



Media in International Public Opinion Warfare on Geopolitical Crises: a Case Study of Al Jazeera's Coverage of the 2017 Gulf Crisis

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Abstract. "Today the press has really become a national estate; more powerful than any other estate, even more so than the aristocracy." —Henry Reeve in <Edinburg Review>[1] This paper examines the impact of media and international opinion warfare on geopolitical crises, with a particular focus on the role of Al Jazeera in reporting the 2017 Gulf Crisis. The study investigates how Al Jazeera's coverage influenced international perceptions and the dynamics of the crisis, highlighting the network's strategic use of media to shape narratives and sway public opinion. By analyzing the content, tone, and framing of Al Jazeera's reporting, probing into its practical effect on shaping international opinions, this paper elucidates the ways in which media can act as a catalyst in geopolitical conflicts, with the interdisciplinary methodology of liberal arts and use of its many fields. The findings underscore the significance of media in constructing and contesting geopolitical narratives, thereby affecting diplomatic relations and crisis resolution processes. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between media influence and geopolitical strategy in contemporary international relations, showcasing how the influential media acting on the variation and final settlement of the geopolitical crisis.

Keywords: Gulf Crisis 2017, Al Jazeera, Qatar, Middle East, Public Crisis Spread

1 Introduction

The media's power in interfering with the geopolitical crisis is enlarged in the modern era when network technologies are flourishing, while global media can increase mutual dialogue and understanding throughout the world, as they can also lead to global conflict and misunderstanding on occasion. These terms refer to these networks' abilities to influence public opinion and foreign policy through the transmission and spread of powerful and leading reporting and information. For news watchers, policymakers, and

journalists, these two views create a broader comprehension of some events, especially if one has the luxury of considering both networks' coverage. But these news channels also possess the potential to escalate the conflict, whether by the perpetration of a written or verbal political spat, generating public opinion warfare, or even ginning up support for a hot war.[2] To illustrate this paradoxical situation, we'd like to give a specific explanation and shed light on the complex factors of the press that act on the crisis in our increasingly globalized century.

Questions:

How Al Jazeera acting on the Gulf Crisis 2017?

The effect of media in the geopolitical crisis?

[Research Background and Significance] Since its first launching on 1st Nov. 1996, Al Jazeera was the first independent news channel and media in the Arab world, before that, the media in the Arab world was characterized by state-controlled narratives that denied audiences the right to know and the right to be heard.[3] In April, when the BBC broadcasted a story on human rights in Saudi Arabia that showed footage of the beheading of a criminal, the Saudi government compelled the BBC to terminate its existence and impact on the country. The Al Jazeera was founded at that time so that the prominent Arabia journalist with modern and sterling news abilities who used to work for BBC, was normally taken over by it and became the basis of the start. In the following regional hot spot incident, Al Jazeera's existence appeared at the center of the conflict, its effect has been especially acknowledged after September 11, 2001, which the exclusive video of Bin Laden. At present it has become the second-largest number of bureaus of any media company in the world after the BBC with currently 70 bureaus around the world that are shared between the network's channels and operations, It also got a title, which is the CNN of Middle East [4] During the Gulf Crisis 2017, the Saudi-led Coalition demand to shut down the Al Jazeera, meanwhile launched full-scale blockade in the land, sea and territorial sky, in the asymmetric and isolated condition, it makes the Al Jazeera become a new center of the crisis, it forced policymakers of influential great powers and regional related countries have to shift the related position towards the crisis due to the Al Jazeera's impact of their public opinion, the OHCHR emphasized the channels for spreading of Al Jazeera are legitimate, and the fact of millions of viewers of Al Jazeera. The Journalist Associations in Europe also made a campaign to support Al Jazeera and condemned the demand of the Saudi-led Coalition. The existence of Al Jazeera's activities made the public opinions of the international community inclined to Qatar and contributed to the final settlement of the crisis, Qatar refused to agree to any of the Saudi-led coalition's demands, and even though there are some comments of the failure for Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt. As Qatar generated tighter ties with Iran and Turkey and became economically and militarily stronger as well as more influential and more autonomous.[5]

