilization of plants (Staffor, 2001). However, its use in postcolonial studies is associated with colonial ideas about racial purity, and the creation of new transcultural spaces. For Bakhtin, hybridization constitutes a different linguistic consciousness: organic hybridity and intentional hybridity, simultaneously (Werbner, 1997, p. 4). Organic hybridity is one of the characteristic features of the historical evolution of all languages. Distinct in meaning, intentional hybrids create an ironic double consciousness, a collision between differing points of view on the world (Werbner, 1997, p.5).

In applying Bakhtin’s classification of hybridity, digital journalism can be seen as a loosely hybrid medium through which digital, print, and audiovisual modes are combined, and historically discrete technologies are blurred (Kawamoto, 2003, p. 4, & Tanjuakio, 2002). Fusion between different sorts of media hybridizes news and drives its representation. It opens up a new ‘Multi-media presentation-model’, within which “news

texts can be accompanied by photography, graphics, animation and video” (Gunter, 2003, p. 63).

In Aljazeera Net, hybridity manifests itself in various forms. It occurs when live programs of Aljazeera permit viewers to visit the Aljazeera website to express how they perceive certain issues that were raised during the program. Additionally, Aljazeera Net re-employs televised modes of presentation, such as visual reports of Aljazeera’s correspondents, the newsbreak template, and the recent news development template.

Engagement between computer technology and design is another form of hybridity. The new version of Aljazeera employs news navigation tools, such as a search-listing bar that includes a list of sections, wherein the reader can move from one section to another. Also, Aljazeera’s users have become adept at controlling the appearance of entire sections of its pages. To empower its users, Aljazeera places movable lists at the side of each page. Conveniently, users can close or open them by clicking on the plus or minus sign at the top of each list.

More importantly, distinct from most Pan-Arab news sites, Aljazeera Net has altered two distinct genres of online journalism so as to take advantage of the capabilities of the online environment: news stories and cartoons. To make the news story more compatible with the online environment, Aljazeera Net has hyperlinked two of the basic elements in the news story’s structure; namely, headlines and brief leads. Abandoned in the new version of Aljazeera Net, the brief lead, a common structural device of Arab news stories, was used in its old website, and had both dynamic and interactive modes. On the old homepage of Aljazeera Net, brief leads of the main news stories appeared before the reader in the traditional static mode. Yet, when a user scrolled down to

navigate other news sections, the brief lead was redirected so as to become more dynamic. In other words, when a user clicked on a headline, a hyperlinked brief lead would appear, so that the user could read it before deciding whether to go on to the news story or not.

The second journalistic genre that Aljazeera Net has modified is the cartoon<sup>47</sup>. During the period, 2003-2005, Aljazeera Net posted 156 animated cartoons. Theoretically speaking, the cartoon<sup>48</sup> is a visual form, whose fantastic characteristics elicit laughter and anarchic disorientation (Chadwell, 1997, p. 16). The political cartoon often responds to information the readers already know, yet it makes them see details they could not see before, or to represent a somewhat unexpected editorial line, stance or point of view (Berger, 1998, p. 136). In the Arab context, the cartoon, as a form of popular culture, is a genre that challenges press censorship, and serves as an index of the “power of the media, political rhetoric, and persuasion, ...and resistance” (Slyomovics, 2001, p. 74). Pantu, Le Monde’s cartoonist, believes that the art of the cartoon in the Arab world conveys a public worldview, which, if studied more carefully, would provide a more accurate understanding of the area (El Gartit, 2005).

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<sup>47</sup> Aljazeera Net replaced the term cartoon with caricature, because the latter genre is more popular among Arabs.

<sup>48</sup> Both caricatures and cartoons can be defined as pictorial representations within which the physical characteristics of an object or person are exaggerated (Othman). Political cartoons are usually composed of two elements: caricature, which parodies a person or an object, and the provision of a simple or more or less complex context, accompanied by an allusion (Backer). Historically, the origins of visual representations and drawings are deeply rooted in ancient Egyptian culture. Yet, the earliest modern Arab contributions to the field were initiated by Yaqub Sannu’, an Egyptian journalist, who created the first cartoon character called Abu Naddara (“the man wearing glasses”). Since, the cartoon is now a popular genre, it has served as a means of overcoming censorship, and Arab cartoonists play a significant role in Arab countries. The major cartoonists have created enduring cartoon characters that are popular throughout the Arab world and beyond. Among cartoonists who inspired the Arab public with their cartoons are the Egyptians, Toughan, George Albahgouri, Hakem, Salah Jaheen, Abd-Elsamea, Rakha, Nagi, Mustafa Hussein, Raa’ouf, Gomaa; the Palestinian, Nagi Alali; the Iraqi, Ghazi; the Lebanese, Pierre Sadeq; and the Libyan, Muhammad Alawawi.

To hybridize the cartoon, the Pakistani cartoonist, Shujaat Ali<sup>49</sup>, has transformed Aljazeera Net cartoons from a static mode to a more dynamic mode, through the use of the art of animation. Animated cartoons can re-inscribe space and time, and they make it possible to mingle an unlimited number of frames and drawings into one animated drawing (See figures 2-10 & 2-11). Animation has been the subject of endless technological discourses that purport to define it (Chadwell, 1997, p. 40). As Joanna Rose Bouldin (2004) puts it, many books have been written about animation, and there have been many attempts to analyze it, yet there is very little consensus about what it is (p. 4).

The problem of arriving at an inclusive definition of animation is compounded by its diverse technical applications, and its multiple institutional contexts (p. 5). The techniques that can be classified under a hypothetical definition of animation are enormous. Similarly, there are a vast range of applications and formats, such as television, video games, film, advertisements, military simulations, scientific imaging, Internet graphics, cartoons, and many others besides (Bouldin, 2004, p. 5). Indeed, the many institutional factors that determine our current conceptualizations of animation make an inclusive definition of animation especially problematic (Bouldin, 2004, p. 6). However, Norman McLaren, a Canadian animation pioneer, proposed a working definition of animation in 1950:

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<sup>49</sup> Shujaat Ali is a political cartoonist whose professional avocations combine the creation of art/cartoons about aviation and modern art animation. Born in Rawal Pini, a city close to Islamabad, in 1971, Shujaat studied chemistry, mathematics, and physics at the university of Punjab-Lahore. He started his career as a cartoonist at the age of twenty-three, and received an education in modern art in 1990. He teaches the art of cartoon creation at the Institute of Mass Communication (IMC) in Islamabad. He is a member of the American Society of Aviation Art. Shjuaat has not yet created a distinctive cartoon character(s). Other Arab cartoonists have become popular because of the cartoon characters they have created. Among these Arab cartoonists are the Egyptian, Musfafa Hussein, who created several cartoon characters, and the Palestinian, Nagi Alali, who inspired Arabs through his cartoon child, Handala.

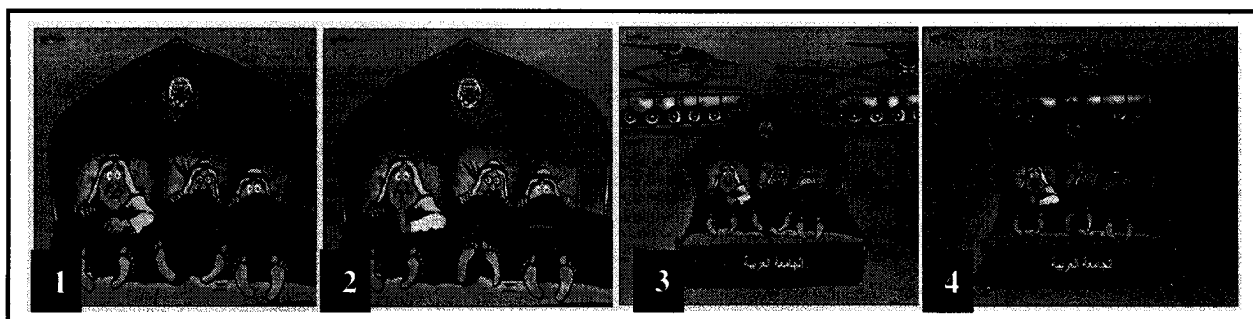


Figure 2-10. An example for animated cartoon: four drawings animated into one cartoon

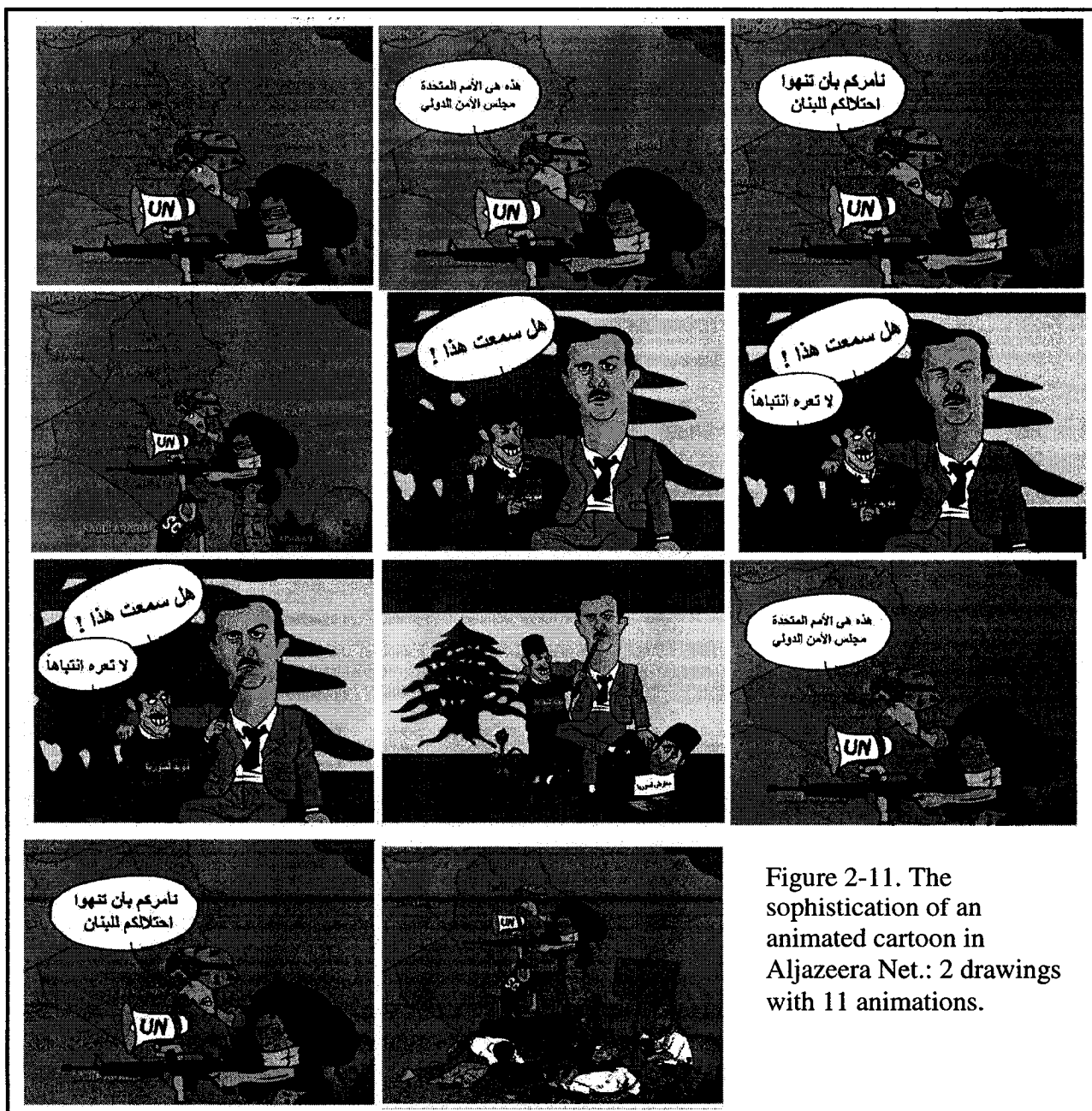


Figure 2-11. The sophistication of an animated cartoon in Aljazeera Net.: 2 drawings with 11 animations.

Animation is not the art of drawings that move, but the art of movements that are drawn. What happens between each frame is much more important than what exists on each frame. Animation is therefore the art of manipulating the invisible interstices that live between frames (Bouldin, 2004, p. 7).

Norman McLaren's tentative definition of animation takes note of the different sorts of frames that are employed in cartoons. In the case of Aljazeera Net's cartoons, while the animation of the main objects in cartoons is superficial, the effects Shujaat Ali often employs, such as fading, zooming in/out, expanding, and fading zoom, incorporate invisible frames that contextualize the cartoon, and prompt users to entertain a more calculated interpretation of its meaning.

**c) Reviewing news sectioning strategies: silencing the representation of spatial bias**

When Aljazeera Net established a visual representation in its new version, the arrangements of the content were accordingly transformed. The old website of Aljazeera underscored a geographical arrangement and classified the news into four sections, comprising the Arab Watan (Arab Home), Asia and the Pacific, the Americas, Europe and Israel. Moreover, it included thematic arrangements for news about the arts and culture, medicine and health, sports, books, the economy, science and technology, special interest files, and various points of view.

Although no study has yet been conducted about the news flow at Aljazeera Net, the geographical arrangement of the content demonstrated that the representation of the news at Aljazeera Net was spatially biased. Conclusions about the geographical bias of Aljazeera Net may be predicted through a parallel study of the news coverage at

Aljazeera television. The study conducted by Ayish I. Mohammed found that Aljazeera carried “a high percentage of news items about pan-Arab developments and issues” (Ayish, 2001). Of five television networks, Aljazeera registered the highest percentage (72.3%) of Pan-Arab news coverage. Understandably, studies of news flow indicate the predictability of cultural affinity and distance that permit the news to move in greater volume between immediate geographical regions (Galtung, 1992, p. 39, & Kariel, 1995, p. 136). However, similar Pan-Arab networks, such as the MBC, do not show as much interest in Arab issues as Aljazeera. Mohammed Ayish’s study found that only 51.5% of MBC’s coverage was devoted to Pan-Arab issues (Ayish, 2001).

The new version of Aljazeera Net reflects the aim of its television sister in positing itself as a transnational network<sup>50</sup>. In an attempt to blur the boundaries between geographic borders, and to create a balance between Pan-Arab news and foreign news, Aljazeera Net has classified the news into two categories: Arab news and international news. In so doing, Aljazeera checked its obvious spatial bias toward news coming from the Arab home countries. However, Aljazeera Net remains distinct from the global and non-Arab websites that target the Arab public, such as the CNN Arab service, and the BBC Arab network. Whereas both these websites choose to insert Arab news within the wider umbrella of the Middle East, Aljazeera Net retains the prime symbol of Arab countries in employing the label “Arabi.” In using the term ‘Arabi’, which literally means Arabic, the immediate connotation of the term indicates a radical change in news representation. Whereas news in the old version of Aljazeera remediated places, the new version of Aljazeera Net re-presents news as content.

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<sup>50</sup> Aljazeera television is planning to launch an English channel during 2006. It established its English website in 2003.



**d) Challenging the characteristics of hypertext: non-centric, yet selectively sequential navigation**

Aljazeera Net is an ideal instance of the chief characteristics of hypertextuality. Hyperlinks in both the old and new version of Aljazeera Net, while being technically different, emphasize the non-centric nature of hypertext. Hypertext, as defined by Theodor Nelson, and George P. Landow, is a “fully non-sequential writing,” an infinitely re-centerable system of non-linear reading and writing (Libby, 2004), which is “composed of bodies of linked texts that have no primary axis of organization” (Landow, 1997, pp-36-37).

Accordingly, hyperlinks at Aljazeera Net take their users on a non-centric, and ever ramifying tour. Unless the reader is prepared to leave the text, navigation can only lead to a point of no return. However, the challenge Aljazeera Net now faces is to formulate an effective response to the change in the nature of navigation. Usually, the user moves through a discursive, non-centric route. The Aljazeera website facilitates chronological navigation through news stories by providing hyperlinks at the side of each news story, wherein users can read the old stories in the order of their original posting. Significantly, when Aljazeera Net’s users choose to go through hyperlinks adjacent to the news stories, they are in a position to replay the entire series of events they are engaged in reading about (See Figure 2-12). As one of its defining characteristics, hypertext fundamentally embeds an intertextual system that has the capacity to emphasize intertextuality in a way that the printed pages in newspapers or magazines cannot (Landow, 1992). By removing the linearity of print, which has hitherto defined the idea of a ‘fixed unitary text’,

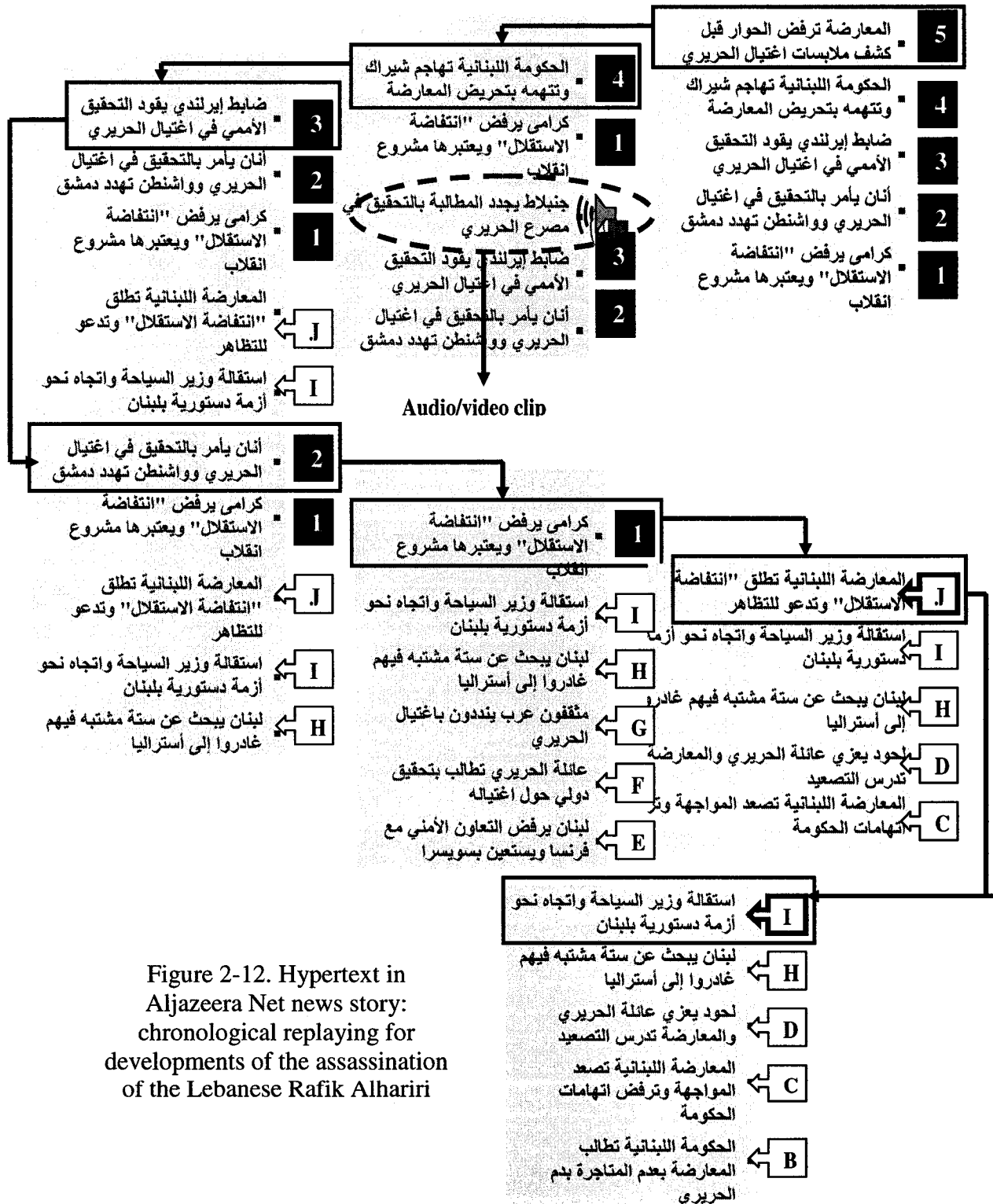


Figure 2-12. Hypertext in Aljazeera Net news story: chronological replaying for developments of the assassination of the Lebanese Rafik Alhariri

hypertext offers users the opportunity of floating from one passage to another, “with the seamless ease and usability the print text offers” (Schubert). Intertexts are extensively used in the scripts of the Aljazeera TV programs, and in the special files of Aljazeera Net, where readers can find hyperlinked words that provide more information about the various personnel, places, and concepts. For example, a user who reads a special file about the Iraq invasion can find hyperlinked words for Alnajaaf and Shiite. While most of the hyperlinks at Aljazeera Net refer to internal texts, the network occasionally permits the user to access other websites, particularly when it provides external links related to the resources used for in-depth coverage.

**d) Transforming the visual: turning photos into icons**

The change Aljazeera Net has made in its mode of representation also signifies a shift in the use of photos. In the old version of Aljazeera Net, only one photo – with a width of 13 cm and a height of 10 cm – was associated with the main news story, and used on the homepage. The new version of Aljazeera Net has increased the number of photos, and minimized their sizes. Although the size of the main photo has dramatically decreased to a width of 6.7 cm, and to a height of 5.3 cm, its size remains bigger than that of the other photos whose size has been equally reduced to a width of 3 cm, and a height of 2.4 cm.

The reduction in the size of the photos has turned the photos into icons, and has transformed their function to serve as eye-catching images. In so doing, Aljazeera Net seems to have followed the design of some of the Pan-Arab websites, such as Middle East Online, wherein the iconic images on the homepage are merely smaller copies made from bigger photos. In other words, when Aljazeera’s user clicks on an icon on the

homepage, s/he always moves to a page that includes the 'normal-usage' size of the photo, or at least the bigger sizes thereof. More importantly, icons on the homepages of Aljazeera Net often become symbols when they signify issues and concepts related to the photograph, because icons related to images attain larger frames of reference and symbolic overtones (Cannon, 2001, p. 18).

**f) Photo composition: erosion or re-negotiation of visual truth?**

While imitating the graphic treatments in printed newsmagazines, Aljazeera Net distinctively employs different graphics techniques of photocomposition than those used in other Pan-Arab sites, or even global networks that target the Arab public, such as the BBC Arab service and the CNN Arab network. Aljazeera Net merges drawings, photos, and icons to create different sorts of collages. The enmeshing of photos serves to legitimate images so that they become images with the power of persuasion (Newton, 2001, p. 89). More importantly, the photocompositions found at Aljazeera Net sacrifice visual truth<sup>51</sup>. Whereas various factors influence photojournalism at Aljazeera Net - such as the camera angles, the viewpoint of the cameraman, framing, focus, and the position of the photos and the headlines – photocompositions serve to subjectify and renegotiate visual truth, and seem to bring about an erosion of the original image. Charles Traub, the consulting photographic editor, explains that the “digital world tells us unequivocally that not only is there no one-to-one correspondence between the image and the scene, but there is no original” (Traub, 1999).

Evidently, the photocompositions used by Aljazeera Net seem to occasion an erosion of visual truth, and undermine what is traditionally at stake in the construction of reality. Looking closely into how the photographic treatment at Aljazeera Net guards

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<sup>51</sup> Visual truth is defined as authentic knowledge that is derived from seeing (Newton, 2001, p. 89).

reality within the culture of the virtual leads us to talk about Guy Debord's notion of the society of the spectacle, wherein images are united and visibly affirmed in order to point to separation, and the negation of the Arab reality (Debord, 1992, pp. 64-65).

#### **2.4.2 Absorbing the medium: removing the tele-visual codes, and hyper-mediating verbal codes.**

Aljazeera Net adopts a text-audio strategy to assure its users the right of initiation into appropriate ways of following Aljazeera's news bulletins and programs. Through this text-audio strategy, the programs of Aljazeera Television are transformed into scripts and audio files, within which Aljazeera's users can follow the discussion of the program through reading its script while listening to the program through an audio file. In so doing, Aljazeera Net has erased the need for visual codes. Codes that constitute the tele-visual, such as codes of composition and movement have been removed. In other words, codes of composition - that govern the picture frames and their colors, the number of elements on the screen and their relationship to each other - and the movement's codes that control the frame of both the camera and the subject, have been eliminated. Aljazeera Net's strategy of absorbing the visual codes of its programs has even more significant implications. Whereas the audio file of any program of Aljazeera operates as a cast player, and mediates the vocal codes, the scripts of Aljazeera Net's programs hyper-mediate the colloquial speech of the program's guests.

Aljazeera seems to unwittingly rehearse Derrida's theoretical objections to de Saussure concerning the relation between speech and writing. Saussure "favors speech as the proper object of linguistic investigation, rather than writing as a secondary representation, or even disguise of speech" (Grodén, 1997). Derrida, on the other hand, is

forced “to acknowledge the dangerous, and usurping power of writing over speech” (Grodén, 1997). Ironically, Derrida confirms the historical priority of the voice over the letter. In Derrida’s eyes, while speech is self-present, immediate and authentic, writing is derivative, because it is just a copy of speech (Grodén, 1997). Significantly, the scripts of the programs at Aljazeera Net justify Derrida’s argument. These scripts are merely duplicates of speech, or a copy placed on the other window.

#### **2.4.2 Re-employing users: re-shaping perceptions to construct news**

Since its conception in January 2001, and up to March 2005, Aljazeera Net has posted 775 polls<sup>52</sup> that address users’ perceptions concerning different topics. The network often utilizes the results of certain polls to create a news story, which are then wedded to a popular analysis of the results of the posted polls. Although the adaptation of the results of a survey to a news story has become a common practice in different media outlets, the way Aljazeera Net has decided to edit the results of its polls constructs a meaning that does not necessarily exist. Whereas all the polls that Aljazeera Net posts are constrained by a time limit, whose online duration never exceeds 4 days, Aljazeera Net deliberately uses the term ‘referendum’ when it edits its news stories about polls. In the course of 2004, Aljazeera Net dramatically changed its lexicon, particularly in regard to news stories relating to its polls. In an attempt to be more balanced, Aljazeera dispensed with the adjectives that describe the consensus of its respondents. Terms such as ‘vast majority’ and ‘popular majority’ have been replaced by the term ‘majority’.

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<sup>52</sup> Aljazeera Net posted 158 polls during 2001, 152 polls in 2002, and 157 polls in 2003. In 2004, the number of polls of Aljazeera Net jumped to 267 polls. Since the beginning of 2005, Aljazeera Net has posted 41 polls.

#### **2.4.4 Retracing McLuhan's theory: how content re-mediate Aljazeera**

The aim of Aljazeera to be an exclusive media network that offers non-aired and non-published content entails a reexamination of the issue of news mediation per se. Whereas the normative view of news collectively determines that media mediate news, news aired or published in Western media about Aljazeera not only re-represents the content of Aljazeera Net, but also re-mediate Aljazeera per se.

To understand how Aljazeera is re-mediated, it is necessary to recall the association between Aljazeera and Al Qaeda's leaders. Since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, Aljazeera television, which often presents audio-visual messages from the leaders of Al Qaeda, has gradually become part of the news story. Similarly, Aljazeera's website uses screen pictures of Aljazeera television which includes its logo and its news label to emphasize that Aljazeera is involved in the news story. For example, the image of Aljazeera television that shows Bin Laden's tape on October 29, 2004, was posted in many websites, among which were ABC News and the MSNBC. The latter makes it clear that Aljazeera is part of the story. As shown in figure 2-13, Aljazeera has become embedded as part of the content.

Following McLuhan's statement, 'the medium is the message', Aljazeera has become a new element in the non-Arab news sites. Whenever non-Arab websites - such as MSNBC, ABC News, and BBC News World, point to Aljazeera's statement about the length of the tapes aired - a veiled signal about the newsworthiness of Aljazeera is emphasized. Examples supporting the claim that content re-mediate Aljazeera, are ample. On November 29, 2004, the BBC News World's story about "Al Qaeda deputy in

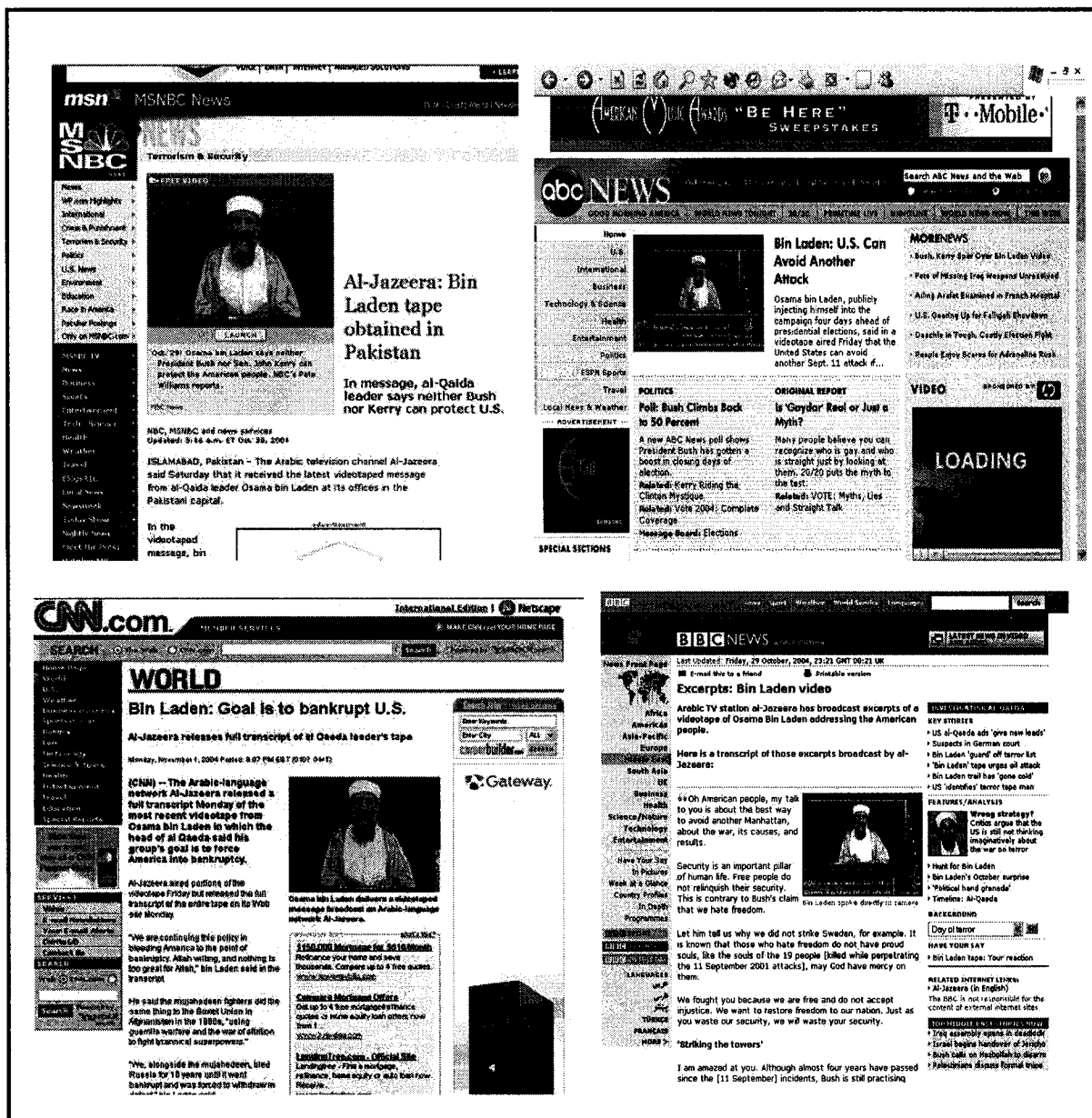


Figure 2-13. News stories in MSNBC, CNN, BBC News World, and ABC news show that Aljazeera has become embedded part of the content



new tape,” indicated the decision of Aljazeera to air only eight minutes from Al Qaeda’s deputy leader tape as a consideration of its newsworthiness. Similar considerations dictated the decisions made by MSNBC and ABC News on February 20, 2005, when Aljazeera aired another tape from the same leader. MSNBC and ABC News reported The Associated Press story, clarifying that “Al-Jazeera reported that the excerpt was part of a longer videotape, but it did not indicate the length of the entire tape. The station did not say if it would air the rest of the video” (Purported, 2005, & Nasrawi, 2005).

## **2.5 New emergent practices at Aljazeera Net**

In Understanding News (1982), John Hartley reminds us that news gains much of its form “from the characteristics of the medium in which it appears” (p. 5). On the web the convergence of media technologies re-shapes news representation by allowing its elements to be reconfigured in a new set of relationships (Hall, 2001, p. 209). The new configuration of news representations often alter the structure and modes of informing people, or at least re-determine new kinds of relationship between the various news elements, namely, the text, the headlines and the images.

Accordingly, Aljazeera Net exemplifies new modes of news representation, and suggests new structures through which to inform people. As I will explain in this section, although Aljazeera appears to imitate non-Arab news sites, or at least re-fashions their presentations of print media, the design Aljazeera Net adopts specifically reflects the strategy of the network to tell people differently through two contrasting techniques, comprising the path and the master narrative.

### **2.5.1 Paths: how visualization of elements empowers interactivity**

In a section entitled “knowledge,” Aljazeera Net provides its users with in-depth coverage, special reports, and points of view. The network emphasizes the power of its paths. Figures 2-14, 2-15 show that Aljazeera Net elaborates distinct paths when covering Arab issues. Clearly, Aljazeera Net resembles the design of the magazine’s pages, yet it combines images, headlines, texts, colors and backgrounds, whereas the paths in the CNN Arab network, and the BBC Arab news service are dependent on the adjacency of the images, headlines and texts.

Aljazeera Net emphasizes the emotional power of its images, which depend on the graphic manipulation of the photo along with its mimetic qualities, and not on the merely realistic quality of its imitations (LaGrandeur, 2003, p. 120). A comparison between Aljazeera Net and the CNN Arabic network will afford a significant example of the emotional appeal of these paths (See Figure 2-15).

Whereas the elements of the paths in the CNN Arab network and the BBC Arab news service are adjacent to each other (See figure 2-15), Aljazeera Net relies on one image, whose size is predominant. Within the image, Aljazeera Net incorporates hyperlinked headlines, texts and images that form one dominant colored image, constituting the path. This incorporation of the image, text and headlines does not merely create a dominant view about the issue being discussed, but also increases the level of user interactivity. Because the path includes dynamic re-presentation and hidden links, the user is invited to highlight each link and choose headlines or images from the lists provided for him (See Figure 2-14).



Figure 2-14. An example for the path in Aljazeera Net

Path about a  
'Year after  
the Iraqi  
invasion in  
Aljazeera Net

Path about a  
'Year after  
the Iraqi  
invasion in  
CNN Arabic

Path about  
Tsunami in  
BBC Arabic

Figure 2-15. Difference  
between paths in Aljazeera  
Net, CNN Arabic, and BBC  
Arabic



### **2.5.2 Master narratives: challenging the inverted pyramid structure**

For journalists and editors, the ability to build narratives is a skill learned during the earlier years of practicing journalism (Tuchman, 1978, p. 105). Technically speaking, journalistic narrations follow a basic structure, which are collectively termed an 'Inverted Pyramid'. Within this structure, the editors concisely identify the most striking news first, and consequently get "to the point as quickly as possible" (The Missouri, 1999, p. 171). Jakob Nielsen (1996) argues that the inverted pyramid becomes even more important on the web, especially as several studies have suggested that users do not scroll, which means that if the users are not very interested in the news immediately presented, they will frequently be left to read only the first paragraphs of the news (Nielsen, 1996).

Yet, for scholars in The Missouri Group, who write about news reporting and writing, the inverted pyramid "is not the best way to tell stories" (p. 171). Similarly, Karim H. Karim (2003a) invites us to think in terms of other ways of telling (p. 183). In his book, Islamic peril: Media and global violence (2003a), Karim addresses the current challenges faced by journalists. He supposes that polyvalent discourses, occasioned by postcolonial writers, permit journalists to explore new forms of narrative (p. 183).

Aljazeera Net seems to have taken on the challenge that Karim refers to, because it decides to tell its stories through a different mode of narration, namely, the master narrative model. Understandably, the master narrative is "the story that generates all the other stories" (Rosen, 2003). In their book, Contesting the Master Narrative, Jeffery Cox and Shelton Stromquist (1998) cogently account for the loss of objectivity that occurred in the early 1990s, creating a vacuum that calls for self-conscious alternative narratives (p. 8). Jay Rosen (2003) describes the master narrative as "the big story, sometimes the

back story, often a fragment of a narrative that generates all the other stories, which are smaller pieces” (Rosen, 2003).

The design of news at Aljazeera Net reflects the features of the master narrative that Jay Rosen has outlined above. Clearly, as shown in Figure 2-16, Aljazeera applies three types of master narrative: the big story, the back-story and the fragmented story. Figure 2-16 explains how Aljazeera Net has used three stories to create ‘the big story’, within which the inverted pyramid has become part of the structure. Accordingly, when the big story, the all-encompassing story, is placed adjacent to hypertexts of news stories that are synchronized in chronological perspective, with hyperlinks to audio and visual files, the back story is emphasized.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has concretely examined the concept of remediation of the news in relation to digital technologies. It stresses the fact that while digital technologies are perceived as a “hybrid of technical, material, social, and economic factors” (Bolter, 1999, p. 77), the identity of media is constructed outside the digital realm. The World Wide Web does not construct Aljazeera Net; rather, it alters the way it constructs meaning, which is influenced by the characteristics of the medium per se. The first part of the chapter seeks to shed light on how Aljazeera emerged as the electrical shockwave that jolted the consciousness of many Arabs, as well as having a galvanizing effect in the West. Evidently, Aljazeera Net sought to spread counter hegemonic ideas that resist hegemonic discourses adopted by both Arab and Western regimes. Aljazeera has been found to be a professional network that applies different yet carefully elaborated standards of professionalism. ‘Expert organization’ in news has been achieved through

The back stories

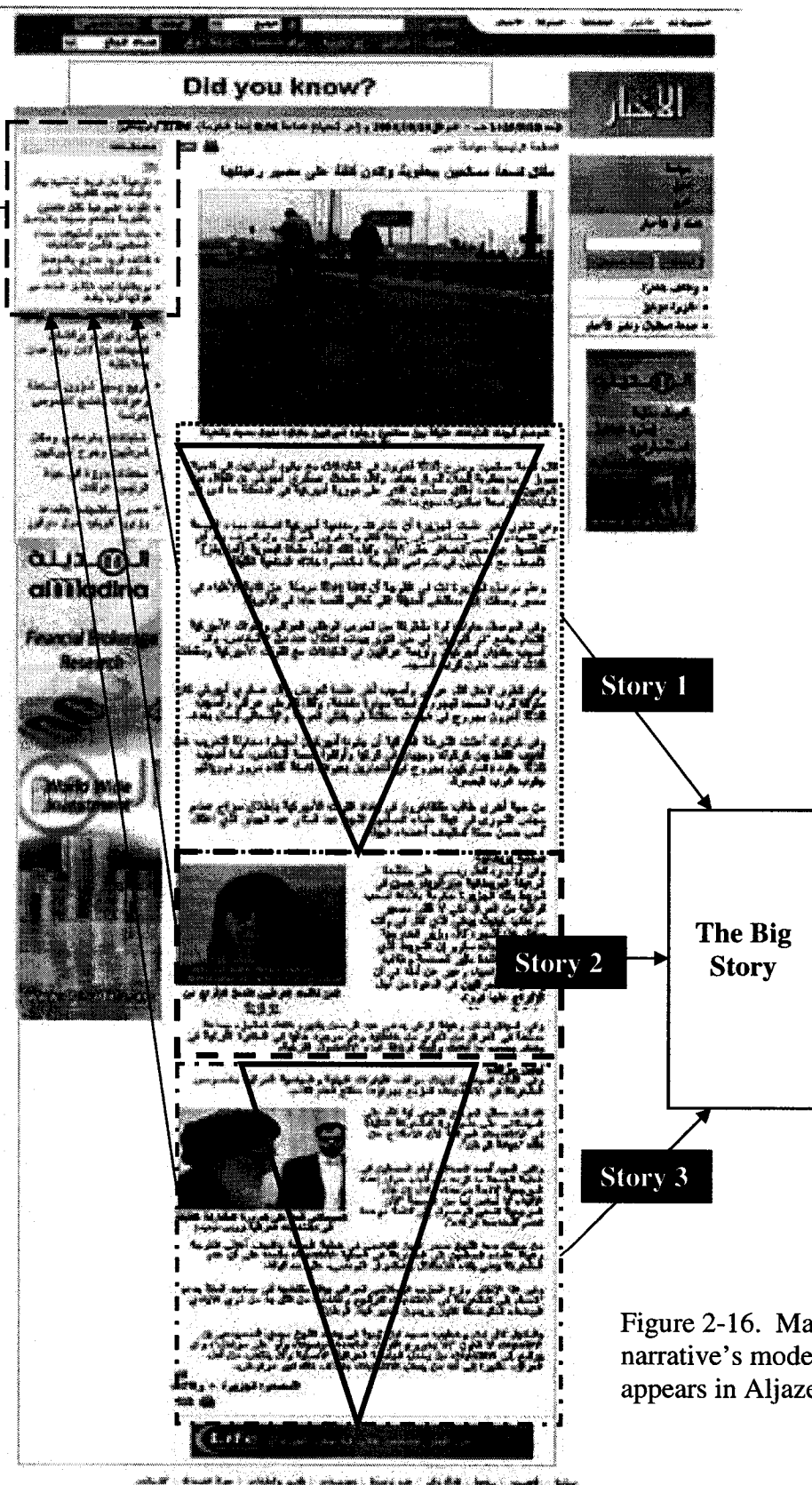


Figure 2-16. Master narrative's model as it appears in Aljazeera Net

the adoption of professionalism as a discourse, and there is an array of checklists to enforce these standards. As a professional media network, Aljazeera challenges the normative view of environmental adaptation, while reflecting a qualified adherence to the notion of occupational socialization. Whereas Aljazeera Net characterizes itself as an objective or neutral media, the Aljazeera team has expressed controversial views that warrant the description of objectivity as an institutional slogan or goal, albeit one that cannot be realistically attained. More significantly, the actual work practices of Aljazeera have given birth to the new concept of neo-objectivity, based on three main rules: balance with perspective, accuracy without embellishment, and fairness without mediation.

The last section of this chapter explains how the construction of meaning at Aljazeera Net has been influenced by its remediation strategies, wherein meaning resides in representation, and is intricately linked to design. Significantly, the strategies adopted by Aljazeera Net have helped to redefine the normative deployment of different journalistic genres, such as photographic images and cartoons, and they help to avert the chorological dilemma of hypertext. Aljazeera Net has proven that characteristics that have hitherto defined a certain medium, such as television, can be reabsorbed. Aljazeera Net has taken on the challenge of creating a new model of narratives, namely, the master narrative model, which makes Aljazeera Net distinct from other Pan-Arab websites, and non-Arab news sites that target Arabs, such as the BBC Arab news service, and the CNN Arab network.

Finally, as part of its strategy of counter-hegemony, Aljazeera Net has successfully worked to remediate the flow of information. As a network that offers exclusive or original content Aljazeera Net has achieved its self-professed aim. Instead of re-



contextualizing the news of Aljazeera Net, Western media remediate Aljazeera per se, and thereby accredit its newsworthiness. The design of Aljazeera Net explains why digital technology, while refashioning different genres and the absorbing characteristics of Aljazeera television, cannot absorb the unique identity of this media.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Aljazeera as the voice of Arabs on the Internet: Representing Arab identity and “the Arab Diaspora”**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The complexities surrounding the notion of Arabness have to do, on the one hand, with its construction as a collective identity and the historical contingencies that have brought about the fragmentation and diminution of this identity and, on the other hand, the identity of the Pan-Arab media, such as Aljazeera and, more specifically, its news remediation strategies, which suggest that the ability to articulate issues of identity and news resides in strategies of representation as they intersect both domains. Representation, a widely used term in media studies, refers to the construction of various aspects of reality, such as objects, places, events, and cultural identities (Chandler, 2003).

Media scholars and ethno-methodologists properly discern and distinguish among representation, identity and news. For example, Stuart Hall (1991) briefly characterizes the relationship between identity and representation, stating that identity is “always in part a kind of representation” (p. 49). Ethno-methodologists, on the other hand, classify this sort of representation of identity in news media into two contrasting categories: reflexivity and indexicality. Both terms have been used to explain how media and ethnic groups can attain a reciprocal sense of identity (Tuchman, 1978, p. 189). Whereas reflexivity stipulates that news representation is embedded in the identity it characterizes, indexicality specifies that news representation may attribute meanings distinct from, or apart from, the context in which this identity is produced (Tuchman, 1978, p. 189).

This chapter utilizes reflexivity and indexicality as part of its ongoing examination of the representation of Arab identity, yet it employs a broader framework of analysis to discuss the various representations of Arabs and the sources of Arabness. For instance, it employs framing and perspectival analysis to investigate how Arab identity is represented in Aljazeera Net, and to assess Aljazeera's capacity to reciprocally become the voice of Arab identity in the Arab community in North America. Moreover, the second part of this chapter sheds light on the senses of perception, the essence of representation, and its problematic nature. It articulates the relationship between representation and the distinct properties of identities.

The discussion that follows in the second part will be followed by an examination of media framing, and the relationship between perspectives, frames and representation. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to the representation of Arabs and the sources that govern Arab identity at Aljazeera Net. The closing section will investigate how Aljazeera represents Arab Muslim Americans, and how Arab scholars, media experts, and academics in North America characterize Arab identity and, more specifically, Aljazeera.

### **3.2. The senses and the essence of representation in relation to the properties of identity**

Representation remains one of the most vague and misunderstood concepts in academia. Its ambiguity resides, not so much in its definition as a term, but as a concept. Most scholars who examine representation tend to highlight its definition through listing its various senses or meanings. Alternatively, attempts to undo the concept of representation often go beyond the definition of the term to focus on the problematic essence of the concept itself.

In examining the various senses of representation, Stuart Hall (1997a) adduces two relevant meanings for the word:

- (1) To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description or portrayal or imagination; to place a likeness of it before us in our mind or in the senses.
- (2) To represent also means to symbolize, or to stand for (Hall, 1997a, p.16).

Whereas the first meaning of representation refers to its intentional but superficial depiction, the second meaning implies delegation to speak for or act on behalf of another (Barnett, 2003, p. 15). Depiction and delegation in representation can be undertaken through the use of the perspectives and frames that contextualize content, as well as the signs and codes that govern it.

Representation, then, can be linguistic, or pictorial. As Stuart Hall (1997a) aptly defines it, linguistic representation is the production of meaning through language (p.16). This concerns not only how identities are represented within the text, but also, how they are constructed in the process of production and reception (Chandler, 2003). Pictorial representation “derives from both the arrangement of elements and the implicitness of the interrelationships inherent in the representation” (Peuquet, 2002, p.191).

Using the same classifications outlined by Stuart Hall, yet with more stress on the articulation between representation and reality, Andrew Gibson (1996) differentiates between two types of representation: surface representation and depth representation. In the eyes of Gibson, surface representation is “a realism of particulars. Its view of language is innocent. It conceives language as unproblematic and adequate to what it represents” (p. 81). Additionally, surface representation does in fact “give primacy to the

visible” (Gibson, 1996, p. 82), even though it is not necessarily confined to it, but practically encompasses what is uttered and heard (Gibson, 1996, p. 82). Surface representation in fact looks like what Martin Heidegger termed “the blueprint of nature,” yet it never goes behind the blueprint framework (Gibson, 1996, p. 83). Representation, in this sense, is not a copy of something; rather, as with the point of view expressed by Barry Brummett (2003), who invites us to understand representation as a kind of simulation, it is an entity “that is different from that which it represents” (Brummett, 2003, p. 4).

Conversely, representation of depths “means penetrating the visible” (Gibson, 1996, p. 82), and paradoxically anticipates the invisible form of the visible (Gibson, 1996, p. 82). It often stresses the “validity of foundations, and essential intuitions at the expense of linguistic habits, social conventions, and ideological constructs” (Gibson, 1996, p. 85). However, because of its arbitrariness in regard to culture, it recognizes the contingency of “culture’s ontological point of view” (Gibson, 1996, p. 85). Moreover, depth representation is more elastic, because it cannot claim “incontestably to have captured deep, hidden, metaphysically significant natures, once and for all” (Gibson, 1996, p. 85). Nonetheless, it refuses to “find life at the level of life itself, as surface, flux, proximity” (Gibson, 1996, p. 85). While the represented is articulated through its ontological foundations, representation is epistemological, since it is “an analogue of reality, a shadowing of reality, but not a precise copy of it” (Brummett, 2003, p. 4).

