Al Jazeera's Expansion: News Media Moments and Growth in Australia

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ABSTRACT

Al Jazeera was launched in 1996 by the government of Qatar as a small terrestrial news channel. In 2016 it is a global media company broadcasting news, sport and entertainment around the world in multiple languages. Devised as an outward-looking news organisation by the small nation's then new emir, Al Jazeera was, and is, a key part of a larger soft diplomatic and brand-building project — through Al Jazeera, Qatar projects a liberal face to the world and exerts influence in regional and global affairs. Expansion is central to Al Jazeera's mission as its soft diplomatic goals are only achieved through its audience being put to work on behalf of the state benefactor, much as a commercial broadcaster's profit is achieved through its audience being put to work on behalf of advertisers. This thesis focuses on Al Jazeera English's non-conventional expansion into the Australian market, helped along as it was by the channel's turning point coverage of the 2011 Egyptian protests. This so-called "moment" attracted critical and popular acclaim for the network, especially in markets where there was still widespread suspicion about the Arab network, and it coincided with Al Jazeera's signing of reciprocal broadcast agreements with the Australian public broadcasters. Through these deals, Al Jazeera has experienced the most success with building a broadcast audience in Australia. After unpacking Al Jazeera English's Egyptian Revolution "moment", and problematising the concept, this thesis seeks to formulate a theoretical framework for a news media turning point. It then examines in detail Al Jazeera's presence in Australia and relationship with the public broadcasters.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP OF THESIS

Except where clearly acknowledged in footnotes, quotations and the bibliography, I certify that I am the sole author of the thesis submitted today entitled –

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I further certify that to the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The material in the thesis has not been the basis of an award of any other degree or diploma except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The thesis complies with University requirements for a thesis as set out in the *Examination of Higher Degree by Research Theses Policy*. Refer to: http://www.canberra.edu.au/current-students/current-research-students/hdr-policy-and-procedures

Candidate's Signature — 24 / 2 / 2017 Date

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PREFACE

Working on a project of this size and diversity over several years has been an incredible learning experience, and if I were to start it again today, I would surely do many things very differently. Throughout this process I've learned a lot about the subject matter of this thesis, but as much again about how to research, learn and write.

Central to this thesis in many ways is my experience as a (freelance) employee of Al Jazeera English for nine months in 2010-2011. Working for Al Jazeera piqued my interest in the media organisation and allowed me an insight into the channel and network not available to many researchers. Observing the workplace, its employees, editorial practices and conflicts, and helping to produce countless hours of news bulletins, gave me a foundation upon which all of my subsequent research rests.

While I had produced a reasonable amount of researched work before starting on this thesis, *18 Days* was my first attempt at a research and writing project of such scale. The daunting nature of the task was exacerbated by the time sensitivity of the topic and my desire to get the book into the market as soon as possible after the events in question. I think *18 Days* would look quite different if I could re-write it and apply everything I've since learned about research and synthesis, and having now had time to reflect on how I should have better structured the narrative and in-depth analysis sections. The book contains, I think, a lot of very useful information for readers wishing to know more about AJE and its moment, but it could have been presented in a more creative, succinct and engaging way. Nevertheless, it represents a useful unpacking of the moment which, when combined with the other elements of this thesis, hopefully contributes to a deeper understanding of Al Jazeera. If rewriting today, I would take what in the book are mere seeds of ideas and develop them more fully in line with my current, more developed thinking. For example, ideas like the "moment" which I used uncritically and which I have problematised in this thesis; the idea of a broadcast media organisation transitioning to a post-broadcast world; and the political

economy of Al Jazeera as a media organisation as seen in the context of the broader industry.