The way that global news networks are behaving has facilitated the transformation of social, economic, cultural, and political power dynamics.[6] The application of the viewpoint in news can dramatically impact the trend of an incident, it creates a platform for all the parties in the incident to spread their viewpoints, at the same time escalating the risk of using the media to engage in information warfare has increased, and all par-

ties are trying to change the public and the international community by spreading information that is beneficial to them.[7] Therefore, it makes the meaning and the abilities of the media more significant than before, through the modification of news stances and the utilization of the new technology and the public platform for expressing the media's effect could be utilized as a bridge for the settlement of crisis to stabilize the regional tensions and to promote international dialogue and collaboration thus to maintain the peace, security and regional prosperity of development.[8] The study showcases a possible substitute platform for the settlement of the geopolitical crisis.

2 The Traditional Profile Towards the Fourth Power and the Effect of Press

In the modern context, the fourth power always represents the press and news media both in the explicit ability of advocacy and the implicit capacity of the framework of political issues. It is also usually used to emphasize the independence and the impact of the press, while the "fourth branch" suggests that the press is not independent of the government in contrast. In the modern society[9], due to technological development, it generated abundant independent media that is not controlled by the central authority, which changed the framework of social power, it gave the opportunity for expressing the opinion to the public, which attenuated the monopolization of the government, According to Philip Seib, the scholar who invented the definition of 'Al Jazeera Effect'"The media' are no longer just the media. They have a larger popular base than ever before and, as a result, have an unprecedented impact on international politics. The media can be tools of conflict and instruments of peace; they can make traditional borders irrelevant and unify peoples scattered across the globe. [10] The Al Jazeera Effect is a represented example of this phenomenon —is reshaping the world. o that the governments are always eager to control information because of its potential impact on the civil society. However, governments have increasingly lost the domination of information due to the development of the technology of new media and press, as they continually acknowledge.

To some extent throughout the world, the connectivity of new media is superseding the traditional political connections that have brought identity and structure to global politics. This rewiring of the world's neural system is proceeding at remarkable speed, and its reach keeps extending farther. It changes the way nations and citizens interact with each other and it gives the individual a chance at a new kind of autonomy, at least more autonomous spaces, because it makes the public be more accessible to the information.

In the globalized era, the media's activities increasingly influence global politics and society as political dynamics and media structures change. Outside of the government-controlled media and propaganda authorities, people around the world are increasingly open about what they know about society and government. What has been seen on the news by the public affects politics and culture on a global scale. Meanwhile, it set a precedent for the way that news networks could influence and even manipulate the

trends of politics and society in modern communications. Therefore, the media's influence on the world could be integrated as a part of the overall study of international politics and economics. The growth of news channels like Al Jazeera constitutes a revolution in thinking, discussion, and public opinion about world history and current affairs. However, every network must cater to an audience to some degree for continuing existing and extending. The media platform provides a different tone depending on the national or international market to which a media broadcasts, as the people prefer to choose news sources that present a worldview that mirrors their own. The media networks often gratify audiences' preconceived opinions and preferences.

In addition, the new media has enhanced the identity of previously vulnerable groups and given them a greater voice than before, even if the new media is not beyond being abused. However, the existence of new media has weakened the monopoly of some countries on information to a large extent, which has greatly promoted the democratization movement and political system reform on a global scale. In addition, the public opinion effect produced by the news media can affect the foreign policy formulation of the relevant countries, and confrontation in the field of global communication has become an indispensable part of international relations. Therefore, as the enlargement of the press's influences continued, the novel type of conflict —public opinion warfare.

3 Methodology

This thesis focuses on the news coverage of the 2017 Qatar diplomatic crisis, the main focus of the study is on Al Jazeera, with a comparative analysis of other international mainstream media such as the BBC and Al Arabiya. It aims to examine the influence of media on the evolution and resolution of the Qatar diplomatic crisis. In June 2017, Saudi Arabia demanded the closure of Qatar's Al Jazeera on the grounds of Qatar's alleged support for terrorism, close relations with Iran, incitement of violence by Al Jazeera, and defense of terrorist organizations. This research, centered on the year 2017, identifies “Al Jazeera” and “Qatar Diplomatic Crisis” as keywords for investigation. It involves searching for related reports on Al Jazeera's English website and the official website of Saudi Arabia's satellite TV. The research compiles reports related to the 2017 Qatar diplomatic crisis.