Clive Barnett (2003) adduces two senses of representation: depiction and delegation (p. 15). To further Barnett’s characterization of representation, Stephen Coleman, and Jacques Derrida explore some alternative meanings of representation. Stephen Coleman

(2004) concisely confines representation to its essentials, defining representation as mediation between the absent and the present. Representation, in this sense, is a “communication activity entailing the symbolic embodiment of a previously absent entity” (p. 8). In a more theoretical sense, Jacques Derrida distinguishes between two senses of presence in representation; firstly, as differential *repetition* that modifies presence, and secondly, as a *substitution* of “what takes the place of, what occupies the place of, another” (Barnett, 2003, p. 14).

Now, when looking at the doubts surrounding representation, the concept of representation becomes a subject of debate between poststructuralists<sup>53</sup> and postmodernists. Christopher Prendergast (2000) attempts to account for the feeling of skepticism surrounding issues of representation. Prendergast believes that nowadays, “in our so-called postmodern times, we are more likely to be seduced by the claim that what matters to us, existentially and historically, is unrepresentable” (p. 1).

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<sup>53</sup> Despite the ongoing critiques of representation and identity made by postmodernists, this dissertation adopts the poststructuralist approach, since, briefly speaking, one cannot claim that Arab identity is not a historical construct, nor can one allege that it is not articulated through various sorts of cultural signs and codes. Moreover, the poststructuralist approach can be seen to be more appropriate for this study, since this approach articulates a thoroughly historical view, which looks at “different forms of consciousness, identities, signification, and so on, as historically produced and therefore varying in different historical periods” (Best, 1991, p.20). Since poststructuralists confer primacy of meaning on the signifier, their approach affords more opportunities to examine Aljazeera Net, and related questions, such as the instability of meaning, the dynamic productivity of language, the intertextual play of the signifier, and the referential relationship between subject and object (Best, 1991, p.20). In stressing the importance of differences in the matter of unities and identities, the poststructuralist approach is more germane to this study, because it facilitates investigations into the fragmentation of Arab identity, or, more properly, it can be enlisted to explore the divisions and fragmentations of Arabness, thus scrutinizing from within the sources of identity that have all too often been thought to be stable throughout the various phases of postcolonial history. A certain overlapping occurs between the postmodern and poststructuralist approaches, especially when the discussion focuses on features of Arab culture and Arab identity, and a new historical phenomenon has been seen to penetrate the Arab World in the post-modern era. However, considering that postmodernists attempt to subvert the former grand narratives, and favor ‘mini narratives’ - which are contingent, provisional, and temporary, at best - and local events, rather than large-scale global concepts (Best, 1991, p.27, & Hjørland, 2005), a poststructuralist approach is clearly more relevant and comprehensive in scope when discussing the key components of Arab identity, and despite postmodernist claims to be contesting master narratives, an approach situated at the sites of intersection of postmodernist and poststructuralist thought, can be paradoxically more global in its range of enquiry.

Yet, Christopher Prendergast alleges that while representation is not universal, everything is representable (pp. 1-2). That is to say, when something is seen to be unrepresentable, this does not mean that representation is impossible, but rather, it indicates the inadequacy of representation to represent what it represents, since it may fail in its purported task (Prendergast, 2000, p.2). Prendergast appears to draw our attention to what we might call the impurity of representation. The impurity of representation, the argument goes, refers to its ambivalence, and this “implies the absence of what is being made present again, and this absence cannot be assumed to be merely contingent” (Barnett, 2003, p. 16). John Zerzan believes that in considering matters of representation “to represent or to be represented is a degradation, a reduction, both in the sense of symbolic culture and in terms of power” (The refusal, 2004). In a rather more critical view of the essence of representation, Andrew Gibson (1996) decries representation for appearing in “a double figure, in the imitation of the imitation, the simulation of imitative form” (p. 71), and for being “wedded either to an empiricism that refuses to interrogate its own bases, or to an essentialism opened up to question” (p. 69).

When relating the notion of representation to the properties of identity, representation can be considered to be a communicative mechanism of identity. Mary Fong’s article, “Multiple Dimensions of Identity,” indicates three distinct properties of identity, conceived in terms of: (1) modes of expression, (2) content and relationship levels, and (3) salience and intensity. Thus, representation entails the repetition of the ‘core of symbols’, ‘names and labels’, as well as the ‘norms’, which underlie the various modes of expression (Mary, 2004a, p. 22). In representation the content has a relational aspect with the message, thereby determining how the message is presented. Salience and

intensity of identity reveal the various degrees of attention attracted to, or, alternatively, performed by a given identity (Mary, 2004a, p. 26).

### **3.2.1. Perspective and framing**

Initially, the study of frames, pioneered by Snow and his colleagues (Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford 1986), and subsequently developed by Gamson (1996), was centrally based on the works of Erving Goffman (1974), who, in turn, was influenced by the social anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1973). Erving Goffman (1974) refers to frames as the principles of organization that used to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” (p. 21). Others define frames as the “structures of expectation, that is, on the basis of one’s experience of the world in a given culture (or combination of cultures), one organizes knowledge about the world and uses this knowledge to predict interpretations” (Tannen, 1993, p.16).

Before moving on to look into the connection between framing, perspective and representation, it is important to relate frames to the concepts of media and identity. Usually, discussions about the relationship between media and frames focus on the various functions of media frames. Indeed, media frames serve several functions: (1) they include some messages and exclude others, (2) they focus on what is inside the frame, (3) they influence the viewing of what is inside the frame so that it is opposed to what is outside the frame, (4) they offer instructions for understanding the message in the frame, and (5) they delimit what is properly outside their bounds (Greer, 2000, p.5, & Severin, 1997, pp. 320-321).

Robert Gardner (2003) deftly introduces the issues of framing and identity into the discussion, thereby seeking to explain the significance of what he calls the ‘identity



frame'. According to Gardner, the concept of 'identity frame' helps to analyze how collective identity influences the view of, and response to, conflicts (Gardner, 2003). Frames, in this sense, can be said to define the core of a group's beliefs and values.

Whereas the frame points to the fact that the content is strictly shaped, perspective indicates the fact that content is inevitably 'displayed' from a given point of view (Ensink, 2003, p. 2). The connection between perspectives and frames on the one hand, and representations, on the other hand, are invariably reciprocal. Since framing focuses on how news is presented and how journalists structure their representations of events, given frames of reference can also negotiate the acceptance of peoples' perceptions concerning certain explanations about issues and events, and they inevitably produce images (Stumpf, 2000, & Fisher, 1997). Representation, in turn, relies on the common sense interpretation of collective images and meanings, and embodies the ideas themselves, reinforced by frames (Fisher, 1997, & Beetham, 1998). When relating perspectives to representation, the processes of delegation and depiction are implicated since the content normally speaks from a certain perspective and it is possible to speak within, or about, certain perspectives as well so that perspective, in this sense, can be understood as a direction of the perception, or, put more succinctly, a concept claiming that no sentence in any representation is free from a certain slant or perspective (Ensink, 2003, pp. 10, 14). Practically speaking, to identify perspective in terms of representation, the observer should look into at least two different textual components: (1) the tone of the content, which confers on the representation an active or passive voice, and (2) the lexical choice (Ensink, 2003, p. 10). The scholar, Kelton Rhoads (1997), associates perspective with frames, simply affirming that: a "frame offers a perspective" (Rhoads). From a

consideration of the positions outlined above, it can be seen that the study of media frames has become a growing trend, since it is perceived as an alternative to the study of the question of objectivity and bias in the media (Severin, 1997, p. 320).

### 3.3 Representation of Arabs and the sources of Arabness

The entanglement between perspective and framing does not necessarily obscure the independent analysis of each concept. However, in the context of this study, it is more fruitful to highlight Aljazeera's perspective at the concluding section of this chapter, taking into account the overlapping between perspectives and framing. This section begins with a reflection on the introduction of the term 'Arabs', as a proxy and voice for different designations in Aljazeera Net. Aljazeera Net uses the label 'Arabs' to describe the general population of Arabs, Muslims and Christians. The label 'Arabs' is principally used to describe Arabs as a collective entity, such as 'Arab leaders', 'Arab ruling regimes', 'the Arab World', 'Arab countries', 'Arab officials', and Arab immigrants. Examples that show how the label 'Arabs' is employed to relate to degrees of Arab status, and more comprehensively, to collective Arab identity, appear in the following headlines featured at Aljazeera Net:

#### The use of the term 'Arab' to refer to Arab leaders and regimes:

<u>Arabs</u> agree upon the necessity of domestic reform.	<u>العرب</u> يتفقون على ضرورة وجود إصلاحات داخلية
<u>Arabs</u> accuse Washington of magnifying the terrorist threat.	<u>العرب</u> يتهمون واشنطن بتوسيع رقعة التهديد بالإرهاب
When will an equal relationship exist between <u>Arabs</u> and Washington?	متى تقوم علاقة ندية بين <u>العرب</u> وواشنطن؟
The responsibility of <u>Arabs</u> in Sharm Elsheikh's conference.	مسؤولية <u>العرب</u> في مؤتمر شرم الشيخ
The dilemma of <u>Arab</u> summits	قمة <u>العرب</u> ومشاكلها
<u>Arabs</u> and the United States: enemies or friends?	<u>العرب</u> والولايات المتحدة أعداء أم أصدقاء؟
Mousa urges <u>Arabs</u> not to participate in attacking Iraq.	موسى يحث <u>العرب</u> على عدم المشاركة في ضرب العراق

#### Here the label 'Arab' is used as a proxy for Arab officials:

<u>Arabs</u> express their condolences to the Pope and describe him as a 'man of peace'.	<u>العرب</u> ينعون البابا ويصفونه برجل سلام
--	---

### The label 'Arab' used to denote the voice of the various Arab publics:

In a Poll: The enmity of Arabs toward the United States bears no relation to Islam.

1.4 trillion dollars: the wealth of Arabs outside...

How do Arabs view the Iraqi elections?

Unity is the dream of Arabs, and economic integrity is its basis.

The Arabs refuse to countenance the American project in Iraq.

استطلاع: عداة العرب للولايات المتحدة لا علاقة له بالإسلام

1.4 تريليون ثروات العرب بالخارج

كيف ينظر العرب إلى الانتخابات العراقية؟

الوحدة حلم العرب والتكامل الاقتصادي لبنيتها

رفض العرب للمشروع الأمريكي في العراق

### The label Arab as an index of the status quo:

An Arab researcher asserts that Arabs lack accurate information.

Arabs must develop higher standards to tackle unemployment.

باحثة مصرية تؤكد أن العرب فقراء معلوماتياً

العرب بحاجة إلى معدلات نمو عالية لمواجهة البطالة

### The label Arab is used as a substitution for Arab Americans:

Arabs support the Bush campaign

العرب يدعمون حملة بوش الانتخابية

When the news raises certain religious questions and employs images hostile to Arabs, Aljazeera Net hyphenates Arabs with Muslims or Christians. The following headlines are examples of how Aljazeera Net conflates Arabs and Muslims.

Schroeder refuses to resort to the Arab and Muslim stereotype in Frankfurt

German police continue in their hunt for Arabs and Muslims

America questions hundreds of Arabs and Muslims

Racism is disseminated against Arabs and Muslims throughout the Internet

The hateful upsurge against Arabs and Muslims in American and Europe

America prepares for the deportation of six thousand Arabs and Muslims

The Orthodox refuse to accuse Arabs and Muslims branded with terrorism

The September events and their impact on Christian Arabs

The Arab Sunni and the Iraqi Elections  
Shia't Arabs...the forgotten Muslims

شرودر يرفض في فرانكفورت تشويه صورة العرب والمسلمين

الشرطة الألمانية تواصل مطاردة العرب والمسلمين

أمريكا تستدعي مئات العرب والمسلمين للاستجواب

انتشار العنصرية ضد العرب والمسلمين عبر الإنترنت

موجة كراهية ضد العرب والمسلمين في أمريكا وأوروبا

أمريكا تستعد لترحيل ستة آلاف من العرب والمسلمين

الأرثوذكس يرفضون اتهام العرب والمسلمين بالإرهاب

أحداث سبتمبر وآثارها على المسيحيين العرب

السنة العرب والانتخابات العراقية  
الشبيعة العرب.. المسلمون المنسيون

Additionally, Aljazeera Net often uses the label 'Arabs' when its content refers to discrimination against Arabs, or to issues of political resistance. Figure 3-1 demonstrates that Aljazeera Net draws on the term 'Arabs' to refer to Muslims. As revealed in figure 3-1, while the headline of the news story indicates that, "Washington refuses to discriminate against Arabs," the picture of the young Muslim girl, associated with the news story, shows that the term 'Arabs' is used as a signifier for Muslims.

An additional example of how Aljazeera Net resists the designation of Arab insurgents fighting as terrorists appears in figure 3-2. Whereas the former administrator of Iraq, Paul Bremer, stated that "hundreds of trained terrorists sneak into Iraq from Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Sudan," Aljazeera Net chose to alter Bremer's statement, reporting in the headline that: "Bremer stated: hundreds of Arab fighters sneak into Iraq."

### **3.3.1. Frames that govern Arabs in Aljazeera Net**

This section begins with two frames that confine or distort the image that Aljazeera Net projects regarding Arab leaders, regimes and publics. The rest of this section will look into the representation of the chief sources of Arab identity in Aljazeera Net. Generally speaking, the images Aljazeera Net portrays of Arabs reflect an identity crisis, characterized by unconstructive meanings to describe Arab leaders, regimes and publics. The following frames provide clear outlines of the images of Arabs that have endured:

Washington  
refuses to  
discriminate  
against Arabs



Figure 3-1. The use of the term 'Arab' as a signifier for Muslims.

Bremer states:  
hundreds of  
**Arab fighters**  
sneak into Iraq

~~trained  
terrorists~~

The US  
administrator of  
Iraq, Paul Bremer,  
claims hundreds of  
**trained terrorists**  
sneak into Iraq  
from Syria,  
Yemen, Saudi  
Arabia and Sudan



Figure 3-2. The term Arab fighters is used as a substitute for terrorists

### **a) Distrustful leaders; corrupt, tyrannical, and deceitful regimes**

The representation of Arab leaders and Arab regimes is one of the most frequently discussed issues at Aljazeera Net. A negative frame in regard to Arab leaders is repeatedly used by Aljazeera Net, and this takes place across a wide spectrum of journalistic genres, such as television programs on the Aljazeera channel, reports, analyses, news stories, images and cartoons, all of which describe Arab leaders as deliberately misleading Arabs, and Arab regimes, as being corrupt, deceitful and tyrannical.

When Aljazeera's host, Faisel Alqasim, posed the following rhetorical question during his program, 'The Opposite Direction' (Alitejah Aalmoakes), "why have Arabs become the joke of the World, and the *mockery*<sup>54</sup> of nations?" his introductory statement began with an aggressive and distorted critique of Arab leaders, describing them as a collection of *rotten fish* with *egocentric* leaders, whose main concern continues to be the perpetuity of clan, tribe, family, and the immediate insider group; moreover, he branded their leaders as being responsible for the deplorable state of Arab political and economic collapse, adducing as an example the way they turn the 'Watan' into private farms' (Alqasim, 2003, February). During another one of his programs, Alqasim referred to the egocentrism of Arab leaders, depicting them as "*earth, sky, water and electricity*" (Alqasim, 1999, December). Faisel Alqasim constantly uses the same sarcastic and ironic tone of criticism when he talks about the various Arab regimes. Reporting on how Arabs celebrated the twentieth century, Alqasim posed the following questions

What have the Arab regimes achieved other than  
underdevelopment, subjugation, repression, ignorance and

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<sup>54</sup> The researcher has italicized some of the words and expressions used in Aljazeera Net. Their significance will be explained later in this chapter in a discussion of the Arabic language frame.

poverty? Why have Arabs reached their lowest ebb given that their leaders are said to be so outstanding? Isn't conspiracy merely a shoddy pretext that Arab regimes exploit in order to authorize their outrages? What can you expect from regimes that rely on loyalty but not on professionalism? What can you expect from regimes swamped by ancestors, kinsmen, clans, and tribes? (Alqasim, 1999, December):

Aljazeera Net's host, Ghassan Ben-Gedo, summarizes Aljazeera's viewpoint, and reiterates Faisel Alqasim's assessment of the Arab regimes. Ben-Gedo, who seems to present a more metaphorical image of Arab leaders, states:

People who enter through *high doors* remain for ever...Normal people are marginalized...Activist movements are engulfed, but fading decorative groups last for ever... Fake elections continue in many countries, and the family is the most powerful authority in both monarchical and republican regimes (Ben-Gedo, 2002, May).

Warned claims that the tendency of some regimes to consolidate the power of their families forms part of the wider strategy of Arab leaders to stagnate 'the rotation of power in the Arab World', and to maintain the political map of Arab regimes in a static mode (Warned, 2005). Aljazeera Net's bloody depiction of the rotation of power in the Arab World, shown in figure 3-3, accords with the report of the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR), in 2003, which criticizes Arab regimes for their tardy and inadequate transition towards democracy. Aljazeera Net highlights the (AOHR) warning about the high incidence of violence exerted by different political movements to propel the rotation of power in Arab Countries (Warned, 2005), and further refers to the lack of freedom given to the political opposition, which consequently limits the influence of political parties. More particularly, the erosion of the opposition parties undermines their opportunities for fair competition in the forthcoming elections. In some cases, political

parties that might compete and run for office in elections are not permitted to wield power, or, at the very least, they are severely hampered; others cannot obtain their fair share of votes in the elections. In all the above cases, votes tend to go to the opposition parties, which are generally considered to be incompetent and without an effective voice (Warned, 2005). (See figure 3-4).

Obviously, Arab leaders have often been charged with obstructing attempts to facilitate the rotation of power, and to bring about political reform. Their self-justificatory claim, which Aljazeera Net is prompt to criticize, is that it is all too risky for leaders in the Arab region to initiate political reform, especially if these reforms are to be imposed from above by the United States. The regimes in Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have criticized the United States' plan for reform in the Middle East, since the American plan is seen as a sort of unofficial encroachment upon Arab internal affairs and, more significantly, as an attempt to sweep away the real dilemma in the Middle East, which is precisely the Israeli occupation of Palestine (Lawyers, 2002, & The plan, 2002, & Saudi, 2004, & Syria, 2004).

Despite the gloomy images and portrayals of Arab regimes, Aljazeera Net has cautiously talked about the Egyptian, Saudi, and Syrian initiatives for political reform, announced at the end of 2004, in order to address the increasing demands for reform in the Arab region. Yet, the lack of any clear position with regard to political reforms provokes Aljazeera Net's doubts concerning the seriousness of the Arab regimes' attempts to develop a significant platform for reform (Shoqayer, 2004).

Indeed, Aljazeera Net's unconstructive characterization of Arab leaders and their regimes always goes beyond domestic issues to articulate views about general Arab





Figure 3-3. An Aljazeera Net viewpoint concerning the rotation of power in the Arab world.

*Published in Aljazeera.net on 23-08-2001*

Source:

<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/0C0282FB-075A-4997-B714-03ED21ACC344.htm>



Figure 3-4. Democracy in Arab political parties.

*Published in Aljazeera.net on 25-07-2003*

Source:

<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/2D2355FA-8204-430E-B391-38DC38509D8D.htm>

issues, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the recent occupation of Iraq in March 2003.

Arab leaders are criticized for exploiting the Palestinian issue to legitimate their domestic

actions, while they seem to be irresponsible about the Palestinian issue per se. Faisal

Alqasim raises the following set of questions, debating the seriousness of Arab leaders

concerning the Palestinian issue:

Is the Palestinian issue really the most urgent one? Has it ever been the central issue or is it just a pretext for the avoidance of other issues that are not less urgent, nor less tragic? How many Arab regimes authorized repression and oppression, and enjoyed a monopoly of power, while adopting the slogan of the liberalization of Palestine? (Alqasim, 2001, April).

Why do Arab regimes associate the Palestinian issue with the issue of reform, apparently forging an essential connection with it, precisely because, if the Palestinian issue remains unresolved, there will likewise be a continuation of corruption, torture and despotism, and contrariwise, a rationale for the forestalling of democracy,

the power of law and human rights in the Arab World?  
(Alqasim, 2004, August).

Faisel Alqasim's doubts about the weightiness of the Palestinian issue are corroborated by reports from the Arab press that Aljazeera Net frequently showcases. Indeed, Aljazeera Net regularly selects representative reports from the Arab press, and then re-introduces them to its users. One remark, in particular, from an Arab newspaper is of significance here. Thus, Mohamed Ahmed Alhassani, a writer at the Saudi paper, *Okaz*, argues that the perceived failure of Arab leaders to vindicate their claims is due to their reluctance to strive for a fair end to the Palestinian conflict, precisely because it is convenient to have a scapegoat to justify their costly mistakes and failures, and the further deterioration of the notion of the Arab nation in the aftermath of liberation can also be ascribed to the same scapegoat (What, 2005). Alhassani, however, seeks to sidestep the questions raised by Faisel Alqasim by asking: If the Palestinian issue is resolved, if this scapegoat can no longer be used, what scapegoat will be found to justify future mistakes and failures of initiative? (What, 2005).

The fecklessness and irresponsibility of Arab leaders concerning the Palestinian issue is illustrated by Aljazeera Net's cartoonist, Shujaat Ali, whose indexical mode of illustrating unpalatable truths is seen through the depiction of an Arab leader covering his eyes with his hands: More specifically, this representation depicts an Arab leader with the traditional head-fetter, willfully restricting his gaze to the Americans by his side, while deliberately turning his back on an Israeli soldier who kills a Palestinian. He then responds to the cameraman's warning about the murder taking place behind his back by exclaiming: "It is normal!" (See figure 3-5).

Aljazeera Net cartoons often depict the relationship between Arab leadership initiatives and the issue of Palestine by emphasizing Aljazeera's frequently stated view of the correlation between Arab regimes and the United States' role and mission in the Arab region. Arab leaders officially objected to the United States' decision to invade Iraq at their summit meeting, held in March 2003. In his speech at the summit, Emil Lahoud, the Lebanese president and the President of the Arab Summit at that time, stated: "We are repeating our objections to the war against Iraq, or Kuwait, or any other Arab country, because it would pose a threat to the entire Arab nation" (The Emirate, 2003). This statement by the Lebanese President did not essentially modify Aljazeera Net's perspective concerning the relationship between the Arab regimes and the United States.

In April 2002, an Aljazeera Net cartoon showed that Arab leaders deceive their respective publics, giving the United States an ostensible cause for alarm in front of their home-based fans, while begging the United States for support out of sight of the Arab public (See figure<sup>55</sup> 3-6). The view of Aljazeera Net, concerning the relationship between Arab leaders and the United States, did not change at the time of the latter's invasion of Iraq. Among the many graphic examples that indicate Aljazeera Net's perspective is the cartoon published on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003, shown above in figure 2-10, which depicts Arab leaders lying down on a bed, turning their backs on the American and British tanks marching in to invade Iraq.

Portraying Arab regimes as hypocritical and deceitful is a common procedure with Aljazeera Net freelancers and television program anchors. For example, Mohamed Gamil Ben-Mansour, an Aljazeera Net freelancer and a Mauritanian writer, believes that despite the alleged objections of most Arab regimes to the invasion of Iraq, these regimes seem

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<sup>55</sup> Some of Aljazeera Net's news content and cartoons contain hostile descriptions and derogatory words.



Figure 3-5. An Aljazeera Net cartoon about Arab leaders and the Palestinian issue.  
Published in Aljazeera.net on 2-09-2002

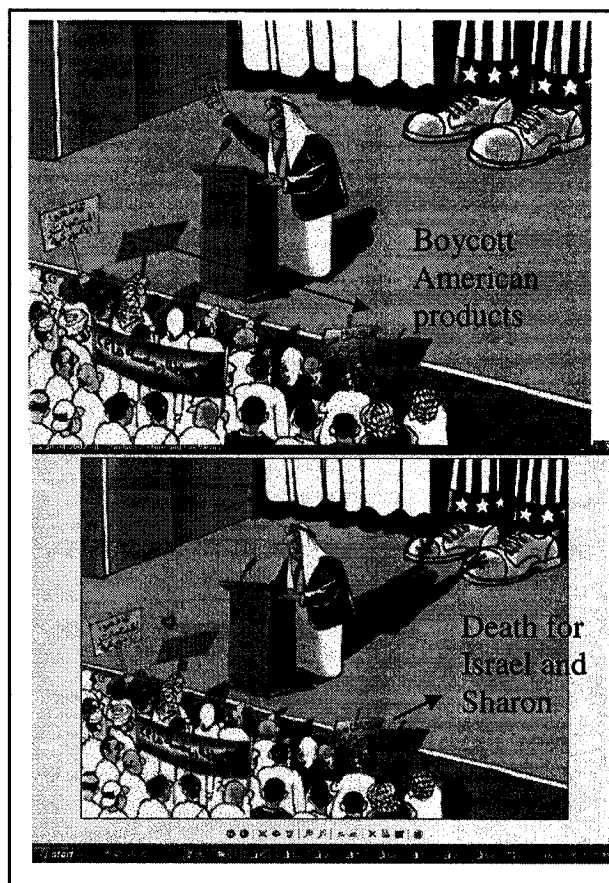


Figure 3-6. An Aljazeera Net view of the relationship between Arab leaders and The United States.  
Published in Aljazeera.net on 30-04-2002

to be in a state of panic regarding the American administration (Ben-Mansour, 2004). Parallel views are provided by Aljazeera Net freelancers, such as Yasser Alzatrach and Hassen Naffah, who argue that while Arab countries were divided about the war against Iraq, certain countries emphatically welcomed the war (Alzatrach, 2004, October, & Naffah, 2004). Faisel Alqasim shares the views of the above-mentioned writers and clearly reflects Aljazeera's perspective about the Arab's position toward the war. Alqasim consequently raises the following questions:

Why do some people characterize Arab regimes as troublesome, given the success of the American mission in Iraq, and why do they claim that the invasion was something forced upon them? Could the legions of American invaders have reached the Raffdin country [Iraq] without counting on an enormous degree of Arab support? Aren't neighboring and distant governments intensively involved in the American invasion of Iraq? Didn't they conspire with Uncle Sam, sharing in the guilt of one of the most momentous and horrible betrayals in history? Hence, how can we now say that these regimes were hoping for the failure of the American plan? If they really wanted the plan to have failed, they could have impeded it at its very inception, but they continued to support it and even to implement it? (Alqasim, 2003, October).

Working along parallel lines, Borhan Ghalyoon, an Aljazeera Net freelancer, draws a significant conclusion about the bond between Arab leaders and the United States. In his article, "The Iraqi dilemma ...the drama of the choice between colonialism and despotism," Borhan concludes that the occupation of Iraq is a reasonable outcome, given the despotism of Arab regimes. He believes that it is difficult to find a better embodiment anywhere else in the world of the reciprocal support marking the relationship between despotism and colonialism than in the Arab region (Ghalyoon, 2002).

Of the many issues that have subverted the potential impact of Arab leaders on the world stage, the dominant factor in any account of lost opportunities for Arab unity must be the failure to signify an effectively unified voice at the Arab summits. Aljazeera Net's content reflects this failure of Arab summits to adopt resolutions that accord with the will of the various Arab publics, especially in claiming that: "Arab summits come to an end at their beginnings" (The phenomenon, 2005). Prior to the invasion of Iraq, Aljazeera Net explored the opinions of twenty Arab experts concerning the Arab summit at Sharm Elsheikh in March 2003. It skeptically questioned the goals of the leaders, as voiced at the imminent Arab summit at that time, predicting that it would achieve little beyond settling the mundane issues of the day.

Later, in the wake of the Arab summit at Sharm Elsheikh, Aljazeera Net reported that the Arab leaders utilized verbose language to conceal their real disputes, although they agreed to support Iraq and collectively objected to the war (Damascus, 2003). Repeating the same journalistic formulas one year later, Aljazeera Net's coverage of the Arab summit in Tunisia in 2004 questioned whether the summit would be capable of going beyond mere rhetoric to attain real objectives (Will, 2004). Likewise, Karim Hussein Nemah, an Aljazeera Net correspondent, briefly outlined his doubts and hopes concerning the Arab summit, held in Algeria in 2005. Nemah wrote:

As usual, every year the Arab street questions whether Arab leaders have the capacity to confront burning issues and to find appropriate resolutions for them, or whether they will simply mask the real issues by adopting rhetorical and unproductive statements (Nemah, 2005).

Even more satirically, an Aljazeera Net cartoon caricatures Arab summits as venues for dozing Arab leaders who participate at these summits merely to enjoy the choice and abundant supply of food and drink (see figure 3-7).

**b) The Arab public and the 'irresponsible' Arab world: Representations of anger and oppression**

Up-to-the-minute reflections on the greater Arab public have always played an important role in forming, or disseminating, Aljazeera Net's evolving conception of Arab identity. Since the Arab region has dramatically undergone a number of changes lately, a brief chronological survey will be necessary to examine the permanent and changing aspects of various Arab publics. During 1999-2004, Aljazeera Net repeatedly underlined the domestic repression that most Arab publics have endured, and more particularly, it gave vent to public dissatisfaction with the performance of Arab regimes in preventing the occupation of Iraq, as well as emphasizing the incapacity of these regimes to end the occupation of Palestine. Invariably imagined to occupy 'underdog' positions, the different Arab publics are also seen as victims of subjugation; they are thus passively characterized as being incapable of facing up to corruption and despotism. Consequently, despite their best efforts to channel their resentment productively, the efforts made on the part of the various Arab publics to resist the pressure of corruption and despotism usually seem unproductive and inadequate.

The images and representations of Aljazeera Net generally correspond with reports about human rights in the Arab region, as set out in the recent report of 2004, conducted by the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR), which warns about the depressing lack of rights enjoyed by most Arab people in most Arab countries (Recent, 2004).

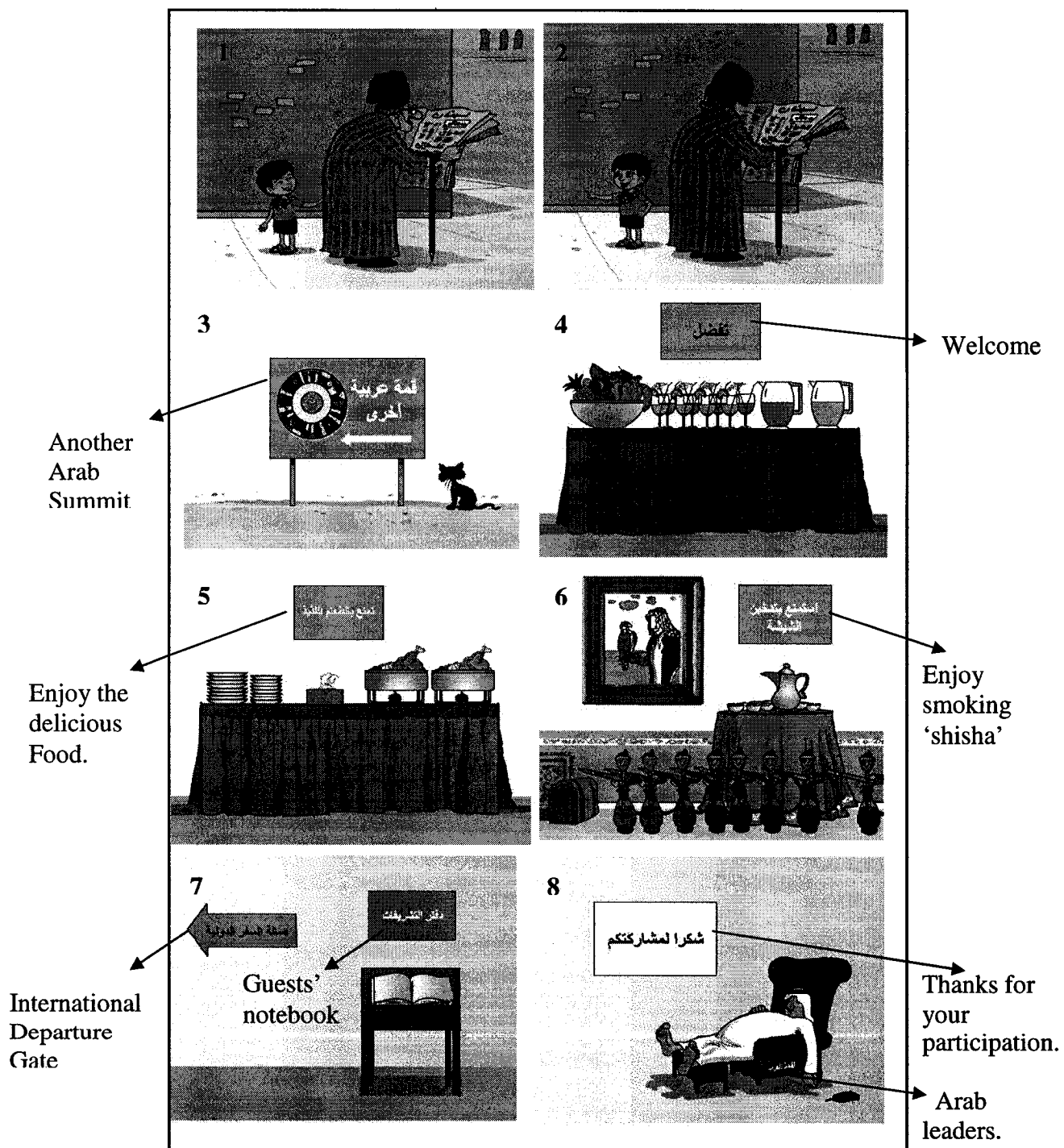


Figure 3-7. An Aljazeera Net view of Arab summits.  
Published in Aljazeera.net on 20-03-2005



Examples of such representations in Aljazeera Net are all too ample. The lack of freedom that characterizes the many Arab publics is portrayed in images that show the hands of the representatives of the Arab publics being bound and fettered, and their minds divided and at odds with each other on the map of the Arab World (See figures 3-8 & 3-9). Implicitly, these Aljazeera Net images posit that the greater Arab public aims to eradicate despotism and corruption among Arab regimes. However, these Arab publics seem to be unable to resist corruption, nor to remove dictatorships, since corruption is perceived as being too deeply rooted and endemic, and despotism appears to be inevitable or inextinguishable (See figures 3-10 & 3-11).

Additionally, Aljazeera Net is keenly alert to the dangers of anger and indignation, given that the mood of outrage pervades the entire Arab region, and points to the fact that most Arab publics do not merely resent their leaders and regimes, but actively distrust them. Of the many aspects of Arab public anger that are extensively publicized, the protest movements that have emerged across the entire Arab region receive the most attention. According to Aljazeera Net, some of these demonstrations depict the greater public's rage against the events that take place daily in occupied Palestine, and the refusal to denounce the invasion of Iraq more actively (Students, 2001, & Protests, 2002, & From, 2003).

Aljazeera Net claims that the Arab regimes' failure to address the continued occupation in Palestine, as well as the invasion of Iraq, has made the various Arab publics doubtful about the seriousness of Arab leaders to take on any kind of collective action. More lately, this has contributed to the Arab publics' relative indifference to the

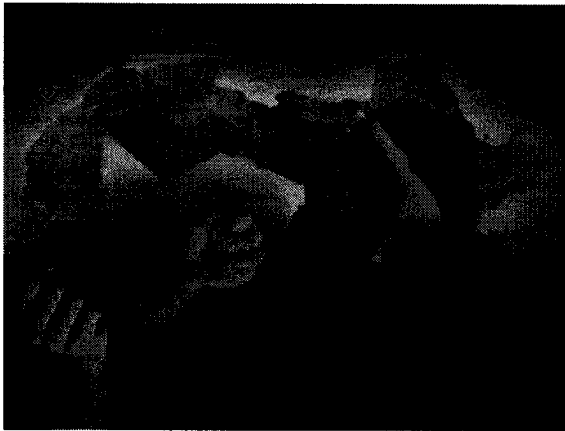


Figure 3-8. An Aljazeera Net image concerning Arabs and the modernity of the 'watan'.

*Published in Aljazeera.net on 7-11-2004*

Source: [www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/916B8F3D-4B25-4BAA-B5BC-CFADC90D128A.htm](http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/916B8F3D-4B25-4BAA-B5BC-CFADC90D128A.htm)



Figure 3-9. An Aljazeera Net image specifying despotism in the Arab World.

*Published in Aljazeera.net on 10-09-2004*

Source: [www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/087F2086-2ABF-4329-8A11-DB06C4C40A13.htm](http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/087F2086-2ABF-4329-8A11-DB06C4C40A13.htm)

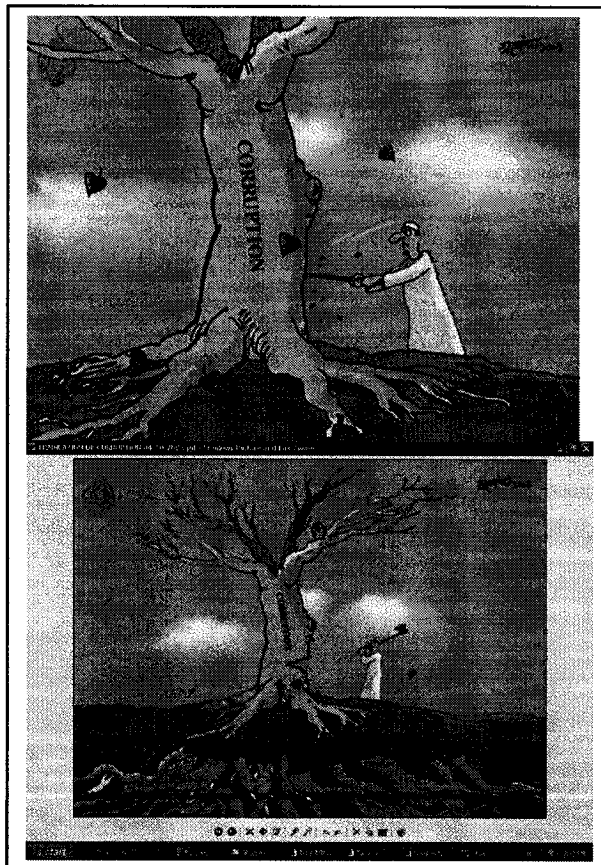


Figure 3-10. An Aljazeera Net view of the possibilities of eradicating corruption in the Arab World.

*Published in Aljazeera.net on 04-10-2003*

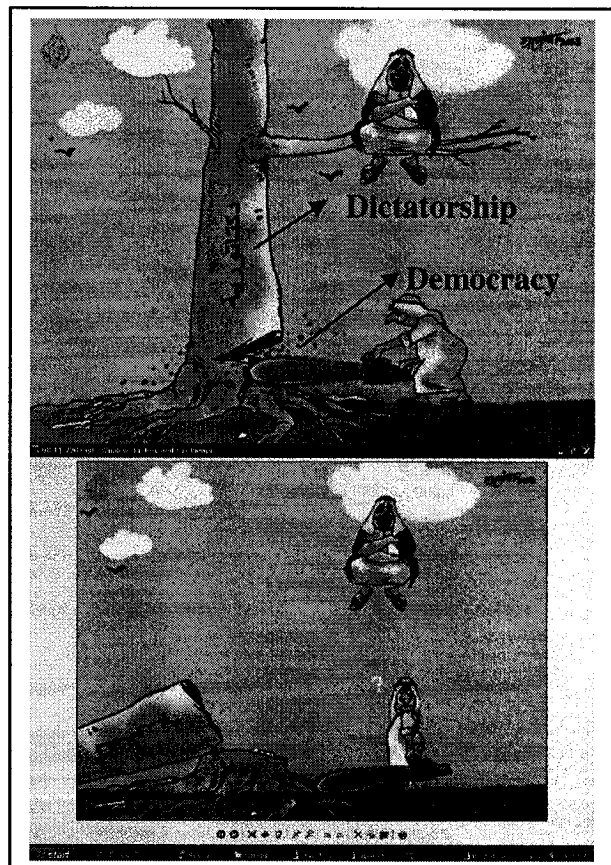


Figure 3-11. An Aljazeera Net view of the power of dictatorship in the Arab World.

*Published in Aljazeera.net on 08-11-2003*

Arab statements protesting the imminent war in Iraq.

Serious (12.1%)  
Not serious (85.1%)  
Do not know (2.8%).  
Total number of participants: 37316



Figure 3-12. The results of an Aljazeera Net poll about the credibility of Arab regimes statements protesting against imminent war against Iraq. Published in Aljazeera Net on 04-01-2003

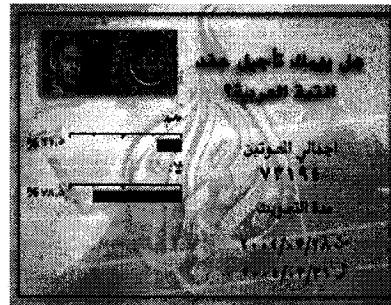


Figure 3-13. The results of an Aljazeera Net poll about Arab public feedback concerning the delay of the Arab summit. Published on Aljazeera Net on 31-03-2004

Arab leaders' meetings and summits. Polls conducted by Aljazeera Net have explored the perceptions and beliefs of 37,316 & 73,194 of its users, consecutively, and these have shown that the different Arab publics do not seriously believe the Arab leaders' statements about the objections of the latter to the invasion of Iraq, nor were they upset on account of the postponement of the Arab summit in 2004 (See figures 3-12 & 3-13).

Apart from images conveying feelings of repression and resentment concerning the various Arab publics, Aljazeera Net often concentrates on other images that criticize the various Arab publics for their docility, and invites them to revolt against their leaders. Mohamed Gamil Ben-Mansour, an Aljazeera Net freelancer, claims that the different Arab publics have become silent due to their fear of what Ben-Mansour terms: 'the officers and watchdogs of Arab security' (Ben-Mansour, 2004). Even more provocatively, Faisel Alqasim, an Aljazeera host, urges the various Arab publics to rebel, to draw on the wisdom of the alert and 'sentient' publics supposedly found in other countries, to discard their preconceptions about the despotism and repression of Arab

leaders, and to reject the idea of the foreign liberator (Alqasim, 2003, December). In a similar vein, Borhan Ghalyoon, an Aljazeera Net freelancer and a professor of sociology at the Sorbonne University, writes that domestic reform has become unfeasible, and has described the uncaring feelings and the loss of national loyalty found among the various Arab publics (Ghalyoon, 2004).

While Aljazeera Net's content acknowledges that Arab publics widely reject the policies of the United States in the Arab region, the cartoons found at Aljazeera Net paradoxically show that Arab publics do not entertain consistent views about the world, and even more negatively, show Arab publics to be careless about the events of the real world (See figures 3-14, & 3-15).

While Aljazeera Net remains pessimistic regarding the aims of the Arab regimes to bring about a democratic transformation, it reflected a more positive viewpoint toward the different Arab publics, particularly during the closing months of 2004, when some Arab regimes acknowledged a readiness to discuss the issue of political and social reform more openly. Aljazeera Net freelancers, Ibrahim Ghaybah, and Tujan Faisel, are also on record as stating that the Arab publics' pressure on Arab regimes has increasingly become more effective. Described as a 'tornado', certain reforms induced by the various Arab publics are indeed the consequences of the publics' commonly proclaimed agenda, and their collaboration is generally considered to be greater than the current degree of cooperation to be found among the leaders of Arab regimes (Ghaybah, 2004, & Faisel, 2005).

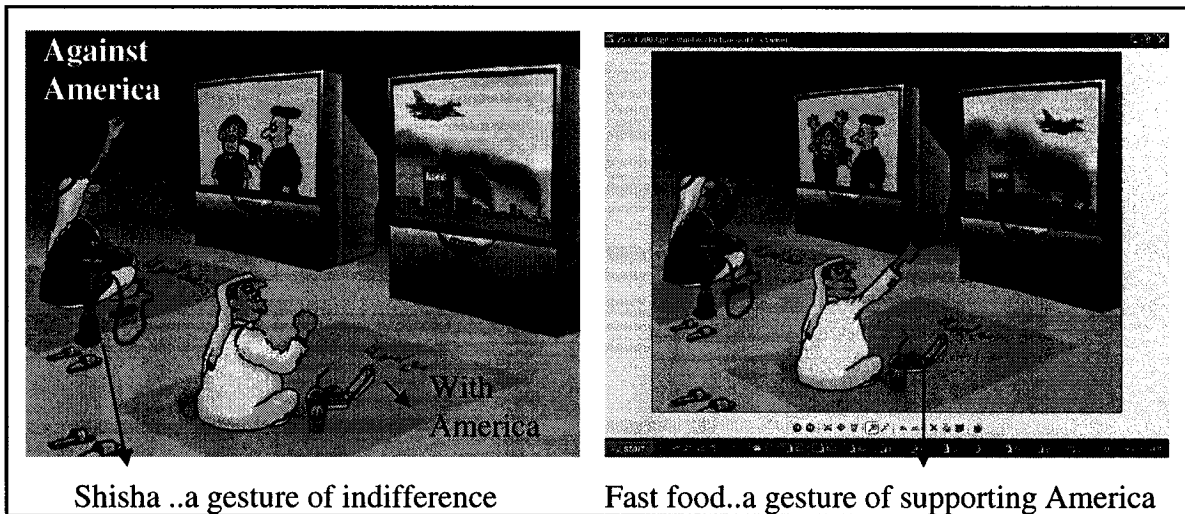


Figure 3-14. Division within the various Arab publics.  
*Published in Aljazeera.net on 25-03-2003*

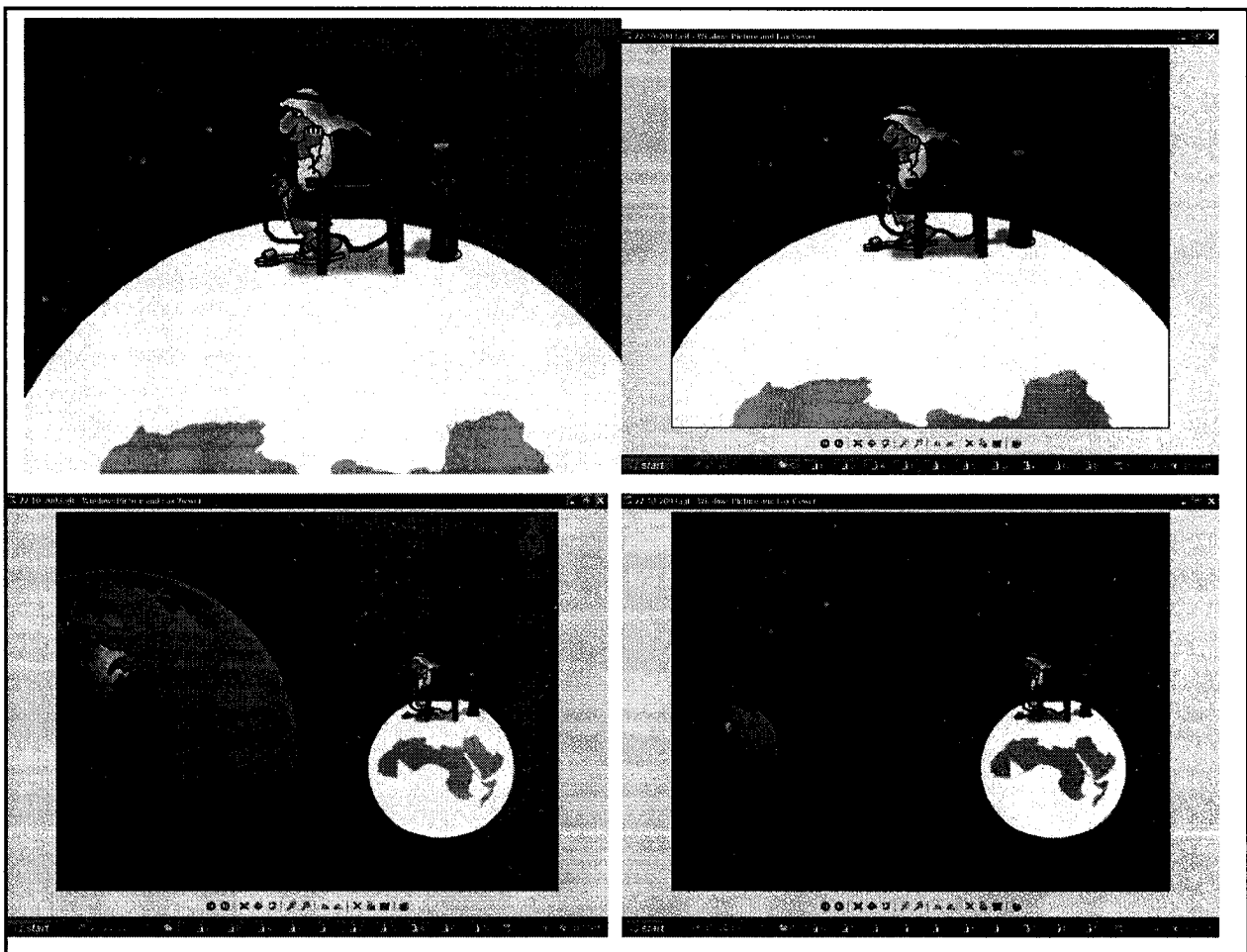


Figure 3-15. The Arab world as 'unreal' and inattentive world to events in the 'real' the World  
*Published in Aljazeera.net on 22-10-2003*

### **3.3.2. Frames governing Arab identity: Its sources of strength and fragmentation**

The earlier discussion in this chapter about how Aljazeera Net describes the relationship among Arab leaders, regimes, and publics, and how Arabs reciprocally respond to the challenges their region now faces, has further problematized the argument about Arab identity. As indicated above, Aljazeera Net portrays uniformly dismal images of Arab leaders, regimes and publics, and sheds doubts as to the prospects for any real reform in the Arab world, and it is likewise gloomy about the possibilities of Arab states gaining ascendancy over their region and assuming firm control over their own immediate sphere of influence.