In terms of the overall thesis, an unavoidable consequence of pursuing a PhD by publication is that each published element must stand alone as a research product while also acting as one component of a larger product. I was cognisant of the need to avoid doubling-up on content, especially with regards to the literature reviews in the journal articles, but some duplication was unavoidable. Redrafts of the journal articles in response to reviewer comments as a condition of publication presented some challenging decisions about how to maintain focus across the thesis as a whole while satisfying the needs of two separate journal editors. I hope that this finished thesis successfully ties together all of the separate-but-related strands into a coherent argument.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Al Jazeera Media Network ('AJMN', or simply 'Al Jazeera') is a global media organisation serving news, sport and entertainment programming to audiences around the world. Al Jazeera has grown in 20 years from a small Arabic-language news channel broadcasting to a limited terrestrial audience, into the first Arab media company to experience global success at such scale.

Al Jazeera is bankrolled in large part by the government of Qatar and was launched by the country's then-Emir to function as a foreign policy tool. Despite these ties, AJMN's news operations enjoy significant, although not total, editorial freedom and are not merely state broadcasters. Indeed, the original Arabic-language Al Jazeera News Channel (called 'Al Jazeera', but referred to in this thesis as 'Al Jazeera Arabic' or 'AJA' for clarity) was the first media organisation of its kind in the region which eschewed the entrenched Arab news broadcasting model and ignored many of the "red lines"[1] endemic in such states.

The fledgling media organisation experienced explosive growth in its viewership and popularity due to several key factors. First, Al Jazeera Arabic brought Arab viewers a style of news and journalism they'd never seen before, let alone in Arabic. Second, while it had some good fortune (for example, the timely availability of high-strength satellite transponders), it most importantly produced news content that people actually wanted to watch. Finally, the Qatari Government's deep pockets full of hydrocarbon rent receipts allowed the organisation to devote enormous resources to producing news and expanding its footprint.

In the space of a just a decade, Al Jazeera, and through it Qatar, challenged the media and cultural hegemony of the traditional MENA regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and it has played a significant role in the shift of the region's centre of political gravity towards the Persian Gulf. Over the following ten years,

[1] "Red lines" are the boundaries of acceptable reporting imposed by governments or regimes on news media. Red lines are often not communicated explicitly, rather they come to be commonly understood by journalists working in an environment of restricted media. Red lines often lead to media making decisions to self-censor in response to the imagined existence of red lines.

Al Jazeera added news services in several additional languages and redoubled its expansion efforts into both new geographical regions and the digital realm. Today, Al Jazeera is extremely popular in the Arab and non-Arab worlds, but it is also polarising and generates both strong loyalty and fierce opposition among viewers and commentators.

Throughout its history, there have been several "moments" which have helped Al Jazeera in its quest for expansion. A moment is defined as a turning point in a media organisation's fortunes driven by its coverage of a media event. The network's most prominent moment was its English-language channel's coverage of the early stages of the Egyptian Revolution in 2011.

This thesis looks generally at Al Jazeera's expansion around the world, but specifically at its presence and impact in Australia, and the role of moments in this expansion. In particular, it analyses both Al Jazeera's relationship with the two Australia public broadcasters, the ABC and SBS, and its Egyptian Revolution moment. In doing so, this thesis makes a contribution towards a number of academic debates in the fields of descriptive media history, journalism studies, international relations and political science. It offers:

- A fuller understanding of the role played by media, and in particular Al Jazeera, in representing the Egyptian Revolution to the world, building on the work done by scholars such as Youmans and Brown (2011) and Seib (2012);
- The first analysis of Al Jazeera's entrance into the Australian market, and a continuation of research into the Qatari broadcaster's expansion. In turn, further analysis of the progress of the Qatari state's soft diplomatic and geopolitical mission, of which Al Jazeera is a part. This builds on a large body of work represented by scholars such as Miles (2005), El-Nawawy & Iskander (2002) and Powers (2012); and
- Further theorisation of the concept of a media "moment" and the development of a starting heuristic with which to analyse moments, building on, amongst others, Young (2009).

This thesis is comprised of four elements: one book and three journal articles. The book and two articles have been published, and the third article has been submitted for review.

Research questions

My research addressed six key research questions, which I briefly introduce here:

1) What is a news media moment?

The concept of a news media moment is anecdotally understood to mean a news event-driven turning point in a news organisation's fortunes, but there is no rigorous discussion of the concept in the literature. I wanted to map current use of the concept and develop an heuristic for identifying and analysing such turning points.