4 The Role of Media in Shaping International Public Opinion: the Impact of Al Jazeera in the Geopolitical Landscape

4.1 The Traditional Profile Towards the Fourth Power and the Effect of Press

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In the globalized era, the media's activities increasingly influence global politics and society as political dynamics and media structures change. Outside of the government-controlled media and propaganda authorities, people around the world are increasingly open about what they know about society and government. What has been seen on the news by the public affects politics and culture on a global scale. Meanwhile, it set a precedent for the way that news networks could influence and even manipulate the trends of politics and society in modern communications. Therefore, the media's influence on the world could be integrated as a part of the overall study of international politics and economics. The growth of news channels like Al Jazeera constitutes a revolution in thinking, discussion, and public opinion about world history and current affairs. However, every network must cater to an audience to some degree for continuing existing and extending. The media platform provides a different tone depending on the national or international market to which a media broadcasts, as the people prefer to choose news sources that present a worldview that mirrors their own. The media networks often gratify audiences' preconceived opinions and preferences.

4.2 The Influence of Al Jazeera Television in Reshaping Media Frameworks and Power Dynamics in Middle East

Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based satellite news network, has become one of the most influential media organizations in the world since its inception in 1996. Al Jazeera is a symbol of this new, media-centric world. It affects global politics and culture, particularly by enhancing the Islamic world's clout. As it delivers its programming in Arabic and English (and perhaps soon in additional languages), and as its message meshes with content from Islamic websites, blogs and other online offerings, Al Jazeera helps foster unprecedented cohesion in the worldwide Muslim community[1]

Al Jazeera's ascent to prominence began in 1996 when the government of Qatar launched the Arabic-language news channel with the goal of providing an independent alternative to the state-controlled media prevalent in the Middle East. In its early years, Al Jazeera differentiated itself by providing a platform for open debates, coverage of controversial issues, and critical reports on authoritarian governments in the region. The network's editorial approach attracted both praise for its boldness and criticism from Arab governments, many of which viewed Al Jazeera's reporting as a challenge to their authority.

Since its establishment in Doha by Hamad in November 1996, Al Jazeera has significantly impacted the media landscape. By 1999, the satellite news channel achieved 24-hour global news coverage. During the events of September 11, 2001, Al Jazeera and CNN concurrently reported the entire incident. In 2005, Al Jazeera exclusively broadcast a video tape of Osama bin Laden. The channel adheres to principles of objectivity and balanced professionalism, earning the title "CNN of the Middle East." [9] The emergence of Al Jazeera shifted the political information landscape in the Arab world, with Qatar gradually replacing Egypt as the primary source of Middle Eastern information. Qatar also overtook Saudi Arabia as the region's main media sponsor. [10] The motto "Opinion and the Other Opinion" hangs beneath Al Jazeera's logo at its headquarters, symbolizing the channel's commitment to presenting diverse viewpoints

and encouraging viewers to form their own opinions. [11] In 2014, the World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index (NRI), which assesses the level of information and communication technologies in countries, ranked Qatar first among Middle Eastern nations and 23rd globally. [12]

5 Different Opinion Towards the Al Jazeera News Stance and Related Incidents

5.1 Al Jazeera's Media Stance and its Influence

Al Jazeera found itself embroiled in the Qatar diplomatic crisis when Saudi Arabia and its allies presented Qatar with a list of 13 demands for restoring diplomatic relations, prominently including the shutdown of Al Jazeera and all its affiliates. This marked another instance where media played a central role in international politics following the “Prism Gate” incident. As a result, Al Jazeera faced a blockade by several Middle Eastern countries, hindering its viewership in the Arab region.

5.2 Analysis of Al Jazeera's Coverage on the 2017 Qatar Diplomatic Crisis

Report One: “Qatar blockade: Five things to know about the Gulf crisis”

The title of the first report is “Qatar blockade: Five things to know about the Gulf crisis”. This report focuses on the Qatar diplomatic crisis, introducing the origins of the Gulf crisis and Qatar's response measures.