In this section, I will examine how Aljazeera Net represents the referents of Arab identity outlined in the first chapter. Whereas the former section sets up an image of Arabs through a process of induction, this section will examine the methodological terms to deduce the key frames of reference that function as catalysts of Arab identity: Pan-Arabism, conflict, religion, media, language, gender and culture traits.

#### **3.3.2.1. The virtual Pan-Arab frame: Uncertain Pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism**

In 2004, Thalif Deen, a writer at the IPS-Inter Press Service agency, applauded the opinion of Mouin Rabbani, a contributor to the Washington-based 'Middle East Report', who believes that Aljazeera "represents an important facet of contemporary Pan-Arabism" (Deen, 2004). Additionally, Thalif Deen supports the premise that Aljazeera is a symbol and "bastion of Arab nationalism" (Deen, 2004).

In accord with Thalif Deen's premise, his view of Aljazeera Net's content is also consonant with the idea that the ultimate goal of Aljazeera Net's use of the label 'Arabs' is to make it function in such a way as to speak for Arabs as a collective entity. This pronounced preference to address Arabs as a group can be indicated through an examination of Aljazeera Net's archive between 1999 and June 2005: When comparing the use of lexical terms, such as 'Arabs', and 'Arab countries', as used in the headlines of Aljazeera Net, there are 779 reported uses of the term 'Arabs' versus 79 uses of 'Arab countries'. Similarly, Aljazeera Net prefers to modify the designation of the 'The Arab League of States', switching its designation to 'The Arab League'. In conducting a search for the terms, 'The Arab League' and 'The Arab League of States', in reference to Aljazeera Net's archived headlines, only 6 headlines came back in response to the former designation, whereas Aljazeera Net appeared to repeatedly emphasize the latter term, recording 133 uses of the term 'The Arab League'.

Talking about Arabs as an entity, rather than as a cluster of Arab speaking countries, facilitates Aljazeera Net's claim that "Arab unity is the ultimate dream of Arabs" (Rashid, 2004), and likewise demonstrates that the desire for Arab cooperation is deeply rooted and pervasive (See figure 3-16). Aljazeera Net commonly interrogates the causes of Arab failure concerning the issues of political unity and economic integrity. Indeed, one year before the invasion of Iraq, specifically in 2002, Aljazeera Net created a special file concerning the issue of 'Arab cooperation'. Despite the poor progress of Arab cooperation, Aljazeera Net considers that the current state of Arab cooperation is nonetheless encouraging. Reiterating the need for Arabs to attempt to achieve unity, the network points to Arab achievements in the wake of the Gulf War in 1991, such as



Figure 3-16. An Aljazeera Net view considering that 'Arab cooperation' is engraved on stone.  
Published in Aljazeera.net on 13-06-2002

Egyptian-Sudanese reconciliation, the Arab-Iranian compromise, the improved relations between Libya and other Arab countries, and the peaceful resolutions in regard to inter-Arab border conflicts, such as those on the Saudi-Emeriti border, the Saudi-Yemeni border and the Yemen-Omani border (Ghraybah, 2002). Moreover, Aljazeera Net favorably assesses the performance of the Arab League of States since it can be seen as having made a positive contribution on the road to integration. The Arab League of States, which was established in 1945, was the first initiative to promote Arab cooperation, and despite the shortcomings of the Arab League of States, its achievements have been optimistically appraised in the economic field, particularly regarding its exertion to increase the level of trade among Arab countries to 9% from its former level of 2%. While reckoning this level of trade to be unsatisfactory, Aljazeera Net considers that The Arab League of States has created a legitimate rallying point and, furthermore, it has helped to solidify Arab ties (Arab, 2002).

Considered as a symbol of Pan-Arabism, the Arab League of States is a reflection of the weaknesses and fragmentary state of union of the Arab countries it serves. Nevertheless, the dubious foundation and desultory performance of the Arab League of



States has been often subject to Aljazeera Net's criticisms. For instance, Faisel Alqasim, an Aljazeera Net host, raises the following questions to reflect on the fundamental basis and functioning of the Arab League of States:

Was not the league conceived out of suspicion and *malaise*? Is it not true that the Arab League of States was initially a British idea that actually aimed to undermine the cause of Arab unification? Does the Arab League of States constitute a viable framework for Arab unity, or, more controversially, does it promote the fragmentation of the local autonomy of Arab countries, whose national sovereignty, borders, and independence are only ostensibly glorified by the Arab League of States? Does it represent all Arabs? That is, is it the home of all Arabs or just some of them? Why does the league devote greater attention to the issues of some countries, while ignoring the key issues of other Arab countries? Shouldn't the league be in a position to prevail over all Arab conflicts and divisions? ... Why has the league become incapable of holding an Arab summit? Who controls the league - the Arab countries or America? How serious is the league about plans of Arab cooperation, Arab security, and Arab economic integration? (Alqasim, 1998, April).

Aljazeera also criticizes the performance of Arab councils, whose objective is to enforce Arab cooperation. The existing councils, formed to facilitate Arab political and economic cooperation, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), and the Arab Maghrib Union (AMU), are considered unproductive, and the establishment of one of them, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), was seen as a response to the increasing demand for security in the Gulf region (Arab, 2002). The accomplishments of the GCC were deemed unsatisfactory, or even negligible, compared to the challenges the council was supposed to meet in the region (Arab, 2002, & Alheyagnah, 2002).

Aljazeera revisited the issue of Arab Unity once again in May 2004. This gave Faisal Alqasim the opportunity to wonder out loud why Arabs have failed in what Europeans have succeeded in, and why all other nations strive for unification, while Arabs achieve fragmentation and division (Alqasim, 2004, May). One of the responses to Alqasim's questions, though less surprising than his queries, throws a sidelight on the significance of the issue of identity. Ahmed Faisal Khattab, a political science professor, responded thus: "while it is ironic to talk about Arab unity, it is nonetheless a tearful subject" (Alqasim, 2004, May). When asked about the way to overcome Arab fragmentation, Ahmed Faisal Khattab states: "we need to know who we are, what we need, and why we have reached this level of humiliation in Iraq, and in Palestine" (Alqasim, 2004, May).

Aljazeera Net's presumption that Arabs should act collectively and simultaneously broaches the question of the Arab nation, and Arab nationalism. Surprisingly, discussion about the 'Arab nation' is not particularly abundant at Aljazeera Net: Only 6 headlines were produced in response to a search for the term 'Arab nation' on Aljazeera Net's archive. Aljazeera Net's limited discussion in regard to the Arab nation has been bound up with conflicts concerning Arab countries' borders. Indeed, conflicts relating to the borders of Arab countries seem to occasion the further fragmentation of Arab states. Consequently, Faisal Alqasim, Aljazeera's host, describes them as 'time bombs', and 'colonial traps' (Alqasim, 1999, March). Symbolically, the images employed in figures 3-3, & 3-4, & and later, in 3-16, explain how Aljazeera Net has visualized the geographic borders of the Arab nation, conferring upon its users a conceptual, geopolitical image as to what the Arab nation might be.

In turning now to Aljazeera Net's view of Arab nationalism, somewhat paradoxically, Aljazeera Net has continued to maintain a dual position in regard to Arab nationalist thought. On the one hand, the network has critiqued the tenets of the Arab nationalist movement, describing them as rebellious and undemocratic (Internal, 2003). For instance, in its analysis of 'internal democracy in the Arab nationalist movement', Aljazeera Net reports that:

Talk about internal democracy within the movement is not feasible, since democracy is lacking. Even during the later stages of the movement, when electing the movement's leaders was permitted, elections did not have any practical basis. The movement was not a democratic political party in the manner of the other Arab parties working in the same arena, since these relied on the people, and appealed to them to determine their political goals and other matters of concern. The movement was a sort of 'revolutionary' party, whose tenets and theories were clear-cut and indisputable...It was a party that looking forward to the 'next revolution' rather than the 'next election' (Internal, 2003).

While Aljazeera's hosts debate the question of Arab nationalist thought, dismissing it as just a matter of 'slogans' that the various Arab publics have ceased to swallow, or as a pretext for the dictatorial regimes to continue in their despotism, Aljazeera, on the other hand, in its paradoxically dual response to the question, also tends to bemoan the fall of Arab nationalist thought and the growing tendency to disbelieve in Arab nationalism, while striving to demonstrate, in a parallel view, that though it is subject to distortion and irrationality, it has nonetheless been an unjustifiable target on the part of the opponents of Arab unity (Alqasim, 1998, February & Alqasim, 2003, July).

In the wake of the invasion of Iraq, Aljazeera focused on the future of Arab nationalism, inquiring whether Arabism, and Arab nationalism, will be eliminated or

renovated. Ghassan Ben-Gedo, Aljazeera's host, questions whether international pressure will push Arab nationalists toward a critical revision, or will lead them to escape what they call the American hegemonic plan, and the closely aligned Israeli threat (Ben-Gedo, 2005). Some of Aljazeera's hosts, such as Faisal Alqasim, tend to consider that 'the recent fall of Baghdad' will usher in the end of Arab nationalism (Alqasim, 2003, July).

Briefly, Aljazeera Net's appeal to Arabs to act collectively to increase their political and economic cooperation, and its strategy to address Arabs in general, regardless of their local affiliations, explains why Aljazeera Net has become a 'virtual' space for Pan Arabism, that is, a space for the paradoxes of the uncertain reality of Arabism and the symbolic hope, for better or worse, of enhanced Pan-Arab cooperation. Likewise, Aljazeera Net's image of Arab nationalism explains why Arab nationalism remains merely an idea that, in the safekeeping of Arab nationalists, is not currently capable of becoming a reality. Moreover, it is an idea that is strained by the undemocratic roots of Arab nationalism movements per se, and co-opted by the cynical and tyrannical practices of Arab regimes (Alqasim, 2003, July). However, despite Aljazeera Net's criticism of the key theories that govern Arab nationalism and the performance of Arab nationalists, its essential vision - which is more or less hopeful about the endeavors of Arab nationalists to employ more democratic strategies on a domestic level and to be capable of resisting colonial plans with regard to the Arab region - not only points to the 'symbolic' nature of Arab nationalism, but also accounts for Aljazeera Net's stress on the imaginative, perpetually evolving and consequently uncertain character of Arab nationalism.

### **3.3.2.2. Arab conflict frames: Imperative resistance, legitimate anger and hatred, and obsessive fixations on alliances and enemies**

This examination of how Aljazeera Net represents Arab conflicts with others may require a brief reconsideration of the argument, initiated in the first chapter, about Arab identity, which explains why Arab engagement in conflicts can in fact galvanize their identity, thereby leading them to engage in various forms of resistance, and to instigate widespread eruptions of anger in the Arab world. Reciprocally, Aljazeera Net's contextualization of Arab conflicts with the *Other* is forged by means of a bilateral frame, whose basis resides in resistance to the other and the expression of outraged indignation towards it. This section begins with the representation of resistance in relation to the conflicts of Arabs with others. The ensuing analysis of this image of resistance will be followed by a discussion relating to how Aljazeera Net depicts and rationalizes what it sees as anger and hate expressed towards the *Other*. Further debate will portray the potential grounds of alliance of Arabs with their enemies.

For Aljazeera Net, conflict with the *Other* refers to conflict with the West and, more particularly, with the United States, Britain and Israel. Current conflicts do not merely center on the question of occupation per se, but on the right of Arabs to resist occupation, since they tend to focus on disagreements about the definition of 'resistance' versus 'terrorism'. Although Aljazeera Net criticizes Arab leaders and the Arab League of States, it endorses their positions regarding the importance of differentiating between 'resistance' and 'terrorism'. Aljazeera Net's appraisal of the Arab leaders' standpoint toward resistance is evident in its representation of a number of incidents. Thus, it emphasizes the constant call of the General Secretary of the Arab League of States, Mr.

Amer Mousa, as well as Arab regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Qatar, to make terminological distinctions between conflicting terms (Syria, 2001, & Qatari, 2001, & Amer, 2001, & The Islamic, 2002).

After conferring official status on the importance of resistance Aljazeera Net proceeds to reflect on its users, claiming them as a representative sample of those Arab publics whose perceptions tend to support resistance, especially resistance expressed against the coalition troops that invaded Iraq in March 2003. During 2003, particularly between June and December, Aljazeera Net conducted four polls to examine the perceptions of its users concerning resistance. At least 80 percent of those who participated in Aljazeera Net's poll in June 2003 agreed that resistance was being waged for the sake of the Iraqi people (Aljazeera Net, 2003, June). Before the capture of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, 61 percent of Aljazeera Net's users claimed that Saddam's audiotape, broadcast by Aljazeera in July 2003, would strengthen Iraqi resistance (Aljazeera Net, 2003, July).

Correspondingly, in November 2003, when asked whether resistance operations would force the occupying troops in Iraq to accelerate their withdrawal, 81 percent of Aljazeera Net's users responded positively to this question (Majority, 2003). Immediately after the capture of Iraq's former President, Saddam Hussein, in December 2003, a majority of Aljazeera Net users, that is, precisely 88.9 percent of the total polled assumed that resistance would not end as a result of his capture (Aljazeera Net, 2003, December). (See figures 3-17, & 3-18, & 3-19, & 3-20). Likewise, in an opinion proclaimed as late as the winter of 2004, Aljazeera Net continues to count on a considerable percentage of its



Figure 3-17. 82% of Aljazeera Net's visitors believe that resistance is in the interests of the Iraqi people.  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 28-06-2003

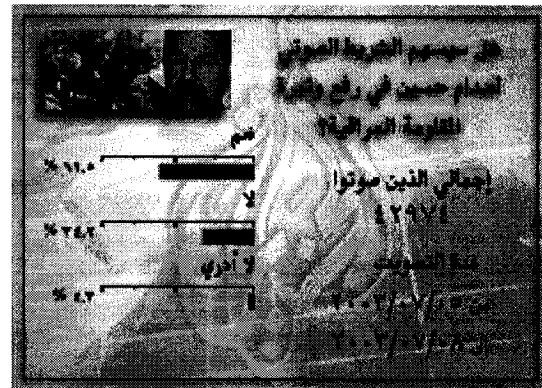


Figure 3-18. 69.5% of Aljazeera Net visitors believe that Saddam Hussein audio tape broadcast in July 2003, will intensify the Iraqi resistance.  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 09-07-2003

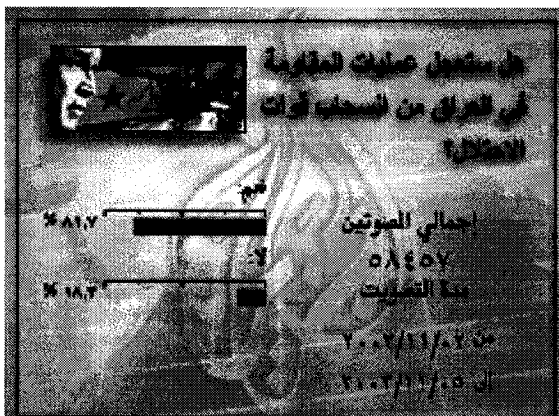


Figure 3-19. 81.7% of Aljazeera Net visitors believe that resistance operations will accelerate the withdrawal of the occupation troops.  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 06-11-2003

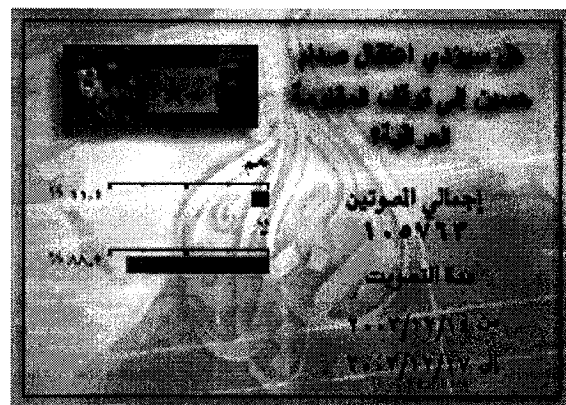


Figure 3-20. 88.9% of Aljazeera Net visitors believe that the detention of Saddam Hussein will not lead to the termination of Iraqi resistance.  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 17-12-2003

users (85.5%) to express their support for the 'Palestinian Intifada', regardless of how disastrous the Palestinian sacrifice is conceived to be (Do, 2004). (See figure 3-21).

In examining the representation of resistance in Palestine and Iraq, it becomes clear that Aljazeera Net's support<sup>56</sup> for the Palestinian 'Intifada' has taken on a variety of forms. Aljazeera Net is at pains to track the historical roots of resistance (Abd-Elatti, 2000, & Ahmidi, 2002), describing armed resistance as a power - that has become more creative, and whose influence has increased through the preceding decades (Dawood, 2002). Moreover, it is seen as 'the absolute way for Palestinians to respond to Israel' (Resistance, 2001), and as the "universal law that enables human beings through the centuries to obtain their freedom and independence" (Abd-Elatti, 2000, *The Intifada*, 2004). The images Aljazeera Net employs, both pictorial and linguistic, often describe the Palestinian resistance, sometimes depicting it as a "sad lion" terrified by pressure from the Palestinian authority (see figure 3-22), and then paradoxically, or even contradictorily, conceiving it as "heroic" (Heroic, 2002).

Whether the Intifada should be peaceful or militant is a key subject of debate at Aljazeera, which devoted 36 of its programs<sup>57</sup> to discuss the issue over a period of two years, particularly from October 2000 to December 2002. Both quantitative and

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<sup>56</sup> Aljazeera's support for resistance often prompts the allegations of its critics, presented in the second chapter, who assume that Aljazeera is a provocative, or even, bellicose media. In response to this claim, Aljazeera Net continues to count on its users' perceptions concerning the performance of Arab satellite media. In one of Aljazeera Net's polls, users report that they cannot support a statement stating that the Arab channels' satellite, including Aljazeera, provoke resistance against the occupation troops in Iraq (Aljazeera Net, 2003). (See figure 3-23).

<sup>57</sup> Among the thirty-six programs Aljazeera devoted to a discussion of the issue of the Intifada, there were thirteen debates about the militant Intifada, wherein 18 interviewees supported the notion of the comprehensiveness of the actions undertaken by Intifada, including the need for militant resistance. Moreover, eight of these interviews were conducted with religious preachers, including seven Muslim sheikhs, and one priest.





مدة التصويت: من 2004/9/29 إلى 2004/10/2

موضوع التصويت:

هل تؤيد استمرار الانتفاضة رغم جسامه التضحيات الفلسطينية؟

الخيار	النسبة	عدد الأصوات
نعم	85.5%	25709
لا	14.5%	4367
إجمالي المصوتين		30076

نتيجة التصويت لا تعبر عن رأي الجزيرة وإنما تعبر عن رأي الأعضاء المشاركين فيه.

عرض التحليل

أرسل نتيجة التصويت

Figure 3-21. 85.5% of Aljazeera Net visitors support the continuation of the Intifadda despite the tragic sacrifices incurred  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 03-10-2004

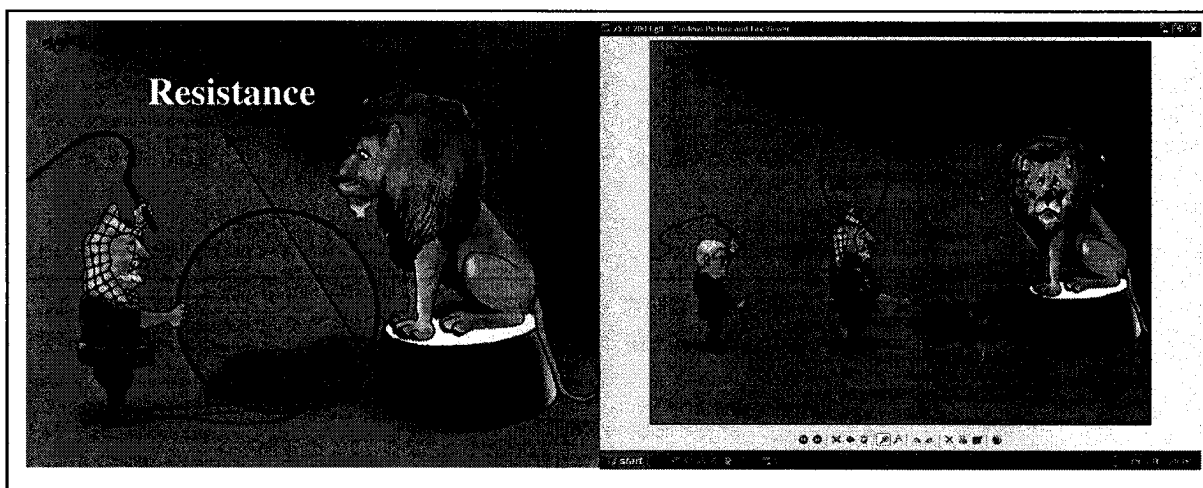


Figure 3-22. An Aljazeera Net cartoon about the domestication of the Palestinian resistance movement  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 25-08-2003



Figure 3-23. 54.8% of Aljazeera Net visitors believe that Arab satellite channels do not provoke resistance against the occupation of Iraq  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 02-08-2003

qualitative analyses show that Aljazeera favors a militant Intifada. In examining the debate at Aljazeera, 36 guests<sup>58</sup> agreed that an armed Intifada was the legitimate vindicator of the Palestinians, claiming that is the legal right of Palestinians to resist the daily aggression unleashed against them (Alqasim, 2001, May, & Alqasim, 2002, April, & Alqasim, 2002, December). Furthermore, the supporters of the resistance of the militias have described their opponents as hopeless, and even craven in spirit (Alqasim, 2002, December).

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<sup>58</sup> Among the thirty-six guests, interviewed by Aljazeera, who support the idea that resistance should be comprehensive, including the militant supporters of Intifada, the following may be specifically mentioned:

- Thirteen Arab scholars: Mohamed Alsaeed Idris, a researcher at the AlAhram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Egypt; Borhan Ghalyoon, an Aljazeera Net freelancer and a professor of sociology at the Sorbonne; Azaam Altamimi, the director of the Institute for Islamic Political Thought at Westminster University – Mohmaed Alhassen Weld Alldou, the director of the Scientific Center in Nouakchott; Abd-Alwahab Almiseeri, an Egyptian expert on the Zionist movement; Abd-Allatif Almahmoud, a professor at the University of Bahrain; Rashed Alghanoushi, the leader of the Alnahdah Party in Tunisia; Abd-Alelah Baleqeez, a member and the General Secretary of the Arab National conference; Maher Osman, a political analyst; Abd-Alwahab Altartiri, a scientific manager of the Islam Today Website; Shalabi Altalhami, a professor of International Relations at the University of Maryland; Ra'ef Nejmi, a former Jordanian Minister; and finally, Hamadain Sabahi, an Egyptian Member of Parliament.
- Four leaders of the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS, Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah) were interviewed: Mohamed Nezal, Khaled Mashael, Osama Hamdan, and Mahmoud Alzahr.
- Three members of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (FATAH, Harakat Altahir alwatani al-Phalestini): Hatem Abd-Alqader, Hussein Alsheikh, and Abu-Khaled Alomlaa.
- Abu-Ali Mostafa, the former General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.
- Three religious scholars: Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi, Abd-Almo'ty Mohamed Bayoumi, the dean of the faculty of Ossoul Adeen, and Attallah Hana, the spokesman of the Roman Orthodox church.
- Two Palestinian writers: Yasser Alzatrach and Anis Alnaqash.
- Three Palestinian Officials: Farouk Alqadumi, the director of the political table of the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization; Mamdouh Nofal, the advisor of the President of the Palestinian National Authority; and Ali Sadek, the Palestinian Deputy Minister of Planning and International Relations.
- Five Palestinian Personnel: Abd-Alsttar Qasim, Mohamed Sawalah, Yousef Alkhateeb, Maryam Abu-Daqa and Ibrahim Abu-Alnaja.
- Hassen Nasser Allah, the General Secretary of Hizb-Allah in the Lebanon.
- Ali Akbar Mohtashmi, the leader of a reformist group in the Iranian parliament.

On the contrary, only 12 guests<sup>59</sup> appear to have rejected the program and aims of the militant Intifada. The opponents of militant resistance invite their challengers to cease being so provocative, as well as to consider the harmful consequences of armed resistance. Their rationale is that the militant Intifada incites Israel to be always on the offensive, increases the incidence of famine among Palestinians and escalates the rate of unemployment found among them, putting acute pressure on women who have lost their husbands or family members, and all this, to achieve a result that still posits the Palestinians as the political losers (Alqasim, 2001, May, & Alqasim, 2002, April, & Alqasim, 2002, December). In accord with this view, Aljazeera Net's statistics for the five years of Intifada, proves that militant Palestinians have, perhaps inadvertently, inflicted considerable harm on the side of the Palestinians<sup>60</sup> rather than on the side of the Israelis (The Alaqsa, 2005).

Edward Said, in an interview with Aljazeera, stated his uneasiness with the militarization of resistance, describing the conflict as a war of attrition, whose cost is paid by the Palestinians who are killed on a daily basis, and not just by Israelis (Mansour, 2000, November). Recently, in the 2005 coverage of the Palestinian Intifada, while Aljazeera Net invites its users to assess the outcome of five years of Intifada, dedicating one of its forums to talk about four years of resistance (Four, 2005), the main content of

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<sup>59</sup> Twelve guests interviewed by Aljazeera appear to have rejected the militant Intifada: the Palestinian Edward Said, the late professor of literature at Columbia university; Sari Nessbeyah, a professor of Islamic philosophy at Alqods university; Ghassan Alateyah, a professor of political science and the editor in chief of *Almalef*, an Iraqi magazine; Ahmed Matter, a researcher and Palestinian writer; Shimon Shetrit, former Israeli Minister; Ziad Abu-Ziad, a Palestinian Minister; Jihad Alkhzen and Alsaleh Bou Walid, writers at *Dar Alhayat* Newspaper; Ahmed Alhmaly, political analyst; Selim Nassar, a Lebanese writer and political analyst; Mazen Ezz-Eldin, a member of the Palestinian Authority, and Abas Zaki, a member of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (FATAH, *Harakat Altahir alwatani al-Phalestini*).

<sup>60</sup> Statistics that Aljazeera Net has published indicate that the Palestinians who have been killed during the 2000-2004 Intifada are 4130, versus 1068 Israelis (The Alaqsa, 2005).

its coverage lends support to the views of the advocates of militant Intifada. Obviously, this perspective reflects the views of the various Islamic movements and pro-Islamic writers (Alrajoub, 2004, & The spokesman, 2004, & Alzatrah, 2004), and seeks to present the view that the development of resistance: enables the Palestinian issue to remain alive (Alzatrah, 2004), triggers the fears of Israelis (Ramadan, 2004), and belies the falsity of the peaceful negotiation process (Alrajoub, 2004).

More significantly, Aljazeera often re-mediate the debate about military resistance. In two responses, or challenges, from Faisal Alqasim, Aljazeera's anchor, to two opponents of Intifada, Ahmed Matter, a researcher and Palestinian writer, and Ghassan Alateyah, a professor of political science and the editor in chief of *Almalef*, the Iraqi magazine, Alqasim criticized Ahmed Matter for his supposed psychosocial inferiority, and for lending propagandistic support to the cause of Palestinian defeat (Alqasim, 2001, January). By linking the Israeli occupation of Palestine to issues that do not address the core of the conflict, and yet appeal to the sympathies of Arabs, a similar critique was likewise made by Alqasim, who had the following to say to Ghassan Alateyah:

But you know that Israel plays strategic *colonial, imperial*<sup>61</sup>, and ever expanding roles; and whatever role is chosen, the Intifada partially prevails over its outcome. Now Israel could hardly fail to secure its domestic position, and its very existence...whereas you come here to make resistance on the street hopeless (Alqasim, 2002, May).

'The cinema of resistance' and graphic arts are two major cultural forms of resistance that Aljazeera Net employs, and they occasionally serve as sites of an implicit struggle to highlight Palestinian grievances against the occupation. They are

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<sup>61</sup> The words have been italicized by the writer to refer to Alqasim's exploitation of expressions that exert an emotional appeal in regard to the perceptions of Aljazeera's viewers and users.

consequently used to brief readers of Aljazeera's website about the Palestinian people's suffering, to document the Palestinians' distress, and to perpetuate the symbolic signs of Palestinian identity, such as the Palestinian scarf, handcuff and cactus, thus serving to mobilize people to engage in resistance (Two, 2003, & Alrajoub, 2004, October). According to Aljazeera Net, the directors of the movies, 'Ticket to Jerusalem', 'Cookies are Still to be Found on the Sidewalk' and 'The Business' do not only invite the Arab public to sympathize with the Palestinian struggle; rather, they believe that the images that these films portray of Palestinians, who must live under occupation, are compelling enough to motivate resistance (Screened, 2002, & Two, 2003). Mohamed Aladdle, the producer of the movie, 'The Business', told Aljazeera Net that his film serves as a call urging the refusal of reconciliation with Israel, and an urgent attempt to rescue Arabs youths from their indifference (The Business, 2001).

Following the same line of argument, Aljazeera Net portrays a sustaining image, or even myth, of resistance against the occupation in Iraq. It explains that the success of resistance has increased the capabilities of the Iraqis to challenge its invaders (Rashid, 2003), and that the efficacy of resistance has caused a political crisis for US President George W. Bush, costing him 4 billion dollars monthly to cover military operations (Four, 2003). Resistance, the argument of Aljazeera Net goes, forces the United States to transfer political power to the Iraqis (Rashid, 2003, November). The formidable scale of resistance in Iraq is assumed to be an occasion for triumph. For example, Yasser Alzatrah (June 2003) writes, concerning the resistance in Iraq: "when resistance is the choice, the victory of free publics will be guaranteed" (Alzatrah, 2003).

Obviously, for Aljazeera Net, the question of Islamic resistance is a key issue. It criticized the Shiite source (The Howza) for being silent despite the attack against the Ali Ben Abu-Talib mosque (Mohamed, 2004), and in a similar vein, some of the Aljazeera Net writers are determined to theologize resistance to the occupation in Iraq. At least two articles of Yasser Alzatrah, the Aljazeera Net freelancer, express pro-Islamic views about resistance. Questioning whether the identity of resistance in Iraq is Bahthi or Islamic, Alzatrah writes:

The fact of it being Islamic resistance is one of the most important guarantees for the continuation of resistance in Iraq; not just because there is an Arab sunni space, but also because there are other ethnic and religious spaces, and more importantly, because it strengthens the rationality and practicality of those who resist, and the people who help and support them. (Alzatrah, 2003, October)

Almost a year later, in September 2004, the same writer who had thus pointed to the rationality of those who ensure continued resistance in Iraq accused the Islamists, particularly those who resist, of being prompted by what he calls jihad thought. Alzatrah writes:

When the Moujahedeen make mistakes during resistance, there is always an immediate and unqualified criticism condemning them and refusing their mistakes...What is noticeable is that many Islamists are still influenced by this conditioning, especially as the 'modernist' condemnatory perspective demands the same kind of clear collective Islamic position to confront 'terrorists and extremists'. Otherwise, Islamists are charged as being in the same camp as the terrorists. If the Islamic effort does not have even more considerable achievements to its name, this is because the voices that call for putting Islamists and terrorists in the same category are increasing. According to these voices, the resistance, inspired by jihad tendencies, leads to uncontrolled violence that may necessitate the rejection of these thoughts on the part of their followers, in the interest of making every thing ready for the spread of the

‘modernist’ commodity without ‘radical’ barriers (Alzatrach, 2004, September).

After two years of occupation, Shafiq Shoqayer, the Aljazeera Net writer, attempted to assess the outcome of resistance in Iraq in 2005. While describing the significance of resistance as being rapid and positive, Shoqayer called on the Iraqi resistance movements to desist from their acts of terror and to cooperate with the Iraqi Politicians who support resistance and oppose occupation. Shoqayer’s concern is that uncontrolled resistance may lead to ethnic clashes. Therefore, he invites Iraqis to discard the groups that target both Iraqi and non-Iraqi civilians, and enjoins their condemnation against those who behead people (Shoqayer, 2005).

Aljazeera Net draws on its users’ perceptions about the imperative of resistance in Iraq. In two of Aljazeera Net’s polls, the majority of respondents (89%) recommended armed resistance as the way forward for Iraqi liberation in 2004 (Aljazeera Net, 2004), whereas (59%) of all participants later refused to entertain the idea of the engagement of armed resistance groups in the political processes now in play in Iraq (Aljazeera Net, 2005). (See figures 3-24, & 2-25).

Certainly, the barrage of images relating to the events in Palestine and Iraq increase the anger and indignation of Arabs, and also inflame the debate about the Other in the context of Aljazeera Net. Two clusters of images associated with the recent occupation of Iraq are especially significant here. The first group of images is related to the US soldiers who abused Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Gharib jail. The images from Abu Gharib prison were frequently utilized as raw material for Aljazeera Net writers, whose articles assiduously traced the leak of Abu Gharib images, and sought to explain how these would further contaminate the image of the United States in the Arab World.



Figure 3-24. A year after the occupation of Iraq, 89% of Aljazeera Net visitors believed that Armed resistance was more significant than peaceful resistance  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 12-04-2004



Figure 3-25. 59% of Aljazeera Net visitors do not urge the incorporation of Iraqi resistance within the political process  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 09-07-2005

Ibrahim Abu-Alhayja's article, entitled: 'Abu Gharib: the embodiment of American values rather than an exception', describes the United States as a country that is constantly implicated in colonialism and war. He believes that what happened at Abu Gharib jail was not merely an individual mistake nor the product of a 'sick desire', but rather, could be emblematically situated: "at the heart of the American ethos that produces the seeds of fascist authoritarianism" (Abu-Alhayja, 2004). Mohamed Ben-Almokhtar Alshankity, a Mauritanian writer, reiterated the same ideas as his fellow freelancer, Abu-Alhayja. In this respect, Alshankity writes:

The scandals concerning the occupants of Abu Gharib jail expose the dark side of the American personality, which most Arabs and Muslims are not even aware of; the dimension of violence, sexuality, indulgence, sadism; the culture of Hollywood whose effect is so destructive on the American psyche; and finally, a culture that is indoctrinated with the fundamentalism of religious extremism, while its depraved moral mores can reach a pitch of animality (Alshankity, 2004).



Ahmed Farouq, the editor of Aljazeera Net, stresses the idea that scandals in Iraq will be constantly repeated, using this as a justification for the following remarks:

Iraqis and the public opinion in the World will be waiting for the next news event that will reveal even more scandals prompted by American and British excesses in Abu Gharib, Guantanamo and Afghanistan against the prisoners and detainees of the American war that is supposedly being waged against terrorism (Farouq, 2005).

A few months later, a video clip showed an American soldier killing a wounded man in one of the Mosques of Alfalluja, an image hardly less harmful than the images depicting the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. The comments of Rania Alzoghby, an Aljazeera Net editor, about the video clip reinforce the image of the false and inauthentic nature of American basic principles, outlined above, and it is representative of the recent reports contained in Aljazeera Net. Thus Alzoghby states:

The cameras of the Western media once again disclose the violations and scandals of American troops, which came to Iraq with slogans announcing the protection of human rights and freedoms, justice, and peace, and yet they committed a new scandal in addition to the outrages of Abu Gharib that shook the World a few months ago (Alzoghby, 2004).

Whereas a number of Aljazeera Net writers exploit single events through which to extrapolate their views about American culture, others, such as Kamal Alhelbawi, the leader of the Arab association in Britain, differentiate between American foreign policies toward the Middle East in the last fifty years and Arab resentment towards the United States. Alhelbawi alerts Arabs to three features of what he terms "American strategic thinking:" first, he notes the persistence of the United States in consolidating its power as the most wealthy, powerful, resource-monopolizing country in the world, always intent

upon ensuring the dominance of its affairs and its business interests everywhere. Alhelbawi explains that the United States always succeeds in its strategy through the power of its material resources, and through its extensive web of relations, and its ready-made resolutions to any problem (Alhelbawi, 2002, February). Secondly, he shows how the United States is quick to exploit weaknesses in others<sup>62</sup>. Finally, protecting Israel and securing its expansion is seen as the third strategy of the United States (Alhelbawi, 2002, February). More challenging still is Alhelbawi's view of the principles that guide US strategy, which appear in a conversation between Maher Abd-Allah, Aljazeera's anchor, and Alhelbawi. In the words of Kamal Alhelbawi:

The chief American strategy is to keep the world in ignorance, thereby preserving its status as a supremely powerful and wealthy state, while others are obliged to remain ignorant... They [the Americans] do not even deny that...no American President fails to state that America should lead and others should follow (Abd-Allah, 2002, November).

Edward Said seems to share the views of Kamal Alhelbawi about America's insistence on protecting its business interests, even through the use of force. Yet, Said further tells Aljazeera that the United States remains unknown to the Arabs, since almost no Arabs have attempted to conduct comprehensive investigations into American history (Mansour, 2000, November). Edward Said criticizes the failure of Arabs to understand that "America is more concerned with its business and affairs, but not with humanity and the self-determination of rights" (Mansour, 2000, November). Said further states, in regard to human rights slogans, that: "we [Arabs] take these slogans literally, and think that they represent America" (Mansour, 2000, November). However, Edward Said

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<sup>62</sup> Kamal Alhelbawi used the CNN coverage of the first Gulf war as an example of how far the United States was prepared to go to exploit the vacuum of Arab media to control media coverage in the Arab region (Alhelbawi, 2002, February).

asserts: “Americans are against all liberation movements without exception...without exception” (Mansour, 2000, November).

In its coverage of events in Palestine and Iraq, Aljazeera Net describes Arab streets as being overwhelmed by “Arab public anger,” by “the volcanoes of people anger,” and by “anger protests” (Parallel, 2002, & Clashes, 2003, & The anger, 2003, & The Arab public, 2003). Reminding us with the argument initiated in the first chapter about how Arabs communicate by shouting, accompanied with signs and gestures of anger (Patai, 2002, p. 170), Aljazeera’s reportage concerning the essential tasks of resistance, propelled by images of Arab public anger, as shown in figures 3-26, & 3-27, can be adduced to contextualize the image Aljazeera Net wishes to convey of the *Other*. Nevertheless, in examining how Aljazeera Net characterizes the West, it should be noted that the relationship between Arabs and the West is generally conveyed in terms of paradox and ambiguity. Generally speaking, Aljazeera Net assumes that there is a reciprocal ‘hatred’ between Arabs and Muslims on one side and the *Other* on the opposing side. At least two of Aljazeera Net’s programs, broadcast on Aljazeera Net, talked about the longstanding grudge nurtured in the West towards Muslims and Arabs (Mansour, 1997, August 31, & Abd-Allah, 2002, July 7).

In response to the questions raised by Aljazeera hosts about the deep-rooted reasons for the ‘hatred’ believed to exist between Muslims and the West, Ahmed Alrawi, the chairperson of the Islamic organizations’ Union in Europe, relates this legacy of hatred to the ongoing conflicts with the West, such as the Crusades, the conflict with the Ottoman State, and the consequences of Western colonialism, all of which have produced a culture of hatred (Mansour, 1997, August 31). While Alrawi considers that it is unfair to deal



Figures 3-26, 3-27. Images of Arab anger within Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan

Sources:

<http://www.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveId=50931>

<http://www.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveId=52254>

with the West as an absolute entity, he believes that hatred of Islam has long been at the heart of Western consciousness (Mansour, 1997, August 31). In a different posture, Mounzer Allassad, an Islamic researcher, responded positively to the same question put to him by the Aljazeera host, stating: "the grudge of Westerners toward us is not absolute. Not every Westerner bears the same malice towards us as others do. Perhaps this is the image we are content to nurture, but it may nonetheless deceive us" (Abd-Allah, 2002, July 7).

Before moving on to explain how 'hate' influences the image Aljazeera Net has of the *Other*, it is worth shedding light on its relations with two particular *Others* that Aljazeera Net represents as being pro-Arab, or as confirming an implicit alliance with

Arabs, namely, those *Others* viewed through the prism of Arab-European relations and Arab-Latin American relations. Arab-European relations are seen as an example of what might be considered a more positive orientation between Arab countries and the West. The European Union, for example, is considered to be cooperative with both Arabs and Muslims. It called on Israel to end the economic siege imposed on the Palestinian territories in March 2001 (Protests, 2001), supported the former Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and refused to share in Israel and the United States' attempt to marginalize him in 2003 (Europe, 2003), and finally, with the exception of Britain, it rejected the war against Iraq (Criticizing, 2003). Aljazeera Net considered that the participation of the European Union's representatives in the meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers in February 2003, just a month before the invasion of Iraq, was "an appeal from Europe to the Arabs to safeguard their future development" (When, 2003).

Although Arab and Islamic countries announced their aim to participate in the war against terror in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the disagreements between Europe, and Arab and Muslim countries, nonetheless appeared on the surface, particularly when it came to the interpretation of 'resistance' and 'terrorism' (Disagreement, 2001). Aljazeera Net referred to the offenses of five Muslim countries, as detailed by European Union representatives, who refused to exclude the occupation of Palestine from the list of reasons for the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks (Disagreement, 2001).

To Aljazeera, Arab-Latin American relations appear to be stronger than Arab-European relations, and not merely because of the "increasing enmity of the Latin American people to the United States" (An increase, 2003) as a result of the occupation of Iraq, but rather because of the inspirational image of Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan

President, who is honored as a charismatic symbol of resistance against the United States. Adulation for Hugo Chavez, notably in respect to his message to Arabs, emerged when Faisal Alqasim interviewed Chavez in December of 2004. Furthermore, Alqasim's opening remarks offer a flattering picture of the popularity of Chavez among Arabs:

Mr. President... undeniably, you know that you have vast popularity among millions of Arabs, and personally I have read a remark stating that if President Chavez were to nominate his candidacy in any Arab elections, he would secure ninety percent of the vote, which is a token of real esteem. The Arab's street's adulation of your personality is due to your concern for poor people in your country, and your bold challenge to the United States, the only superpower in the World (Alqasim, 2004, December).

In reply, Hugo Chavez explains that the view of Washington as imperialistic reflects the liberal view of the Latin American people, which originated over two hundred years ago (Alqasim, 2004, December), and he further states that:

We [the Venezuelans] do not occupy the defensive position, but rather we assume a position of attack... What makes me admire the Arab public is its power to unite. Yet, I want to explain that this power should not be limited to the military, but rather, it should be vested in spiritual power; the power of one united and aware public; and this is one of the missions that Aljazeera is currently interested in performing (Alqasim, 2004, December).

Now, in scrutinizing the main details of the image Aljazeera Net is attempting to portray of the Other, particularly in using 'hate' as a label, which frequently appears in Aljazeera's content to contextualize the relationship between Arab countries and the West it is clear that this hatred facilitates 'enmity' toward the Other. Moreover, such enmity toward the Other is especially pronounced in the view that Aljazeera Net takes towards both the United States and Israel.

Strikingly, enmity towards the United States was already part of Aljazeera's image of America even before the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. In June 2001, Aljazeera Net programmed 'The opposite Direction' (Alitejah Aalmoakes), which devoted a discussion to "The American enemy" (Alqasim, 2001, June). In his introductory statement, Faisal Alqasim, the program's host, stated:

For Arabs, is there any difference between Zionist and American perspectives? Does not Israel stand for America, and America for Israel? Aren't the two theories in fact identical, and therefore our first enemy is America even though we try to get around this fact? (Alqasim, 2001, June).

Aljazeera Net's image concerning the United States and Israel stresses the alliance between them. Aljazeera Net cartoons contain abundant illustrations of the relationship between the United States and Israel, portraying it as a 'true alliance', a coalition against Arabs, particularly Palestinians, who are not able to break through the United States-Israel power alignment, regardless of the scale of the power they, the Palestinians, have (See figures 3-28). Aljazeera cartoons commonly conceive American and Israeli personnel as symbols of the ongoing conflict with the United State and Israel. Thus, President George Bush is described as the 'coach' for the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who is trained to strike out at certain Arab countries, such as Syria (See figures 3-29). Condoleezza Rice is seen as the main representative of the double standard implicit in the United States' perspective on the Arab World, because she refused to countenance what she considered as the Syrian "occupation" of the Lebanon, which apparently took place against the will of the Lebanese people, and she explained how this incursion played a decisive part in bringing pro-Syrian officials into the Lebanese government and thereby affected the outcome of the elections. Aljazeera cartoonists



Figure 3-28. Aljazeera Net cartoon about the alliance between The United States and Israel against The Palestinians  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 30-05-2003

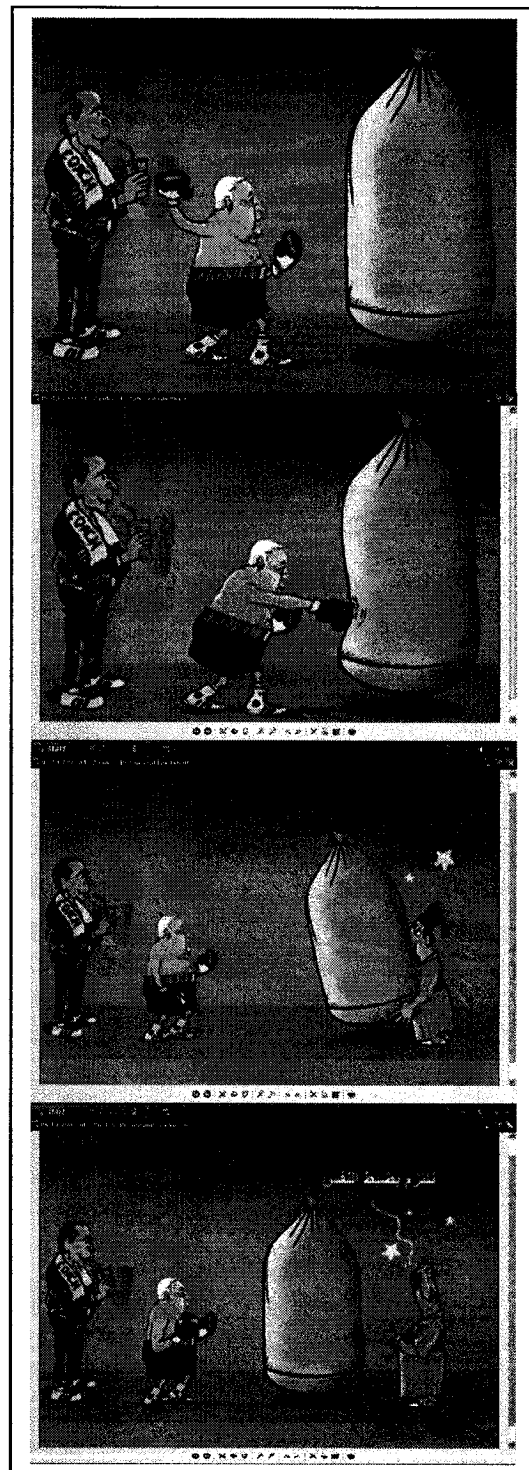


Figure 3-29. Aljazeera Net cartoon portraying the US President as a 'coach' for the Israeli Prime Minister  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 06-10-2003





Figure 3-30. An Aljazeera Net cartoon depicting Condoleezza Rice as a typical representative for the double standard informing The United States' foreign policy in the Arab World  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 18-02-2005

invite its users to consider how Condoleezza Rice is hypocritically prepared to countenance the same kind of raid as the United States, which, in the view of Aljazeera, is currently undertaking an illegal occupation of Iraq (See figures 3-30).

As caricatured by Aljazeera cartoonists, the United States is additionally seen as the 'cooker' that prepares the meal for Arabs, using Palestinians as fuel. Moreover, the US is also seen as a 'baker' whose job is to divide up the Arab World, or as a muscle man who is pictured destroying the Arab World's 'pyramids' by brute force in order to impose democracy (See figures 3-31, & 3-32, and 3-33). In accord with such Aljazeera Net cartoons, Kamal Habib, an Aljazeera Net writer, believes: "that the modernization imposed by gun-power, human indignity and national honor will not lead to development, reform, or construction, but to resistance and rebellion, and perhaps, to even more deadly

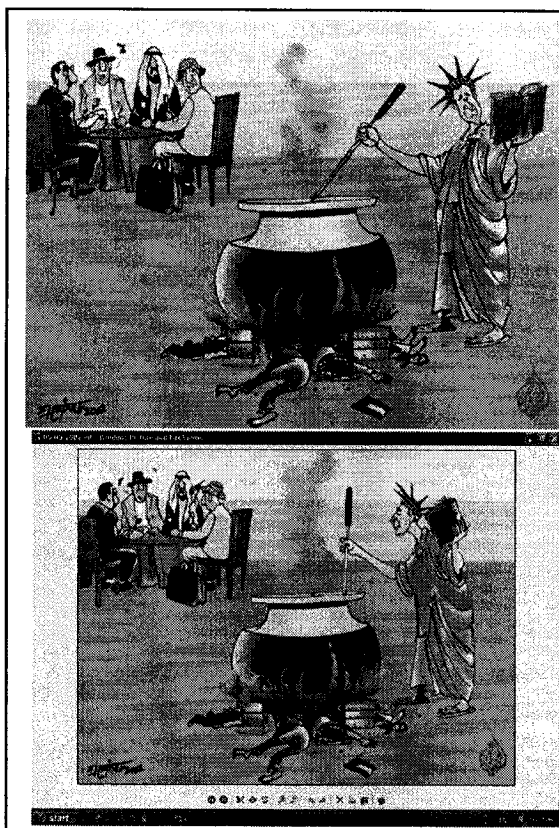


Figure 3-31. Aljazeera Net cartoon portraying the US President as a cook who uses Palestinians to feed the flames  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 05-05-2002

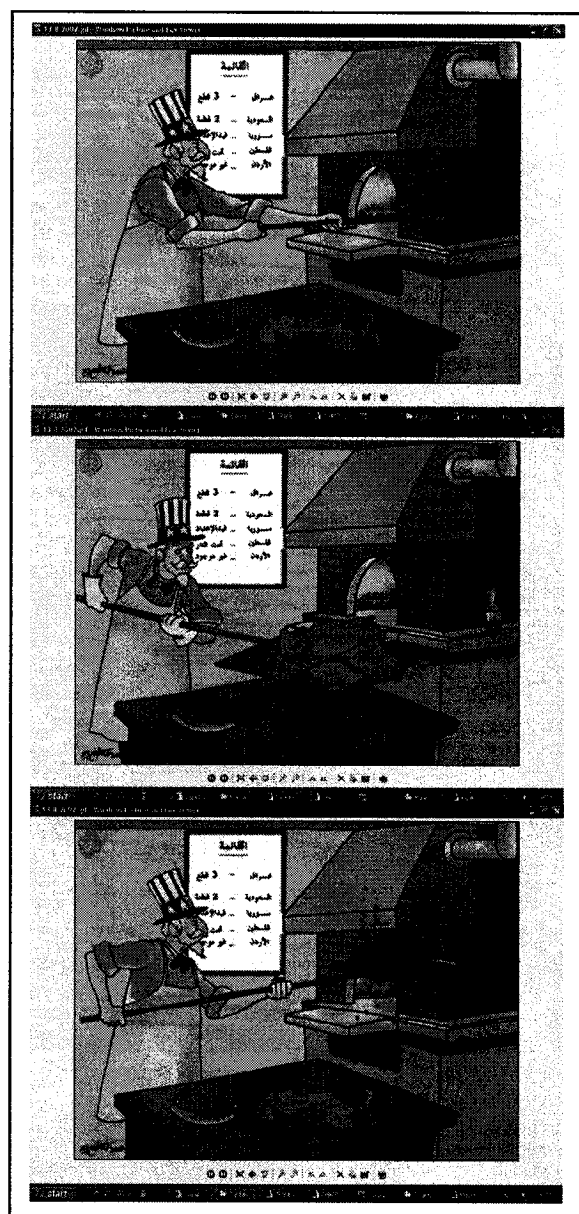


Figure 3-32. An Aljazeera Net cartoon showing how the United States acts as baker who aims to divide the Arab World  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 13-08-2002

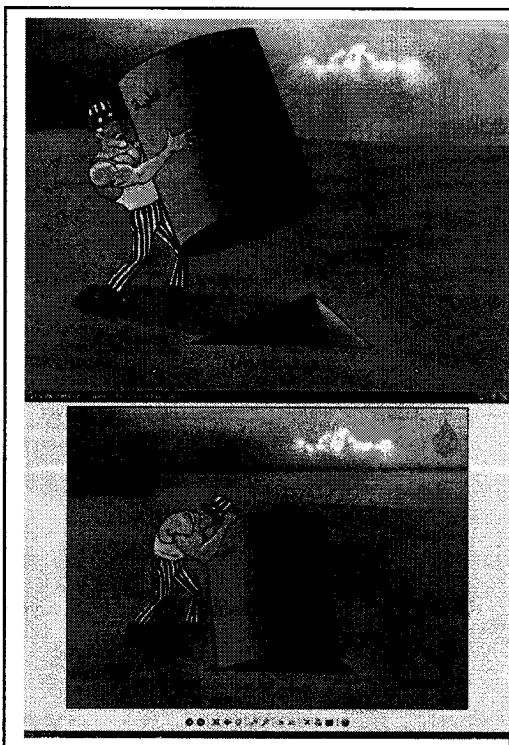


Figure 3-33. An Aljazeera Net cartoon showing how the United States conceives democracy in the Arab World  
Published in Aljazeera Net on 09-06-2003



What is the greatest danger currently threatening Arabs?

Figure 3-34. 44.7% of Aljazeera Net respondents saw the United States as the biggest danger that Arabs currently face, followed by Israel (34.4%). Fundamentalism and poverty are considered less dangerous threats (10.1% and 10.8%) respectively. *Published in Aljazeera Net on 09-11-2003*

networks than Alqaeda” (Habib, 2005). In a similar vein, Kamal Habib offers a critical summary of current views of American identity, stating that

America has arrogantly devised an agenda to transform the Arab world, not merely at the geo-strategic level, but also at the cultural, civil and religious levels, in order to create a new identity for the Arab and Islamic worlds according to which the American agenda is set by an extremist Christian wing, represented by the current administration, which is presently engaged in a crusade-like confrontation with the Islamic World (Habib, 2005).

Aljazeera Net depends on the perceptions and attitudes of its users to account for the increasing feeling of ‘hate’ toward the United States. For instance, in response to an Aljazeera Net poll about “the most dangerous threat” for Arabs, 44.7% of respondents pointed to America, and 34.4% to Israel” (Large, 2003). Aljazeera Net explained that the results of this poll could reflect the tendency of the United States to impose a central unilateral global system, through which it controls the domestic affairs of all *Others*, albeit under the umbrella of the United Nations (Large, 2003). (See figure 3-34).

Conceiving Israel as the second greatest danger threatening Arabs may explain the quantity of images related to Israel and its key personalities. Aljazeera Net cartoons

describe the Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, as a 'murderer', who has killed Palestinians in Genin, whereas the former US secretary Colin L. Powell is caricatured acting as conjurer who uses the magic of American foreign policy to turn Palestinian deaths into the (ever illusionary) birds of peace. Moreover, the Israeli Prime Minister is portrayed as someone who tries to deceive the Palestinian authority, and to blind it by giving Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, the former Prime Minister of Palestine and currently the Palestinian President, black glasses, thus using Abbas as the strategic armor that helps Sharon to vanquish any remaining Palestinian resistance (See figures, 3-35, & 3-36, & 3-37). The content of Aljazeera Net echoes the images portrayed in its cartoons and emphasizes the enmity of Israel toward Arabs. In October 1999 Aljazeera's host, Faisal Alqasim repeatedly raised questions that are charged with enmity towards Israel:

Wasn't Israel, and isn't it still, the cancer that infects the body of Arab nations? Isn't Israel responsible for the failure of all Arab development projects? Hasn't the Arab struggle, in the wake of Zionism, turned from striving toward democracy into a struggle for survival before a savage barbarian enemy? Why, then, do some people applaud Israeli democracy so much? (Alqasim, 1999, October).

One month afterwards, namely in November 1999, Alqasim's program raised even more questions about Israel, including questions about the peace negotiations with Israel:

Will the so-called peace process with the Hebrew State offer a salutary treatment that heals Arab problems or will it be administered as a *deadly poison*? No wonder some people describe it as a poisoned peace! Didn't the wife of the Palestinian President shout out loudly a few days ago, criticizing Israel for poisoning the water resources of

Figure 3-35. An Aljazeera Net cartoon about the conjuring acts of US foreign policy that turn the Palestinians who are killed by the Israeli Prime Minister into a bird of peace. Published in Aljazeera Net on 17-04-2002



Figure 3-36. The Palestinian Prime Minister is portrayed as a patient who looks at the future of Palestinians through dark glasses given to him by the Israeli Prime Minister. Published in Aljazeera Net on 15-06-2003

Figure 3-37. The Israeli Prime Minister is portrayed as using the Palestinian Prime Minister to crush resistance groups. Published in Aljazeera Net on 11-06-2003



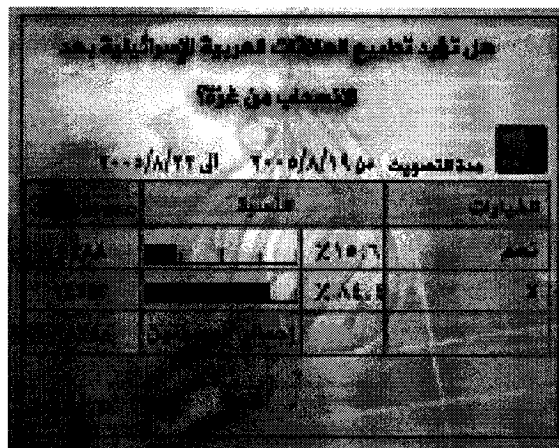
Palestinians in an aim to kill Palestinians with poison? According to Israeli sources haven't the numbers of Palestinian children infected with cancer and fatal diseases reached exceptionally high levels, while the Palestinian regions have been reduced to rubble? Will, then, the Palestinian region be a tomb for the Palestinian people, albeit developed under the auspices of peace? (Alqasim, 1999, November).

Seeing peace, no matter what shape it assumes, as a poison, can tell us much about the manner in which Aljazeera Net vehemently sustains theories of conspiracies. Evidently, the cartoons published by Aljazeera Net, and Alqasim's questions, as recorded above, support the idea that Arabs have been subject to conspiracies launched by the United States in order to attain Israel's objectives. However, Aljazeera Net appears very professional when it passes on its own views in the guise of its users' perceptions. Thus, in August 2005, prior to the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, Aljazeera Net reflected on the refusal of its users to condone any normal relations between Israel and Arab countries, since 84.4% of the participants in the poll expressed their rejection of the idea of reconciliation with Israel (Aljazeera Net, 2005, August). (See figure 3-38).

Before moving on to examine the second frame of Arab identity, it is helpful to shed light on the American and Israeli voices<sup>63</sup> that appear on Aljazeera Net. American and Israeli guests and writers, who are present in Aljazeera Net as part of its 'fair-minded' policy to expose its users to the voices of these *Others*, do not seem to have an appreciable impact on the cumulative image of hostility to the United States and Israel.

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<sup>63</sup> Many American speakers are invited regularly as guests on Aljazeera programs. Similarly, some Israeli guests have appeared on Aljazeera. Among the Israeli officials interviewed by Aljazeera were Amnon Shahak, the leader of the Center Party in Israel, who appeared on Aljazeera in February 1999, Ehud Barak, the former Prime Minister of Israel (January 2001), and Moshe Ketsaf, the Israeli president (August 2002).



Do you support the reconciliation of Arab Israeli relations in he wake of Gaza withdrawal?

Figure 3-38. 84.4% of Aljazeera Net users do not favor the reconciliation of Arab-Israeli relations after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza  
*Published in Aljazeera Net on 23-08-2005*

Some of the American voices to appear on Aljazeera corroborate its image of the United States. Among these voices is that of Francis Boyle, a professor of International law at Illinois, who appeared in one of Aljazeera's programs in April 2005. In an interview with Francis Boyle, whose views seem to accord with the Aljazeera Net poll just mentioned above, the latter agrees that the current ruling administration in the United States threatens the global system and undermines the United Nations (Mansour, 2005). He adds that: "the eleventh of September has been used as a pretext for hegemony all over the world, to control the oil and gas reserves of the world, which are, in part, the resources of Arab and Islamic countries, and to eliminate any resistance (Mansour, 2005). An essay written by Sandy Shanks (2005), American columnist and Aljazeera Net freelancer, puts more stress on the conflicts Arabs have endured throughout their history. Answering a question about 'why Arabs hate the United Sates', he writes:

The vast majority of Americans are clueless regarding the past of faraway lands as well as their own. This is highly dangerous in so much as we share this planet with other ethnicities and historical illiteracy begets misunderstanding (Shanks, 2005).

In detailing the historical events that may have led to Arab resentment toward the West, he states: “centuries of Western domination are kind of hard to forget and this will remove any holier-than-thou attitude American negotiators may have” (Shanks, 2005).

### **3.3.2.3. Confirming the Arab reference: Islam as a frame for Aljazeera.**

A brief recall of the argument made in the first chapter about religion will serve to launch the discussion that follows about Aljazeera Net’s representation of religion. The discussion in the first chapter explained that while Islam and Christianity are the two principal religions in the Arab World, Arab scholars have nonetheless chosen to focus on Islam. This section begins with an examination of how Christianity and Christians are represented. The second part of this section explains how Aljazeera Net re-mediate Islam in relation to the argument made in the first chapter. In observing the image it portrays of Islam it will be necessary to discern whether the representation of Islamic voices is substantive and authoritative enough to constitute an adequate reflection of views about Islam in Aljazeera Net, especially as noted in terms of its breadth and depth of coverage.

The Aljazeera Net archive seems a reliable reference to gauge the quantity and significance of the content registered concerning Christianity. Thus, only 28 headlines were found in response to a search for the term ‘Christianity’ versus 253 headlines for the term ‘Islam’. Similarly, when searching for the term ‘Christians’, 19 headlines came up versus 425 headlines in response to a search for the term ‘Muslims’. Aljazeera Net does not appear to focus sufficiently on issues of concern to Arab Christians. Among the few issues relating to Christians, only three television programs of Aljazeera discuss issues pertaining to Christians. One of these programs, entitled ‘Christians in the Arab World’,



features a discussion between Ghassan Ben-Gedo, an Aljazeera host, and one of his programs guests, Elie Ferzli, the Lebanese Information Minister, and the ensuing conversation reveals just how marginalized Christians feel in Aljazeera (Ben-Gedo, 2004, December 18):

Ghassan Ben-Gedo: Do Christians constitute a major part of the general social weaving of Arabs, or rather, do they have another culture and different civilization? Does the geographic formation bring them into the same sphere as the Muslims of this region?

Elie Ferzli: first of all, I think your question is somewhat bizarre since Christians are the original population of these countries.

Ghassan Ben-Gedo: some people say that the Christian sectors, especially here in Lebanon, reside here, but their culture is different...they live in the Arab World, but they are more attached to Western culture.

Elie Ferzli: I believe that there is a major historical misunderstanding here... (Ben-Gedo, 2004, December 18).

A glance at one of the headlines of Aljazeera's satellite programs indicates the spectrum of users Aljazeera Net has chosen to disseminate its views about Islam, and to alter its users and viewers' perception about how and what Arabs should think about their daily life and affairs. When Khadija Ben-Qenna, Aljazeera Net's host, asked her guest to respond to the title of the program, "The comprehensiveness of Islam...The conception of the idea and its future," Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi<sup>64</sup>, explained that:

What we understand by the 'comprehensiveness' of Islam is that Islam is an inclusive message, expressed through a thoroughly comprehensive system; that those who are willing to undo this message, and therefore, to segregate Islam – are those who would be willing to wipe out a great

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<sup>64</sup> Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi: Born in Egypt in 1926, Sheikh Alqaradawi is one of the well known followers of the Muslim Brotherhood, an academic and a Muslim scholar who obtained his doctoral degree from the faculty of Islamic Studies in 1973. He has worked in Qatar since 1961, and has written more than 120 titles. Al-qaradawi established the faculty of Islamic Laws at Qatar University in 1977, and then worked as a dean in the same faculty until 1990. A search for the name of Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi in Aljazeera Net archive will reveal that Sheikh Alqaradawi has been called upon as the main speaker of Aljazeera programs at least 273 times between November 3, 1996 and November 6, 2005.

many of its principles, to make peace without jihad, marriage with divorce, moral principles without laws, worship without action, truth without power, the Quran [Moshaf] without the sword – that is, they want to infer what they like about Islam and to dispense with what they dislike. The religion of Islam that accords with Allah's will, as revealed in his book, and as shown by the Prophet Mohamed (May the prayers of Allah be upon him!) [Sala Allah Alyeh wa Salam]...is a message that blends the demands of the present with the other life, spirituality and materiality, idealism and realism; moreover, it embraces all individual, family, social and national concerns, that is, Umma as well as international affairs...It is not a theological message restricted to the individual consciousness, nor is it limited to the mosque; rather, it is a message that includes all aspects of life (Ben-Qenna, 2005, February).

Following the same line of argument, Aljazeera Net has discussed many Islamic issues<sup>65</sup>, among them, the rotation of power in Islam and the question of its political diversity. Aljazeera's main guest, Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi, stresses the 'indispensability of the Umma' as the basis for a political system based on multi-parties. He widely agrees that Islam endorses a democratic political system, whose scope is limited to the bases of the Umma and the Islamic state (Alsheikh, 1997, & Mansour, 1999, April). Other Muslim scholars, such as Fahmy Hewaidy, and Mohamed Said Alawa, support the views of Alqaradawi as to the sources of authority in Islam. Hewaidy and Alawa believe that Islam is the essential reference for the state; that both the state and its democratic formations are just tools through which to achieve the Islamic project, or, to solve any political problems whatsoever, such as those inherent in dictatorship (Mansour, 1997, August 24 & Alansari, 1999, May).

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<sup>65</sup> The following issues are also broadly covered: 'The status of woman in Islam', 'The rights of youths in Islam', 'Sports and Islam', 'Love in Islam', 'The view of Islam in the media', 'The Islamic way of using the Internet', 'The child's rights in Islam', 'Morals and Islam', 'Islam and the arts', 'Individual responsibility in Islam', 'The family in Islam', 'Leadership in Islam', 'Islam and poverty'.

Debate about the relevancy of Islam to politics and democracy has hardly been broached at Aljazeera Net. However, such a debate did occur once on Faisal Alqasim's controversial program, 'The opposite Direction', when he invited the leader of the Nationalist Unionist Convening Party in Egypt, who debated the idea that neither the Quran nor the Prophet indicate that Islam is the way to govern the people, nor does it declare the essentiality of a 'religious state' (Alqasim, 1999, January).

Generally speaking, Aljazeera does not contest Islamic views in its daily affairs; on the contrary, it attempts to tutor its users and viewers about Islam, thereby elucidating the Islamic view about a variety of daily issues that occur in real life, and more importantly, by talking about the subject of Islam as a life governing theory and methodology. In different interventions on Aljazeera Net, Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi explains that Islam is not just a theory; rather, Islamic laws are formulated by way of accretion over time, and inform its theoretical elaborations (Ben-Qenna, 2005, February). Therefore, Muslims are not free to adopt the *Others'* way of life, nor are they free to do whatever they like, since they are committed to established principals, regulating lawful and righteous conduct (Abd-Allah, 2002, January).

Given this absolute prohibition on the 'right' to follow the *Other's* way of life, this is an opportune moment to discuss how Aljazeera represents the Islamic view about certain global and regional issues and, more particularly, globalization and conflict. In response to how Islam can be linked to globalization, Sheikh Mohamed Hussein Fadl-Allah and Alqaradawi argue that globalization falls within the comprehensive orbit of Islam; since Muslims respond to a global call whose inclusiveness is not limited to a specific place or temporal dimension - past, present, or future - since Islam is ubiquitous

in time and space (Abd-Allah, 1999, July & Ben-Qenna, 2005, February). The effect of globalization as a major phenomenon is also broached by Ghazy Altawbeh, an Islamic writer and researcher, who believes that despite the benefits that Muslims have gained from globalization, such as satellite communication and the Internet, its concomitant risks are notably harmful, especially in view of the threats posed by the banking interest system and worldwide American supremacy, as reflected in the imposition of global capitalism and the monopoly system created by international corporations (Abd-Allah, 2001, August).

In the preceding discussion about Arab conflict with *Others*, one can hardly overlook the influence of Islamic voices, which shape the ongoing argument about conflict. Obviously, Aljazeera Net offers space for Muslim scholars to explain their views about conflict in Palestine and Iraq. Indeed, appearing in different interviews on Aljazeera Net, Sheikh Alqaradawi criticizes the attempts of those who seek a peaceful dialogue with Israel, because Israel is “a brutal Zionist power that ultimately depends on the power of the gun” (Alsheikh, 1997, June). Arab and Muslim regimes, Alqaradawi’s argument goes, should show solidarity with the Palestinians and use their military arsenal to fight Israel (Abd-Allah, 2002, April). When Sheikh Alqaradawi is asked about Muslims who support the process of peaceful negotiation with Israel, he states: “The invitation of peace at this time is a betrayal, because it is we who are attacked, and whose homes are destroyed, our blood is shed, our privacies are violated, our sacred places are trampled down, and even the Al-Aqessa mosque is considered to be under threat” (Abd-Allah, 2002, April). Alqaradawi summarized his position thus: “as I’ve said before we have no choice but ‘Aljihad’” (Abd-Allah, 2002, April). Evidently, Sheikh Alqaradawi

does not support the argument for establishing normal relations with Israel; his reason is that the boycott with Israel is not a governmental request, but a public demand (Abd-Allah, 2002, June).

Yet, despite his rejection of the idea of peaceful negotiations with Israel, Alqaradawi supports the idea stated above that Muslims should not deal with the West as an absolute; hence, there should be a dialogue between Muslims and certain countries in the West, at least those that are not engaged in a war with Muslims (Alsheikh, 1997, June & Abd-Allah, 2000, February & Abd-Allah, 2001, September). Thus, prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and in response to a question about the relationship between Islamic extremists and the West, Alqaradawi expressed the view that Islamic extremism is not just dangerous for the West, but for all Muslims (Abd-Allah, 2000, February).

In the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, a number of Aljazeera programs invited experts to talk about how the image of Islam and Muslims had been affected. Muslim scholars appeared on Aljazeera to condemn the terror attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> against the United States, and they entertained broadly similar views about the increased vulnerability of the image of Islam and Muslims as a result of these attacks (Rayan, 2001, & Nour, 2002, February, & Nour, 2002, October).

At the beginning of the war against Afghanistan in October 2001, Aljazeera commenced a debate about the public demand for the 're-introduction of Islam'. The idea of reformulating Islam was applauded by Mohamed Omara, an Egyptian Islamic scholar, and Ahmed Alsarraf, an Arab journalist. Omara believes that Muslim countries have not directed sufficient efforts toward the appropriate enlightenment possible through the translation of the key texts of Islam, and in any case, this would be very difficult, given

that seminal Islamic books still await translation (Abd-Allah, 2002, August). In a rather more challenging extension of this idea, Ahmed Alsarraf indicated the need to “humanize” Islam (Alqasim, 2001, December). Alsarraf then added:

We failed in our Islam. We failed resoundingly...Newspapers, books, magazines, messages, studies and school education, as well as government speeches...prove that we have failed. We remain fragmented and combat each other to the extent that we have proven ready to practice violence, killing and assassination and merely because we disagree with each other. If this is the way we express our disagreements with each other, then what can be expected from other countries, other religions, and other groups (Alqasim, 2001, December).

By contrast, Ahmed Nofal, a Jordanian Islamic scholar, Ziad Abou Ghenimh, an Arab journalist, and Abd-Alwahab Almiseeri and Yasser Alzatrah, Aljazeera Net freelancers, have severely criticized the West, particularly the United States. Ziad Abou Ghenimh believes that the United States aims to create a new Islam, an Islam that equates resistance with terror (Alqasim, 2001, December). Similarly, Ahmed Nofal expressed his resentment against the war in Afghanistan, claiming that the United States chose to deal in an unthreatening manner with any country that was content with its policy, and that was ready to lower its sights in face of the United States’ aggression (Abd-Allah, 2002, June 16). Nofal was ostensibly stunned by the United States’ persistence in redefining its terms, and urged that the United States aims to make people more aware of the difference between resistance and terrorism, albeit conceived in its own terms (Abd-Allah, 2002, June 16). Following the same line of argument, Yasser Alaztrah believes that the United States uses the concept of ‘normative Islam’ as a tool to contest political Islam and Jihadi Islam (Alzatrah, 2005). In echoing the same cluster of views, Abd-Alwahab Almissiri

explains that the failure of Arab Nationalist thought has led to the emergence of Western enmity toward Islam, yet, in Almissiri's eyes, this Western enmity for Islam is not conceived as absolute; rather, it is hostility for an Islam that resists, and for any aspect of resistance that defies the attempts of the West to turn the World into a fabric ripe for exploitation (Almissiri, 2004).

The occupation of Iraq in March 2003 has widened the debate about Islam and the West, particularly in the aftermath of the decision of the Shiites in Iraq to combat the resistance of the military militias, and to join in the political process that aims to build a new democratic political system in Iraq. On the one hand, the representative of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Saad Jawad Qandil, explained to Aljazeera that Shiite Muslims in Iraq are committed to the basic tenets of Islam and the Islamic identity of Iraq, yet they also agree that Islam should be a key point of reference, alongside other considerations (Hadad, 2005). The view of the Iraqi Shiite, which appears to invite a compromise with the reality of occupation while offering a new federate evaluation of the nature of Iraq, finds an echo in the recommendations of the Global Anti-Aggression Conference, which was held in Qatar in February 2005. At its close, this conference called for alternative and peaceful ways to confront aggression against Muslims (Alkhtab, 2005).

On the other hand, the views of Aljazeera guests and freelancers, such as the Sudanese scholar, Hassen Altorabi, also an Iraqi Sunni scholar, and Mothana Harth Aldari, an Islamic scholar, support the dominant refrain of overt hostility toward the United States on the score of Islam, stating that the United States wages war against Islam in the guise of attacking 'terrorism' (Abd-Allah, 2003, May &

Abd-Alhamid, 2003). Their views found support in the decree of the Association of Muslim Scholars that Aljazeera Net published, about the right and obligation to resist the occupation in Iraq (The association, 2004).

Now, in turning to the discussion about Islam in relation to the debate set out in the first chapter, that is, the argument in the first chapter between Arab nationalists and Islamists about whether Islam is in fact a constituent of Arab identity, this issue has been excluded from consideration at Aljazeera Net. In fact, Aljazeera does not provide a space for prospective argument about the contribution of Islam to Arab nations; rather, the voices found at Aljazeera criticize Arab nationalist thought, and denounce the call for an Arab nation. Among the Aljazeera guests who have attacked the Arab nationalists is Ghazy Altawbeh. Altawbeh, who seeks to undermine the reasons for the existence of an Arab nation, believes that:

The fault does not reside in the endeavors of Arab nationalist thinkers to reform and solve the problems of the Umma, since it presents unreal resolutions, improper solutions... These thinkers construct an Umma based on two main sources: language and history. I think that what they [Arab nationalists] say is incorrect, unscientific, and pointless. It is no more than a fantasy in the minds of those who concoct it... Their mistake perhaps bound up with their attempts to learn more, but they should nonetheless acquaint themselves with the reality of the situation... What are the factors that people collectively agree upon in these countries? ...Whatever the answer they appear to rely on language and history, which is the wrong approach (Abd-Allah, 2001, August).

Thus, Aljazeera Net does not prognosticate, nor does it speak unambiguously about the need for an Arab nation, as seen in its attitude toward the Islamic concept of Umma. Initially, Umma entailed a community of individuals bound together by religious ties based on the community, people and nation of Arabs and, as such, it was founded on the



Umma that the prophet Mohamed originally created at Medina. Aljazeera talks repeatedly about the weaknesses of the Islamic concept of Umma, describing the challenges facing it, and the factors that may lead to its rise and development. In an attempt to minimize the crisis the Islamic concept of Umma is going through, Mohamed Omara informs Aljazeera that such crises are part of any valid conception of Umma. In talking about the crises in the development of Umma blame is laid on conspiracies, which are seen as a major factor in the undermining of Umma (Abd-Allah, 2003, July). Sheikh Alqaradawi offers a similar view when he paradoxically states: "I do not support the conspiratorial interpretation of history, but I cannot deny it; there are conspiracies for sure" (Abd-Allah, 2003, March). The scenario of conspiracy that the Umma of Muslims is said to have undergone is perhaps best explained by Mamoun Feraz Jarar, a Jordanian Islamic scholar, who explains that Islam became a subject for conspiracies a long time ago (Abd-Allah, 2002, July 14). He instances how Great Britain and France dramatically attempted to dismantle the Islamic Umma and to undermine its identity after the Islamic struggle for Umma had reached a critical impasse during the nineteenth century (Abd-Allah, 2002, July 14).

In addition to such conspiratorial factors, Islamic scholars point to a second regional factor. Recalling the arguments presented by the Arab nationalists in the first chapter, Islamic scholars warn against the upheavals occasioned by localism. Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi and Mamoun Feraz Jarar, for example, point to the dangers inherent in a lack of unity and are consequently concerned about the increased tendency towards localism (Abd-Allah, 2001, May, & Abd-Allah, 2002, July 14). Alqaradawi believes that the Umma of Allah should encompass everything, since it is only by being united with all

things that the debilitating tendencies of localism and tribalism can be overcome (Abd-Allah, 2001, May). Taking up the ideas of Alqaradawi, Mamoun Jarar deplores the territorial nature of localism, which he considers as a means of compromising Islamic identity (Abd-Allah, 2002, July 14). Whereas conspiracy theories and localism are seen to depend on foreign and regional factors, Muslim scholars, such as Mohamed Omara and Yousef Alqaradawi, believe that ignorance, despotism, and the corruption of Arab leaders are the result of domestic factors and, as such, they are conducive to the further debilitation of the concept of Umma (Abd-Allah, 2003, March, & Abd-Allah, 2003, July).

Turning now to the challenges facing the Islamic concept of Umma, Ghassan Hasanain, an Aljazeera Net editor, specifies two major tasks; first, to seek an end to the ongoing decline of the spirit of Umma that continues to destabilize Muslims, especially as a consequence of the relentless aggression against Muslims in Iraq and in occupied Palestine, and secondly, to challenge Western endeavors to make people skeptical about Islam, and thereby to stereotype it through associations with terrorism and violence (Hasanain, 2004).

Aljazeera Net adduces several reasons for the rise of the Islamic concept of Umma. For instance, Yousef Alqaradawi envisions the rich abundance of an Islamic community, or people united in the spirit of Umma, and puts forward four factors to account for its development: (1) the large populations the Islamic Umma comprises, (2) its rich natural resources, (3) the civil legacy, and (4) the Islamic message intrinsic to Umma, such as the establishment of the rights that Islam has enjoyed in every Muslim country (Abd-Allah, 2001, May, & Abd-Allah, 2003, March). In addition to Alqaradawi, Kamal Alhelbawi

formulates what he sees as two compulsory proposals: firstly, to rationally re-read the legacy of conflicts and crises, and secondly, to become more committed to the Quran and Sunna (Alhelbawi, 2002, & Abd-Allah, 2002, November). However, Mamoun Jarar - who believes that Islamic movements have accomplished many great things, even if many others await them, contests the proposals embodied in the Islamic Umma, describing the endeavors of Islamic movements to establish the Umma as more imaginative than real (Abd-Allah, 2002, July 14).

Briefly, Aljazeera Net does not appear to re-mediate the discussion about Islam; rather, Islam is introduced as an implicit frame for Aljazeera, and as a legitimate reference for 'Umma'. The voices that speak for Islam in Aljazeera echo four 'key' ideas, initially discussed in the first chapter; first, concerning the 'essentialism' of Islam as a governing theory and the guiding methodology for Muslims; secondly, the 'essentialism' of Umma as the presiding political form and spiritual entity for Muslims; thirdly, the ongoing enmity on the part of the *other* that engages with Muslims in conflict or supports aggression against them in the form of the occupation of Muslim territories; fourthly, the imperative of armed resistance, conceived as an absolute means for resolving conflicts. These four 'key' ideas additionally invite visitors of Aljazeera Net to believe in Western conspiracies as the basis for a historic interpretation for the weaknesses of the Islamic Umma.

#### **3.3.2.4. Re-empowering roots: The Classical Arabic language as a frame**

The Arab scholars' views cited in the first chapter collectively attest to the fact that the Arabic language is a stable and reliable source of Arab identity. Aljazeera Net does not veer from the line of argument made in the first chapter about the significance of the

Arabic language for Arabness; rather, it accentuates the solid bond between the Arabic language and the intrinsic identity of Arabness. This section will begin with a brief discussion of the conventional relationship between the Arabic language and Arab identity as it appears in Aljazeera. Additionally, it reveals the challenges awaiting the Arabic language and its prospective uses that are in fact in tune with Aljazeera's view of Arabness.

Apparently, the Islamic voices in Aljazeera indicate the innate roots between Islam and the classical Arabic language, particularly as it is the language that Allah 'selected' to be the language of the Quran and Sunna. Yousef Alqaradawi and Enayat Allah Eblagh, an Islamic scholar, argue that the Arabic language is at the root of Islamic identity, since every Muslim must learn some Arabic intonations to perform his prayers (Mansour, 1998, July, & Abd-Allah, 2001, April 29).

The classical Arabic language appears to enjoy more privileges than the colloquial language in the eyes of some Arab scholars. One of these scholars, whose holistic conception of the Arabic language encompasses something more than linguistic attributes, is Nasser Eldin Alassed, the former Minister of Education in Jordan, who believes that Arabic language and identity are symmetrical aspects of one overriding phenomenon (Mansour, 2004, April). When Aljazeera asked him about the relationship between the Arabic language and identity, Nasser Eldin Alassed explained that language and identity are inextricable; that "language is identity; and reciprocally, the identity of the Umma resides in the Arabic language, which embraces the values, ideals, experiences, expertise, and knowledge of Umma" (Mansour, 2004, April). Conceiving the classical Arabic language and identity as one overarching entity allows Alassed to

reiterate the argument of Arab Nationalists that affirms that the Arabic language is ineluctably tied to Umma's thought and culture (Mansour, 2004, April).

The assertion that the Arabic language expresses the thought of Umma explains why Arab and Muslim scholars associate the vulnerable state of the classical Arabic language with the challenges posed by Umma. Scholars identify two fundamental challenges currently facing the classical Arabic language, and consequently, two threats to Umma; firstly, the penetration of English and French terms, which have saturated people's daily discourse, and secondly, the influence of the colloquial Arabic language.

Yousef Alqaradawi denounces the spread of some foreign terms, and notes their rapid diffusion among young people. In Alqaradawi's opinion, the decline of the classical Arabic language is due to the Arabs' diminished pride in using their national language, and the increasing tendency of some Arabs to employ English or French terms in their daily discourse in an attempt to show off their ability to speak English or French (Abd-Allah, 2001, April 29). Additionally, the rapid expansion in the sector of foreign education in the Arab region is seen as a threat to the survival of the classical Arabic language (Abd-Allah, 2001, April 29). Alqaradawi praises the Syrian higher education system for assigning the classical Arabic language for use in the study of science and medicine (Abd-Allah, 2004, April 4).

The colloquial Arabic language is considered no less harmful than the penetration of foreign languages (Abd-Allah, 2001, April 29). Yet, colloquial Arabic is a subject for ongoing debate among Arab scholars. On the one hand, some scholars, such as Yousef Alqaradawi, and Nassr Eldin Albahrah, a Syrian scholar, and Shawki Daif, the president of the Academy of the Arabic language point to the menace that faces the classical

Arabic language as a result of the spread of colloquialisms and slang words. The latter, Shawki Daif, blames the mass media in the Arab world for augmenting and expanding the colloquial uses of Arabic, proving once again that the classical Arabic language is the language of Umma, whereas colloquial Arabic is a local language that belongs to the public of one country (At the opening, 2001). Daif, who calls upon the mass media and Arab governments to use the classical Arabic language, believes that colloquial Arabic will spell the ruin of Arab identity (At the opening, 2001, & Egypt, 2001).

One the other hand, Abd-Allah Altatawi, a professor of Arabic literature, and Rafik Rohanh, a Lebanese poet, believe that colloquial Arabic represents a transformation in the constitution of the language, and has been the language for a considerable proportion of the cultural production that exists in the Arab World; therefore, it represents the various Arab publics who express themselves through it (Alqasim, 2001, August, & Arabic, 2005). A more tempered view, expressed by Enayat Allah Eblagh, assesses the importance of colloquial Arabic and takes note of its immense cultural heritage, yet he bestows greater accolades on classical Arabic, albeit sounding a cautionary note in stating that colloquial Arabic should not be used as a tool to diminish classical Arabic (Mansour, 1998, July).

Aljazeera Net has articulated its views on the relationship between language and Arab conflict. Aljazeera Net explores the use of language as a tool for resisting occupation. It points to the war of words in Iraq, since Iraqis have tenaciously used Arabic words to write statements urging resistance on their walls. According to Aljazeera Net, American troops were ordered to eradicate such provocations to resistance, which Iraqis made to support Saddam and the cause of resistance, however, once the American

troops decided to abandon a certain spot, Iraqis would come back in force to write new statements that called for resistance (Walls, 2003).

Aljazeera Net was quick to stake its own position in the battle over the Arabic language, reaffirming the traditional emphasis on the use of classical Arabic. Aljazeera's guide for professional behavior states that:

the language of the channel is classical Arabic, which is free from needless complexity and exaggeration; it is recognized as a suitable language for journalism, since its classical simplicity means that it is not susceptible to the same errors that are to be found in colloquial Arabic and, as such, it will be used on condition that classical Arabic fulfills the requirements of reporting (Aljazeera satellite, 2005).

The instructions included in Aljazeera's guide for professional behavior require the journalists at Aljazeera to display their professionalism in editing headlines and images, and to avoid any form of exaggeration, simplification, and linguistic presumption (Aljazeera Satellite, 2005). More important to the argument elaborated here, Aljazeera calls on its journalists not to use descriptive and oversimplifying vocabulary, singling out such terms as 'shameful behaviour', 'savageness', and 'brutality' for special disapproval, since they negatively influence the fairness and reliability of its coverage (Aljazeera Satellite, 2005). The language that the Aljazeera team is urged to use in order to achieve credibility and objectivity, should be free from what Aljazeera's guide defines as recurring rhetorical 'tricks', convoluted sentences and expressions that might be construed as unduly ambiguous or judgmental (Aljazeera Satellite, 2005).

Reminding us about the debate launched in the second chapter about the discrepancy between the rules and practices that govern objectivity, the language that Aljazeera Net uses is not merely formulaic, descriptive, and judgmental, but almost

exclusively based on rhetoric and exaggeration. Examples<sup>66</sup> detailing the quality of language Aljazeera expects its journalists to adopt are ample, though they are far exceeded by counter examples that breach its stylistic protocols. The following two examples exemplify the rhetorical excesses of Aljazeera. Indeed, in two questions raised by Aljazeera's anchors, Faisel Alqasim and Ghassan Ben-Gedo, it becomes apparent how rhetoric and exaggeration are used to regulate the language of Aljazeera. In one of 'The Opposite Direction' (Alitejah Aalmoakes) television programs, entitled, "The possibility of resisting America," Alqasim (2003) questions: "whether the *Iraqi swamp* will be the *straw that breaks the back* of American imperialism." Likewise, at the beginning of a discussion between Ghassan Ben-Gedo and his guests about the reality of change in Arab countries, Ben-Gedo (2004, December 4) raised a question, repeatedly posed by his fellow journalist, Faisel Alqasim, and amply documented above, inquiring "whether Arabs have really become *the stock joke* and *butt* of the World?" The dialogue between Ben-Gedo and his guest, Hayat Howyek, an Arab researcher and writer, explains how an anchor, such as Ben-Gedo, can force the guest to further his line of argument in order to consolidate a point (Ben-Gedo, 2004, December 4):

Ghassan Ben-Gedo: A warm welcome to our viewers. Miss Hayat Howyek... Has the Arab world – that is, the political life and political reality of the Arab World – become the stock joke of the world?

Hayat Howyek: Well, surely your question begs its own answer? It's a weighted question!

Ghassan Ben-Gedo: You think I'm exaggerating?

Hayat Howyek: Well, perhaps not; after all, it is not comedy, but tragicomedy that provokes ridicule, yet pain, as well.

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<sup>66</sup> The expressions and vocabulary italicized throughout this chapter are examples of the kind of overly emotive lexicon Aljazeera Net commonly employs.



### **3.3.2.5. Media battle frame: entertainment, censorship and the imposition of watchdog-underdog roles for Aljazeera**

Aljazeera positions itself as a Pan-Arab media, whose message outruns the dominant discourses, found in other local Arabic media, or even in Arab media that have a comparable scope to that of Aljazeera. As shown above in the second chapter, Aljazeera has been a subject of harassment in many Arab regimes, and it has even drawn the criticism of United States' officials. This section discusses how Aljazeera positions itself in a 'media battle frame', whereby Aljazeera casts itself in two respective roles: as watchdog, or underdog<sup>67</sup>.

The representations of Arab media and other media are verbally and pictorially graphic in Aljazeera Net, and mostly, this is due to Aljazeera's animated cartoons. For instance, Shujaat Ali describes the cameraman of the Arab amusement media as "a clown walking on stilts, oblivious to those who die in Iraq and Palestine by US bombs, and barely paying attention to a child who asks for help" (See figure 3-39). In a similar vein, in plumbing the surface of another image, appearing in figure 3-40, the seemingly objective image of a horse appears, however it has been intentionally shot by an Arab, who is probably emblematic of Arab regimes. Other Arab media that appear outside the ostensibly objective neutrality of Aljazeera's gaze are not seen as being objective. Somewhat surprisingly, but nevertheless reflecting the freedom enjoyed by Aljazeera anchors, Mohamed Krishan, Aljazeera's anchor, practices a limited degree of self-criticism in accord with the image, if not the guidelines, that Aljazeera provides. He therefore disclaims the idea of partaking in the panic of those who scream in the face of entertainment in Arab media, and he does not agree with those who charge Arabic

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<sup>67</sup> The term 'underdog' is proposed in a conversation with Adel Iskandar about Aljazeera (Iskandar, 2004).

Arab  
media



Figure 3-39. An Aljazeera Net cartoon portraying an Arab media cameraman as a clown whose concern is entertainment.

*Published in Aljazeera Net on 20-07-2003*



Figure 3-40. Aljazeera Net cartoon about the murdering of 'objective media' by Arab governments.

*Published in Aljazeera Net on 10-08-2002*

satellite news media with a conspiracy to 'put poison in the honey'. Rather, he believes that Arabs should embrace both the entertainment media and news media as part of the reality they live in (Albashrawi, 2002, January 4).

Aljazeera Net often refers to these concerns on the part of its guests, who attribute the lack of objectivity of Arab media to the lack of democracy found in other Arab countries. Recalling the censorship imposed on Arab media, Salah Eldin Hafez, former president of the Federation of Arab Journalists (FAJ), told Aljazeera in 2000:

There is no space to talk about press freedom in the Arab World...because the environment in Arab society historically, and contemporaneously, has been undemocratic. Currently, governments do not accept criticism, and in some cases, leaders are given cult-like status as semi-Gods... We do not yet enjoy the culture of freedom, nor do we enjoy an openly democratic culture (Mansour, 2000, September).

Aljazeera's anchor, Faisal Alqasim, tells Kawther Albashrawi, another Aljazeera anchor, that "we [Arabs] are living in conditions of political, social, and cultural repression... if someone closes your lips, forcing you to be speechless for fifty years, what will you say to him, when you are eventually allowed to speak?" (Albashrawi, 2002, January 11). The investigation undertaken by the Reporters without Borders' organization that Aljazeera Net recently published about Arab media seems to support both Salah Eldin Hafez and Faisal Alqasim's views, since it strongly emphasizes the lack of press freedom found in Arab countries (Temlali, 2005).

The lack of press freedom in the Arab World is not however sufficient to thwart the efforts of Aljazeera to report views that are critical of, or at least unpleasant for, Arab governments, nor is its critical agenda likely to be put into a reversal mode through fear of intimidation. Certain Arab regimes have been irritated because of the '*watchdog*' role

Aljazeera plays, however, as shown in the second chapter, certain Arab regimes have exerted considerable pressure<sup>68</sup> on Aljazeera. Preventive measures have been repeatedly taken against Aljazeera, ranging from the withdrawal of a correspondent's license, to detaining reporters<sup>69</sup>, to shutting down Aljazeera's bureaus. Nonetheless, the aggressive measures Arab governments apply to throttle Aljazeera are considerably less deadly than the offensive measures taken by the United States, which bombarded Aljazeera's bureaus in Afghanistan in November 1999, and in Baghdad in February 2003<sup>70</sup>.

Since considerable pressure has been placed on Aljazeera, especially in attacking its bureaus, which strategically permit Aljazeera to put itself in an underdog position, Aljazeera has responded by alternating its watchdog and underdog personas. This latter underdog niche that Aljazeera has assigned for itself operates as both a protective and mythologizing artifice through which Aljazeera can be seen to fight for freedom of information and the right of Arabs to know the truth. However, Aljazeera's typical

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<sup>68</sup> Aljazeera Net lists at least 20 aggressive acts of harassment on the part of both Arab and Western countries against the network (See Appendix T). Aggressive actions taken against Aljazeera's crew seem to be part of a calculated ongoing process of attrition. Aljazeera recently reported that the network was exposed to two punitive actions during July 2005; once, in Yemen, where two of its crews were detained (Sanaa, 2005), and again in Morocco, which decided to withdraw the license of the Aljazeera correspondent, Abd-alsalam Razak (Morocco, 2005).

<sup>69</sup> Detention of Aljazeera's correspondents and cameramen is one of the measures both Arab and Western governments have applied. Tayseer Allouni, for instance, Aljazeera Net's former correspondent in Afghanistan, received an indictment from the Spanish authorities, which claim that Allouni formed a connection with some suspects who are currently facing charges for their connection to Al Qaeda (Tayseer, 2005). However, though Allouni appears to be charged with the same allegations as a cameraman from Aljazeera, this man, Sami Alhaj, does not enjoy the same privileges as Allouni, since Alhaj has been detained in a prison in Guantanamo Bay for three years and, half of that time, without specified criminal charges having been brought against him (Alkartit, 2005).

<sup>70</sup> Two of Aljazeera's correspondents died in Iraq during the invasion and occupation of that country. The US attack on an Aljazeera crew in Baghdad, in February 2003, caused the death of an Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad, named Tarek Ayoub. Aljazeera also lost another correspondent, Rashid Hamid Waly, who died in Karbela during a confrontation in May 2004.

strategy of adopting an underdog position can also be interpreted as a legitimate response to the pressures imposed upon it from both Arab governments and the United States.