Table 1. Al Jazeera's Coverage on the 2017 Qatar Diplomatic Crisis

Media	Title & Lead	Information source	Thematic trend	Keynote
Al Jazeera	Subject: Qatar Tendency: Neutral	—	subtopic: How it started	Neutral tone: Have a comprehensive statement of the position and behavior of the crisis incident, stand in the third party perspective, impartial, calm and objective public
		The statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt	subtopic: Diplomatic collapse	
		Saudi foreign minister	subtopic: The roots of the conflict	
		—	subtopic: Blockading countries' demands	
		International Monetary Fund	subtopic: Financial impact	

The title “Qatar blockade: Five things to know about the Gulf crisis” suggests an exploration and analysis of the formation of the Qatar diplomatic crisis. The objectivity of the title does not immediately reveal the media's factual attitude towards the event. The lead paragraph provides a comprehensive introduction to the actions and statements of all parties involved, detailing accusations of terrorism support by Qatar from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar's denial of these accusations.

Regarding sources, the report features three distinct segments of opinions and sources. These include statements from the conflicting parties (diplomatic statements from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt, and comments from the Saudi Foreign Minister) and the International Monetary Fund, as shown in Table 1. The report discusses the stances held by various countries during the Qatar diplomatic crisis and analyzes the causes and response measures to Qatar's Gulf crisis. In this context, it is crucial to include perspectives and attitudes from various factions and aspects of the conflict. Therefore, the setup of information sources in this report is objective and comprehensive, encompassing official statements from different countries and comments from the International Monetary Fund.

From the perspective of thematic dimensions, the report is structured around five subheadings, each representing a different aspect. The report unfolds in chronological order of events, offering a comprehensive coverage by summarizing information from various facets. It begins with an explanation of how the Qatar Peninsula crisis started, detailing the multiple perspectives of Qatar and countries like Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, the report addresses the diplomatic breakdown, roots of the conflict, and demands of the blockading countries. It elaborates on the joint statements from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar's responses, and the severance strategies adopted by Saudi Arabia and others towards Qatar. Finally, the report analyzes the financial impact of the severance, indicating an increase in Qatar's GDP from the perspective of data from international authoritative organizations.

5.3 Analysis of Saudi Arabian Satellite TV's Opposition to Al Jazeera's Coverage of the 2017 Qatar Diplomatic Crisis

The title "Saudi Information Minister: Qatar's game of collusion revealed to the world" directly quotes the Saudi Information Minister, filled with subjective evaluations of the Qatar diplomatic crisis. It unilaterally describes Qatar's refusal of the demands from Saudi Arabia and other countries without considering multiple perspectives for a comprehensive evaluation.

Table 2. Saudi Arabian Satellite TV's Opposition to Al Jazeera's Coverage of the 2017 Qatar Diplomatic Crisis

Media	Title & Lead	Information source	Thematic trend	Keynote
Alarabiya News	Subject: UAE Ten- dency: Bias	UAE's Minister	Subtopic: Comments on Qatar by the UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs	The tone of bias: The report on Qatar is biased, starting from Saudi Arabia's own remarks and its own position, aiming at safeguarding its own authority.
		Saudi ministers	Subtopic: Comments on Saudi ministers	

As shown in Table 2, all sources originate from within Saudi Arabia, exhibiting a subjective tint and emphasizing allegations of Qatar supporting terrorism. The theme solely relies on excerpts from the statements made by the Saudi Arabian Minister of Information and Culture and another Saudi minister. The language is predominantly

subjective, employing terms such as “most dangerous” and “threat” to accuse Qatar, thus carrying a strong emotional tone.