Aljazeera has repeatedly declared that, “it will remain tolerant, despite the pressures” (Alzoghby, 2004, August, & Despite, 2005). In keeping with this declaration, in response to the decision of the temporary government in Iraq to shut down the Aljazeera Bureau in Baghdad, Aljazeera Net’s editor, Ranya Alzoghby, wrote on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2004 about the refusal of Aljazeera to negotiate its professional media-principals, which seemingly angered both the Iraqi authorities and Washington (Alzoghby, 2004, August). A few months later, Aljazeera inaugurated its ninth year with a press statement, issued on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, 2005, which assured its users and viewers that it would adhere to an editorial policy based on professionalism and credibility. (Despite, 2005). The statement explained that Aljazeera has been subject to severe harassment from various different ‘fascist’ regimes in the Arab region, and from foreign states that do not condone the strategy of Aljazeera, which is based on representing ‘both sides of the coin’, or, “our view and the opposing view,” in the words of its editorial motto (Despite, 2005). Whenever the pressures on Aljazeera are intensified, the statement concluded, Aljazeera could always be relied upon to stand firm in its principles (Despite, 2005).

Clearly, Aljazeera has an obligation to respond to the destructive and deadly attacks launched against its bureaus in Afghanistan and Iraq. Impressively enough, Aljazeera has sought to continue its editorial line despite the intolerable nature of these incidents, yet it clearly remains in a blatant underdog position vis-à-vis the United States. Thus, Aljazeera’s strategy has been to send a message to its viewers and users, informing them

that the war in the United States that is currently being waged against Iraq is not only illegal, but also, in the words of Joanne Tucker, Aljazeera Net's director, an "unclean war, a messy war, and it will continue to get messier" (Mansour, 2004, December, & O'Regan, 2005). As if in accordance with the line of argument highlighted here and the explanations set out in the first chapter concerning the emotionalism of Arabs and the high-flown rhetoric of the Arabic language, Aljazeera Net has indicted the occupation troops for transforming the media field in Iraq to 'a daily death-for-free scene' (Aljazeera, 2004, May).

However, the underdog position of Aljazeera became even clearer when some of Aljazeera Net's editors, such as Okbah Alahmed and Mohamed Dawood, began to accuse the Anglo-American troops in Iraq of intentionally targeting the eyewitnesses of the war, namely, the journalists, who aimed to report truthfully the events of the invasion and the occupation of Iraq (Alahmed, 2003, & Dawood, 2003). Okbah Alahmed and Mohamed Dawood rhetorically describe the killing of Aljazeera journalists as a murder staged to silence observers and to put blinkers over their eyes in an attempt to consolidate the criminal invasion and occupation of Iraq while remaining unobserved (Alahmed, 2003, & Dawood, 2003). Appropriately, Aljazeera Net cartoonist, Shujaat Ali, ironically depicts how the fighter planes of Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, target media men, engaged in reporting the civilian casualties in Iraq, with their deadly missiles (See figure 3-41). Aljazeera Net often chooses to focus on the murder of Tarek Ayoub, Aljazeera's correspondent in Baghdad, who is portrayed in hyperbolic rhetoric as a symbol of "flesh-and-blood credibility," the "messenger of truth," "whose only weapons were two eyes, a tongue, and a pen" (Abd-Alhady, 2004).

Aljazeera Net prompts its users that the battlefield in Iraq is not sufficient to whet the war-appetite of the United States and Britain. Questioning whether it could tolerate yet more pressure, Aljazeera Net's statement goes on to explain that "the war has reached the realm of the Internet, and Aljazeera's website is one of the fields that has received some of the splinters of this war" (Could, 2003, & Another, 2003). That is, just a few days after Aljazeera broadcast images of dead and captured American soldiers in Iraq, particularly on Thursday 27 of March 2003, Aljazeera's English website was hacked<sup>71</sup> (See figure 3-42). Adopting once more a conspiratorial interpretation of events, Ahmed Farouk, Aljazeera Net's editor, writes about the "electronic attack on Aljazeera" (Farouq, 2003), continuing thus:

The constant incursions against Aljazeera from disgruntled Americans are not limited to bombarding its bureaus in time of war, nor to the intimidation of its journalists, but the attack has been extended to undermine the network's website on the Internet...It is not surprising that the first attack that targeted Aljazeera in the early days of the war was staged at the same time as the extraordinary electronic hacking directed against Aljazeera Net. Though the website of Aljazeera has been designed to resist the sabotage of individual hackers, it has nonetheless been subject to planned, costly and extensive attacks from technologically advanced organizations or associations (Farouq, 2003).

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<sup>71</sup> As reported by Aljazeera Net, the English website of the network experienced constant attacks from hackers on the same day that Aljazeera broadcast live images of dead and captured American soldiers (Could, 2003). The hackers managed to take over the website of Aljazeera Net, and to redirect Aljazeera's users to a different web page, where users found the United States flag along with a message proclaiming: "Let Freedom Ring." The hackers called themselves the "Freedom Cyber Force Militia" (See figure 3-42). Aljazeera Net states that the attack against its electronic website was not the first incident of this kind. It claims that the agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) raided the office of InfoCom, the host of the Aljazeera server, and gained access to information about Aljazeera on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 (Farouq, 2003). This allegation on the part of Aljazeera was denied by the FBI spokesman, Lori Bailey, who stated that "they were executing a search warrant as part of a criminal investigation and the action had nothing to do with Middle East issues" (FBI, 2001).



Figure 3-41. An Al Jazeera Net cartoon describing how British Air fighters intentionally target media reporting civilian casualties in Iraq.  
*Published in Al Jazeera Net on 08-04-2003*



Figure 3-42. The image hijackers posted to replace the Al Jazeera Net website on Thursday, March 27, 2003.

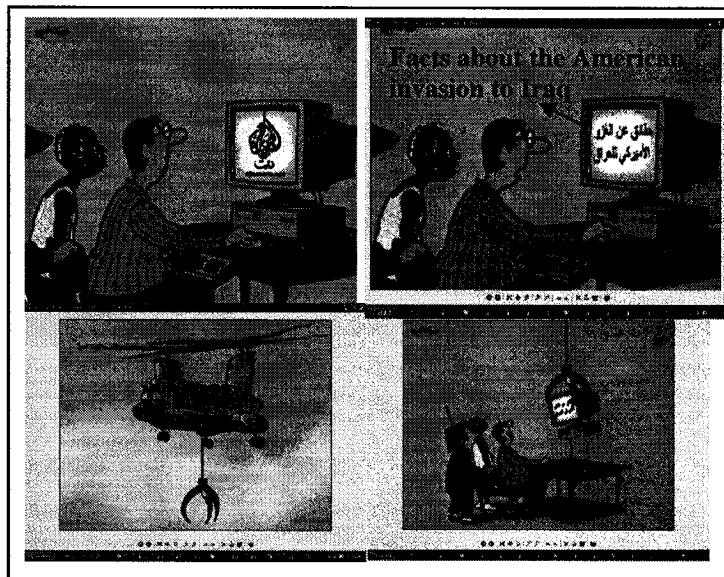


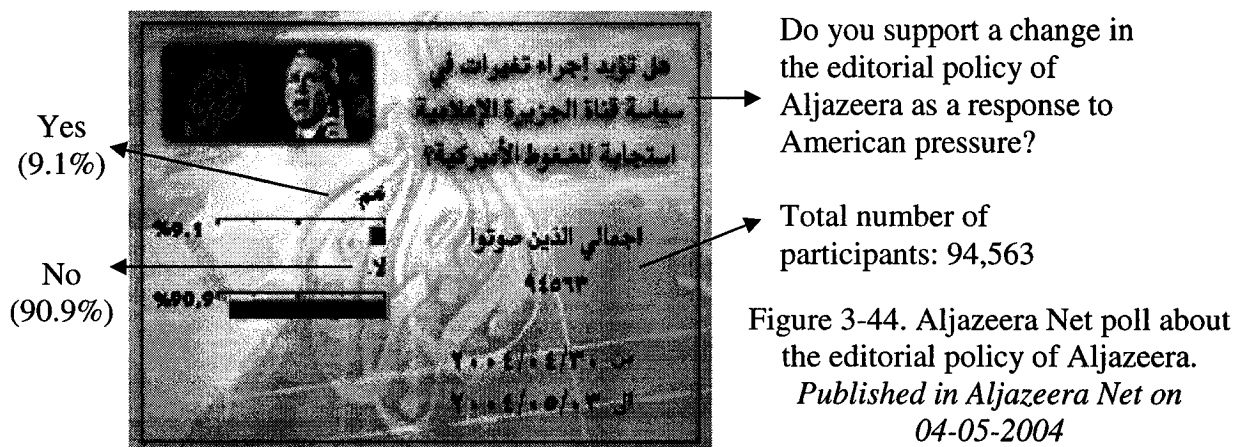
Figure 3-43. An Al Jazeera Net cartoon explaining that the hacking of the Al Jazeera Net server was at the instigation of the United States to prevent people from knowing the truth  
*Published in Al Jazeera Net on 29-03-2003*



Chiming in with Ahmed Farouq's allegations, an Aljazeera cartoonist described the hijacking of the Aljazeera Net server as being aimed at preventing people from different cultures from knowing the truth (See figure 3-43). Yet, the Internet is not the only field of operation in which Aljazeera's activities are targeted. Another battlefield where war is being waged is the New York Stock Exchange and the Nasdaq Stock market, which barred Aljazeera's financial analysts, Amar Alsankary and Ramzy Shber, from the floor, immediately after Aljazeera broadcast news footage of dead and captured American soldiers.

A year after the occupation of Iraq Aljazeera Net conducted a poll, apparently to bolster the underdog position it had chosen to take. Aljazeera Net's poll, which was carried out over a period of three days, beginning on April 30, 2004, appealed to its users as to whether Aljazeera should change its editorial policies in response to American pressures. Reflecting the trust Aljazeera enjoys among its viewers and users, 90.9 % of participants, who represent 94,563 users, did not support a change in Aljazeera's editorial policy (The majority, 2004) (See figure 3-44). Aljazeera Net's comments on the results of the poll explain that the attitude of its users are in accord with the opinion of media analysts, who believe that Aljazeera is more accurate than American media outlets (The majority, 2004).

Regularly, Aljazeera articulates its stance on the differences between various Western media and the policies adopted in their respective countries, describing the Western cameraman, the 'CMM' in figure 3-45, as someone who not only averts his gaze from the murder of Palestinians by an Israeli soldier, but also uses his camera as a missile in order to attack a Palestinian family. This literalizing of a metaphor – the camera as



weapon – is clearly meant to point to the deadly consequences of biased (CNN) reporting. Likewise, Western media were also depicted as the front line forces in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and as agents propagating the double standards of the West, particularly on behalf of the United States, which criticized Aljazeera for broadcasting images of dead American soldiers, while itself choosing to show the dead bodies of Qasey and Addey Saddam Hussein (See figures 3-45, & 3-46 & 3-47). In reinforcing the message of the Aljazeera Net cartoons, Mohamed Dawood, Aljazeera Net’s editor, emphasized that:

Analysts believe that military troops attempted forcibly to take over and monopolize the audio and visual resources needed to cover this war. Many of them point out that American and British media were quick to follow the first gun shot fired in Iraq, and conceived the War against Iraq as a patriotic duty that could only be upheld by producing suitable rhetoric and images, evidently to the detriment of disclosing the real facts concerning the unfolding of the war (Dawood, 2003).

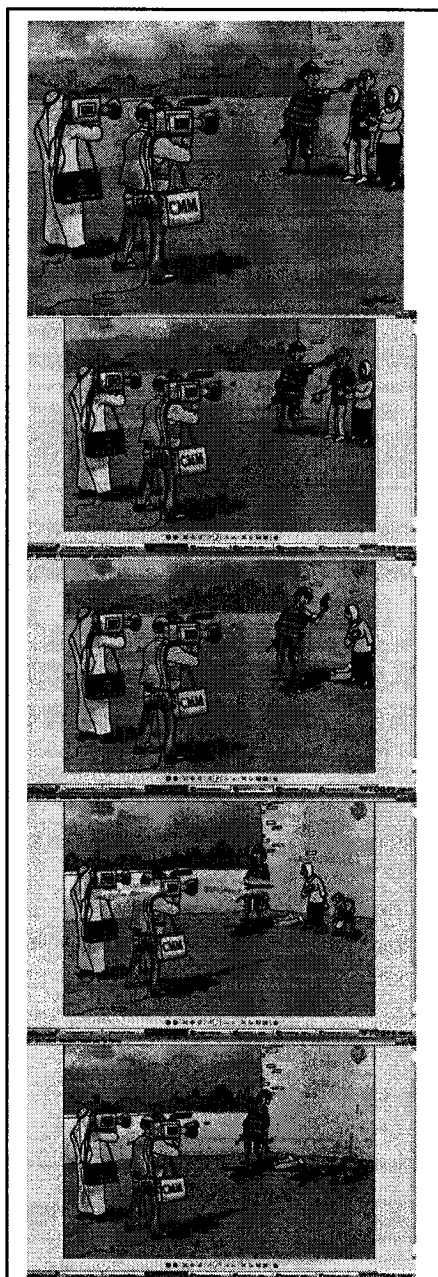


Figure 3-45. An Aljazeera Net cartoon about how 'CMM', shares responsibilities for the murdering of Palestinians. Published in Aljazeera Net on 26-07-2002.



Figure 3-46. An Aljazeera Net cartoon describing how the American media was used as the front line of troops during the invasion of Iraq in March of 2003. Published in Aljazeera Net on 21-03-2003.



Figure 3-47. An Aljazeera Net cartoon indicating the double standard of the American media, which criticized Aljazeera for showing graphic images of the dead American soldiers, while going on to depict the dead bodies of Addey and Qasey Saddam in graphic details. Published in Aljazeera Net on 29-03-2003

### **3.3.2.6. Framed gender: Islam, male superiority and cultural dominance, versus the postcolonial myth of innocent masculinity**

Islam shapes the argument about Arab gender at Aljazeera Net, either as a frame determining that Arab issues related to women should not be amenable to interpretation outside this given frame, or, at least, utilized as the basis for an argument that aims to negotiate a different set of codes and practices. That the Islamic frame is preeminent at Aljazeera Net indicates the prevalence of Islamic voices. In order to examine the image of Arab women within the Islamic frame it will be necessary to explore how the Muslim scholars presented on Aljazeera Net conduct their talks about women's rights.

The Muslim scholars interviewed at Aljazeera Net are still prone to debate whether or not women have the right to work and to take on a job. Hassen Issa, a professor at the faculty of Islamic law in Qatar, asserts that women's work should not be put at the top of the list of the family's priorities; rather, the family itself, conceived strictly as a collective entity, and the husband should enjoy more privileges (Alsheikh, 1997, April). Therefore, women's work is conditioned by the family's need for her work, and her husband's perceived right to take care of her. For instance, by inferring that the workforce has already reached a point of saturation with men and youths alone, Hassen Issa does not deem it an urgent matter to consider women's reasons for choosing to work (Alsheikh, 1997, April). Moreover, Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi approves of Hassen Issa's views, merely adding that the kind and quality of the job should be one of the determining factors in women's work. Thus, they are not permitted to work as dancers or bartenders, nor are they allowed to work in nightclubs (Alansari, 1999, June). Additionally, they are urged not to work in a space where they have opportunities to be alone with single men,

or in places where work is particularly strenuous, such as in mining, or construction work (Alansari, 1999, June).

Nonetheless, the conditions specified by Hassen Issa and Yousef Alqaradawi do not appear to be sufficiently exclusive and rigorous for a scholar, such as Abd-Alrazak Alshaygi<sup>72</sup>, the Dean of the faculty of Islamic law at Kuwait University, who believes that women should not be allowed to hold official positions, nor to be governors or parliament members (Hadad, 1999). The position he sets out is centered on one of the Prophet Mohamed's 'Hadith' (Statement in the Sunna), which states that: "those who put women in positions of governance will not succeed" (Hadad, 1999).

In response to Abd-Alrazak Alshaygi's opinion, Sami Hadad, Aljazeera's anchor, implied that scholars who do not entertain Abd-Alrazak Alshaygi's view are inexcusable:

So...tell me doctor, in the United States, Miss Madeline Albright is a Jew who adheres to the Bible [The Torah], yet, her opinion influences the entire Gulf region, particularly Kuwait, but you forbid your Kuwaiti sister to express her opinion in Parliament? (Hadad, 1999).

However, the point of view put forward by Abd-Alrazak Alshaygi has been rejected by many other scholars, such as Yousef Alqaradawi, Abd-Alhamid Alansari, the Dean of the faculty of Islamic Law in Qatar, who believe that the Quran provides a significant counterexample in the queen of Saba, who governed her people well (Mansour, 1998, September & Hadad, 1999). Yet, some Muslim scholars, such as Alqaradawi and Ali Alqoreh Daghy, a professor of Islamic law at the University of Qatar, who might condone the rights of woman to vote in parliamentary elections, are yet very conservative in

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<sup>72</sup> Abd-Alrazak Alshaygi considers that his view of preventing woman from holding any general governing position is merely a moderate alternative to the 'harmful' views of the liberals and extremists (Hadad, 1999).

regard to women's rights that might permit them to hold certain sorts of sensitive position in the state, such as those in the judiciary. When Ahmed Mansour, Aljazeera's anchor, asked Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi<sup>73</sup> about whether Islamic law warrants restrictions for women's work as judges, Alqaradawi answered: "Brother Ahmed, I do not know why you wish to raise problematic and argumentative issues that merely create opportunities for tittle-tattle" (Mansour, 1998, September).

The following conversation between Ahmed Masnour, Aljazeera's anchor, and Yousef Alqaradawi, not only summarizes how those who are described as 'moderate' Islamists problematize the 'issue of woman', but invites the consent of Aljazeera's anchor, who either endorses Alqaradawi's answers, or uses the words of his guest as a constant refrain. For instance, Alqaradawi<sup>74</sup> remarks:

In fact, the most serious problem with regard to women that *we* [Muslims] experience is the tendency to veer between the extremes of immoderation and inattentiveness. Some people want to forbid women from doing anything, forcing them to remain at home, and not to leave their homes more than twice: one time to go to her husband's home when she gets married, and the other time, to attend her own funeral. Of course, this is an extreme view. On the contrary, there are those who want woman to do more or less what they want and to go with the flow.

Ahmed Mansour: Yes.

Dr. Yousef Alqaradawi: Nothing prevents her, or restricts her; no tie can fasten her, and no deterrent can correct her. *We* fall somewhere between these two positions and, frankly, both of them are to be deplored. That's why *we*

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<sup>73</sup> Alqaradawi posits three statutory conditions for women who wish to work in the judiciary. In Alqaradawi's words, women can work as judges at an age when their menstrual cycles stop, and her children are grown up, yet women in their thirties should still not be legible to judge. Besides being qualified, which is the second condition that Alqaradawi lays down, women should wait until society is developed enough to accept women as judges, and until such a time when there is a societal need for women to hold these positions (Mansour, 1998, September).

<sup>74</sup> The words that are italicized in Alqaradawi's answer to the delegation, are those wherein Alqaradawi appears to speak on behalf of Islam.

seek a more moderate position at the center.

.....  
Dr. Yousef Alqaradawi: *We permit women to obtain an education...we even allow women to work, but with certain conducts and what? Conditions.*

Ahmed Mansour: *And conditions* (Mansour, 1998, September).

Nonetheless, Aljazeera's apparent wish to honor its maxim, 'our view and the opposing view', has opened the way for women to speak for themselves. Moreover, in response to the allegations of certain Muslim scholars, Eisha Alghabashawi, professor of Islamic law at Umdurman Islamic University, and Omaymah Abu-Baker, professor of comparative literature at Cairo University, as well as Narjes Ahmed Omar<sup>75</sup>, a judge at the appellate court in Yemen, have each given their view that banning women from delivering legal opinions on matters pertaining to Islam, or from working in courts, will retard the prospects of Umma as a whole, and they emphasize that working as a judge or as a Mufti is not something that should be exclusive to men (Alshayeb, 2003).

Aljazeera has debated two key concepts that Arab culture has not hitherto embraced: that is, it has attempted to address the theoretical and practical challenges posed by feminism and gender. In response to a question about the prospects of tailoring the concept of feminism and gender to Islamic culture the voices that adopt Islam as the starting point for an argument agree that feminism is an unusual term, a concept that merely reflects Western liberal movements without any specific attempt to understand the claims of Arab women. Instead, they emphasize that Islam provides women with a rich body of knowledge about women, justice and freedom (Ben-Qenna, 2005, May). Recalling the argument made in the first chapter by Nouha Al-Hegelan about the specificity of Arab women, Amani Abu-Alfadl, professor of English literature at Cairo

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<sup>75</sup> Narjes Ahmed Omar notes that Yemen has at least thirty female judges.

University, believes that women's Islamic movements should not defend themselves when they refuse to admit the relevance of western values and policies due to their opposition to fundamental Islamic tenets (Ben-Qenna, 2005, May). Talking on behalf of Muslim women, Amani Abu-Alfadl states:

I [a Muslim woman] should be free to maintain my own identity and beliefs, when they [Westerners] inflict their very different beliefs upon me, and even obligate me to adopt their own moral system... I am not obliged to keep an eye on them all the time in order to transform, or to criticize their system; rather, I have my own concerns. The women's Islamic movement has achieved many goals, and many more await completion (Ben-Qenna, 2005, May).

Adopting a rather more secular view of the matter, Nawal Alsadawi, an Arab woman activist, explains that: "the concept of feminism differs from one society to another" (Alqasim, 1998, May). She believes that Arab feminism refers to a societal notion whose aim is to achieve egalitarian ends for both men and women; and in this view biological differences are seen as irrelevant (Alqasim, 1998, May).

The debate about gender rests on eliding the biological differences between men and women. In this scenario, the concept of gender is not less sensitive than the concept of feminism for Arab Muslim women. Thus Aljazeera's anchor, Laila Alshayeb (2003, February 17) initiates a discussion about whether the concept of gender calls for equality or similarity between the sexes. Following the same line of argument about feminism, Omaymah Kamel, a researcher in the field of gender, warns that gender is a broad cluster of values, and any philosophy that purports to narrow the field of enquiry to the matter of removing all sexual boundaries or differences between a man and a woman, including the biological ones, is doomed to failure (Alshayeb, 2003, February 17). However, a comment from the Aljazeera Net freelancer, Adel Latify, expresses an opposing view,



which criticizes the claim that equality between Arab men and women is necessarily a call for the erosion of biological differences (Latify, 2005).

Although Aljazeera gives equal opportunities to other women activists, such as Zaineb Mady, a professor of sociology at the University of King Alhassen Althani in Morocco, and Lina Abu-Habib, a researcher in the field of gender, to express their views about gender, which means that a more balanced approach to the examination of the relationships and roles between women and men becomes possible (Alshayeb, 2003, February 17) the sheer strength of representation of Islam voices at Aljazeera, often has the effect of weakening the oppositional force of secular voices, and construes women activists as voices that circulate in the Western vacuum.

In contrast to the more affirmative and idealistic view of women that Islamic voices portray, the image of Arab women that Aljazeera puts forth is one of marginalization and victimization by male Arabs, yet the detailed construction of this image depends on the appropriation of problematic issues within Islam, and using these as a decisive point of reference. Four specific issues contributing to the image of Arab women can be clearly discerned: namely, the socio-economic status of women, women's relationship with men within the family and the public, the agenda of Arab women in relation to their occupation, and the commodification of Arab women versus the myth of the innocence of masculinity.

Socially, Arab scholars, including some Islamists, widely agree that women are not equally treated in laws that determine the state of politics in Arab countries, since women are banned from voting in parliamentary elections, excluded from being parliamentary candidates, and assigned to secondary roles in government, or merely nominal positions.

The implications of this absence of women from Arab parliaments is explained by Nehad Abu-Alqemsan<sup>76</sup>, the director of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, who argues that the nonattendance of women in parliament may lead to an expensive financial bill for those governments involved in development projects (Alramhy, 2002, April 22).

Blame for the absence of Arab women from parliament and from important positions of power has rarely been attributed to Islam. Of the few opinions that criticize the orientation of the Islamic framework are Nawal Alsadawi and Fardia Alnaqash, women activists and Egyptian writers, who believe that Arab women's rights should be established through a necessary separation between Islam and the state, because, they argue, women are seen as the victims of political Islam (Alsadawi, 2004, & Egyptian, 2003).

The Muslim scholars who participate in Aljazeera's programs, while tending to find fault with the traditional approach, nonetheless frame their arguments within the traditional parameters deemed appropriate for such debates. Yousef Alqaradawi, Eisha Almana'ey, the professor of Islamic laws in Qatar, Rashida Ben-Masoud, a Moroccan parliament member, and Zaki Badawi, the dean of the Islamic college in Britain, believe that a misconception of Islamic rules<sup>77</sup>, its cultural mindset<sup>78</sup> (Alshayeb, 2003, May), and

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<sup>76</sup> Nehad Abu-Alqemsan says that if women were to have been present in parliament, Arab governments would have saved a lot of the money spent to develop rural areas. A telling example offered by Nehad Abu-Alqemsan reveals that women did not use some clean water stations built to help them in the villages, because the locations of these stations had been chosen by men, who did not realize that women would be wary of passing by these public locations (Alramhy, 2002, April 22).

<sup>77</sup> One of the rules that have increasingly received criticism is the concept of the husband's guardianship. Ahmed Alraysouni, a Moroccan writer and Aljazeera Net freelancer, explains that while Arab feminists believe that guardianship is a form of repression, it is nonetheless a form of partnership through which the husband can come to hold more responsibility for the support of the family (Alraysouni, 2005). However, many women activists believe that guardianship should not apply, because wives equally support their families, and in many cases, wives are the prime economic sponsors of their families, and not their husbands. However, this view is discarded by some Arab sociologists, such as Samia Alsaaty, the chair of

the maintenance of its traditional power base have led to an ongoing lack of equality between women and men (Nour, 1999, & Ben-Qenna, 2002, February, & Abd-Allah, 2003, March).

Arwa Alkilani, a member of the Islamic Front Action Party in Jordan, argues that the disorder that is widespread in Arab countries empowers traditions (Alshayeb, 2002, December). Zaki Badawi, who applauds the same view, criticizes the rules that govern the Arab family, which in Badawi's opinion, do not accord with Islamic legislation, but with traditions that look down on Arab women, and undermine their rights (Nour, 1999). In the eyes of Zaki Badawi, when Arab families come to treat them with respect, Arab women will likewise have more success in gaining access to political and social positions (Nour, 1999). Similarly, a brief look at how men treat women in their family can go a long way in exemplifying how some Arab women are treated. Rashida Ben-Masoud, a member of the Women's Creativity Association and a Moroccan member of parliament, when interviewed by Aljazeera, considered that the attitude, on the part of the male head of the family, of considering the women in one's family as constituting a personal 'harem', is rooted in the idea that women are a property that none should touch, nor should they even come near to doing so. She further asserts that this behavior is emblematic of the violation of the human rights of Arab women within their families (Alshebl, 2004, October).

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the Sociology Department at Ain Shams University. Samia Alsaaty argues that the mere offer of financial support should not, in itself, permit a wife to lead the family (Ben-Qenna, 2002, January).

<sup>78</sup> Rashida Ben-Masoud, a Moroccan parliament member states that the cultural mindset makes it hard for women to be elected. She accordingly suggests that appointing women to formal positions, and securing their entry into parliament, might be considered an alternative way to represent Arab women.

When looking at the effects of the lack of equal social and economic justice between Arab men and Arab women, as reported in Aljazeera Net, the inequality Arab women encounter is seen to influence their performance as businesswomen. Rahjeah Mahmoud, the spokeswoman for the council of Arab Businesswomen argues that the fear of failure in the market negatively influences women's confidence in competing with men (Alramhy, 2002, May 13). The circumstances of women living in rural areas in Arab countries are even worse, since the majority of Arabs living in rural areas remain uneducated, and they do not receive adequate salaries to compensate them for their contributions to the rural workforce. Additionally, Arab women do not enjoy equal rights, nor can they authorize citizenship for their children (Alramhy, 2002, December).

Turning to a more strictly secondary issue, the relationship between women and men in the family and in public, Aljazeera has focused considerable attention on matrimonial relationships and on the problem of violence against women. The key marital issues, in Aljazeera Net's estimation, judging by what it has chosen to highlight, are marriage and polygamy, divorce and disavowal (khul'a), where the issue of violence against women is principally focused on sexual harassment toward Arab women.

Generally speaking, women are seen as the victims of male sexual desire, since men exercise control in determining the quality of marriage, and they can decide whether the marriage is to be temporary (Muttah), to remain unregistered (Orfy), or to be formally registered (Rasmy) (Alshebl, 2003, October). The attempts of some Muslim Muftis to issue decree (fatwa) that decree the marriage of men and women are seen by other Islamists as being a depreciation of the rights of women in Islam. They are also seen as an imitation of Western relationships that oppose the essence of marriage in Islam

(Alshebl, 2003, August), since these decrees suggest that women can be obliged to relinquish some of their rights. Two alternative forms of marriage are suggested: first, the 'walk-in-marriage' (The Misyar), through which the wife is obliged to put aside some of her rights, such as the husband's financial support, the accommodation that should be provided by her husband, and the number of nights he should sleep over if he is married to another woman (Mansour, 1998, May). Secondly, the 'friendship-marriage' (Zawaj Friend), which permits the man and woman to get married, but to live separately, and to meet at the man/woman family's apartment (Alshebl, 2003, August).

Inside the marriage relationship, sexual satisfaction is reported as being more or less absent between husband and wives in Arab countries (Alramhy, 2002, June). Women interviewed at Aljazeera, Anisah Almaray, Altaf Aleisy, and Khadija Ragheb, and psychologists from the Lebanon, Kuwait and Egypt, all agree that Arab husbands and wives lack sexual knowledge. The socialization of women is partly responsible, since they grow up with the idea that sex is something monstrous, nasty and shameful (Alramhy, 2002, June).

Parallel to marriage is the complex issue of polygamy. Polygamy is represented in Aljazeera as an essential component of Arab and Muslim society, since it is seen as Allah's law, and women have no choice but to accept it (Abd-Allah, 2001, December). Aljazeera sometimes brings in women experts to talk about polygamy. Moreover, the voices of secular women seem marginal and almost absent before the governing frame of Islam. Khadija Mofid, the president of the Alhoden (The Hug) association in Morocco, strongly underestimates the risks of applauding polygamy, which, in the eyes of women secularists is the main cause of the growing selfishness of Arab men. Likewise, Khadija

Mofid believes that polygamy is part of the biological nature of man (Alramhy, 2002, October). Khadija Mofid further explains that resisting polygamy will disenfranchise those women who are not given the chance to get married from one of their essential rights in Islam; namely, motherhood (Alramhy, 2002, October). Therefore, polygamy, or so the argument of Khadija Mofid goes, is a privilege for women, as it is for men (Alramhy, 2002, October). Nevertheless, the call for polygamy often comes from non-religious activist women. A notable example of this occurred in Egypt, when Hayam Darbek, an undisclosed journalist, established an association called 'One Wife is not Sufficient' (Alramhy, 2002, October).

The image of divorce in Arab family is not less problematic than the debate surrounding polygamy. Divorced women are invariably disrespected by people in society, who look at them as failed wives who cannot establish a family; or alternatively, they are seen as rebellious, sinful and eager for free sex (Alshebl, 2004, February). Hoda Rzeq, a professor of sociology at Lebanon University, and Mokram Odah, the director of the Family Guide Program in Jordan, relate that the threats posed by unbridled masculinity and the underestimation of the views of divorced women do not apply to all women, but rather, exclusively to divorced Arab women (Alshebl, 2004, February). Hoda Rzeq, and Mokram Odah claim that the superiority complex of Arab men explains why an Arab man "proudly prefers to get married to a foreign woman, whose number of sexual relationships is unknown, than to get married to a divorced Arab woman, who was married to only one man" (Alshebl, 2004, February). Although women activists in some Arab countries, such as Egypt, have managed to pass legislation that enables women to

extricate themselves from marriage (Khul'a)<sup>79</sup>, others are still struggling to pass the same law of annulment in Jordan<sup>80</sup>.

The struggle of women to obtain more legislative rights is apparent in their efforts to prevent violence and sexual harassment toward them. A conference about 'violence and discrimination against women in the Gulf states' recently called on the Gulf governments to criminalize violence against women (Calls, 2005). Reporting violence concerning Arab women has been placed at the top of the agenda of Arab women activists, who conducted a workshop in Jordan that sought to publish a comprehensive report about violence against Arab women (Atiq, 2004). Kamilia Helmy, Aza Suleiman, Vaolet Dagher, and Rasha Awad, women experts<sup>81</sup> interviewed by Aljazeera, describe violence as a 'masculine Arab legacy', as a reflection of the domination of men, and as a response to the absence of democracy in Arab countries (Ben-Qenna, 2002, January 28, & Alshebl, 2003, December, & Alshebl, 2004, January).

Adel Latify, an Aljazeera Net freelancer, unwittingly reinforces the claims made about violence against women in his manner of responding to them. Reminding us, as in the debate outlined in the first chapter, about how women are responsible for the reputation and honor of the Arab family, Latify ascribes the murdering crimes that aim to 'cleanse a family's honor' to what he calls the 'comfortable masculine niche ascribed to

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<sup>79</sup> The annulment (Khul'a) law gives women the right to obtain a divorce, even if her husband is not willing to divorce her. In return, she is required to give back the dowry and gifts her husband gave her at the beginning of their marriage.

<sup>80</sup> Aljazeera Net reported the ongoing struggle of Jordanian women to pass the al-Khul'a law, and the debate surrounding the issue.

<sup>81</sup> Kamilia Helmy is the director of the Global Islamic Committee for Women and Childhood. Aza Suleiman is the director of the Organization for Egyptian Women's Issues. Vaolet Dagher is an Arab psychologist, working in France. Rasha Awad is a member of the center of Bab Babaker Badry for Research about Women.

Arab man' (Latify, 2005). He incriminates Arab society for being often silent on these crimes, and for its lenient verdicts towards criminals (Latify, 2005). However, the implication of his paternalistic argument is nonetheless to uphold the superiority of Arab men when women go public with their grievances. Mary Khouri, an expert in sexual education, and Zainb Radwan, an Egyptian member of parliament, both agree that the potential social shame women face makes them loathe to report the incidents of sexual harassment they are exposed to in daily life (Ben-Qenna, 2002, March).

However, there is a broad and ongoing consensus among women voices that claims that unchecked Arab masculinity is responsible for their superiority complex toward Arab women, albeit, other women activists continue to challenge this consensus. In line with the postcolonial approach, many women activists believe that Arab women are used as pretexts to embody ideas that serve imperial objectives. Alert to this danger, Aljazeera has consistently drawn upon women activists to warn about the hidden agendas that activate the call for unfettering Arab women. Tujan Faisel, a Jordanian writer, who warns women about the dangers of being the "Trojan horse" that the enemy will exploit as the traitor within the gaits, writes:

What we should be aware of and refuse is the conspiracy between governments, America and the West in general, that aims to replace the rights of Umma and human rights in general with the minimal privileges that depressed and aggrieved fathers, sons, wives and husbands may be said to enjoy (Faisel, 2004).

Likewise, Ahmed Alkabeesy, a professor at Baghdad University, believes that the demand for improving the conditions of Muslim women is permeated by Western imperatives that have penetrated most of the women's associations in the Arab and Islamic World (Abd-Allah, 1999, September). Ahmed Alkabeesy's remarks about the



incursions of Western feminist agendas are positively appraised by Amani Abu-Alfadl, a professor of English literature at Cairo University, who is also skeptical about embracing the 'United Nations' hodgepodge' to address Arab Women's agendas (Alshayeb, 2002, December 23). Yet, other scholars, such as Sohair Slty, the representative of Arab women's organizations, explains that while Arab women's associations and organizations seem to have collective agendas that range in content from the call for equality between men and women to the liberation of Palestine, their agendas are ideologically and politically fragmented (Alshayeb, 2002, December 23).

In tune with the first chapter's argument about the expansion of the Arab women's agenda to include the issue of enforced occupation and employment, the women who talked at Aljazeera emphasized how the occupation of Palestine and Iraq continues to victimize women, since 40% of all Palestinian families are supported by women, whose husbands have either been killed or detained (Alramhy, 2002, September). Maryam Abu-Daqa, the General Secretary of the Palestinian Women's Union, adds that their association has had to additionally provide treatment therapies for trauma victims, which are highly in demand among Palestinian women (Mansour, 2001, May). Maryam spells out that many Palestinian women, especially those who have been detained, lack an education, and consequently lose any prospect of finding a good job when they finally secure their freedom (Mansour, 2001, May). The women experts interviewed by Aljazeera Net also express their concern over the situation in Iraq, and they point to the causal relationship between the occupation of Iraq and the insecurity of Iraqi women, and likewise, the violation of their privacy and the absence of rights to protect them that pertain under normal living conditions (Alshebl, 2004, April).

Discussions at Aljazeera sometimes seek to go beyond the 'normative' implications of life under occupation. Appealing to Arab men to cast off their derogatory view of women, women scholars<sup>82</sup> appeal to Aljazeera to invite Arab women to take on three related roles to confront occupation, and to resist what they term "Americanism and Zionism", (Alramhy, 2002, April 15), which can be set out as follows: (1) an economic role that aims to increase the amount of family-made products, (2) a role of resistance through participation in demonstrations against occupation, and (3) a military role to defend "their honor, and that of their homelands" (Alshayeb, 2002, January, & Alramhy, 2002, April 15 & Alshebl, 2004, March).

The dominant view that prevails at Aljazeera concerning Arab women is that acculturated Arab masculinity is responsible for the state of inequality women are obliged to endure, and for forcing women to be housewives and to wear the veil. However, such a view is insufficient to account for Aljazeera's discordant overall perspective that actually tends to leave Arab men assured and impregnable in their roles vis-à-vis Arab women. On the one hand, Arab men are further indicted for being accountable concerning the use of media to commodify women in commercials, or at least pressuring women to represent a feminine image that appeals to their sense of masculinity in video clips (Alshebl, 2004, May, & Alshebl, 2004, August 11). On the other hand, Arab men are seen as blameless, and are ultimately let off the hook.

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<sup>82</sup> Among the scholars who talked to Aljazeera about Arab women and military occupation are: Hoda Zakareya, professor of sociology at Zagzig University, Egypt; Bothaynah Shaban, the Minister of Immigration in Syria; Afaf Abd-Alrahman, the director of the Center of Women for Peace and Development; Amal Almamalji, activist in the Iraqi Feminist Movement; Eman Ahmed, the director of the International Center for Monitoring Occupation; Mozah Ghobashy, the Director of Alqodos University in United Arab Emirates, and Amel Mahmoud, a member of the Committee for Resisting Reconciliation.

Many of the voices that are heard at Aljazeera tend to free Arab men from more formal charges, since it is repeatedly emphasized that some media outlets, actually owned by women, are jointly responsible for commodifying women, since they reflect the liberal ideology of Western feminist organizations (Alshebl, 2004, August 11, & Ben-Qenna, 2005, June). Another group of scholars believes that Arab men's view of women is one that reflects the alienation and subjugation of men in Arab societies. Hayat Howyek, a Jordanian writer, and Hoda Rzeq, a professor of sociology at Lebanon University, take up the notion of 'oppressed societies', where both men and women are defeated by Arab regimes, and live without dignity (Alramhy, 2002, May 6, & Alshebl, 2005, February).

A third group of scholars focus on socialization, education, and culture in order to account for Arab perspectives on the relations between men and women (Alshebl, 2004, August 30). Interestingly, Elweyah Sobeh, an Arab novelist, informed Aljazeera that women are the mouthpieces for the cultural idioms that men produce (Alramhy, 2002, November). Imprisoned by society, Hessah Alawady, a Qatari woman wearing the veil, called on Qatari women to abandon the Niqab<sup>83</sup>, explaining to Aljazeera that Qatari women wear the Niqab, because they are too shy to face men in public. Misk Aljaneed, a Yememi writer and researcher, who wears the Niqab, further applauds the claim of Hessah Alawady, revealing that no one forced her to wear the Niqab; rather, her choice to be *Mounaqbah* (wear the Niqab), is an affirmative response to her social and cultural milieu (Alshebl, 2004, September).

Finally, Arab gender is barely reflected in Aljazeera's cartoons. However, one of Shujaat Ali's cartoons clearly reflects the vulnerable situation of Arab women in his portrayal of a pregnant veiled woman questioning the values of the Arab world (See

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<sup>83</sup> The Niqab is a dress that covers women's hair and face.

Figure 3-48). The significance of this Aljazeera Net cartoon is that it seems to summarize, through its mute appeal and poignancy, the essence of the above discussion. Moreover, it implicitly expresses a dominant perspective found among Arab men, who are acculturated to Islamic views in regard to Arab women, since the veiled woman's pregnancy is emblematic of her status as the sexual property of the Arab man, just as represents the maintenance and continuation of Arab identity in embryo, so to speak. Additionally, the cartoon situates the Arab woman in relation to women from different ethnicities, where European women have a sporty allure, and African women are victims of famine. Finally, the cartoon includes a caricature of Miss Condoleeza Rice, the American Secretary of State, who in deftly ironic strokes of the brush symbolically represents what strong American women can aspire to achieve in politics (See figure 3-48).

#### **3.3.2.7. Arab cultural traits frame: Arabic traditional food and music versus the globalization of McDonalds Hamburgers and Kentucky Fried Chicken**

One cannot claim that the content and discussions found at Aljazeera Net exclusively focus on Arab perspectives on culture, since the 'Culture and Arts' web forum in Aljazeera Net is a space for global cultural and art movements, but it would not be correct to assert that Aljazeera Net has abandoned its Pan-Arab perspective entirely. However, whenever Aljazeera Net goes beyond its regular reporting agenda to problematize the collective features of Arab culture, an arbitrary relationship between cultural traits and Arab patriotism on the one hand, and between the resistance of cultural imperialism and occupation, on the other, informs the image that Aljazeera wishes to project. This section sheds light on two prominent features of Arab culture: namely,

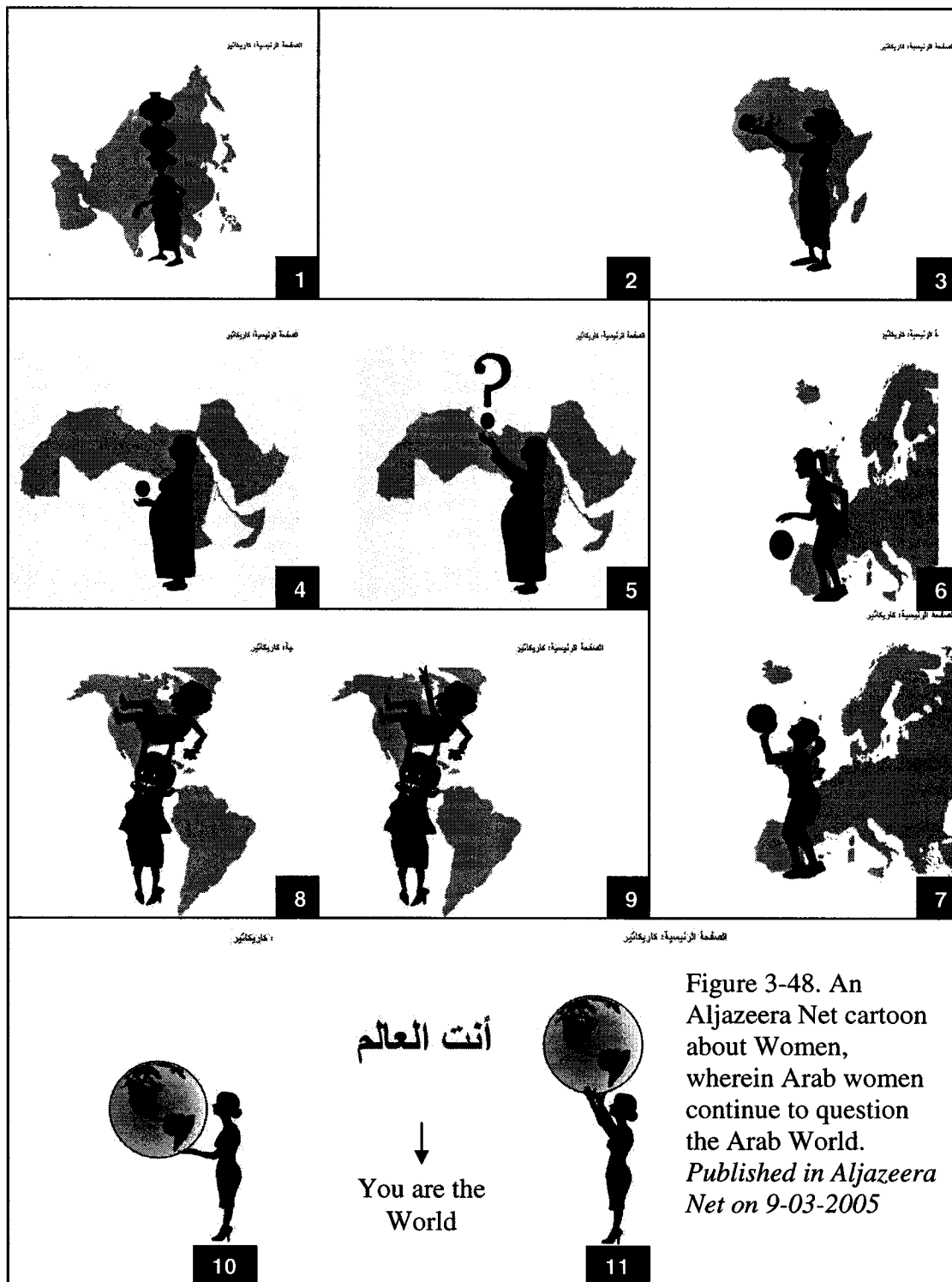


Figure 3-48. An Aljazeera Net cartoon about Women, wherein Arab women continue to question the Arab World. Published in Aljazeera Net on 9-03-2005

This cartoon was published as part of Aljazeera Net's observations on International Women's Day

music and food. It demonstrates how Arab music constitutes a mere fraction of the postcolonial discussions staged at Aljazeera Net, and how food icons and symbols mediate the ongoing conflicts in the Arab region.

Pan-Arabist songs are not a new cultural form. In fact, they date back to the 1930s, when Mohammad & Ahmad Flayfel composed 'Arab Lands' and 'Bilad al-Orb'. In 1958, six Arab singers sang an operetta to exalt the glory of the Arab nation, singing on behalf of the beloved homeland (Watani Habibi). In the wake of the October war of 1973 when Egypt and Syria launched a joint strike against Israel, the poets Ahmed Fouad Nejm and Sheikh Imam, composed a duet. Sheikh Imam sang "Ya Arab" to express his feelings, as follows: "those who betray the ties between us, desecrate everything, despise Arabism, and merely acquiesce to foreigners, who can never truly belong to us" (Ya Arab). Two decades later, in 1998, twenty-three singers from across the Arab World performed a group song called 'The Arab Dream' (Alhelm Alarabi), reflecting the unbroken circle of Arab aspirations across the decades.

Aljazeera Net occasionally reflects on the import and lyric intent of Pan-Arabist songs. For instance, Ahmed Mansour, Aljazeera's anchor, concisely describes patriotic song as "a salient form of expression of Arab public impulses and concerns during the period of colonialization" (Mansour, 1999, August). A parallel view is once again reported in Aljazeera, this time stating how the Palestinian Intifada inspires the political songs in Egypt (The Intifada, 2001). Reciprocally, Arab music seems to register, in lyrical and harmonious forms, what Pan-Arabism has failed to achieve. The clash between Saudi Arabia and Libya is a case in point<sup>84</sup> here. Sidi Mohamed, an Aljazeera

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<sup>84</sup> In November 2003, Saudi Arabia accused Libya of devising a plan to assassinate Crown Prince Abd-Allah. A few months later, in August 2003, a further charge was directed at the Libyan President for what

Net correspondent, made political capital of the decision of the organizers of the Doha Sixth Festival in Music, whose motto was 'Back to the Roots', to devote the last night of the festival to two singers; one, Libyan, and the other, Saudi (Mohamed, 2005).

Lotfi Boushnaq, a Tunisian singer interviewed by Aljazeera, stresses the strong bond between politics and song, when he correlates musicians with politicians, stating that both of them are history makers and mirrors of reality (Krishan, 1999). A significant example of the engagement between politics and music can be found in the songs of Shaban Abd-Alrahim<sup>85</sup>, an Egyptian vocalist. At least two of Shaban Abd-Alrahim songs have found popularity in the Arab world: 'I hate Israel', and 'Leave Iraq alone...watch out for Israel' (Shaban, 2003, & Egyptian, 2001). Shaban performed the latter song prior to the invasion of Iraq by the American coalition in March 2003.

A further example of the links between politics and music occurred when the organizers of the Arab Summit, held in March 2005, in Algeria, launched a convoy on behalf of Arab Art and folklore that passed through the Algerian capital, chanting music that characterizes the respective contributions of each Arab country. The Aljazeera Net

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Saudi Arabia called the destabilization of Arab collaboration. The divide between Saudi Arabia and Libya has grown in recent years, particularly after a controversial exchange between Crown Prince Abd-Allah and President Gaddafi at an Arab League Summit in March 2003. In its turn, in February 2005, Libya accused Saudi Arabia of organizing a conference on behalf of Libyan opposition in London, which called on the Libyan President to quit ruling. The recent apologies made by King Abd-Allah, who now rules Saudi Arabia after the death of his predecessor, King Fahad, are seen as acceptable overtures for cooling the clash (Saudi, 2003, & The Arab, 2004, & The Saudi, 2005, Libya, 2005).

<sup>85</sup> Shaban Abd-Alrahim, whose songs appeal to the grassroots elements in Egypt, has occasioned a debate about the quality of his songs, since he makes one melody serve for all his songs. According to Aljazeera, some of the lyrics of Shaban Abd-Alrahim's songs about the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, have been censored. However, he gained even more fame in Egypt when McDonalds in Egypt canceled a contract for a commercial with Shaban Abd-Alrahim, whose popularity was a potential asset for McDonalds, since it wished to promote its products among the Egyptian grassroots. Aljazeera Net reported the feedback of the Arab Nasserist newspaper, which criticized the censorship of some of the words of Shaban's songs, and in so doing, had called for 'saving Shaban' (Egyptian, 2001).

correspondent, Ahmed Rawbah, quotes the comments of an organizer of the Arab Summit, who states that “art and folklore is the cement that bonds publics, and seals the spiritual relations among the members of the Arab Nation, which presently faces grave challenges to its integrity and identity” (Rawbah, 2005).

Obviously, such a characterization as the one made above underscores the peculiar niche in music that Arab identity enjoys, however it also hints at threats posed towards that identity. Saher Taha, an Iraqi singer, has emphatically stated the risks confronting the Arab region. Saher believes that the music should retain the identity of the Arab nation, which has been targeted and desecrated by a conspirator, who now wants to destabilize it (Saher, 2004). Hybrid music characteristics, including fast rhythms and foreign melodies, which have quickly become a dominant feature of Arabic music, are deemed an aggressive attack on Arab culture as a whole (Alqasim, 2000, June). Mohamed Abdoh, a Saudi singer, who slams the companies at the head of the musical production in the Arab world for what he terms “the tawdry aspects of the temptation to sellout,” further warns against the globalization package, which imposes the culture and legacy of the Other on the Arab nation” (Mohamed, 2005, January).

Despite the challenges now facing Arabic song, its innate cultural roots are perceived as a determining factor in the cultural rivalry between Arabs and Israelis. Saleh Alnaami, a Palestinian writer and an Aljazeera Net freelancer, emphasizes that Israel’s failure to blend the various ethnicities into one combined cultural melting pot weakens the attempts of Israel to celebrate its nationhood through song (Alnaami, 2004). The absence of a collective ‘cultural’ identity in Israel, or so the argument of Saleh Alnaami goes, has conferred on Arabic song a greater capacity to prevail in the music market, and



has led some Israeli singers to duplicate Arab melodies (Alnaami, 2004). Additional evidence attesting to the strength of Arab musical culture, as adduced by Alnaami, demonstrates that many Jewish associations continue to pay attention to the revival of oriental culture in Israel (Alnaami, 2004). The activities of certain Jewish musical ensembles are considered as an example of the upsurge in this kind of oriental music, especially as they take advantage of the Arabic poems composed during a period when the Jews were living in Andalusia. Other musical groups perform Andalusian *terza rima* composed by Arab poets during that era (Alnaami, 2004).

Aljazeera's attempt to assign a protective role to Arab music in order to maintain Arab identity and to keep it cohesive in the face of globalization and cultural imperialism, as well as to demonstrate the strength of Arabic songs and lyrics in resisting occupation seems more successful than the rather less challenging position it has assumed in regard to the role of food in preserving identity. Indeed the question of how Arabs could advance the symbolic significance of their food to uphold their Arab identity is barely highlighted at Aljazeera Net. Nonetheless, Arab food is seen as a means of resistance against Israel and its alliances, and as an ingredient in a more comprehensive strategy to boycott<sup>86</sup> Israeli and American products.

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<sup>86</sup> The repetition of the discourse about Arab boycotts in Aljazeera Net represents the boycott of Israeli products as an ongoing Arab and Islamic strategy. The general delegate of Arab boycotts of Israeli products, Ahmed Khoza'ah, estimates that the Israeli deficit resulting from the sanctions imposed on its products is estimated as being at least 95 billion dollars, in the period since 1950 (Arab, 2003, December). The discussions centered on boycotts, as examined by Aljazeera Net, began as early as February 2001, when the Arab bureau of the Arab Boycott Commission conceived a plan to ban Israeli products from entering Arab countries (A plan, 2001). In May 2001, the Arab Bathist conference in Baghdad asked Arabs to cease all deals with Israel (Arab, May 2001). The call for boycotting Israel was followed by a request in June 2001 from the government of Saudi Arabia that urged Arabs to revitalize their economic boycott of Israel, if the peace process did not show any signs of moving forward (Saudi, 2001). Additionally, Sudan reacted positively to the demands made above by taking precautions in July 2002 to stem the flood of products coming from Israel (Sudan, 2002). Just two months before these Sudanese precautions had been announced, in May 2002, Aljazeera invited Abd-Alrahman Alsehibani, the deputy General Secretary of the Arab League of States for Economic Affairs, to be its guest, and he emphasized that the formal position of

Aljazeera Net does indeed follow some of the arguments made in the first chapter about how the other's food icons and symbols have become a staple Arab political target in their "conflict with America and Israel" (Alteriki, 2002), and Aljazeera anchors often cheer the manifestations of Arab boycotts. In 2002, in his introductory statement about the boycott of American and Israeli products, Alteriki observed that: "Arab publics have made their attitude clear toward the hamburger and other American products, through their participation in spontaneous campaigns conducted throughout the Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain" (Alteriki, 2002).

Other anchors at Aljazeera, such as Faisel Alqasim, often impose their opinions in the debate about the boycott. Commenting on one of the opponents of the boycotting of products, Alqasim declared: "Now I can assure you that if all the members of the Arab public stopped drinking Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola, you can be sure that all the American ambassadors would start complaining. They would create an uproar." (Alqasim, 1999, September). Thus, in hypothetically representing the enforced absence of American icons and commodities from the Arab market as a definite cause for conflict, the idea that economic power can achieve the military goals of imperialism by other means, gains a new lease of life. Likewise, Aljazeera's anchor, Mallek Alteriki, draws on the comments of Thomas Friedman, a columnist at the New York Times, who has stated that countries with McDonald's do not wage wars against each other (Alteriki, 2002).

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the Arab League was to boycott all Israeli products (Alteriki, 2002). In order to keep the strategy operational, the Arab bureau of the Arab Boycott repeated the call for the boycott insiistently (The bureau, 2002). Islamic congregations participated in the strategy also. For example, the Tenth Islamic Summit, held in Malaysia in October 2003, assured Muslims of its commitment to maintain the economic restrictions on Israeli products (The Islamic, 2003).

The attempt to localize and assimilate American icons and symbols has engendered a debate about Hamburgers, McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Coca-Cola. Hence, opponents of the boycotts of American products emphasize the means by which these products can gain a grassroots allegiance. For instance, Wahid Abd-Almajid, the editor in chief of the Arab Strategic Report, and Abd-Alhamid Alansari, the dean of the Faculty of Islamic Laws in Qatar, believes that Hamburgers, McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Coca-Cola are Arab enterprises, and that “Kentucky Fried Chicken was born and raised in Arabic culture” (Alqasim, 1999, September, & Alqasim, 2002, May 21). Yet, in a more critical analysis of how American products, such as hamburgers, can violate Arab culture, while yet symbolizing American food, Abd-Alwahab Almiseeri, an Egyptian writer and Aljazeera Net freelancer, describes the hamburger as the symbol of a culture that does not consider the specificities of place (Almiseeri, 2005). Almiseeri explains that the invasion of the Burger is something that transcends the dimensions of time and place; however, anywhere one goes, the dimensions of a hamburger will be uniformly the same, the support staff will be wearing identical uniforms, and even the prices will be comparable in any restaurant, regardless of considerations of time or place (Almiseeri, 2005).

### **3.3.3 Aljazeera and the Arabs in the North America Diaspora: Representing Islamic and Arab identities**

This section examines how Aljazeera represents Arabs in North America, sheds light on how Aljazeera blurs the boundaries between the local and the global, and finally examines how Arabs reciprocally represent Aljazeera as well as their own identities. When looking into the image Aljazeera Net portrays of Arabs in North America, two

notable observations can be made. Firstly, Aljazeera<sup>87</sup> focuses on the Arab-American community through examining the issues that may affect Islamic identity, but it does not necessarily reflect the experience and opinions of the various members of the Arab diasporic community. Secondly, Aljazeera represents Arab Americans, and ignores Arab Canadians<sup>88</sup>, despite the support that Aljazeera receives through Arab Canadians.

As explained in the first part of this chapter, Aljazeera conflates Arabs with Muslims when it talks about Arabs in North America. Rather than speak on behalf of an Arab identity, it highlights the challenges facing the maintenance of Islamic identity. That is to say, Arabs are seen as part of the general population of the Muslim community. Aljazeera Net's archive provides evidence in support of the argument that Aljazeera blurs the distinction between Muslims and Arabs. When conducting a search for 'Arab Americans' through the Aljazeera Net archive, only nine headlines were identified. Khaled Safouri, the president of the American Islamic Institute, problematizes the Arab community, claiming that a great many Arab Americans do not consider themselves as Arabs (Almarazi, 2002, June). Although Arab Americans number as many three million people, Khaled Safouri explains that many Arabs live and work outside the Arab American community, and identify themselves as either Copts or Pharos (Almarazi, 2002, June). Moreover, two sources related to Arab identity are approached from a strictly Islamic perspective: namely, Islam and Women.

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<sup>87</sup> Since December 2002, Aljazeera Net has begun to add one of the programs of its sister channel, called 'The news from Washington,' to the list of its available programs. 'The news from Washington' is Aljazeera's debating program, and it is screened on location from Aljazeera bureau in Washington. Aljazeera Net's archive now records 173 editions of 'The news from Washington' since December 2002.

<sup>88</sup> The only news story found about Arab Canadians was a short news item about Maher Arar in October 2003. Aljazeera Net reported that Amer Mousa, the General Secretary of the Arab League of States approached the Syrians to initiate talks about Arar's case (The Arab, 2003, October).

Initially, Aljazeera portrays a gloomy picture of Muslims and Arabs in the United States, describing them as victims of discrimination and as living targets of the Zionist lobby in North America. Likewise, those Muslims and Arabs who approach Aljazeera with their own evaluations of their situation depict how the United States administration and its media attempt to portray them. For instance, Nehad Awed, the executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), says that the image of Muslims in America is very complicated, and though it appears to be positive overall, he reports that Muslims have been the subject of constant and systematic distortion over many decades (Nour, 2002, October).

Ala'a Bayoumi, the director of Arab affairs at CAIR, identifies two factors to account for the pressure exerted on Islamic Identity; namely, the attempts of what he terms 'an extremist American minority', to distort the image of Muslims in the United States, and the opposition of some Muslims, who seem disturbed by the increasing manifestations of Islamic identity (Bayoumi, 2004, April). Ala'a Bayoumi<sup>89</sup> concisely summarizes some of the conflicts launched by what he termed "the pro-Israel Lobbyist organizations" against Muslims (Bayoumi, 2004, June). Bayoumi alleges that the pro-Israel lobby has adopted conflicting positions against Muslim organizations that have

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<sup>89</sup> Ala'a Bayoumi critiques some American writers such as William Lind and Paul Weyrich, which last, stated that American Muslims: "should be encouraged to leave the United States. They are like a fifth column in this country" (Bayoumi, 2004, April). In Bayoumi's words, "such invitations are propagated by right-wing extremists, such as Daniel Pipes" (Bayoumi, 2004, April). Bayoumi relates that Daniel Pipes was widely criticized because of his call for the supervision of professors and academic institutes (Bayoumi, 2004, June). Similarly, in August 2003, when President Bush decided to appoint Daniel Pipes as a member of the Board of Directors of the United States Institute of Peace, Aljazeera Net responded by describing Pipes as an extremist and, yet nonetheless, as a challenging researcher (Bush, 2003). Daniel Pipes, himself, who seemed annoyed by the accusation made against the Israeli Lobby in the United States, defended himself in one of Aljazeera's debates about the American Presidential Election in 2004, by observing that: "I am not an official lobbyist, and I write and publish my ideas openly. All of us do the same because we perceive this as a legitimate matter. If the Israeli lobby is now stronger than the Arab lobby, well then, I can only say to Arabs, create a stronger lobby, after all, this is [the United States] a free country in the last resort" (Alqasim, 2004, November).

achieved some success and have gained in popularity among Muslims (Bayoumi, 2004, June). Bayoumi states: "If these organizations had not been capable of reaching the American media and its political platforms, these organizations would not have been targeted by the pro-Israel Lobby" (Bayoumi, 2004, June). Aljazeera Net relies on the reports of American media such as the Los Angeles Times, which states that many American Jewish organizations are behind the campaign to distort the image of Arabs and their organizations (Report, 2001). However, some Arabs and Muslims are not satisfied with the performance of Arab and Muslim organizations in America, since they believe that some of the organizations that appear to be popular among Muslims do not in fact represent all Muslims and Arabs. Others criticize these organizations for formulating an American agenda, while they are supposed to adopt an agenda to meet the needs of Arabs and Muslims (Almarazi, 2004, October).

The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks have had a profound impact on Arabs and Muslims. Almost two years after the attacks, particularly in July 2003, Aljazeera Net published a report on the "Anathema of September 11 that pursues American Muslims," indicating that "seven million Muslims in the United States are having to keep up a rosy front in a society that considers Muslims a threat to their security" (The anathema, 2003). Ala'a Bayoumi, the director of Arab affairs at the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), spells out three key implications of the attacks for Muslims: firstly, it puts pressure on Muslim forces to leave the United States; secondly, it exerts pressure on others to withdraw from public life, and thirdly, another minority are tempted to redouble the effort of assimilation to a hostile environment, even seeking to change their Islamic names in so doing (Bayoumi, 2004, April). Yet, Bayoumi, who describes the efforts made

by this latter grouping of Muslims, who prefer to live and work under a hidden identity, as awkward and largely unsuccessful, emphasizes that the majority of Muslims are working diligently to express their connection with their Islamic identity (Bayoumi, 2004, April). Ala'a Bayoumi's highlighting of the present dilemmas of American Muslims is based on the study of Zahid H. Bukhari, the founder of Muslims in the American Public Forum, which notes that the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks have speeded up the process of integration of Muslims in American society (Bayoumi, 2004, April). Bayoumi also refers to a survey, conducted by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), whose results indicate renewed manifestations of what Ala'a Bayoumi terms, the development of Islamic identity. This survey, conducted two years after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, concludes that 58% of Muslims have increased their level of social activities, while 45% of them have become more concerned with politics, and another 52% of them have begun to engage in discussions about the dialogue between religions (Bayoumi, 2004, April).

While the freedom of Muslims to practice their religious rituals has not been unduly influenced by the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the director of CAIR, and other Arab scholars, such as Jamal Badawi, the President of the Fiqh (Jurisprudence) Council in North America, assign positive reactions to the September attacks; that is, they point out that the discrimination shown toward some Muslims has increased their solidarity, and motivates them to be more open to non-Muslims, or has even afforded opportunities to provide a corrective image about Islam (Almarazi, 2002, August).

The comments made by Aljazeera's anchors, Hafez Almarazi and Mohmaed Ben-Almokhtar Mohamed, seem to offer an overly reductive image about the discrimination

directed against Arabs and Muslims. Hafez Almarazi and Mohmaed Ben-Almokhtar both agree that innocent Arabs and Muslims in the United States are usually accused of being terrorists, or at least suspects, until they have otherwise proved their innocence (Almarazi, 2001, November & Ben-Almokhtar, 2003). Indeed, Aljazeera Net highlights some of the reports about discrimination against Arabs and Muslims, indicating that at least one fifth of Arab Americans undergo discrimination<sup>90</sup>; that many Arab Students are planning to leave the United States; and that the United States is going to deport at least 6,000 Arabs and Muslims in the aftermath of September 11 (One, 2001, & Arab, 2001, September, & America, 2002). Shujaat Ali, an Aljazeera Net cartoonist, portrays an image that reaffirms the former view of the persistence of discrimination and suspicion, since his cartoon features American media and national security organizations, which are seen intently monitoring the activities of a praying Muslim (See figure 3-49).

In a similar vein, Nehad Awed, the executive director of CAIR, warns against the increase in various aspects of discrimination, which jumped by 70% percent in 2003. Recently, in May 2005, Awed pointed out a disturbing tendency in the proliferation of media discourses disseminating hatred against Islam and Muslims (CAIR, 2004). Khaled Abu-Alfadel, a member of the International Association of Religious Freedom, also mulls over what he calls the explosion of Islam-phobia, an unreasonable fear of Islam that has

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<sup>90</sup> At least one in five Arabs have informed the American Arab Institute that they have experienced many different aspects of discrimination. Possible acts of discrimination against Arabs and Muslims, as reported by Aljazeera Net, range from the detention of thousands of Arabs and Muslims to investigate their ideological and religious affiliations, to the increase in pressure on Arab and Muslim males who request entry visas, and even, the exclusion of job applications because of the provenance of their names (Almarazi, 2001, November, & One, 2001, & Almarazi, 2002, September).





Figure 3-49. An Aljazeera Net cartoon about scrutiny of Muslim Americans on the part of the American media, the FBI, and the CIA.  
*Published in Aljazeera Net on 3-07-2002*

lead to an alarming increase in the number of books, movies<sup>91</sup> and radio programs that violate Islam (Almarazi, 2005, May 12).

Hope for a better future for Muslims and Arabs in North America is seemingly unattainable, yet Aljazeera Net often focuses on the personal achievements of Arabs and Muslims in America. Devoting one of its programs to talks about “stories of Arab success in America,” Aljazeera introduced two stories: one about Abu-Baker Aljame’i, a Moroccan journalist, who won a Press Freedom award, and another story by Abdul Haidous, the first mayor of Wayne, Michigan, to be elected directly by the city’s residents (Almarazi, 2003, November).

Now, turning to women, Aljazeera rarely represents an Arab view of issues related to Arab American women; rather, it continues to enmesh Arab American women within the frame of Islam. Nonetheless, Aljazeera has conducted debates about Arab and Muslim women in the West, often examining their life from an Islamic perspective. One of Aljazeera’s debates about Arab women who migrated to France sought to ask why Arab women often migrate to Western countries.

Recalling the postcolonial framework of debate, Sawsan Sadafi, the educational director of the Future Institute in Paris, explains that the first waves of Arab women’s migration to the West were due to colonialism, while the waves that followed in the 1960s and 1970s were owing to the motivation of Arab families to secure a better level of

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<sup>91</sup> One of the movies that create outrage among Muslims is “The Siege.” Directed by Edward Zwick, the movie describes the fictional lives of Arabs who come to North America to study, and end up, particularly if they come from Palestine, as terrorists. Nehad Awed explains that the movie’s objective is to negatively influence Muslim’s participation in social and political life in the United States, thereby isolating them further and distorting their public image (Mansour, 1998, November). Muslims in the United States responded to the movie by protesting in a number of different American states (Mansour, 1998, November). Nehad Awed told Aljazeera that there are at least 700 movies that provide negative images about Islam (Mansour, 1998, November).

economic life (Alramhy, 2002, July). A similar view is offered by Suad Alwahidi, the editor in chief of *Oriental Studies* magazine, in responding to a question regarding the dreams of the first waves of Arab women in regard to immigration, and the retention of Arab identity. Suad believes that Arab women were, first and foremost, companions and mothers (Alramhy, 2002, July). That is, Arab women of the first waves of migration were companions for their husbands, who were forced to leave their homelands because of social injustice and sufferings, and as mothers, they held the prime responsibility for Arab identity and Arab heritage (Alramhy, 2002, July). Suad Alwahidi further adds that “the next generation of Arab women immigrants, who did not choose their place of birth, were French in every social, economic, and political meaning of the term, because they were educated in French schools and speak the French language” (Alramhy, 2002, July). In a different vein, Safa’a Alsawi, a spokeswoman for the Arab Women’s Association in London, explains that Arab women in Britain are less likely to face the same amount of discrimination they face in Belgium and France, but she agrees that Arab women are stereotyped as either ignorant or as terrorists (Alshebl, 2003, October 20).

Positioning herself within the Islamic framework, Suad Alwahidi, in reply to a question about the integration of Arab women in countries with an extensive immigrant presence, indicates that it is more accurate to speak of an Islamic identity in France, given that the number of Muslims there exceeds six million (Alramhy, 2002, July). Raghed Altakriti, the spokeswoman for the Islamic Society in London, puts the matter in other words. She states:

We should be aware that in any war against Islam and the Islamic identity, Muslim women are always in the front line, because people will not necessarily recognize a Muslim man, but women wearing the veil are the first

victims in any attack against Muslims and Islam (Alshebl, 2003, October 20).

Aljazeera practically ignores Arab women in the United States, since it prefers to speak of issues concerning Muslim women in America, or as part of a given issue, such as the dilemma of Muslim women in the West, as explained above. One of the more heated issues that Aljazeera has debated is the call of Muslim woman in the United States to lead Muslim prayers at mass. Aljazeera interviewed two Muslim women imams: Asra Noumani and Amina Wadoud. Asra Nomani, a Muslim American, a former Wall Street journalist, and the author of "Standing Alone by Mecca," believes that gender relations are employed to prevent women from enjoying their rights in public places. Asra, who has twice led mixed-gender Friday mass prayers, emphasizes that women's rights in the mosque should be on a par with her rights in the bedroom (Almarazi, 2005, March). Likewise, Amina Wadoud, a professor of Islamic Studies at the Virginia Commonwealth University, who led a Friday prayer assembly of over 100 men and women in the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York on March 18, 2005, believes that the Quran gives equal rights to men and women in prayer (Almarazi, 2005, March).

The relative indifference on the part of Aljazeera to Arab women in the United States is part of its tendency to overlook the Arab community, since Aljazeera often prefers to approach Arab Americans as a political entity rather than as a community. Accordingly, it prefers to discuss the views of Arab Americans at Presidential elections (Almarazi, 2004, September, & Alqasim, 2004, November). Another example of the politicization of Arab communities in the Diaspora is offered by Hafez Almarazi, the chief of the Aljazeera bureau in Washington: When Hafez Almarazi devoted a sequence of programs to the inauguration of the Arab museum in Detroit (Almarazi, 2005, May 5),

he did not invite leaders of the Arab community to talk about the museum, but surprisingly, he invited Amer Moussa, the General Secretary of the Arab League of States, and three Arab ambassadors to the United States, in order to underline how the Arab museum is a powerful cultural symbol, and represents the political agenda of Arabs (Almarazi, 2005, May 5).

### **3.3.3.1. Aljazeera and the purity of representation: The local and the global among Arabs and Muslims**

Aljazeera Net blurs the boundaries between the local and the global, so that in localizing the global, and globalizing the local, Aljazeera can proceed with its strategy to remediate and de-territorialize the various Arab publics in Arab countries and, more particularly, Arabs and Muslims in North America. That is to say, when Aljazeera brings in local writers and speakers from the entire range of Arab countries to discuss global issues related to Arabs, Aljazeera globalizes these speakers and writers, so that the specific and local experience of Arabs and Muslims living in North America is reconstructed through a globalizing frame that may or may not yield up its 'local' significance through the remediation prism. Examples supporting the notion of how Aljazeera globalizes the local, and then re-localizes the global are numerous. For instance, Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi was invited to talk about the image of Arabs in American cinema and to discuss the position of Muslim women in the West without it being thought necessary to question the ethics of who can properly speak for whom and, more particularly, whether global intellectuals can be thought to speak to, or on behalf of, 'local' communities (Mansour, 1997, August 31, & Mansour, 1998, November). The same concerns are relevant to Aljazeera's invitation to Milad Hana, a Copt who lives in

Egypt and a member of the Supreme Council of Culture in Egypt, to talk about the impact of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on Arab Christians living in the United States (Mansour, 2002, August). Likewise, when Aljazeera invites Arab scholars, who live in the United States, Great Britain, and France, such as Ala'a Bayoumi and Nehad Awed, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), to talk about Muslim Americans, or invites Zaki Badawi, the dean of the Islamic faculty in London, and Nahlah Alshal, a professor of sociology at the University of Paris, to debate issues concerning the Arab women in the Arab World (Nour, 1999, & Alramhy, 2002, September), or Borhan Ghalyoon, an Aljazeera Net freelancer and a professor of sociology at Sorbonne University (Ghalyoon, 2002, & Ghalyoon, 2004), to write about wide-ranging issues related to the entire spectrum of Arab countries, not to mention the many other writers and speakers cited in this chapter, Aljazeera, in effect, localizes these scholars for an Arab reader or viewer who lives in any other Arab country or Arab Diaspora. Moreover, a transnational media, such as Aljazeera, has become a local media for Arab communities in the United States and Canada. As will be seen in the upcoming section, Aljazeera has become almost a requirement for Arab Canadians, especially as it is now the voice of Muslims and Arabs in the United States.

More significantly, when scrutinizing the process of localizing the global, and/or globalizing the local from the representational point of the view, the reciprocal shift between the local and the global seems very problematic. Could the representation of Arabs around the globe, and Arabs in Arab countries, ostensibly as a representation of the local, be in any way consonant with Aljazeera's claims concerning the purity of representation? Additionally, in localizing Arab Americans and their issues to viewers

and users from Arab countries, and in globalizing Arabs living in the Arab World, then surely, from the standpoint of Arab Americans confronted with these remediated issues, what we have here, in so far as it is anything, is a pure representation of dislocation? Might, then, Aljazeera be a forum for pure representation?

The two following responses to such questions seem to support the standpoint of the purity of representation, given that the represented is conceived in terms of location or dislocation. Clive Barnett (2003), who attempts to discuss what is entailed by purity of representation, supposes that purity requires a restoration of full presence (p. 14). In his book, The Ring of Representation, Stephen Ross (1992) provides yet another response to the questions posed above. Ross (1992) posits that pure representation is possible if representation exceeds itself, and is “freed from its classical bonds to subject and object” (p. 62). Stating the matter even more categorically, Stephen Ross, who bases his argument upon Michel Foucault’s The Order of Things, states that: “[I]n the invisibles that surround representation dwell the “only” representation we may find of pure representation as dislocation” (p. 62). Therefore, the nature of pure representation may not be equated with the origin of representation, but as the ring of transcendence, “where representation represents itself by dislocating itself” (Ross, 1992, p. 62).

### **3.3.3.2. Representing Aljazeera and Arab identity: Media experts, academics, and community leaders speak out**

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the representation of Arab identity at Aljazeera Net. This section shifts the discussion to examine how Arab media experts, academics, and community leaders in North America respond to Aljazeera and reflect

upon the claims of Arab identity. The representation of Aljazeera and Arab identity that follows will draw on the contributions of ten North American scholars: six Arab Americans; Jehane Noujaim, a film director; Diana Abu Jaber, an Arab novelist; Mamoun Fandy, Jamal Nassar, Fouad Ajami and Margaret Nydell, academics and media critics; and four Arab Canadians: Hassan Isidean, the owner of the Middle East Book Store; Baha Abu-Laban<sup>92</sup>, an Emeritus professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta; Mazen Chouaib, the executive director of the Nation Council on Canadian-Arab Relations (NCCAR); and finally, Omar Alghabra, the president of the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF).

This section will begin with the thoughts and reflections of Jehane Noujaim, a Harvard-educated Egyptian-American, who expresses her frustrations as an Arab regarding the “American ignorance of the Middle East,” and relates the general lack of awareness of Arab affairs to her tenuous sense of identity, formed in a relative vacuum:

I’m trying to figure out: why do I feel like I’m in a bubble in the United States? And this has to do with the fact that when you turn on the television, you see a very small part of what is actually happening in the world (Schechter, 2004).

Trying to figure out the reason for her frustration, she adds that perhaps it is attributable to the fact that she is not obliged to look beyond the borders of the United States, or, in any case, she is isolated from the countries around her by big oceans (Schechter, 2004). Given her relative sense of isolation, Jehane, the director of a documentary about Aljazeera called the ‘Control Room’, shares the views of many other

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<sup>92</sup> Dr. Abu-Laban is Director of the Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration.



Arab Americans when she defines Aljazeera as the first free global Arab news network (Schechter, 2004).

Fouad Ajami, the director of the Middle East Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University, shares Jehane's views about Aljazeera, describing Aljazeera as a more independent media than any other Arab media (Ajami, 2002). Yet, when he broaches the subject of the relation between Aljazeera and identity, Ajami is pointedly critical of the collective identity Aljazeera would appear to represent. Repeating a common charge laid at Aljazeera's door, he believes that the "network deliberately fans the flames of Muslim outrage," and describes the collective identity of Aljazeera as follows:

A fiercely opinionated group, most are either pan-Arabist-nationalists of a leftist bent committed to the idea of a single nation built across the many frontiers of the Arab world, or Islamists, who draw their inspiration from the primacy of the Muslim faith in political life (Ajami, 2002).

Mamoun Fandy, a Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, and former professor of Politics at Georgetown University, agrees that Aljazeera represents the identity of Arabs as 'We versus the Other', and in this reductive scenario, Americans are conceived as barbaric, and Arabs are presented as heroic (Fandy, 2003). As an Egyptian who has lived in the United States for over 20 years, Fandy's broad lines of analysis are generally similar, at least in relation to his references to the sources of Arab identity, to the analysis set out above in the first chapter. That is, he believes that the collective identities Aljazeera represents "span historical events from the Crusades to the Mongol invasions of Baghdad to the colonial experience and the recent Arab-Israeli wars" (Fandy, 2003).

Dwelling on what he calls the “mutual need in the United States and in the Muslim world for a greater knowledge of each other” (Fandy, 2002), Mamoun Fandy calls on young Muslims who come to study in America to engage with the problematic issue of the representation of the other, and to help bridge this divide (Fandy, 2002). Moreover, he sets an inspiring example for Arabs in America, through capitalizing on his capacity to create a third space for the emergence of a new identity, free from the trammels of preconceptions, ossified views and rigid ideological barriers. Mamoun observes:

When I arrived in Washington, I was lucky to meet people who helped me to be successful. I came from an old and homogeneous society. Thus questions of multiculturalism and race relations did not occur to me -- until I came here. I saw things in this country that did not match what I had read in the Arab press about the imperialist American view. I saw a society in the making. America sees itself as a human project to which anyone can contribute. I jumped at the chance (Fandy, 2002).

The closing of the cultural gap between the Arab world and the United States, or with the West in general, necessitates more direct media participation. Jamal Nassar, the chair of the department of Politics and Government at Illinois State University, agrees that the Arab media, including Aljazeera, should be more hybrid, attributing less blame to the other, since this is more likely to help Arab societies to face up to their own responsibilities, and resist a facile recourse to scapegoats (Nassar, 2004). Additionally, he believes that the image of Arabs in the West is characterized by the predominance of ignorance and violence, and unless this image is corrected, Arabs will not gain the respect they merit for their aspirations and rights (Nassar, 2004).

Generally speaking, Nassar refuses to overestimate the construction of common enemies, since this kind of projection always seems to function as a willed constituent of

one's own sense of identity and belonging (Nassar, 2004). Jamal Nassar explains that the tendency of media to construct the other is global in scope, and warns against a disproportionate critique of Arab media, since Arabs have gone through many colonial experiences and conflicts, and suffer at the hands of those who wield incommensurate power in the media, and can therefore control news representations to protect their own, predominantly Western interests (Nassar, 2004). In terms of their subjective, or even, affective identity, the influence of the Arab sense of victimization by the other, or so the argument of Jamal Nasser goes, can make Arabs more emotional, and more motivated concerning patriotism and nationalism than other less vulnerable populations (Nassar, 2004). Conversely, Nassar indicates that Arab identity contributes to the fervor of nationalism, and helps Arabs to keep their spirit of resistance against colonialism intact (Nassar, 2004).

Margaret Nydell, a professor of Arabic at Georgetown University, identifies a further motivation for resistance. In taking up the argument made by Jamal Nassar to question whether Arab identity is a resistant identity, Nydell acknowledges that it is possibly resistant to the process of wholesale Westernization as an ingredient of modernization, and it is further informed by the inevitable traumas and challenges posed by competing ideologies, such as 'individual freedom' versus 'social morality' (Nydell, 2004). She further emphasizes that increasing the level of awareness about these developments could contribute to a stronger conception of Arab identity (Nydell, 2004). Nevertheless, Margaret Nydell seems to contest the allegations made about Aljazeera as being a manifestation of the higher profile of Arab identity; rather, she believes that there is an increasing demand for a specifically Islamic identity, especially, it would appear, in

response to the more directly manifest threats made against Muslims in the West (Nydell, 2004).

In tackling the issue of the media representation of Arab identity more directly, Margaret Nydell argues that Arab media are influential enough to shape Arab identity (Nydell, 2004). Yet, she tends to believe that Arab identity is not well presented, because Arab media do not focus on the positive and objective components of Arabness (Nydell, 2004). Representation might be more effective, the argument of Nydell runs, if the media were to put more stress on the social values of Arabs (Nydell, 2004).

When asked about the construction of Arab identity in the Diaspora, Nydell points to the misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims, stating that Arabs in the Diaspora are shaped by the sense of being besieged and misconstrued, and by the excessive stress on militant Islam (Nydell, 2004). She explains that Arabs will be more likely to form their relationships and identify themselves in accordance with their affiliation to religious sectors (Shia, Sunni Druze, Ismailis, Christians, Copts), or to regional sub-groups (Egyptians, Maghrebians, Peninsular Arabs) (Nydell, 2004).

The Arab identity of first generation immigrants has essentially been retained. What most concerns Margaret Nydell is the gradual erosion of Arab attributes among members of the second generation. She additionally laments the inability of Westerners to distinguish between Muslims and Arabs (Nydell, 2004). Since they are the constant recipients of disapproval and criticism, Nydell claims that Arab Muslims respond to such negative images by attempting to assimilate, and they are, correspondingly, less expected to maintain their identity compared with other ethnic groups. She also warns that the

constant pressure exerted on Arabs has meant that identity is now de-emphasized (Nydell, 2004).

This de-emphasizing of identity that Margaret Nydell is at pains to stress tells us much about the frustrations of Arabs over their own identity, especially where religion is concerned. A significant instance of the challenges that can be expected, according to Nydell's analysis of the problem, may be found in the case of Diana Abu Jaber, an Arab novelist who has lived in America since her childhood.

The daughter of a Christian Jordanian father, who converted to Islam, and an Irish Catholic mother, Diana Abu-Jaber states that "her father told her she was absolutely Arab." She adds:

I had my father, who said, [T]his is absolutely who you are. Then I had all these other people who were extended family -- and also in the Arab community -- saying, No, no, no. This is much better. You want to look American; you want to be American. It was very confusing.

My dad is quite secular, even though he has a religious soul -- and he does pray in times of stress, which is not the same thing as five times a day. He observes Islam in a kind of social way. What he used to tell me and my sisters growing up is that it was important for us to have some kind of faith. He didn't care what it was. I went through all sorts of stuff. I did the born-again Christian thing. I studied Islam and the Koran. I got confirmed as a Catholic. A lot of Muslims I grew up with in Syracuse went to the Greek Orthodox functions, because that was the great social clearinghouse for the Arab community. So I was very comfortable in that setting. But I don't know what (religion) I am now (Curiel, 2004).

As an Arab writer concerned with Arab American life, Diana Abu-Jaber expresses two compelling views about Arabs and Arabic language. She agrees that "there are so few representations of Arabs in America" (Curiel, 2004). Diana further embodies a verbal

image of the Arabic language in comparison with the English language. She describes English as an “automatic car” and Arabic as a “stick-shift car” (Curiel, 2004). She further remarks: “When you speak Arabic, it engages your whole body -- the diaphragm, the spine, the pelvis” (Curiel, 2004).

Turning now to the comments of Arab Canadians, Hassan Isidean, the owner of the Middle East Book Store in Montreal, provides a pro-Arabist view of Arab identity. He believes that there is no association between being an Arab and being religious, since there are Arab-Christians, and Arab-Jews as well (Isidean, 2004). Problematically, Hassan Isidean believes that Arabness is not well defined, even though it is easier to define and more cohesive than other identities. Reinforcing the views of Margaret Nydell concerning the spread of sub-group identities within Arab global media, Isidean reveals that Arab media stand for local identities and, as such, appeal to Saudis, Lebanese and Egyptians (Isidean, 2004). He suggests that Arab media in the Diaspora is too remote from the real concerns and needs of the diasporic audience, since they are generally in Arabic. Unless Arabs in the Diaspora have media that operate with languages other than Arabic, Hassan Isidean warns that the Arab voice will simply not be heard (Isidean, 2004).

In contrast to Hassan Isidean’s view, Baha Abu-Laban, a professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Alberta, supposes that Arab identity is conditioned by childhood, language and religion. However, he shares the view expressed above about the importance of operating Arab Canadian media that address Canadians in their own languages. Abu-Laban blames Arab Canadian media for not being sufficiently influential and for their failure to reach Arabs on a mass scale (Abu-Laban, 2004). He points out

that the Arab community in Canada has become more conscious in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and he further refers to the efforts of Arab Canadian organizations to mobilize their resources to counteract prejudice against Arabs and Muslims (Abu-Laban, 2004).

Mazen Chouaib, the executive director of the National Council on Canadian-Arab Relations (NCCAR), expresses concerns that appear to challenge some of Abu-Laban's views. Mazen explains that the Arab community is currently weak and, while it has considerable potential, it must be alerted to the real nature of the challenges and opportunities before it. Tackling the issue of the representation of Arabs from a different perspective, the director of NCCAR criticizes the Arab community for being too defensive. Instead of representing the values of the Canadian community in general, and stressing its role as one of the main groupings in Canada, Mazen explains that Arab Canadians tend to defend themselves and their values (Chouaib, 2004). Corroborating some of the views of Arab scholars expressed above, such as those of Margaret Nydell and Hassan Isidean, Mazen Chouaib additionally emphasizes that the Arab community is fragmented into segments (Lebanese, Egyptian, Moroccan), yet he stresses the NCCAR's efforts to address the commonalities to be found among Arabs at cultural, social, and political levels (Chouaib, 2004).

Mazen sheds further light on more problematic issues facing the Arab community in Canada, such as the generational differences among Arabs, and the construction of the Other. Mazen explains that the older generations of Arab immigrants to Canada have contested political bias and fought against the negative images that bring their community into disrepute (Chouaib, 2004). Yet, little by little, these older generations have become

well integrated into Canadian society, thereby losing their interest in sustaining Arab issues (Chouaib, 2004). The new generations of Arab immigrants, according to Mazen Chouaib, face more formidable economic challenges (Chouaib, 2004).

Evidently more critical than many Arab scholars, Mazen Chouaib blames Arabs for their tendency to construct unfair images of the other. Mazen explains that Arabs often refuse to take responsibility for their actions and inherit cultural dogmas that forbid them to engage in self-criticism (Chouaib, 2004). Reinforcing the notion of a culture of self-justification and excuse, the director of NCCAR criticizes what he terms the “Arab’s intellectual ghettoization,” and the Arab’s fear of being honest with themselves (Chouaib, 2004). Mazen provides examples of this lack of Arab self-criticism, stating that Arabs always fear speaking from a human rights perspective, because if they do so, they confer on the other, a justification and excuse to attack them (Chouaib, 2004).

While Arab scholars in Canada are inclined to provide incoherent views of Arab identity and the Arab community, their views concerning Aljazeera are more consistent. These scholars have reached a consensus about the unprecedented role of Aljazeera. Baha Abu-Laban explains that Aljazeera is trying to promote a different approach towards culture and religion, thereby opening more spaces for interpretation, and permitting people to become more critical (Abu-Laban, 2004). Mazen Chouaib applauds this view, describing Aljazeera as a revolutionary media that reflects the reality of Arabs by exposing the contradictions among Arabs (Chouaib, 2004). Omar Alghabra, the President of the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF), takes up a positive view of Aljazeera, characterizing it as “one of the most recognizable news organizations in the world”



(Alghabra, 2004), and “the most progressive civic institution in the Arab World” (Alghabra, 2004).

Since its inauguration, Aljazeera has not been visible on the map of Canadian cable channels. When the debate about allowing Aljazeera to operate through Canada cable companies first began, Arab scholars, particularly those at the head of Arab organizations, advocated Aljazeera. However, a more attentive focus on the debate reveals the discrepancies in opinion found within Arab Canadian organizations toward Aljazeera. For fear of banning Aljazeera<sup>93</sup> from operating in the Canadian zone, Mazen Chouaib, the director of the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations, wrote to the Montreal Gazette, in May 2003, acknowledging the negative and hateful messages Aljazeera often spreads, but also making it clear that “barring it from cable services violates Canadian core values of freedom of thought and speech” (Chouaib, 2003). Going straight to the heart of the matter, Mazen stated that:

No sensible Canadian agrees with any form of hate dissemination aimed at any group. We will not accept it from anyone, and it should be condemned in the strongest terms. However, Canadians have the right to information (Chouaib, 2003).

He added:

It is insulting to our intelligence to propose banning Al-Jazeera because it broadcasts tapes and videos attributed to Osama bin Laden. How else can we start to learn the truth about these terrorists and criminals, who refuse to reach out to other media? How else are experts expected to continue examining the threat they pose to peaceful societies? (Chouaib, 2003).

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<sup>93</sup> The Canadian Jewish Congress calls for banning Aljazeera from the Canadian market, and indicates that Aljazeera’s “programming content contains hate propaganda, in contravention of Canadian laws and broadcast standards” (Landy, 2003).

When the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication Commission issued a conditional approval in July 2004, indicating that cable companies “alter or curtail” the programming of Aljazeera to forbid any “abusive comments” from being broadcast (Alghabra, 2004), Omar Alghabra, the president of the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF), wrote to the Globe and Mail on September 15, 2004, defending Aljazeera. He noted that:

Considering that Al-Jazeera has never been viewed by most Canadians and regulatory bodies, claims against it have never been proven. In their claims, advocates of censoring Al-Jazeera failed to make a distinction between news reporting and editorial positions. They also failed to differentiate between politically controversial discussions or racial/religious hate propaganda (Alghabra, 2004).

Regardless of the assessment implicit in the decision of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication Commission toward Aljazeera, which in the eyes of Omar Alghabra, allows distributors of cable companies to act as censors, the view set out above about Aljazeera, as well as the analysis conducted throughout this chapter, reveals that the content of Aljazeera is beset with hateful speeches about the other.

Briefly, Aljazeera Net represents Arab identity in North America as being polarized. Either it has been retained or it is lost. Additionally, Aljazeera Net portrays a postcolonial image of this dual identity, based on presence or loss, wherein Arab and Muslim immigrants in North America, and everywhere else for that matter, struggle to retain any one of these two opposed identities, thereby keeping these identities preserved from the violation of the other. The views of Arab scholars expressed in the last section attempt to engage and debate the former representation. Yet, coherent views about Arabness in relation to Aljazeera are difficult to identify. Though Arab scholars have reached a

consensus on the unprecedented role and impact of Aljazeera, their views on the nature of Aljazeera's mediation of Arab identity are as fragmented as the identity itself.

### **3.4 Conclusion: Aljazeera's perspective and framing revisited**

Throughout this chapter I have examined the proposals I made in the first chapter about the nature and sources of Arab identity. The image Aljazeera Net has attempted to portray concerning the sources of Arab identity is fairly striking to the observer. Clearly, Aljazeera Net reflects a Pan-Arab perspective, which poses a peculiar challenge for the whole Arab region. Aljazeera Net is fairly pessimistic about the potential of Arab leaders, regimes and publics to live up to its Pan-Arab ideals. The lexical and cognitive terms employed in the content of Aljazeera Net are decidedly negative, descriptive, and often, hateful. Even more stunningly, while Aljazeera has adopted the Pan-Arab approach as a touchstone for the issues that Aljazeera has chosen to take up, and it constantly talks about Arabs as a collective entity, it employs Islam as the all-pervasive frame and reference that governs the content, tone and approach of the entire network. Islamic voices in Aljazeera Net are not merely loud and dominant, but are construed as the legitimate voices of the network, constituting a means of making an appeal to the perceptions of Aljazeera Net users that implicitly expects them to fall into line.

The Islamic perspective of Aljazeera Net can be seen as the foundational prop for the frames that govern the representation of Arab identity in Aljazeera Net. Pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism are construed as the uncertain reality of Arabs, the two bases that Aljazeera Net stands for, yet the network is at pains to remind Arabs that both these goals have proven to be elusive, equivocal, and even unreal. The hesitant and grudging quality of Aljazeera's representation of Arab leaders, regimes and publics accounts for why it

tends to reflect on, and even orchestrate, the crisis of Arab identity, while yet cheering on its own dominant representations of Islamic identity.

In discussing Arab conflicts armed resistance is portrayed as an imperative, but not as a practical or an effective choice for Arabs, and although Aljazeera Net questions the rationality of military resistance, such a strategy nonetheless seems to be entertained as an option, even when Aljazeera itself has spelled out the reasons for the inefficacy of such a militant posture. The 'Other', particularly those who are perceived as being in conflict with Arabs, are declared as hated 'enemies', the fabricators of conspiracies against Arabs, and therefore, negotiating peace with them is seen as 'poison'. Non-Arab leaders, who resist the United States' policies, such as Hugo Chavez, are portrayed as the missing charismatic leaders Arabs are looking for.

Looking at the image Aljazeera Net portrays of Islam, it is obvious that Islam has not been represented as an actual source of Arab identity, but rather as a theory, and a cultural entity per se. This conclusion supports the Islamists' claim made in the first chapter that Islamic identity is a much more comprehensive entity than Arab identity, and furthermore, it supports a call for Islamic Umma, but not Arab nationhood. Because Aljazeera serves as an agent, or even sometimes, a mouthpiece of Islam, there is no real possibility of the issues it discusses being contested. Moreover, it can be seen as the representative of certain Islamic voices, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood and Sunni. Further evidence of it being an agent for Islam can be found in Aljazeera Net's precise monitoring of those who convert to Islam. In keeping with the above, Aljazeera Net has published news stories about the conversion of 37 members from South Korea's army to Islam, the conversion of two Jews in Palestine and that of a number of US army officers

in the Guantanamo base to Islam (American, 2003, & Gobran, 2004, & Before, 2004, & A Jew, 2005).

Arab women are seen as the victims of Arab masculine superiority, Arab culture, occupation and colonialism, and they are always seen from within the parameters of the Islamic reference. The image of Arab women in Aljazeera has been drawn by Islamic voices, which, echoing the debate in the first chapter about Arab gender, emphasize that the freedom of Arab women is compromised by the fear of their being a political target of Western 'feminist' impositions, and the threats incurred by 'liberal' ideological aspersions cast on their Islamic identity. Arab gender is represented as imprisoned and curtailed by societal and cultural impediments and, as such, has become, in its turn, a symbol of the fragmentation of Arab identity.

Arab media, other than Aljazeera, are depicted as the tools of corrupt regimes, as media entertainment, tranquilizing disseminators of placebos that contribute nothing to the mission to educate Arabs concerning their democratic responsibilities, in a word, media that distort the Arab reality. Aljazeera constructs itself as a postcolonial subject, a symbol for Arab resistance against occupation and colonialism. However, it serves as the unreconstructed model of a media that is both radical and repressed, albeit resilient enough at the same time to persist in its agenda. While being on the offensive in both its Internet and screen incarnations, Aljazeera chooses to position itself in an underdog niche, particularly in the field of battle, where the crews and bureaus of Aljazeera are almost routinely bombed, and where it would appear that its operation over the Internet is subject to persistent hacking. Unless, or so it is implied, Aljazeera joins the herd of other Arab media, and becomes more lenient with regard to issues concerning corruption,

occupation and colonialism, Aljazeera stresses the need for continual vigilance, and cues in its users and viewers to the likelihood that it will continue to be the constant target of Arab regimes, as well as the United States, thereby reaffirming its heroic underdog status.