5.4 The Variation of the Situation During the Gulf Crisis Around the Media effect

In the long period since the founding of the Al Jazeera in 1996, various accusations and attacks toward the news stance of it exist. According to the journalist Robert Kaplan, *'Al Jazeera can come across as a biased news source, but so can other networks. it distinguishes between developed and developing world broadcasting'* [13] Al Jazeera's Islamist skew grew stronger and generated a negative effect on Qatar's political relations with its neighboring states of Saudi Arabia and Egypt.[14] For example, during the Arabic Spring in 2011, the local people found it difficult to see the massive, spontaneous protests against Syrian rule, due to the tight censorship in Arab countries controlling television broadcasts, nevertheless, these media-manipulated images of the protests are spread by Al Jazeera, which inspired thousands of people to unite for the pro-democratic struggle. During the Gulf Crisis 2017, On 22 June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, and Bahrain issued Qatar a list of 13 demands through Kuwaiti mediation, requiring Qatar to agree within 10 days. [15] After the report of the list of demand was spread by global media, it soon caused a range of responses around the world to express support for Al Jazeera. The Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders, the New York Times editorial board, and The Guardian have all condemned the efforts to pressure Qatar into shutting down Al Jazeera.[16] The groups voiced their "strong disappointment" over what they described as an "attack on one of the key human rights" and requested "that freedom of expression and freedom of the press" is respected. In addition, abundant journalist associations emphasized that the Middle East and the rest of the world, need media companies to report news and current events, and give the public information and background analysis on what, when, how, and why they occur. What's more, The United Nations human rights chief expressed strong concern about international demands that Qatar close down the Al Jazeera network and other affiliated media outlets, it defined these demands as extraordinary, unprecedented, and clearly unreasonable. The OHCHR affirmed that the dispute between the Saudi-led coalition and Qatar has been taken to a new level due to the inclusion of some fundamental rights and freedoms in the list of demands. Besides the U.N.-related institution also reiterated that all five governments should solve the ongoing matter in a calm, reasonable, and lawful manner that does not impact their human rights, or those of other countries. [17]Al Jazeera has described the Saudi-led campaign as "nothing but an attempt to silence the freedom of expression in the region and to suppress people's right to information and the right to be heard". The ban on media outlets has become an outrageous attempt to censor the public debate. In a conflicted world, freedom of the press is more important than ever."

After suffering from the blockade throughout the sea, land, and territorial sky. Qatar's counterattack against the Saudi-led coalition at the field of public opinion and diplomatic level during the crisis also began with Al Jazeera, although the latter did not focus its coverage on the comments of Saudi Arabia and other countries of the GCC

Coalition on the statement of severing diplomatic relations but focused on the United States, Russia, Turkey, and Iran, and major powers outside the region that are not directly involved in the crisis but have an influence on the situation in the Middle East, highlighted the attitude of major powers to urge dialogue rather than further escalation to resolve the crisis. Through the measures above, Al Jazeera and the Qatar state-affiliated news institutions created an atmosphere and public opinions that eagerness for a final calm settlement.

The changes of the attitude of Trump from the endorsement of Saudi Arabia to the urging for stability, accorded with consistent foreign positions towards the Middle East affairs of the United States. Al Jazeera seized on Trump's statement that he hoped to ease the crisis and publicized it. What's more, Al Jazeera immediately promulgated the news that U.S. President Donald Trump's telephone talk with Qatar's ruler, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, from which it expressed readiness to find a solution to the diplomatic crisis in the Gulf after the dialogue. So that to create an atmosphere the US attitude inclined to the peaceful settlement and the maintenance of regional stability, which generated a positive effect on the international public opinions of Qatar. In addition, despite the siege from Arab countries, the Qatari royal family still maintained a relatively restrained attitude, saying that Qatar would not take the initiative to escalate the crisis, even if Qatar believes that the actions of Saudi Arabia and other countries are "baseless".

After a range of responses in the field of international public opinions of Qatar, a favorable international situation for Qatar is formulated. Sympathy and support for Qatar and condemnation of the Saudi-led alliance were generated in social media and online platforms across the Arab world which paved the way for the final settlement of the Crisis.

6 Conclusion

The thesis basically analyzes Al Jazeera's effect in the Gulf Crisis 2017 including how it became the most influential media in the Middle East and even the whole Arabic world and how it affected global public opinion by spreading the information and the leading voices, and expound how it responds to and impacts on the crisis based on the variation. With the utilization of the press in the diplomatic incident and geopolitical issues, the international incident becomes more vulnerable to the media's influences, thus the thesis showcased how the media impact the related policy formulation and the trend of international relations. The Qatar Diplomatic Crisis is a perfect example to express how significant act the media can generate, it provides us the thinking about the specific impact of the media and public opinions in the settlement of the geopolitical crisis.

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