Aljazeera Net is dedicated to the classical Arabic language, which is seen as the cornerstone of Arab identity, since classical Arabic and Arabness are, if not identical, inextricably bound up with each other. Aljazeera takes full advantage of the stylistic features of the Arabic language, and employs rhetoric and repetition in a way that even violates the professional and behavioral guide Aljazeera assigns for its own use. Foreign language terms and contemporary Arabic colloquialisms and slang words are seen to pose a threat to the classical Arabic language, and consequently, to Arab identity itself. Similarly, Arab music and Arab food are represented as being subject to violation by fast-beat rhythmic music, and by fast American food products.

When examining the image Aljazeera Net portrays of Arabs in North America, Aljazeera talk more about American Muslims than Arab Muslims. It tirelessly repeats the same refrain about discrimination, and rehearses a litany of negative images perpetrated against Arabs and Muslims. Issues concerning Arab American women are disregarded, since Muslim women are represented as a symbol of all Arab women, and the distinction between 'Arab' and 'Muslim' is almost entirely elided in discussions of gender. Finally, Arab scholars in North America reflect and reproduce the confusion surrounding issues of Arab identity, and given the fragmentation of this identity, it is hardly surprising that Islamic voices are more salient. Likewise, the very prominence given to religious explanations of identity account for why the issue of religion, and notably, the Islamic religion, is often seen as the most confusing factor of all in coming to terms with one's

identity. Arabs, then, in the North American Diaspora, are confused and fragmented, and often put on the defensive, even to the extent of expressing contradictory and controversial views about the Arab community, and these tendencies are even more pronounced in Canada, where markedly more divisive views about the identity and role of Aljazeera are commonly expressed. However, despite the foregoing discussion about the precarious and vulnerable nature of both Arab and Muslim identity, there is a strong consensus on the revolutionary character of Aljazeera that enables it to remediate the Arab 'reality' on many different levels and to thus exert a reciprocal impact on that reality.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Any close examination of Arab identity must not only set out to discuss the debates centered around its sources, as interpreted in the period of post-colonialism, but must hope to verify or challenge the claim proposing that Arabness emerged to resist colonialism and imperialism. Beginning with the 'Arab Revolt,' which was waged by Sherif Hussein in June 1916 against the Ottoman empire, and followed by the growth of three powerful political movements – those of the Bathists (1947), the Arab Nationalists (1951), and the Nasserists (1970) – the formidable resistance to the major colonial powers, particularly the Great Britain and France of that time, marked the emergence of a new sense of Arab identity. This ongoing sense of resistance has not fundamentally changed over time, yet it surfaces anew whenever Arabs encounter colonial or imperial threats to their identity.

Therefore, Arab scholars repeatedly argue that Arabs should protect the key attributes of their identity, especially through protecting the classical Arabic language from the excessive interpenetration of foreign languages – notably, French and English – and through being alert to the imposition of Western ideas or agendas that tacitly continue the colonial and imperial mission, however unwittingly, for example, through targeting Arab women. Further tasks of defence and resistance might include campaigns waged against the boycotting of fast food monopolies and unwarrantable intrusions into Arab economies, especially where resources, products and occupations become stakes in pursuit of imperialist agendas, secured through ostensibly non-violent means.

However, the postcolonial history of Arabs has created new exigencies, notably in terms of devising strategies of resistance that nonetheless remain in accord with the need



to achieve a more collective orientation and identity among Arabs, thereby meeting their common needs, interests and objectives in regard to joint Arab actions and initiatives (Barakat, 1993). Moreover, these collective goals should not be striven for at the cost of securing a renewed commitment to plurality and cultural diversity. In other words, the sense of resistance, while aiming to 'protect' Arabs from the usurpations of colonialism or imperialism, should not hinder a thoroughgoing engagement with, and openness to, new ideas, irrespective of their American or European provenance, since it is clear that the touchstone of a strong identity will never be found in an overly cloistered or exclusive mentality, that is, one that resists the new or innovative just because it is so. However, the keynote to be struck is a strategy of resistance that is able to negotiate, and even to assimilate the new on its own terms. It is certainly not to be found in an unbridled and undifferentiated welcoming of alterity and innovation for their own sake.

Thus, if, as some argue, Arabs accept technological innovations, such as satellites, computers and telecommunications products, while resisting McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Burger products, or the fast rhythms of Western music, what can be said to motivate their choices? Such a query inevitably begs the question of identity, and if this identity is, as conceived above, a resistant identity, then a close reading of Arab history will reveal that Arabs are far from accepting what is imposed upon them in its entirety. Indeed, Arabs continue to negotiate and transform the ideas and commodities that the realities of their world make them ultimately powerless to resist. Arab Satellites, Mecca Cola and Arab fast food are examples of the kinds of products and services that are amenable to this kind of ongoing process of negotiation, as I indicate in my first chapter. Negotiation, in this sense, is a sort of enforced hybridity, or more precisely, the

reprocessing of ideas and commodities in order to make them one's own, either by reconstructing them, or by adapting them to one's own reality. The concept of 'enforced hybridity' has recently found a new application in Arab social relationships. Among the examples of imitating or reprocessing ideas that Arabs had previously resisted for years is the adaptation of new models of marriage, such as 'walk-in marriages' (Misyar marriage) and 'friend marriages' (Zawaj friend), which are perceived by many scholars as imitations of the pre-marriage relationships to be found in the West, wherein boyfriends/girlfriends are not able to live together under one roof at the beginning of a relationship.

From an ethnic perspective, Arabness is not only marked by difference from others, and by conflicts with others, but rather, by conflicts among Arabs themselves. To state this more categorically, when theorizing the postcolonial history of Arabs, the image that often appears on the surface prompts, and even warns us, that Arabs are to be found in a more or less constant state of conflict with others. Yet, investigations of Arab history in the era that followed the national liberation movements reveal that Arabs have progressively weakened themselves, and even provoked conflicts among themselves. As I explained in the first chapter, Arabs have given cause for many manifestations of disunity, border conflict, and war, as in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Thus, turning to the communication of a sense of identity, one should look at the cultural productions of Arabs to explore how Arab identity mediates issues that reflect the postcolonial condition of Arabs. Arabness, construed as a source of meaning and identity, is made manifest when Arabic poems, idioms, and songs transmitted by the media operate as signifiers for charisma, Arabism, patriotism, and enmity. Arab poems,

for example, can be seen to embody the charisma of Jamal Abd-Alnasser, as it is recreated through such poems<sup>94</sup> as 'the martyr of Arabism' and 'the horseman of Arabism.' Likewise, Arab songs can be seen as repositories of Arab patriotism, as it has been refigured over the decades, beginning with the song 'The Arab Countries' (Bilad al-Orb) in the 1930s to the 'Arab Dream' concert, a performance featuring 23 Arab singers, held in 1998. Throughout the postcolonial history of Arabs, a large body of songs can be said to have kept the vision of Arab nationalism and Arab unity alive. Furthermore, many Arabic proverbs warn that: 'those who are not for us are against us.' For example, two similar maxims state that: 'An enemy can be a lover when a donkey becomes a doctor,' and 'Enemies cannot be loved, even if the asp can be domesticated.'

Correspondingly, Aljazeera Net echoes the image of Arab identity that the postcolonial history of Arabs presents. It insists on the differences between Arabs and others. The representation of Arabs, conveyed through 'we,' 'us,' or 'our,' occurs in Aljazeera through a 'Pan-Arab' perspective, which operates, or so the team of Aljazeera argue, to reflect much of the reality of Arabs. The reflection of reality at Aljazeera systematically takes place through the coverage and reporting of news events. Ultimately, Aljazeera seeks to obtain accurate information about events at the time of their occurrence. It is more balanced in its coverage than many other Pan-Arab or Western media, and it can legitimately claim that its coverage of news events is generally transparent, or even hyper-transparent, when informed by a Pan-Arab perspective.

Obviously, if Aljazeera's content had been less reflexive of news events, or less balanced in its coverage, it would have received inconsequential or innocuous criticism.

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<sup>94</sup> 'Words to the horseman of Arabism' is a poem composed by Raja'a Eid, published in 1973. Two different poems, published in 1973 and composed by Mohamed Altohamy and Abd Elrahman Sedqi, describe Nasser as 'the martyr of Arabism.'

In other words, Aljazeera's refusal to reproduce, or to parallel the hegemonic discourses prevailing in the Arab World is an attempt to reveal much of the 'unreal' that envelops the Arab region. That is to say, the Aljazeera editorial line seeks to break through the mythic discourses the various Arab governments disseminate through their own media, which gild the pill of the Arab governments' endeavours to accomplish what they consider 'real' political and social reforms.

When reporting about the 'Other,' Aljazeera does not hide its Pan-Arab perspective. Strikingly, Aljazeera has become a model for the myth of media objectivity, in spite of the fact that it aggressively violates the behavioural and professional guide it assigns for its own journalists and reporters. Aljazeera's anchors, journalists, and reporters often use the descriptive, rhetorical, and even derogatory words that they are explicitly urged to avoid. Consequently, I propose a new model in regard to the kind of objectivity that Aljazeera purports to practice. Aljazeera's coverage can be more accurately defined as 'neo-objective,' and such a model of reporting is better able to accommodate the different 'subjectivities' of its journalists. This model of neo-objectivity suggests that Aljazeera's coverage of events is balanced, fair, and accurate, yet consistently informed by its own unique 'take' or perspective.

Indeed, Aljazeera's agenda is not limited to the reflection of Arab reality. Rather, it alters and constructs that reality. In the first place, Aljazeera seems to have altered the reality of Arab media. The emergence of new Pan-Arab media has been almost directly in response to Aljazeera's fame, but not merely because it has its own unique agenda. Yosri Fouda, an Aljazeera investigative correspondent and London bureau chief, describes how Aljazeera has induced a sort of 'media transformation' in the Arab World. In the eyes of

Fouda, when the United States and the various Arab governments could not beat Aljazeera, they did not exactly try to join Aljazeera, but they were nonetheless put into the position of trying to provide the various Arab publics with symmetrical media outlets that sought to emulate Aljazeera's overall strategy of news presentation (Miles, 2005, p. 334). Therefore, news channels, such as Abu Dhabi TV, Alarabiya and Alhora, have been launched to imitate Aljazeera, each one aspiring to achieve the renown and significance of Aljazeera (Miles, 2005, p. 335).

In its reflection and alteration of reality the frame of news presentation Aljazeera has worked to construct is emphatically informed by its Pan-Arab outlook. However, the reflection of reality at Aljazeera is never wholly transparent, nor can it be absolute. Aljazeera Net strives to present a more humanitarian face in regard to the Arab situation as a whole, but Aljazeera Net's representation of Arabs, highlighted in the third chapter, reflects a decidedly discouraging perspective concerning their present plight. Surprisingly, Aljazeera's characterization of Arabs, with its 'corrupted leaders' and 'oppressed and furious Arab public,' does not exactly encourage Arabs to go beyond an open avowal of their flaws to explore the more radical potential of Arabs as the active agents of a civil society that they can recognize as their own.

In order to take my argument further, I now wish to reconsider Aljazeera's cartoons and images. As represented in Aljazeera Net, Arab political parties and oppositional forces are insignificant, and if corruption and oppression are a matter of fate, how then can Arabs hope to avoid a predestined and undemocratic future? Indeed, Aljazeera Net does highlight the views of Arab dissenting voices. However, as noted in my third chapter, Aljazeera's anchors are always ready to push the argument to make it fit a pre-

existing frame or to endorse some of the views expressed by one or another of the guests. Therefore, dissenting voices are all too often co-opted, however unwittingly, to further the frames of corruption and oppression, and to lead Arabs to believe that 'revolution' against Arab governments - rather than the 'evolution' of Arab political parties, and the long struggle for political, economic and social reform - will grant Arabs the capacity to create their own reality and future.

Furthermore, though odd television episodes of Aljazeera, or single essays providing in-depth coverage of a certain issue at Aljazeera Net, do not offer a discouraging view of their prospects to Arabs, these are simply not abundant or substantive enough to offset the major frames of reference, which reiterate the message of an unbreakable cycle of corruption and oppression, or offer hope only through proclaiming the panacea of revolution. More importantly, Aljazeera's assumed role of educating Arabs about democracy is paradoxically at odds with Aljazeera Net's ambivalence about standing up for Arabs and its incapacity to adopt frames that reflect the actual potential of Arab development in light of the frequently intractable and problematic aspects of Arab political and social life. Another related problem concerns Aljazeera's inability to adopt sober, precise and clearheaded arguments, which, although certainly present in the odd interview, essay or analysis, are generally lost within the controlling frames of conflict, anger and strident rhetoric.

Aljazeera anchors, reporters, and freelancers are insistent in propelling their arguments through the use of misleading descriptions, hyperbole and rhetoric that are invariably calculated to make an emotional appeal to Aljazeera television viewers and website visitors. This means that its dominant frames of representation, centered on

frames depicting anger, oppression and corruption have, in their turn, played a significant role in constructing the Arab reality. Engaging with these aspects of the construction of reality in Aljazeera satellite channels and in Aljazeera Net necessitates a reconsideration of the representation of Aljazeera's main perspectives, especially in relation to Arab conflicts, Arab women, the Arabic language and Aljazeera's remediation of the components of Multimedia design.

In the first stage of the construction of reality media perspectives can be concretized and remediated as a sort of identity enactment. Any media that has a 'Pan' perspective can mediate the collective identity of its audiences, and provide them with the referents of connotations that reflect their identities. But in the case of Aljazeera, Aljazeera positions itself at the center of the process of the formation of Arab identity. As media scholars warn us, it is often misleading to position media at the center of the process of identity formation, because media, as institutions, are subject to a wide range of political, cultural and economic pressures (Kosebalaban, 2004, p. 50). Arab identity, as represented at Aljazeera Net, is therefore not mediated, but rather, remediated into the perspective of Aljazeera, and then reflected back in the shape of an enhanced identity.

The emergence of Aljazeera caused a sudden transformation in Arab media, since it escaped or avoided the censorship that had hitherto constrained Arab media. This entailed a much greater degree of freedom of expression than Arabs, for decades, had been used to. In other words, Aljazeera ushered in a new sense of liberty and immediacy so that the prospect of greater transparency, or objectivity, in news representation was no longer an idle dream. In part, the gap between the perception of its viewers, or visitors, and its own

perception of its ends, was closed. Aljazeera thereby filled an essential niche in inaugurating a radically critical, oppositional and 'free' conception of Arab media.

Indeed, Aljazeera's stress on its distinct conception of 'We-ness,' since it is this sense of communality of being and identity that distinguishes Arabs from all others, has made it alert to the collective responsibilities of the 'one true self.' This authentic selfhood is constructed through the classic Arabic language and through highlighting the tenets of Islam that match the principles of Arab identity intrinsic to the Arab inheritance and cultural tradition. Likewise, Aljazeera has also adopted a resistant 'underdog' position in its opposition to the West, particularly the United States, through adhering to a stridently anti-American editorial line.

Aljazeera's ability to capitalize on the sources of Arab identity has strengthened the Arabs' sense that Aljazeera not only speaks for them, but fights for them. Aljazeera, in the above-mentioned contexts, has thus established itself as an inspiring entity, or charismatic force that Arabs had previously lacked. Moreover, as a Pan-Arab media that appeared committed to fulfill a uniquely Arab destiny, to 'wake up Arabs,' 'educate them about democracy,' and to guide them about the kind and quality of resistance Arabs should draw on when dealing with conflict, it has seemingly lived up to its proclaimed mission.

Evidence concerning the reflection of Aljazeera's identity, as a sort of identity enactment that makes tangible the collective sense of Arabness, appears in Michael Wolff's article, entitled "Al Jazeera Edge." Wolff, who comments on Aljazeera and its journalists at the media center of the US Central Command (CENTCOM) in Doha has the following to say about them:



Al Jazeeraans didn't really seem like Arabs, even — at least not like the Qataris in white dishdashas. The Al Jazeera guys (and even sometimes women) were polyglot, urbane, sexy in a radical-chic sort of way...The way the network speaks to its audience is evidently pitch-perfect. Al Jazeera has become, practically, the Arab street. In my brief attempt to locate this fabled boulevard, I ended up, one afternoon, in a Doha teahouse with a water pipe and a few dozen couch-potato Arab men looking wordlessly at the Al Jazeera evening news (Wolff, 2003).

The ironic image Michael Wolff provides of Aljazeera is striking to the observer, since it reflects on how the news media has successfully simulated the representation of Arabs. In Wolff's view, Aljazeera has become a different media, since Aljazeeraian guys do not look like the rest of Arabs, and the 'dozen couch-potato' Arabs in a Doha café match the image of the fabled Arab street that Aljazeera wishes to target. In an ironic transposition, the Arabs that repeatedly appear in the cartoons of Aljazeera that I feature in my third chapter, that is, the Arabs who either inattentively smoke the Shisha, or who are impressively captivated by the facts and information Aljazeera provides, are now the couch potatoes who provide Aljazeera with the audience it would appear to seek.

In removing 'the perspectival Pan-Arab mask,' Aljazeera's identity can be seen to contribute to a second aspect of the construction of Arab reality, notably, the construction of Islam as a textual society. However, before moving on to explain how Aljazeera Net goes beyond the representation of Islam to form a textual Muslim society, I wish to briefly re-evaluate the identity of Aljazeera. From its inception, Aljazeera's identity has been a heated subject of debate among media scholars and political analysts. Whereas many scholars tend to believe that Aljazeera propagates Arab nationalism, the framing analysis conducted in this study reveals that Aljazeera does not represent the views of all

Arabs. Rather, it reproduces the marginalization of Arab-Christians, while for the most part, expressing the views of Arab-Muslims. This investigation of the frames governing Arab identity at Aljazeera Net emphasizes the fact that Aljazeera Net is more or less 'pro-Islamist,' even though it claims to have a Pan-Arab perspective.

An Arab scholar, Kia Hafez, reached parallel conclusions, in her brief study of Aljazeera Net. In an article entitled, "Arab Satellite Broadcasting: An Alternative to Political Parties?" Kia Hafez conducted a limited investigation of the political bias of Aljazeera Net, and found that there is no 'real' Pan-Arab line of argument:

Honestly, I was a bit disappointed because for the year 2004 I could only find about ten articles dealing with democracy in the Arab world, most of them polemics against American plans to democratize the area.... There was an interview with the US government, and the moderate Islamist viewpoint was well represented...My impression is that democracy at Aljazeera.net currently tends to be pushed aside by international political problems with American and Israeli policy (Hafez, 2004, Fall)

Kia Hafez does not fail to note that the viewpoint of moderate Islam is well presented, but fails to recognize that Aljazeera Net does not represent a significant Arab viewpoint. In order to take stock of what Kia Hafez fails to notice there must be a reconsideration of the distinction between the perspective and identity of Aljazeera and how Aljazeera re-accommodates the Pan Arab perspective.

To distinguish between the Pan-Arab perspective of Aljazeera and its 'pro-Islamic' identity the differences between Aljazeera's 'coverage' of news events and its 'interpretation' of occurrences and issues must be noted. Certainly, when Aljazeera covers news events, it reports from a Pan-Arab perspective, but when Aljazeera comes to the issue of interpretation, the question of Islamic voices becomes more pressing, since

they are inescapable. The domination of the Islamists takes place through the privileges of representation they enjoy. In most debates about Arab issues, Islamic voices have more legitimacy in the dialogue, and they often enjoy the endorsement of the Aljazeera anchors. Since both those who speak from a Pan-Arab perspective, and Islamists, have matching views as to the corruption and despotism of Arab leaders, and similar anti-American attitudes, the distinction between the perspective of Aljazeera and its frame of identity becomes more blurred, and is even sometimes unseen.

However, the identity of Aljazeera, as a source of meanings, surfaces when it represents how Arabs should handle issues of daily life. At this juncture, the Islamic voices become more visible, especially through their representation in solitary interviews, wherein Islamic scholars express their views in discussions with Aljazeera anchors, but not through debates. Some Islamic voices, particularly that of Sheikh Yousef Alqaradawi, have never been contested in Aljazeera. The sheer representation of Islam, particularly the voice of the Muslim Brotherhood, explains why Aljazeera does not feel obliged to debate Alqaradawi's views. Additionally, Qatar has been a site of operation for the Muslim Brotherhood and for Alqaradawi himself, who runs an Islamic website, IslamOnline.net, which has become very prominent among Arabs. IslamOnline.net is a global Islamic site for Muslims and non-Muslims in the Arabic and English languages, and "a reference for everything that deals with Islam, its sciences, civilization and nation" (About Us).

In accord with the objectives of IslamOnline.net, Aljazeera devotes a weekly episode to 'discussing' daily life issues in the light of Islamic law. Muslim scholars, who appear at Aljazeera, utilize texts from the Quran and the Sunna. However, while drawing

on different sorts of texts from the Quran and the Sunna is only to be expected from a Pan-Arab media, and not merely from Aljazeera Net, let alone Aljazeera, what is most revealingly significant about Aljazeera Net is how it engages in a discourse about the Muslim Umma in a way that constructs Islam as a textual society.

To explain how Islam has become a sort of textual society, it is important to emphasize the common features between a given society and its textual construction. Any society has its own unique history, and its own select points of reference. It distinguishes its members from other societies, actualizes the issues of its people, unites them, and integrates the individual within the group through dialogue and persuasion. The group then grows by adding more members to its structure, and society vindicates its dominant voices through investing its leaders with charisma (Taborsky, 1997, pp. 193-194, & Said, 1983, p. 34).

Turning now to Aljazeera Net, it is clear that its textual expression could not be more complete, since it transforms every single word aired on television into both audio and printed texts, including complete scripts of its television programs. Once it arrives at the website of Aljazeera, the text gains yet more power through its very means of representation, since Aljazeera adds by-lines to divide up the text and to categorize it through introducing certain ideas, and also through the interpretation of certain sentences included within the texts. Aljazeera Net, at this level, operates not merely as a mediator, but also as the 'moderator' of the presumed textual society.

In accordance with the particular features of a given society, the texts representing Islam in Aljazeera echo the history of identity it represents; significantly, the Quran and Sunna, which have been followed for nearly fourteen hundred years ago since their

sanctification in the name of the prophet Mohamed, as the essential Muslim reference, always differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims. In a parallel activity, the texts of Aljazeera Net implicitly make their own authoritative claims vis-à-vis the faithful community of readers and viewers they represent. The conversations that appear in the original classic or colloquial language that the anchors of Aljazeera and the invited Muslim scholar(s) tend to use are reproduced in such a way as to enliven the issues they represent. Muslim scholar(s) are thus enshrined as the leaders of both the 'real' and textual society they represent.

More importantly, the notion of textual society becomes even clearer when certain members of the 'real' Muslim society express their views and share some of their problems through phone calls that cite these documents, hoping to find responses from the scholars represented by the texts. To briefly summarize this argument about society as text, the texts found at Aljazeera Net embody the social realm of Muslims in a generalized, or even universalized, form of expression (Said, 1983, p. 4). Likewise, the texts purporting to represent Arab Muslims in the Diaspora do not appear as distinct from their society, but rather, they have merely become an additional structure in the entire global Muslim textual society. In reading texts about Muslims in North America, for example, the texts clearly pay more attention to how to secure members of this part of Muslim society from being assimilated into North American society rather than to the process of understanding the choices made by those who, alone, have to make them. Likewise, they monitor and counteract discrimination against Muslims without taking note of their own prescriptive and discriminatory frame of reference. In other words, they are texts without contexts.

Significantly, where as the construction of textual society can apply to the representation of Arabs, it is more related to the representation of Islam, because Arabs seem to fluctuate between many frames of reference, whereas Muslims do not, even though Arabs share the same history and have witnessed, or participated in, the same conflicts. Moreover, the Arabs scholars who appear in Aljazeera do not enjoy the same authority as the sheikhs and Muslim scholars interviewed in Aljazeera. That is to say, the fragmentation of Arab identity is such as to make Arabs powerless to construct a coherent textual society, as in the case of the representation of Islam.

The representation of Arab conflicts contributes to a third aspect of the construction of reality. Herein, I will consider the conflict in its broader sense, both in terms of domestic Arab conflicts in Arab countries, and conflicts between Arabs and the other. Whenever domestic or inter-Arab conflicts occur, Aljazeera positions itself as a political constituency and as a symbolic space for 'diplomacy,' 'politics,' and 'virtual politics.' Indeed, Aljazeera has become a place where politics and diplomacy can in fact be practiced. The quality of coverage of events of Aljazeera creates waves of diplomatic trouble for the government of Qatar, and the government of the United States and many other Arab governments have requested the Qatari government to intervene in Aljazeera's activities. Similarly, Aljazeera has become a space for all the political actors in the Arab region, for dissenting groups in Arab countries, and for Arab groups living in exile. Once they appear in Aljazeera, certain political actors are even subject to torture from their respective Arab governments, while some political parties can easily become subject to government harassment.

However, at what might be termed a 'meta-constructive' level, Aljazeera can be seen as a symbol, even the symbol, of 'virtual politics' in the Arab world since Aljazeera emerges as a field where Arabs can practice politics, but not true politics (Miles, 2005, p. 328). In practice, the work of the political actors who appear in Aljazeera has not led to any serious political changes in the reality of Arab politics, despite the fact of its undoubted impact on the political landscape or climate of thought. Likewise, Arab governments often issue statements to condemn the views of those who appear in Aljazeera, and they criticize Aljazeera for being politically alienating through the agency of its 'undesirable' political actors. However, while Aljazeera is certainly not 'alienating' in this sense, and although it can only be perceived as a political institution at a symbolic level, it is in fact a media with its own agenda.

Turning now to Arab conflicts with others, and bearing in mind that the rhetorical structure of the Arab language tends to essentialize the enmity of others through the idioms it employs, the representation of Arab conflicts with others creates an impression among Arabs that 'military resistance' is to be privileged over other aspects of resistance. Crucially, Aljazeera Net has ushered in a new era in media-war relationships. The offensive attacks against Aljazeera's bureaus in Afghanistan and Iraq have helped Aljazeera to construct itself as a heroic institution in the Arab world. To put the matter simply, Aljazeera Net repeatedly imbues its audience with the idea that it symbolically fights on behalf of Arabs in their conflict with the United States, and indeed, some of its journalists have sacrificed their lives to confirm Arabs in their right to know the truth.

The representation of Arab women is a fourth aspect of the construction of Arab reality. The image Aljazeera Net depicts of Arab women reflects the ambiguity about the

status of Arab women in the Arab World. Aljazeera Net does however share in the new frontiers the Arab media has opened for the discussion of issues regarding the situation of Arab women, and more particularly, in regard to their rights. Sensitive issues concerning Arab women, such as sexuality and abuse, which were untouched just two decades ago, have become a subject for debate in Aljazeera and in other Arab media. However, Aljazeera Net continues to mediate the voices of Arab women in such a way as to construct Arab women as a 'national property' that Arabs should defend, in order to prevent Arab women from, what Yousef Alqaradawi terms 'going with the flow.' The 'flow' here is clearly the tide of new ideas that Arab women may choose to adopt.

A fifth aspect of the construction of reality is at stake when Aljazeera Net utilizes the power of rhetoric of the Arab language in the Arab World. In examining the kind of language Aljazeera's journalists and anchors use, certain features of Arabic rhetoric, notably metaphoric and descriptive expressions, seem to be used in an uncontrolled and seemingly endless mode of repetition, regardless of the linguistic rules that Aljazeera has assigned for the observation of the whole network. These linguistic rules of Aljazeera call on journalists and reporters not to use descriptive and rhetorical language. Obviously, such rhetoric has become the norm at Aljazeera Net, and is the standardized linguistic fare for visitors at Aljazeera's online news, and for the viewers of Aljazeera's satellite channel. Metaphorical and descriptive language tends to distort the conversation between Aljazeera's guests and anchors, and in so doing incurs the risk, already present, of exaggeration in evaluating news events.

Through the overuse of rhetoric, the Arabic language has become a less than transparent medium for ideological invective and, as such, Aljazeera's language seems to



condone the disturbing growth of irrationality among the various Arab publics. Building upon the argument made in the first chapter, the dynamic nature of the Arabic language and its rhetorical power to touch off the emotions makes it amenable to an undue influence on the Arabs publics' interpretation of events. Clearly, if they continue to be exposed to such rhetorical excesses, this will inevitably lead the Arab publics to make irrational judgments that, in turn, lead them to take irresponsible actions.

### **Aljazeera Net and Multimedia Design: Constructing a Meta-Reality**

Aljazeera Net utilizes multimedia features to dynamically mediate its construction of reality. Multimedia features at Aljazeera Net contribute to the construction of hyper-reality, impose a dynamic meaning on the spectacle, and insert a master narrative. Whereas media scholars argue that the construction of reality can be attributed to the devices that emphasize certain news values, such as conflict and drama, Aljazeera Net tends to use hyperlinks to augment its news values, thereby incorporating additional ideological values within the texts of its news stories. For example, the representation of some parts of the audio/video tapes of the second leader of Alqaeda, Ayman Alzawahri, adds certain ideological values to the news story, which a visitor at Aljazeera's online news site may read, such as the values of 'reciting' and 'textual justification.' Multimedia herein facilitates the fusion between two different sorts of texts, printed text and audio/visual text, to create a new hyper-reality supplemented by two different sorts of textual representation of ideology. Hyper-reality is thus a kind of additional ideological validation, which not only highlights the realm of the Jahdis and how they address Muslims and Arabs, but also compensates for the absence of certain ideological codes so

that Aljazeera may choose to abandon a related news story in the body of the text for the sake of pursuing its editorial line.

Animated cartoons and hypertext at Aljazeera Net are inscribed in the creation of two levels of the construction of reality. Firstly, animated cartoons are used to transform the single representation of one drawing to transform it into a dynamic spectacle, through which Aljazeera Net cartoonists can utilize the separate drawings about different events and issues, and then unite them again to form one animated cartoon. The 'cartoonic' spectacle can thus provide visitors to Aljazeera Net with a newly integrated meaning. Resembling a chain that contains many circles, the spectacle may further influence the perception of Aljazeera Net's visitors, thereby informing them as to how to relate unconnected events or issues to one another. More importantly, the spectacle, as it appears in Aljazeera Net, creates political relationships that do not exist in reality. For example, when representing a spectacle concerning how the former Pope, John Paul II, responded to world events, Aljazeera Net portrayed the Pope as someone who greeted the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The fictional world conjured up by the animated spectacle was clearly at odds with the appeals John Paul II had actually made on behalf of the peace of the Palestinian people, and his grief at acts of destruction, no matter where they were committed, as in the war in Iraq.

Hypertextuality, in the case of Aljazeera Net, functions as an innovative technique to construct a 'reality' based on a master narrative. A master narrative, as shown in the second chapter, is a redeemable narrative, since it enables the visitors of a site to read the entire story concerning a given event. The retrospective reading of an event makes Aljazeera Net more capable of shifting, and thereby determining, the construction of

meaning through the insertion of reports, analyses and video clips at any point in a series of narrative linkages concerning the event. 'Flashbacks' are thus available as and when they are needed. Indeed, reality in such a context is metaphysical, since the entire interpretation of an event is subject to the influence of the time of its reading and of the discursive context that establishes its meaning. The metaphysical meaning consequently creates a corresponding reality through the multiple levels of the hypertext. That is to say, the various levels of hypertext generate a reality based on a chain of texts according to the analogy of a palimpsest, a reality that would be radically other, were it to be based on the reading of a single text, which would necessarily fail to attend to some of its contexts.

#### **Discussion: Arabs in Diaspora, Arab identity and Postcolonialism revisited.**

There are parallel lines of argument between how Aljazeera Net represents the 'reality' of Arab-Muslims in Diaspora, and how Arab scholars in North America describe Arab identity. Obviously, Aljazeera Net chooses to put more stress on the religious identity of Arabs, thereby highlighting the voices of Muslim organizations in North America, while describing the reality of negative images and discriminations with which Arab-Muslims have to cope. In corroboration, the Arab Canadian Federation's report of 2002 concludes that although Arab Canadians are well integrated, they feel marginalized as a consequence of the discrimination and stereotypes directed against them (The Knowledge, 2002).

The image of Arabs, as represented by Arabs in North America and at Aljazeera Net, indicates that whenever identity enters the ethnical and religious dimension, particularly in regard to Islam, then the feeling of living in exile gradually increases. That is to say that Arabs, who approach their identity from a cultural perspective and express

only shared representations of Arab culture and tradition, are not likely to feel that they live in exile.

In examining the sources of Arab identity, Arab gender and religion are clearly the most confusing sources in the composition of that identity in the Arab Diaspora. For instance, some Arab families send their daughters back to Arab countries when they have reached the ages of 15-18, hoping to get them married off, which means they cannot be included within this study of the North American Diaspora, except through noting their absence. It is likewise difficult to determine the contribution of religion - particularly Islam - to the issue of identity in the Diaspora. On the one hand, it is the most stable factor in the retention of identity of Arab-Muslims, especially as it is represented at Aljazeera Net. On the other hand, it is felt to be a confusing factor among some Arabs, who feel that any sign referring to their Islamic identity may have a negative impact in regard to their assimilation in North American society at large. As evidence of the confusion that religion can create, some Arab Canadians actually prefer to change their first names if they have patent Islamic connotations. For instance, some Arabs, whose first name is 'Mohamed,' tend to change it to 'Mike,' 'Mac,' or 'Michael.'

I now wish to bring my personal experience to bear on some of the issues discussed above. As an Arab who has lived in Canada for five years I have come to realize that a certain illusion is created, not necessarily disclosed in the results of academic studies and the reports of Muslim and Arab organizations, about the degree of discrimination and negative images perpetrated in the Diaspora. Whereas the results of academic studies are generally premised on the assumption that the amount of discrimination and negative images are responsible for marginalization of Arabs in Diaspora, I come to realize that

Arabs often tend to marginalize themselves, because they do not represent their Arab or Islamic identities at a cultural level, but at an ethnic or a religious level. However, there is a circular logic at play here. On the one hand, it is argued that unless Arabs adopt the social values of Canadian society, they are not likely to experience full integration within this society. On the other hand, if Arabs in Canada, at least first generation Arab immigrants, should endeavour to make their hybrid designations yet more hybrid at the cultural level, then their sought for assimilation as Canadian-Arabs, through adopting the social values of Canadian society, can only be achieved at the cost of sacrificing some of the most important aspects of their identity, namely, the religious aspects.

### **Resisting the Other: Rereading Aljazeera through the lens of Edward Said**

I now wish to relate the image of the other to some of the positions taken up by Edward Said, especially as the representation of Arab identity at Aljazeera seems to accord with the views of Said. Edward Said tends to problematize the relationship of Arabs versus the Other, particularly in the United States, in a reductive form of argument. In the estimation of Said, the United States is decidedly an empire (Said, 2003), and further we, as Arabs, “are bombarded with images that ask us to submit to them and in the end to buy them, whether through news commodities or travel or whatever” (Said, 2003, pp. 98-99). Looking at Arab-US relationships from within the spectrum of imperialism and colonialism, Said, as an Arab Nationalist enthusiast, criticizes the West for being responsible for the ills of the Arabs, and accordingly, his binary logic too easily conceives Arab stagnation as part and parcel of the imperatives of global capitalism and globalization.

Though Said avoids objectifying Arabs for cultural and social interrogations, he tends to ignore the Arabs' relegation, from a Western perspective, within what has become the prison-house of the Arabic language, since the translation of Arab cultural productions into European languages is commonly undertaken in such a way as to limit the potential of, say, literature or cinema, to address the West in the spirit of its own language or culture. This insensitivity to language means, practically speaking, that Arabs are relatively unknown to others, especially in the West. Another dimension of Arab self-critique that Said's binary conception of the Other will seemingly not allow him to acknowledge, or at least, obliges him to disregard, is the way in which the socialization and education of Arabs in the recent history of Arab countries has led to a new generation of Arabs who believe in the evolution of the Arab World into a group of closely related civil democratic societies. This admittedly slow evolution, brought about by listening to, and evaluating their own experiences, needs and expectations, does not owe its origin and impetus to some mirrored or mimetic version of Western societies or ideologies, since Arabs know what they stand to gain through greater cooperation among each other, and they also know this might exceed what their present imaginations can grasp. Of course, this vision goes against the grain of a society bound by a caste of rulers and an Arab public subjugated to its command, but that has never been the 'only' history of the Arab world. If this study teaches anything, it is that identity is an extraordinarily complex and dynamic historical entity, and if an Arab identity is to flourish in the future we cannot predict what form it will take.

Aljazeera Net treats the notion of Arabs and the 'Other' from the same perspective as Edward Said, since it depicts the West, particularly the United States, as hostile, and

locked into permanent enmity against Arabs. It remediates Arabs through an Islamic identity, and then constructs Arabs and the Other through a reductive binary system, conferring on its would-be audience, a conception of the essentiality of a 'sinister West,' which continues to forge conspiracies against Arabs, colonizes them, and then leaves them in ignorance and poverty. Aljazeera, in this sense, appears as a postcolonial subject; a media that represents the ambivalence and fragmentation of Arab identity, and in turn, the starkly contrasting substantiality of Islamic identity. Though it is conceived as a disobedient subject in the gaze of the colonizer, in its own heroic conception of itself it is a charismatic subject that has the capacity to monopolize the attention of Arabs and Muslims, and in so doing, to universalize their multiple subjectivities.

However, it is helpful to define the parameters of Aljazeera's contribution to the notion of a present day engagement with Arab identity in the Arab World and in the Arab Diasporas. Ostensibly, where postcolonialism often aims to overtake the normative relationship between the colonizer and colonized to create a more complex hybrid space, Aljazeera does not offer spaces for the fluid construction of identities. Aljazeera is a neo-hybrid media. It does not go beyond adumbrating the idea of the 'sinister West', nor does its editorial line attempt to make distinctions between Arab and Islamic perspectives in opposing foreign views. What Aljazeera does, in effect, is to introduce guests from the United States and Israel, and then proceeds to challenge them through its anchors, or by simply giving the Arab scholars who appear at Aljazeera Net the opportunity to challenge any pro-American views. Both implicitly and explicitly, Arabs are informed that if Arab leaders and regimes have not been able to accomplish what is necessary for the sake of their publics then Aljazeera is there to assume the hero's mantle and to take responsibility

for that mission. Nonetheless, Aljazeera remains a revolutionary media in terms of its perspective, its editorial line and its agenda, since it is the first Arab media to have penetrated the Western hemisphere, and to thereby begin to reverse the flow of information, obliging Western media to lend an ear to Aljazeera's editorial line, and to listen to the views of Arabs who only a few decades ago, were unknown and unrepresented.

### **Suggestions for future research on postcolonialism, Arab identity and media representations**

The postcolonial approach has undoubtedly been useful in examining the socio-cultural and economic relationships between Arab countries and Western countries, and it has created at least the potential to construct a hybrid cultural space that goes beyond the logic of binary oppositions, and the almost Manichean tactics of exclusion implicit in cut and dried position taking. Clearly, there has been a resurgence of Arab-American organizations that do not necessarily have the organizational and communicational profile to have hitherto merited examination. However, it might prove possible to examine how Arab-Americans and Arab-Canadian organizations can and do venture beyond their American or Canadian contexts to initiate a dialogue between Arabs and the West.

Additionally, since the postcolonial approach is historical in scope and emphasis, it might prove helpful to investigate the changing conception of media in attempting to go beyond its traditional propaganda and counter-propaganda roles, and to become more self-reflexive in examining competing ideologies in the construction of the media. This study of Aljazeera Net has informed me about the more subtle and insidious dimensions of propaganda since a significant part of what Aljazeera is attempting to do in fixing and



immobilizing the perceptions of Arabs concerning their identity crosses the boundaries between truth telling and propaganda.

After five years of living in Canada my attention has been drawn to the rapid increase in popular cultural productions that have drawn on the relationship between Arab countries and the West, such as audiotapes, posters, and individual or sub-group websites. It has been my experience that while scholars tend to focus on the newly emerging technologies in the Diaspora, Arab Canadians, particularly Arab-Muslims, still communicate through cultural productions that are very traditional in scope. In a different vein, this study has prompted ideas about future research in the further examination of some of the key sources of Arab identity in relationship to the postcolonial approach. This examination might take the form of a more thoroughgoing investigation into the following in relation to Arabs living in the Diaspora: Arabic language, Arab media in relation to cinema and music, theatrical plays and documentaries. I would attempt to identify spaces to articulate the impact of the history of colonialism on these cultural productions, paying particular attention to the intersection of past and present in the way Arabs negotiate their identity.

Finally, in talking about media images, it seems more important to focus on the study of spectacles, since when we come to examine collective identities in all their complexity, we can see how such representations mediate social relationships, and both solicit and implicate a certain audience, thus enabling Arab scholars to address how various artistic media can forge potentialities for responsible social relationships.

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- When Europe asking Arab to save the future (Hina tonashed Oropa Alarab enqaz almostaqbal). (2003, February 16). Aljazeera Net. Retrieved 3 November 2003, from the Aljazeera Website: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveId=48490>
- Will Tunisia's summit go beyond than the words? (Hal tatjawez qemmat Tunis Alkalamat?). (2004, May 23). Aljazeera Net. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from the Aljazeera Website: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveId=77332>
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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A. Internet access within the Middle East

Internet access within the Middle East

COUNTRY	DATE	NUMBER	% POP
U.A.E.	December 2001	900,000	36.79
	December 2000	735,000	31.02
Bahrain	December 2001	140,200	21.36
	December 2000	40,000	6.31
Israel	July 2001	1,940,000	21.39
	January 2001	1,270,000	17.12
Qatar	March 2001	75,000	9.75
	March 2000	45,000	6.22
Kuwait	December 2001	200,000	9.47
	December 2000	150,000	7.6
Lebanon	December 2000	300,000	8.38
	March 2000	227,500	6.39
Oman	December 2001	120,000	4.42
	December 2000	90,000	3.55
Jordan	December 2001	212,000	3.99
	December 2000	127,300	2.55
Saudi Arabia	March 2001	570,000	2.5
	March 2000	300,000	1.4
Syria	December 2001	60,000	0.35
	December 2000	30,000	0.18
Yemen	March 2001	14,000	0.08
	March 2000	12,000	0.07
Iraq	December 2000	12,500	0.05
Palestine	March 2001	60,000	-
	October 1999	23,520	-

Source: (Madar Research Group) and (Arab Advisors Group) and (Emirates Internet & Multimedia (EIM)) and (Ajeeb.com).

## Appendix B. Arab population in Ontario, Canada 2001 Census (1-3).

African, n.i.e.	80	10	75
Arab origins	149,490	102,155	47,335
Egyptian	20,950	14,420	6,530
Iraqi	13,640	10,340	3,305
Jordanian	2,530	1,520	1,010
Kuwaiti	485	315	170
Lebanese	59,155	38,440	20,710
Libyan	755	530	225
Maghrebi origins	6,275	3,080	3,195
Algerian	1,310	855	455
Berber	650	375	270
Moroccan	2,970	1,215	1,755
Tunisian	845	350	495
Maghrebi, n.i.e.	670	285	390
Palestinian	9,060	5,770	3,295
Saudi Arabian	395	210	190
Syrian	7,730	3,360	4,365
Yemeni	1,155	555	595
Arab, n.i.e.	36,720	23,600	13,120
West Asian origins	118,810	92,305	26,505
Afghan	17,155	15,040	2,115
Armenian	18,245	11,780	6,465
Assyrian	5,940	4,025	1,920
Azerbaijani	1,020	360	665
Georgian	445	200	245
Iranian	51,775	43,095	8,680
Israeli	3,405	745	2,660
Kurd	3,325	2,560	765
Pashtun	740	445	300
Tatar	550	250	305
Turk	14,580	9,335	5,250
West Asian, n.i.e.	5,375	4,485	895
South Asian origins	592,500	486,880	105,620
Bangladeshi	8,305	7,110	1,190
Bengali	4,410	3,285	1,120
East Indian	413,415	329,455	83,955
Goan	3,090	1,315	1,770
Gujarati	2,005	730	1,275
Kashmiri	300	115	185
Pakistani	52,830	38,945	13,880
Punjabi	22,670	12,050	10,620

### Source:

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=62911&APATH=11&GID=431515&METH=1&PTYPE=55440&THEME=44&FOCUS=0&AID=0&PLACENAME=0&PROVINCE=0&SEARCH=0&GC=99&GK=NA&VID=0&FL=0&RL=5&FREE=0>

## Appendix B. Arab population in Quebec, Canada 2001 Census (2-3).

African, n.i.e.	25	0	25
Arab origins	135,750	100,180	35,570
Egyptian	15,050	8,655	6,400
Iraqi	2,275	1,490	790
Jordanian	500	355	145
Kuwaiti	135	125	10
Lebanese	48,990	35,750	13,235
Libyan	90	75	15
Maghrebi origins	39,685	28,185	11,500
Algerian	13,545	10,165	3,385
Berber	4,530	2,770	1,760
Moroccan	17,540	11,470	6,070
Tunisian	4,325	3,035	1,285
Maghrebi, n.i.e.	1,285	745	540
Palestinian	3,135	2,080	1,055
Saudi Arabian	195	155	40
Syrian	10,445	5,940	4,510
Yemeni	60	50	10
Arab, n.i.e.	23,710	17,330	6,375
West Asian origins	40,960	30,360	10,600
Afghan	3,315	3,105	210
Armenian	18,855	13,885	4,970
Assyrian	390	165	225
Azerbaijani	185	25	160
Georgian	180	105	75
Iranian	9,535	7,545	1,990
Israeli	1,465	370	1,120
Kurd	775	575	205
Pashtun	145	80	65
Tartar	150	70	75
Turk	5,675	3,455	2,225
West Asian, n.i.e.	1,190	970	220
South Asian origins	62,585	52,235	10,350
Bangladeshi	3,680	3,350	330
Bengali	1,900	1,725	175
East Indian	34,125	26,680	7,445
Goan	155	115	40
Gujarati	355	310	45
Kashmiri	55	20	35
Pakistani	7,990	6,105	1,885
Punjabi	2,180	1,585	595

### Source:

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=62911&APATH=11&GID=431515&METH=1&PTYPE=55440&THEME=44&FOCUS=0&AID=0&PLACENAME=0&PROVINCE=0&SEARCH=0&GC=99&GK=NA&VID=0&FL=0&RL=5&FREE=0>



## Appendix B. Arab population in Canada 2001 Census (3-3).

Ivorian	1,120	655	465
Kenyan	2,990	1,540	1,455
Malagasy	780	415	365
Malian	815	480	340
Mauritian	2,720	1,145	1,575
Nigerian	9,530	6,570	2,960
Oromo	1,030	710	320
Rwandan	3,060	2,430	630
Senegalese	1,675	1,045	630
Seychellois	980	605	370
Sierra Leonean	565	350	220
Somali	33,725	30,830	2,895
South African	18,925	4,980	13,945
Sudanese	6,525	4,495	2,030
Tanzanian	1,865	830	1,030
Togolese	755	480	275
Ugandan	2,125	1,115	1,005
Yoruba	1,875	1,340	535
Zairian	1,885	1,390	495
Zimbabwean	1,250	585	660
African (Black), n.i.e.	97,185	37,380	59,810
African, n.i.e.	155	10	155
Arab origins	347,955	238,600	109,355
Egyptian	41,310	26,150	15,160
Iraqi	19,245	14,105	5,140
Jordanian	3,760	2,320	1,435
Kuwaiti	855	585	275
Lebanese	143,635	93,895	49,740
Libyan	1,180	795	390
Maghrebi origins	48,185	32,175	15,990
Algerian	15,500	11,235	4,260
Berber	5,570	3,350	2,220
Moroccan	21,355	13,035	8,315
Tunisian	5,325	3,425	1,890
Maghrebi, n.i.e.	2,270	1,125	1,145
Palestinian	14,675	9,215	5,465
Saudi Arabian	1,080	660	420
Syrian	22,065	10,425	11,640
Yemeni	1,445	685	760
Arab, n.i.e.	71,705	47,800	24,100

**Source:**

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=62911&APATH=11&GID=431515&METH=1&PTYPE=55440&THEME=44&FOCUS=0&AID=0&PLACENAME=0&PROVINCE=0&SEARCH=0&GC=99&GK=NA&VID=0&FL=0&RL=5&FREE=0>

### Appendix C. An example of Arab Americans counter-image (1-2).

## Making a Difference

There are about 3 million Arab-Americans, and as a community, we've been demonstrating loyalty, inventiveness, and courage on behalf of the United States for over 100 years. Here are just a few of the famous and accomplished ones... people you may know!

### Military Service

You talk about source gas...How about American and the world's first jet and the man who won the Korean War hero, U.S. Air Force Col. James Johnson. In World War I, Army officers like Maj. Gen. Fred Sneyd taught alongside Gen. Patton, and Brig. Gen. Elmer Shivers served on Gen. Eisenhower's staff.

And in 1968, one of our Navy's ships, the destroyer escort USS *Wright*, was named in honor of an Arab American hero, Wajid J. Habib, who died in Vietnam. Several years ago, Habib was an official staff aide of Chairman Ford. He had been a member of the Arab American Student Union at the University of California at Berkeley. He died serving in Company B, 1st Battalion, 22nd Airborne Division, 1st Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam in 1968 and 1970. Habib was awarded the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, who he encountered both European and U.S. troops. Habib, Gen. William J. J. Johnson is the Director of the Air Force Program Executive Office for Fighter and Bomber programs in the division of the A-32 Systems Program Office (AFMCO). Habib was a member of the Arab American Student Union at the University of California at Berkeley. He died serving in Company B, 1st Battalion, 22nd Airborne Division, 1st Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam in 1968 and 1970. Habib was awarded the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, who he encountered both European and U.S. troops.

## Political

Some of its work in our nation's capital, the western Congressman Nick Ray (R-Nev.) (West Virginia), Ray LaHood (Illinois), Clark John (Washington), David Lee (California), Senator John E. Seamon (West Virginia) and former Congressman John Sullivan who is now the Governor of Maine.

**Two Arab Americans**  
were appointed to  
President George W.  
Bush's Cabinet. U.S.  
Secretary of Energy  
and former Senator  
Mott MacDonald and  
Danish, The first  
Arab American ever  
appointed to a Cabinet position just now.  
George Mitchell, the secretary's first name.  
Secretary of Health and Human  
Services, and now a member of the

University of Miami. Former Governor of New Hampshire John M. Sununu became the White House Chief of Staff under President George W. Bush, Sr., and later a political commentator on CNN.




**JAMES H. THOMPSON**  
 President, Anti-Separatist  
 Committee in Seattle  
 CONSPIRACY

America's largest  
 serving White House  
 Chief of Protocol  
 serving more and a  
 half years under  
 President Reagan  
 was Ambassador  
 Theron M. ...  
 both served as U.S.  
 Museum. Our ...  
 Therefore ...  
 1. A ...

[illegible]

Cuba who has served in high elected Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell since 1981 in Northern Ireland and led in the Middle East, former U.S. Secretary of State, former head of the U.S. State Department.



George H.W. Bush  
President of the United States

Arab Americans are grocers and grocers, physicians and farmers, Indy 500 champs and mixed drivers, financiers and factory workers, bankers and dentists, salesmen and senators, TV stars and TV repairmen, teachers and preachers, Holman Trophy-winning quarterbacks and neighborhood walloper barbers. Name it, and an Arab American has probably done it.

## Sports

San Diego Chargers quarterback Doug Flutie, who threw the "backyard touch-down" pass for Eastern College, won the Heisman Trophy in 1984. He previously played for several NFL teams and was a superstar in the Canadian Football League. There's also NFL player Jeff George, who quarterbacked several NFL teams, and former NFL coach Rich McIvor. Don't forget former Chicago Bears linebacker, NFL Hall of Famer Bill George,

**Another NFL player is Drew Bledsoe of the New England Patriots. The former owner of the Miami Dolphins was Dan Marino.**

Major League baseball players Joe Lohoud played with the Boston Red Sox and Sam Shalke played for the Pittsburgh Pirates. And Fred Snigh was named head coach at St. Louis.

At 2,300 cc, the 1937 Buick Wildcat won the Indy 500 in 1906, later becoming the all-time average champ among Indy car racers. The founder of the Fordland Duesse Association was the late Eddie Fike. In the 1930s, Pursey Duesse won the world featherweight championship in 1936-1937. John "Stone" Wheeler was

University of Miami. Former Governor of New Hampshire John H. Sununu became the White House Chief of Staff under Pres. George Bush, Sr., and later a political commentator on CNN.



**THOMAS M. BLANTON**  
 President, Public Management  
 Association & former mayor  
 of San Diego

The late Ambassador Philip C. Habib served as Special Presidential Envoy to the Middle East and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom Posthumously. Habib was also awarded for 27 years as a correspondent for United Press International and was dean of the White House press corps, as a *Newsweek* newspaper syndicated columnist, in a close by himself the late, well-known Robert George portrayed State Class year-round for nearly 30 years and was a Presidential Envoy at the White House through seven administrations.

[illegible]

Arab Americans are grocers and grocers, physicians and farmers, Indy 500 champs and taxicab drivers, financiers and factory workers, bankers and bankers, salesmen and senators, TV stars and TV repairmen, teachers and preachers, Heisman Trophy-winning quarterbacks and neighborhood sadist heroes. Name it, and an Arab American has probably done it.

## Sports

San Diego Chargers quarterback Doug Flutie, who threw the "tomato touchdown" pass for Boston College, won the Heisman Trophy in 1984. He previously played for several NFL teams and was a superstar in the Canadian Football League. There's also NFL player Jeff McGraw, who quarterbacked several NFL teams, and former NFL coach Nick Burch. Don's former football coach Bruce Brubaker - a NFL Hall of Famer in 1988, chosen as former Cleveland Browns All-Star.

The former owner of the Miami Dolphins was Joe Robbie.



Robbie's very much like Jim Murray, who is born to the NCAA playing off eight years in a row, winning the national championship in 1956. The late George Minkoff, St. Louis the 1960s Heisman Trophy winner, today he has 100,000 and 100,000 of the Sacramento Kings.

JOE ROBBIE, FORMER OWNER OF THE MIAMI DOLPHINS

In a later meeting, Bobby Robbed won the Indy 500 in 1986, later becoming the all-time winning champion among Indy car races. The founder of the Professional Bull Riders Association was the late Eddie Egan. In the ring, Rocky Marciano won the world heavyweight championships in 1952-1957. Eugene "The Red" Marone was

the country's most successful attempts, Joseph D. Jacob, in the famous "most real" trial of the 1940s, Georgia Wiley defended against accusations and blacklisted Americans in Los Angeles in the late 1930s. Edward Barry and Don Brodbeck find no attractions in the trial against the Pacific and the Pacific for pushing the drinking water of Marley, CA. Their efforts are secured the largest case that justice administered in U.S. history, \$321 million in damages, and was chronicled in the blackboard fire station. Arlo Roberts and Albert F. Jones.

## Entertainme

**CRITICS' FAVORITE** Canadian-born singer-songwriter Paul Anka became one of America's first pop stars. The late shaggy-chubby kid who wrote the hit "Diana" (1957) and "Diana (Twist Version)" (1958) became known as "The King of Teen." And in the world of rock, there was the late, legendary Frank Zappa. On the West Coast, Dick Dale was the "King of the Surf Guitar." Shaggy-dance-music pioneer Pauli Abdul has had two number-one albums, six number-one singles, a Grammy award, and was the first African American to be crowned Mr. Soul.

**DERWISH.** Pop star Shahbina of Colerain and Lorraine descent, has worked on the U.S. charts and is a multiple Grammy winner.


Speaking of music, three of America's landmark music shows on radio were hosted by Andy Sherman, Don Money and me — "American Top 40," "American Top 20" and "American Country Countdown." Diana Ruhs is host and executive producer of "The Diane Ruhs Show" on national public radio. [www.dianeruhs.com](http://www.dianeruhs.com)

Monty did some "Concert to Condemn AIDS" can be heard on one of 500 stations nationwide. The movie has proven pivotal the concept of a radio programming consultant: In 1986 it was the Jonico, which helped organizations the ABC, CBS, and NBC, among others. On Broadway playwright Fred Baby wrote one classic, "Tintin's Rainbow" and "Warrior Girl." Oppenheimer's Broadway show has the high note on the list. And for some, the "Dance of the Year" in 1982, the New York Times picked a 30-year Broadway veteran with the Paul Taylor Company—the Club. David Yazbek wrote the lyrics and score for "The Full Monty."

Turning to his seniors, Linda Sweeney became the first woman to head a national network, as chair of the Broadcasting Education of United Partnership Network. Twynna Hubbard, the creator of "Young Larry King," is executive producer of "Backstage Press." Olivia E. West anchors the news on NBC international. Madeleine Stern is a correspondent for NBC "Dateline" and Jim Aron, who is of Lebanese and Mexican descent, is a national correspondent for NBC News. Among TV directors, two Arab Americans have been honored over 30 episodes for the remarkable. Amal and Malala have done remarkable news like "Twenty Two" and episodes of "The Facts of Life."

"Charmie & Greg," "Nourahy Louisa Raymond," the Al-Badr's brother, "Brooklyn like the 'Sweet Charity,'" "Mama" and "The Underneath" Malaya Brown, John Bushman, who had 167 and he showed episodes of the classic "The Cosby Show" as well as "My Wife & Kids" and "Who with Beyoncé."

**Did you know...**



that the highest-rated episode in television history was the last episode, "MAYDAY." And who played the role of the Army's Commanding General for a mere 13-year run? A talented African American from Toledo, Ohio, Jacob Ford.

On NBC, "Saturday Night Live" has been on for nearly years as the greatest comedy show on television. The show's creator, Lorne Michaels, was a pioneer in the field.

The best-known interview in America was on the founder of St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital — the late, great comedian and actor Danny Thomas. His son is a television and film producer and multi-talented actor for "The Golden Girls" and other TV shows. —Tony Thomas.

**ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY**

**CLARRY'S** *Good News*,  
Biting America-  
boring inside there,  
was the first actress  
ever to play a single,  
independent young woman on the  
series. "That Girl" she currently appears  
on TV's *Friends* as Rachel's mother or  
published a book *The Right Words*  
she Made Time?

**ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY**

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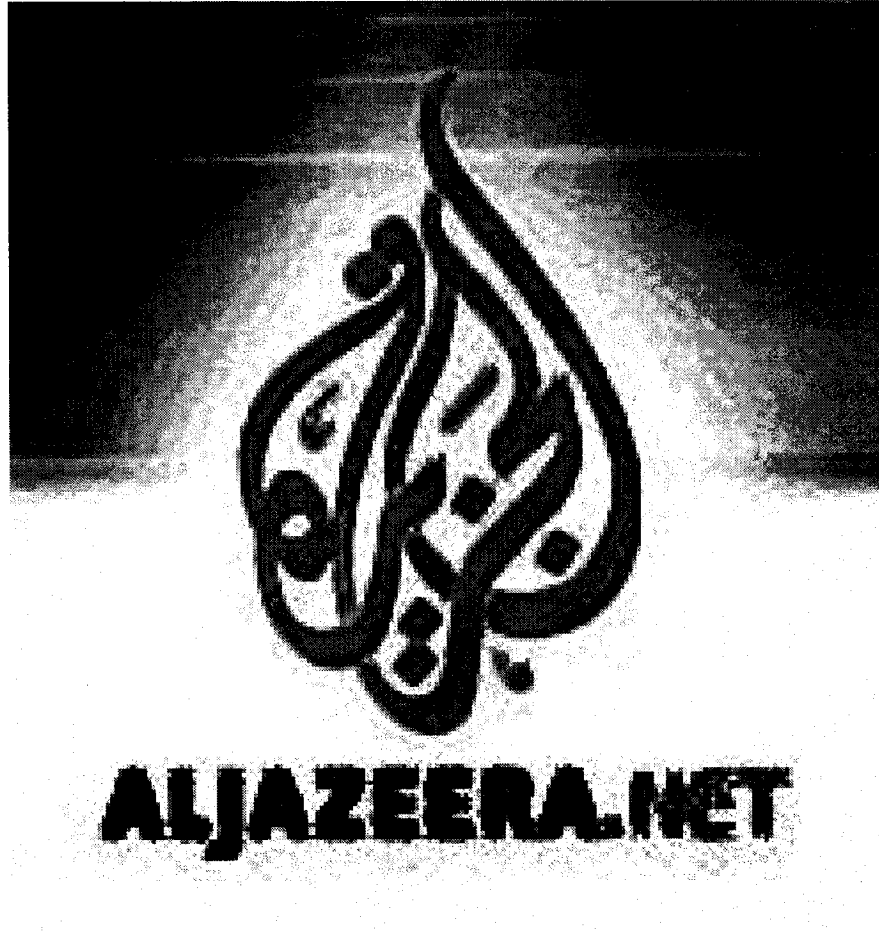


**Appendix D. Aljazeera's code of ethics and guide for professional behavior**

**قناة الجزيرة الفضائية.. الرؤية والمهمة**

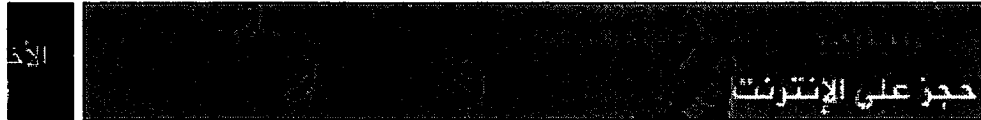
**Aljazeera Satellite Channel...Perspective and Mission**

**(Available only in Arabic language)**



**Source:**

**<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C9999251-E03C-41AA-9F21-5A27E80EC1D0.htm>**



العضوية | من نحن | إلى الجزيرة | مركز المساعدة | بيانات صحفية | خريطة إلى

مشارك جديد  
تسيت كلمة المرور!  
ابحث عن  
في الجمع

المستخدم  
كلمة المرور

الأربعاء 1425/12/30 هـ - الموافق 2005/2/9 م (آخر تحديث) الساعة 14:27 (مكة المكرمة)، 11:27 (غريننت)

الصفحة الرئيسية: من نحن

## قناة الجزيرة الفضائية.. الرؤية والمهمة



الجزيرة خدمة إعلامية عربية الانتماء عالمية التوجه شعارها الرأي والرأي الآخر وهي منبر تعددي ينشد الحقيقة ويلتزم المبادئ المهنية في إطار مؤسسي.

وإذ تسعى الجزيرة لنشر الوعي العام بالقضايا التي تهتم الجمهور فإنها تطمح إلى أن تكون جسرا بين الشعوب والثقافات يعزز حق الإنسان في المعرفة وقيم التسامح والديمقراطية واحترام الحريات وحقوق الإنسان.

- ميثاق الشرف المهني
- دليل السلوك المهني

### ميثاق الشرف المهني

كونها خدمة إعلامية عالمية التوجه فإن الجزيرة تعتمد ميثاق الشرف المهني التالي سعيا لتحقيق الرؤية والمهمة اللتين حددتهما لنفسها:

- 1- التمسك بالقيم الصحفية من صدق وجراة وإنصاف وتوازن واستقلالية ومصادقية وتنوع دون تغليب للاعتبارات التجارية أو السياسية على المهنية.
- 2- السعي للوصول إلى الحقيقة وإعلانها في تقاريرنا وبرامجنا ونشر اتنا الإخبارية بشكل لا غموض فيه ولا ارتياب في صحته أو دقته.
- 3- معاملة جمهورنا بما يستحقه من احترام والتعامل مع كل قضية أو خبر بالاهتمام المناسب لتقديم صورة واضحة واقعية ودقيقة مع مراعاة مشاعر ضحايا الجريمة والحروب والاضطهاد والكوارث وأحاسيس ذويهم والمشاهدين واحترام خصوصيات الأفراد والذوق العام.
- 4- الترحيب بالمنافسة النزيهة الصادقة دون السماح لها بالنيل من مستويات الأداء حتى لا يصبح السبق الصحفي هدفا بحد ذاته.
- 5- تقديم وجهات النظر والآراء المختلفة دون محاباة أو انحياز لأي منها.
- 6- التعامل الموضوعي مع التنوع الذي يميز المجتمعات البشرية بكل ما فيها من أعراق وثقافات ومعتقدات وما تنطوي عليه من قيم خصوصيات ذاتية لتقديم انعكاس أمين وغير منحاز عنها.

- ✖ الأخبار
- ✖ الفضائية
- ✖ المعرفة
- ✖ الأعمال

تفاعلات

خدمات الموقع

خدمات الاتصالات  
الدولية عبر الإنترنت

لمراكز الاتصالات  
مقاهي الإنترنت  
قطاعات الموزعين

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- 7- الاعتراف بالخطأ فور وقوعه والمبادرة إلى تصحيحه وتفادي تكراره.
- 8- مراعاة الشفافية في التعامل مع الأخبار ومصادرها والالتزام بالممارسات الدولية المرعية فيما يتعلق بحقوق هذه المصادر.
- 9- التمييز بين مادة الخبر والتحليل والتعليق لتجنب الوقوع في فخ الدعاية والتكهن.
- 10- الوقوف إلى جانب الزملاء في المهنة وتقديم الدعم لهم عند الضرورة وخاصة في ضوء ما يتعرض له الصحفيون أحيانا من اعتداءات أو مضايقات والتعاون مع النقابات الصحفية العربية والدولية للدفاع عن حرية الصحافة والإعلام.



### دليل السلوك المهني

#### أولا- لائحة السلوك المهني

تسمى هذه الوثيقة "لائحة السلوك المهني" وهي دليل يتضمن الضوابط والتوجيهات التي ينبغي الالتزام بها في العمل لكونها تستند إلى ميثاق الشرف الصحفي. واللائحة مرجع للاسترشاد به والاحتكام إليه في كل ما يتعلق بالعمل ذي الطبيعة الصحفية في القناة سواء في مجال نشرات الأخبار أو البرامج وكل ما له علاقة بين القناة ومصادرها وجمهورها.

#### أهداف اللائحة:

- أ- تحديد الأسس والمعايير المنهجية للسلوك والأداء المهني.
- ب- تعزيز وتكريس حرية العمل الصحفي.
- ج- ضبط التمسك بالقيم الصحفية.
- د - ضمان موضوعية ومصداقية واستقلالية القناة.
- هـ - تعزيز ثقة المشاهد بالقناة.
- و - تحديد علاقات العمل بما يكفل سلاسة سير العمل في جو من المهنية والاحترام المتبادل.

#### المصداقية والموضوعية

يعتمد نجاح العمل الإعلامي على عناصر عديدة أهمها المصداقية والموضوعية، اللتان تكفلان إيصال المادة الخبرية بصيغة يمكن الوثوق بصحتها وتصديقها. وقد ظل هذان العنصران سمة مميزة لقناة الجزيرة، وعلينا تكريس ذلك بالتقيد بالضوابط والتوجيهات التالية:

- 1- تحري دقة وصحة المعلومات الواردة من مختلف المصادر والحرص على تفادي ارتكاب أخطاء نتيجة للغفلة والإهمال.
- 2- عدم تحريف الوقائع والمعلومات والحقائق تحت أي ذريعة.
- 3- عدم إطلاق الأحكام على الأمور والموضوعات التي نتناولها، وتفادي التحليلات الوصفية غير القائمة على معطيات وحقائق وبيانات معلومة يمكن التأكد منها.
- 4- تفادي الإبهام والمفردات والمصطلحات والعبارات التي قد تؤدي إلى التشكيك في صدقية الخبر أو التقرير أو الرأي أو التحليل (مثل استخدام كلمة

مؤخرا بمعنى أخيرا" لتقادي التثبت من تاريخ حدث مهم.. وتكرار مفردات وعبارات مثل "العالمون ببواطن الأمور" و"النقاد والمراقبون" قد تبدو محاولة للالتفاف على الحقائق بنسبها الى جهات غير معلومة (لدى القناة والمتلقي).

5- ينبغي عدم التلاعب بمحتوى الصور المتعلقة بالأخبار والتقارير الإخبارية بحيث يؤدي ذلك الى تشويه الوقائع وانما يمكن محاولة تحسين الصورة فنيا لتكون أكثر وضوحا.

6- إعادة تمثيل الأحداث والوقائع أو اصطناعها مجافاة للأمانة الصحفية وفي حال اللجوء الى تمثيلها لغايات إيضاحية يجب إبلاغ المشاهد بأنها محاولة لمحاكاة الواقع.

7- عند تناول الموضوعات والأحداث بالتحليل والتعليق ينبغي الاستعانة بأهل المعرفة والدراية على اختلاف رواهم مع الأخذ في الاعتبار أن تبني موقف أو رأي دون الآخر سيُحسب على القناة.

8- يجب احترام خصوصية وتفرد مختلف ثقافات وعادات وتقاليد الشعوب كافة وعدم إعطاء أوصاف تعميمية (وصف زي معين بأنه "قومي"، أو وصف امرأة ترتدي الجينز بأنها متفرنجة، أو نعت شاب ذي وشم وأقراط بأنه جانيح..).

9- تقادي التتميط والأحكام الجاهزة الشائعة على أساس العنصر أو العرق أو الجنس أو الدين أو السن أو الموقع الجغرافي أو الإعاقة أو المركز الاجتماعي.

10- الحرص على التمييز بين الخبر من جهة، والتحليل والتعقيب من جهة أخرى، تقاديا لشبهة المحاباة والانحياز. فالخبر يستند الى عناصر ومصادر متعارف عليها، ويمكن للمشاهد تقصي صدقيتها عبر أدوات إعلامية أخرى، في حين ان التعقيب أو التحليل يعكس بالضرورة وجهات نظر قابلة للجدل، وقد تكون محل قبول أو رفض، وينبغي من ثم تقادي إدغام ودمج وخطط الرأي أو التحليل في عناصر الخبر دون تنويه بذلك.

11- ليس هناك حَجر على آراء الصحفيين العاملين في القناة، وقد يستوجب موقف أو حدث معين استطلاع رأي مراسل أو موفد في موقع ما، فيقدم قراءته الخاصة واستنتاجاته دون الإيحاء بأنها حقائق قاطعة، أو أنها تمثل رأي القناة، ويستحسن ان يكون ذلك في المشهد الذي يظهر فيه المراسل أو الموفد على الشاشة في مواجهة الكاميرا، أو يجيب فيه على الأسئلة الموجهة اليه من المذيع.

12- على الصحفي عدم إطلاق الأحكام على الأمور التي يتناولها، وتقادي التحليلات الوصفية غير القائمة على معطيات وحقائق وبيانات معلومة يمكن التحقق منها ( مثلا التحدث عن دمار شامل في بلدة ما لمجرد أن في المشهد المصور بضعة مبان مهدمة.. أو القول بأن طرفا ما في مواجهة مسلحة تلقى "ضربة قاصمة").

13- منح الفرصة لأطراف أي قصة خبرية أو قضية موضع حوار، لتوضيح مواقفهم والرد على أي اتهام موجه إليهم، أو قول أو فعل يرون أنه نسب إليهم خطأ، أو بصورة مشوهة، وإذا تعذر عند طرح المواضيع المثيرة للجدل، إدراج وجهات النظر المتعارضة في حلقة البرنامج ذاتها فينبغي السعي لمنح الفرصة لمن لم يتسن لهم الإعراب عن وجهات نظرهم، في حلقات لاحقة.

وفي حال رفضت جهة ما المشاركة لتوضيح وجهة نظرها أو موقفها من قضية بعد محاولة الاتصال بها من قبل القناة ينبغي إبلاغ المشاهد بذلك كي لا تُتهم

## القناة بعدم التوازن.

14- عند تغطية أحداث فيها مواقف وآراء متضاربة مثل الانتخابات، يجب التعامل بحرص موضوعية مع الحملات التوعوية الرامية إلى كسب التأييد، والشعارات، تفادياً لتغليب مصالح طرف أو حزب على آخر، والحرص على منح الأطراف المتنافسة فرصاً متساوية لطرح رؤاهم وبرامجهم (ولا يشمل ذلك الإعلانات مدفوعة الأجر التي يبثها طرف معين على نفقته).

15- المراسل أو الموفد الموجود في موقع الحدث ليس حجة في كافة الأمور المتعلقة بالحدث أو بمكانه أو أطرافه، وعلى المذيعين تفادي التخاطب مع المراسلين والموفدين وكأنهم مدركون لكافة أبعاد المواضيع التي يغطونها أو بشكل قد ينعكس عن انهم معنيون في الأمر لأن ذلك يوقع المراسلين والقناة في حرج، وقد يضطر المراسل/الموفد إلى الخوض في شؤون لا يلم بها، وقد يدلي بآراء شخصية وكأنها حقائق مسلم بها. ولهذا ينبغي التفاهم بين المذيع والمراسل أو الموفد حول محاور المقابلة قبل البث.

16- عدم الوقوع في فخ الإعلان التحريري غير مدفوع الأجر في سياق إعداد وبحث المادة الإعلامية (كالقول بأن دعاية معينة تعتبر الأفضل في الميدان، وبأن عقاراً معيناً هو الأنجع، أو الإشادة بكتاب أصدره أحد ضيوف البرامج، إلخ).



## التعامل مع المصادر:

1- القاعدة هي أن يُنسب كل خبر/ رواية / رأي، إلى مصدر معلوم وموثوق به، والاستثناء هو الامتناع عن نسبة الخبر / الرواية / الرأي إلى المصدر لأسباب تقتضيها خصوصيات المصدر نفسه.

2- عند رفض المصدر الكشف عن هويته ينبغي التحقق من دوافعه ومبرراته، فإذا كانت خالية من الشبهات، يجب احترام رغبته، مع التنويه إلى ما يؤكد الثقة فيه/ فيها.

3- لا تعرض مصادرك للمخاطر أو المضايقة أو الملاحقة أو المساءلة، ووفر لها الكتمان والحماية إذا كان الكشف عنها سيعود عليها بمتاعب.

4- المصادر الرسمية وغير الرسمية تتمتع بنفس القدر من الأهمية، وتأسيساً على هذا فإن المادة المذاعة لا تكتسب أهميتها من أسماء الشخصيات اللامعة التي ترد فيها، وعليه لا يجوز إغفال أو إهمال خبر أو تقرير يهم الرأي العام لمجرد أن أطرافه أو رواته من غير المشاهير.

5- لا تثق بالمصادر غير المعتمدة وغير المتعارف عليها والتي تطلب مقابلاً مادياً نظير توفير المعلومات.

## الأمانة المهنية:

1- عند إعداد العناوين والمواد الترويجية أو استخدام الصور والرسومات التوضيحية (الغرافيكس) والمقتطفات والأقوال للتنويه بمادة معينة، ينبغي تفادي التهويل أو التبسيط الذي يجافي محتوى المادة المذاعة، ويجب أن تكون المادة الترويجية خالية من الأحكام المسبقة، وبعيدة عن التحيز.

2- تفادي استخدام "المؤثرات" المتاحة في أنظمة المونتاج والتصاميم الإيضاحية (الغرافيكس) بما يعطي المشاهد انطباعاً غير واقعي ولكن يجوز اللجوء إليها لتعزيز الصورة والصوت الفعليين (مثلاً استخدام مؤثر صوتي



لتبادل إطلاق نار حدث فعلا ولكنه جاء ضعيفا عند التسجيل).

3- يجب عدم التلاعب بمحتوى الصور المتعلقة بالأخبار والتقارير الإخبارية، بما يؤدي إلى تشويه الوقائع، إلا لدواعي تحسينها فنيا لتكون أكثر وضوحا.

4- إعادة تمثيل الأحداث والوقائع واصطناعها مجافاة للأمانة الصحفية وفي حال اللجوء إليها لغايات إيضاحية يجب إبلاغ المشاهد بأنها محاولة لمحاكاة الواقع.

5- عند استخدام المواد الأرشيفية ينبغي وضع تنويه على الشاشة أو على لسان المذيع يفيد بأنها تعود إلى توار يخ سابقة.

6- لا يجوز للصحفي السطو على جهود وانتاج الآخرين ونسبتها إلى نفسه، وعليه عدم انتهاك قوانين الملكية الفكرية.

7- لا يجوز إهمال أو قتل قصة خبرية مهمة لمجرد انها قد لا تكون مقبولة لدى شريحة من المشاهدين.

8- التحلي بالشجاعة والأمانة عند تناول موضوع قد لا ينال استحسان شخصية/ شخصيات متنفذة، وإذا شعرت بأن ارتباط اسمك بمادة تحريرية ما قد يجر عليك متاعب مؤكدة، عليك إبلاغ أعلى سلطة تحريرية بذلك مشفوعا بطلب تكليف زميل آخر بمهمة إعداد تلك المادة.

9- في حال بث مادة يثبت لاحقا أنها خاطئة أو تحوي إفادات غير دقيقة، أو موثوق بها يتم اتخاذ الخطوات التالية:

- \* التأكد من عدم إعادة بث تلك المادة.
- \* الاعتراف للمشاهدين في أقرب فرصة ممكنة بحدوث الخطأ والاعتذار عنه.
- \* إعادة بث المادة بعد تصويب الخطأ (ما لم يكن الخطأ كبيرا بحيث يُفقد المادة أهميتها الخبرية).
- \* إذا كان هناك طرف متضرر من ذلك الخطأ فمن مقتضيات الإنصاف ان يمنح الفرصة ليقوم بالتصويب أو النفي مع ضمان أنه لن يلجأ إلى المهاترة أو أي أسلوب ينال من سمعة القناة.

التعامل مع شرائح ذات وضعية خاصة:

1- تعامل بحصافة وكياسة مع الذين تأثروا سلبا بالأحداث موضوع التغطية، خاصة الأطفال والبسطاء من عامة الناس (مثلا ينبغي عدم الطلب من رجل الشارع العادي ان يقول رأيه في حدث شائك ومتعدد الأبعاد، في غير سياق الاستطلاعات، ولي ذراع شخص، قاصرا كان ام راشدا، ليقول ما يريد الصحفي سماعه).

2- الحرص على عدم جرح مشاعر ضحايا أحداث مأساوية عند محاورتهم أو التقاط أو بث صورهم (مثلا الذين تعرضوا للاذلال والمهانة وانتهاك الشرف في ظروف معينة)، وتفادي مخاطبة العواطف بالتركيز على المشاهد والأقوال الانفعالية التي لا تشكل عناصر مهمة في التقرير أو الخبر.

3- كونك مكلفا بجمع المعلومات وتغطية الأحداث لا يعطيك رخصة لتعريض بعض الناس للأذى أو المخاطر، وحتى لو قدم لك البعض معلومات عن طيب خاطر وبمبادرات منهم، عليك أن تنبههم إلى محاذير الكشف عن هوياتهم، في

حال إدراكك ان ذلك قد يعرضهم لمناعب من اي نوع.

4- لعامة الناس حقوق أكبر للمحافظة على خصوصياتهم، مقارنة بالرسميين او الساعين للسلطة والنفوذ والأضواء، ومن ثم لا يجوز التعدي على تلك الخصوصيات ما لم يكن هناك مبرر مهني أخلاقي قوي لذلك، شريطة ألا يتسبب تناول تلك الخصوصيات للمعنيين بها في حرج او مضايقات قد تؤثر سلبا على مجريات حياتهم.

ولهذا لا بد من التأكد من أن من يدلون بآراء أو إفادات للقناة يدركون أنها ستذاع منسوبة إليهم.

#### الصياغة والمعالجة:

1- الرصانة وليس الإثارة هي ما يكسبك احترام جمهورك ، ومن ثم ينبغي تفادي التهويل عند وصف الأحداث أو عرض الخبر، أو محاوره أصحاب الرأي والمواقف، ويستوجب ذلك عدم الانفعال من الأحداث بما يوحي للمشاهد ان هناك تعاطفا أو انحيازاً لطرف أو آخر - حتى من خلال ما يسمى بلغة الجسد (الايماءات وتعابير الوجه، إلخ).

2- الصفات والنعوت ذات الطابع التعميمي تشكك في أحيان كثيرة في صدقية وحياد الرواية ( سلوك شائن،.. همجية،... وحشية..).

3- لغة القناة هي العربية الفصحى المبسطة أي الخالية من التعقيد والتلطح أي ما تعرف بلغة الصحافة دون ان يعني التبسيط اللجوء الى المفردات العامية ما لم يقتض السياق ذلك (مثل نسبة عبارة بالعامية الى قائلها).

4- اللغة أداة اتصال، ولا بد للصحفي ان يتقنها ليتسنى له استخدام مفرداتها وعباراتها بما يخدم الخبر/التقرير/الموضوع، لأن عدم استخدام المفردة أو العبارة الصحيحة ينال من دقة المادة الصحفية، كما ان الأخطاء والركاكة اللغوية تؤثر سلبا على سمعة القناة.

5- تفادي الحيل البلاغية المستهلكة، والعبارات المقولبة المحفوظة ( مثلا: عن بكرة أبيهم،.. المصير المشترك ... الجموع الهادرة.. خفي حنين...والحرية الحمراء باب،..)، واستخدام عبارات صحيحة وسهلة لها دلالات مباشرة لا يوصل المعنى المطلوب وينبغي تفادي المفردات والجمال التي قد تحمل أكثر من معنى، أو يفهم منها الاستخفاف أو الإساءة الى اي معتقد أو عرق أو ثقافة أو فرد.

#### ثانياً- السلوك العام

1- تفاد السلوك والمواقف والأفعال التي تؤدي إلى تضارب / تعارض المصالح الشخصية والمهنية.

2- تجنب الارتباطات والأنشطة التي قد تنال من مصداقيتك أو تقود الى التشكيك في استقامتك المهنية.

3- لا يسمح للعاملين في القناة بالقيام بأي عمل إضافي يؤثر على أدائهم ولا يسمح في جميع الأحوال بممارسة أي عمل ذي عائد مادي (بما في ذلك الكتابة الصحفية) دون إذن مسبق من مدير القناة او من ينوب عنه رسميا.

4- لا يجوز للعاملين في القناة المشاركة في تقديم اي نوع من انواع الدعاية السياسية او الحزبية، أو الإعلانات التجارية .

- 5- لا يجوز للعاملين في القناة العمل لدى أي جهة إعلامية منافسة لها بأجر أو بدون أجر.
- 6- على الصحفي مقاومة ورفض أي ضغوط لبث أي مادة تجافي أخلاقيات وشرف المهنة والإبلاغ الفوري عن تعرضه لضغوط من هذا القبيل.
- 7- يجب عدم قبول الهدايا النقدية والعينية، والعطايا غير المباشرة مثل تذاكر السفر والضيافة ( ما لم تكن مقدمة عبر إدارة القناة أو بعلمها أو في سياق مهمة رسمية)، ولا يشمل ذلك الهدايا الرمزية والتذكارية (مثل الدروع وشهادات التقدير) على أن يتم إبلاغ إدارة القناة بأمرها لتحديد ما إذا كانت ستسمح للشخص المعني بالاحتفاظ بها أو جعلها ملكاً للقناة في ضوء محتواها ودلالاتها.
- 8- لا حظر على الانتماءات الحزبية والفكرية، ولكن ينبغي التأكد من أن ذلك لا يؤثر على الاداء المهني الذي ينبغي المحافظة عليه من خلال التمسك بميثاق الشرف الصحفي للقناة، والالتزام بالضوابط والتوجيهات المدرجة في هذه اللائحة.
- 9- يمنع منعاً باتاً استغلال المكانة الوظيفية أو اسم جهة العمل للحصول على مكاسب شخصية، أو معاملة تفضيلية خاصة إذا كان في ذلك ما يسيء إلى مكانة وسمعة القناة.
- 10- يمنع منعاً باتاً استخدام المعلومات المتوفرة لدى القناة للمصلحة الشخصية أو لتحقيق مكاسب لأطراف أخرى .
- 11- التعميم الداخلية والتوجيهات المتعلقة بتسيير العمل في القناة، بما في ذلك ما يكتب في منبر الحوار الإلكتروني الداخلي (التوك باك)، أمور داخلية تهتم فقط العاملين في القناة، ومن ثم ينبغي الحفاظ على خصوصيتها.
- 12- على مقدمي البرامج الظهور بمظهر لائق خاصة في ما يتعلق بأسلوب التزين (المكياج)، والملابس التي يرتدونها بحيث لا تكون مناقية لقواعد الرزاة والاحتشام المتعارف عليها.
- 13- حرية التعبير والعمل الصحفي ليست سلاحاً في يد الصحفي يشهره في وجوه الآخرين. (ومن هذا التهديد بالبطاقة الصحفية أو الانتماء المهني لشخص طبيعى أو اعتباري للإيحاء بأن القناة ستستخدم للتشهير بذلك الشخص).
- 14- عند استضافة أي من العاملين في القناة من قبل وسيلة إعلام أخرى عليه عدم الخوض في سياسة القناة وخططها الحالية والمستقبلية وشؤونها الداخلية الأخرى وكأنه ينطق باسمها، ما لم يكن قد كلف رسمياً بذلك. ولا يجوز - في جميع الأحوال - الإدلاء بأي تصريحات أو أقوال قد تعود على مكانة القناة وسمعتها بالضرر.
- 15- لا تستخدم الأجهزة والمعدات التي توفرها القناة إلا للأغراض المخصصة لها. (ويشمل ذلك استخدام أجهزة الكمبيوتر لممارسة ألعاب التسلية واستخدام الانترنت أثناء ساعات العمل للدرشة أو تصفح مواقع ترفيهية، برينة كانت، أم موضع ريبة).
- 16- يجب الإبقاء على قنوات التواصل مع افراد الجمهور مفتوحة للاستماع إلى شكاواهم وانتقاداتهم وملاحظاتهم وآرائهم (عبر البريد الإلكتروني الخاص

بكل برنامج، أو قنوات الاتصال المتاحة الأخرى).

### ثالثاً- التعامل مع المشاركين في البرامج

1- يجب اختيار ضيوف نشرات الأخبار والبرامج الحوارية بعناية، والتأكد من أهليتهم وإلمامهم بالمواضيع المطروحة، (لأن نوعية الشخص المستضاف قد تحسب على القناة).

2- يجب تفادي تعريف الضيوف بمسميات هلامية ولا تنطبق عليهم (كـ "مفكر"، أو "مراقب"، أو "محلل سياسي"، أو تعريف شخص بأنه إعلامي، رغم أنه معروف بمهنة أخرى أو لمجرد أنه نشر أو ينشر مقالات في الصحف أو يشارك في حوارات إعلامية) فلا ضير في أن يعكس التعريف طبيعة عمل أو مهنة الضيف ( ما لم يكن الضيف - مثلاً - مشهوداً له في مجال الفكر والفلسفة والتنظير... أو يحترف التحليل السياسي ).

3- عامل ضيوفك ومشاهديك أو مستمعيك باحترام وخطبهم بلغة مهذبة حتى لو بادروك بالإساءة، وتجنب تحقيق وتسفيه آرائهم، دون حرمان نفسك من حق تصويب ما تراه خطأ في طروحاتهم.

4- خلال البرامج الحوارية والتفاعلية احرص على التوزيع العادل لفرص الكلام وتجنب الانحياز إلى أو تغليب طرف على آخر.

5- خلال البرامج التفاعلية ينبغي أن نحفظ كرامة ضيوفنا إذا تعرضوا للإساءة والتجريح من قبل من يقومون بمداخلات هاتفية ( ويعني هذا ضمناً إهمال الإساءة والتجريح التي تأتي عبر الفاكس أو البريد العادي أو الإلكتروني)، وقد يكون ذلك بقطع الاتصال عن المتدخل والاعتذار للضيف.

6- وبنفس القدر علينا حماية أفراد الجمهور الذين يقومون بمداخلات في برامجنا من التجريح والإساءة من قبل الأشخاص الذين نستضيفهم، بلفت انتباههم بأدب ووضوح إلى أن التجريح بالآخرين غير مسموح في الجزيرة.

7- أمر مقاطعة الضيف الذي يراد استنطاقه متروك لتقدير الشخص الذي يقوم بإجراء الحوار إن كان في البرامج أو نشرات الأخبار. ولكن ينبغي إدراك أن المقاطعة المتكررة قد تهدد فرصة الحصول على أجوبة كاملة ومعلومات وافية كما أنها تشتت ذهن الضيف أو تسبب له ضيقاً. ومن ثم ينبغي تفادي مقاطعة الضيوف خاصة وهم يدلون بمعلومات مهمة، وطالما أنهم لا يتهربون من السؤال أو الموضوع المطروح، وفي جميع الأحوال ينبغي أن تكون المقاطعة بكياسة وأدب.



### رابعاً- علاقات العمل

1- كل التوجيهات المعتمدة الصادرة عن مختلف الأقسام والوحدات حول كيفية تسيير العمل وإنجاز المهام تعتبر ملزمة ومكملة لهذه اللائحة.

2- العمل الإعلامي جهد جماعي وينبغي أن تسود روح الفريق بين العاملين في كل برنامج على حده، وفي كافة البرامج (بما فيها الأخبار) على وجه العموم. وفي حالة ظهور اختلافات أو وجود اعتراضات مهنية حول أسلوب تناول أو المعالجة يصعب التوفيق بينها فعندئذ ينبغي الاحتكام إلى أعلى سلطة تحريرية مناوبة.

3- المنصب أو المسمى الوظيفي ليس رخصة لتجاهل أو تسفيه آراء الآخرين

من أعضاء فريق العمل، وينبغي أن يحظى كل العاملين في القناة بالتقدير والاحترام اللازمين بغض النظر عن مستوياتهم المهنية. ينبغي على رئيس الفريق المناوب أن يتوخى تحقيق أعلى مستوى للإنتاج من خلال توزيع العمل وفقاً لأهلية المعنيين مع الأخذ في الاعتبار ما قد يتوفر لدى البعض من تخصص أو خبرة في مجال أو آخر أو معرفة بمنطقة جغرافية.

4- علاقة العمل تقوم على الاحترام المتبادل ولا مكان فيها للاعتبارات الشخصية، ومن ثم فإنه لا يسمح لمهارات أو مشاجرات بين الزملاء داخل مباني القناة بغض النظر عما قد يكون مسبباً لها.

5- يجب احترام التراتبية الوظيفية، وعدم تخطي المسؤول المباشر، إذا كان هناك ما يستوجب التشاور أو الحصول على توجيهات أو اتخاذ قرار في أمر مهني.

6- لا يجوز بث أو إدخال أي مادة مهما كانت قصيرة في نشرة أخبار أو برنامج دون الحصول على ضوء أخضر من المسؤول المختص.

#### خامساً- العنف والمحظورات الأخلاقية

1- ينبغي تجنب بث كل ما يحض على العنف ويروج له وعدم بث صور مشاهد العنف ما لم تكن عنصراً مهماً من عناصر المادة المراد بثها (المراد بالعنف هنا كل فعل لا مبرر أو مسوغ له يهدف إلى إلحاق الأذى النفسي أو الجسدي بكاثن حي - خاصة الأديين)، وعند حجب مشاهد العنف مراعاة لمشاعر المشاهدين، ينبغي إعلان ذلك.

2- يجب توخي الحذر الشديد عند التطرق لمواضيع تتضمن مشاهد عنف ضد النساء والأطفال أو ذات طابع عرقي أو ديني أو طائفي أو تستهدف ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة وكبار السن.

3- إذا اقتضت ضرورات مهنية بث مشاهد عنف في غير سياق الحروب التقليدية فعلى مقدمي نشرات الأخبار والبرامج تنبيه المشاهدين مقدماً إلى أن هناك مشاهد قد يجدونها غير مستساغة.

4- عند تناول مواضيع تتعلق بالجنس والعلاقة بين الرجل والمرأة يجب تفادي اللغة والصور السافرة التي تخدش الحياء العام وعدم عرض مشاهد العري - إذا اقتضى السياق ذلك- إلا بعد المعالجة الالكترونية لستر العورات.

5- توخي أقصى درجات الحذر لتفادي تمجيد ممارسات تعتبر ضارة بصورة عامة مثل (التدخين وتعاطي المخدرات والمسكرات).

#### سادساً- ضوابط وتوجيهات عامة

1- يتوقع من العاملين في إعداد وتقديم نشرات الأخبار والبرامج مواكبة الأحداث والمستجدات في الساحات السياسية والاقتصادية والرياضية والفنية والعلمية والتعليمية والترويجية توسيعاً للمدارك وإثراء للمعلومات العامة.

2- يجوز للصحفي، في ظروف خاصة (أحداث طارئة وشديدة الأهمية مثلاً) إعداد المادة المناطة به دون الرجوع إلى المنتج أو كبير المحررين إذا كان واثقاً من صحة ودقة المعلومات المتوفرة لديه، ولا يعني هذا أن تلك المادة تجد طريقها للنشر دون التمهيد المتعارف عليه من خلال المنتج أو كبير المحررين المناوب، والمدقق اللغوي.

- 3- كبار المحررين والمنتجين مسؤولون عن البث في مضمون التحليلات والتعليقات التي يتم اعدادها داخليا من حيث حياديتها وموضوعيتها وصحة ودقة المعلومات وملاءمة الصور الواردة فيها أو المصاحبة لها.
- 4- عند استدراك خطأ ما وتصويبه أثناء أو بعد بثه (في حالة الإعادة) ينبغي عدم طمس الخطأ أو إخفاؤه ليتسنى رصده من باب النقد الهادف الى التقويم.
- 5- يتم إبلاغ رئيس التحرير أو من ينوب عنه شفاهة ثم كتابة بحدوث خطأ ما يتطلب تداركه ومعالجته فنيا أو تحريريا.
- 6- يناط بمدير القناة أو من ينوبه مهمة البث في خرق هذه الضوابط / اللائحة على ان يكون ذلك خلال 3 أيام من تاريخ التبليغ.
- 7- يعتبر الخروج على الضوابط والتوجيهات المتضمنة في هذه اللائحة خرقا لشروط عقد الخدمة وسترتب عليه عقوبات متدرجة (سيتم الإعلان عنها لاحقا).

#### سابعا- الإعلانات

- 1- لا يجوز قبول الإعلانات التجارية التي تخدش الحياء العام أو تسيء إلى المعتقدات الدينية أو تروج للعنف والرهبة والمحرمات المتعارف عليها دوليا (السلاح ، الدعارة، الدجل، الخرافات ، العقاقير الطبية غير المسجلة لدى جهة/ جهات معترف بها عالميا... إلخ).
- 2- لا يجوز بث الاعلانات ذات الطابع السياسي التحريضي (تأليب طرف على آخر أو حض على العنف)، أو تلك المتعلقة بنزاع قانوني بين أي عدد من الأطراف (منتج أمر ملكيته متنازع عليه).
- 3- ينبغي الإشارة بوضوح على الشاشة الى ان الإعلانات السياسية مدفوعة الأجر، منعا للالتباس لدى المشاهدين الذين من دون ذلك قد يحسبون المادة الإعلانية صادرة عن القناة.
- 4- لا يجوز بث اعلان دون موافقة الجهة المعلنة، فبعض الاعلانات قد تكون - مثلا - ذات طابع كيدي، وقد تجعل القناة طرفا في مساهلة قانونية.
- 5- لا يسمح بالإعلانات التي تقلل صراحة من قيمة أو جدوى منتجات أو خدمات منافسة محددة الاسم.

#### ثامنا- المنافسة

- 1- لا يجوز ان يكون الحماس الشديد للتفوق على المنافسين وتسجيل سبق الصحفي ذريعة لتغليب الإثارة على الموضوعية والالتفاف على ميثاق الشرف الصحفي.
- 2- المنافسة لا تعني أبدا الحط من قدر الجهات الإعلامية الأخرى بالإساءة المباشرة إليها أو التشكيك صراحة في صدقيتها، فإثبات التفوق ينعكس في كسب أكبر شريحة ممكنة من الجمهور، وعلينا إدراك أننا لسنا ننافس القنوات التلفزيونية الترفيهية مهما لقيت برامجها من رواج، فنحن أولا وأخيرا قناة أخبارية ولا يجوز لنا ان نخلط بين الخدمة الاخبارية والترفيهية فالخط الفاصل بينهما يكون في غاية الدقة أحيانا.

3- سلامة العاملين في القناة لها اولوية على السبق الصحفي، ومن ثم ينبغي على من يغطون الأحداث توخي الحذر الشديد وعدم تعريض حياتهم للخطر خاصة في ظروف الحرب والاضطرابات العنيفة وأعمال الشغب، ولو وقعت خلال المنافسات الرياضية.

4- الرغبة في تسجيل سبق ليست مبررا لقطع البرامج لبث خبر او حدث باعتباره عاجلا أو طارئا. ويترك لأعلى سلطة تحريرية مناوبة حق البث في ما إذا كان هناك سبب وجيه يستدعي قطع برنامج ما.

5- كسب الاحترام والحفاظ على المصداقية له اولوية قبل كسب الشعبية والرواج.



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العضوية | من نحن | إلى الجزيرة | مركز المساعدة | بيانات صحفية | خريطة الموقع

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