2) How did Al Jazeera English produce the news reporting that led to its Egyptian Revolution moment?

Al Jazeera English's Egyptian Revolution reporting is commonly held to have represented a moment, but what was happening behind the scenes to create that moment? I wanted to unpack the coverage and analyse what was happening in the newsroom and in the field during those 18 days.

3) What has been Al Jazeera's presence in the Australian media market over time, and how has it expanded?

It was clear after even a cursory review of the Al Jazeera literature that there was no existing research on Al Jazeera's presence in the Australian media market. I wanted to begin filling that large gap by mapping the history of AJMN in Australia.

4) What have been the drivers of, and impediments to, Al Jazeera's presence in Australia?

Related to the first research question, this seemed to me to be another important line of inquiry — especially the impediments angle. I had long wondered why it was so difficult to watch Al Jazeera in Australia and I suspected that Al Jazeera had sought, and continued to seek, much higher visibility in the broadcast market. I had ideas about the nature of these hurdles, but wanted to confirm or challenge them through research.

5) What role has Al Jazeera played in the Australian news landscape over time?

This question adds depth to the research by ensuring that it is not just a simple chronology of Al Jazeera's presence in Australia. I wanted to examine the extent to which the network has (or hasn't) impacted domestic news practices, domestic news content, and Australian audiences.

6) What is the nature of the partnerships between Al Jazeera English (AJE) and the Australia public broadcasters, and how do the partnerships work in practice?

This question grew out of the research for the first two questions as the significance of those partnerships and the importance of understanding them became clear.

Structure of introduction

In this introductory chapter I will review the literature around the establishment of Al Jazeera, explaining how and why it was launched, what its effects have been, and how it has expanded throughout its 20 years. With respect to Australia, I will

map how Al Jazeera fits into the Australia media landscape and provide context for the two journal articles.

Then I will expand upon, and ground in the literature, some key concepts that have emerged from my research to establish the theoretical foundations of the published elements of the thesis.

Finally, I will outline the four published elements of this thesis and how they address the research questions and discuss the methods used in the research for these publications.

Al Jazeera's history

From humble beginnings in 1996 as a small terrestrial news broadcaster, the Al Jazeera Media Network is today one of the world's larger media companies. In addition to news, sport and children's television channels broadcast via satellite and cable across the world, Al Jazeera also comprises educational and cultural non-broadcast arms, such as media training centres and film festivals. Initially set up by the Qatari government as a public entity, in 2011 Al Jazeera was reclassified under Qatari law as a "private organisation devoted to public interest", a move intended to pave the way for private investment and further expansion (Toumi, 2011).

While there is a large and reasonably consistent body of work dealing with the launch of Al Jazeera in 1996 and the motives of the State of Qatar in its creation (see, for example, Miles, 2005; El-Nawawy & Iskander, 2002; Powers, 2012; Bahry, 2001), it is worth briefly outlining that history here for context.

Qatar

Sparsely, but continuously, populated for thousands of years, Qatar is a tiny country perched on a peninsula of desert jutting out from the northern edge of

Saudi Arabia into the Persian Gulf. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Qatar was a British protectorate under the British post-World War 1 system of trucial administration, before gaining independence in 1971.

For much of the 20th century Qatar's only real industries were pearling and fishing, and its small population (just over 100,000 people) lived and traded in rudimentary buildings along the coast. Soon after independence and the discovery of large oil and gas fields, Qatar dramatically ramped up its exploitation of those reserves and began generating significant sovereign wealth. It's hard to overstate how important hydrocarbons are to the state of Qatar — despite its small landmass, the country has the third-largest proven reserves of liquefied natural gas in the world.

Rents received by the state through the sale of oil and gas not only built the modern Qatari economy, but also shaped the political and societal structures that exist today. These funds allowed the ruling monarch to overwhelm all other financial actors in the economy and set up cradle-to-grave social services, bypassing the need for taxation and democratic institutions. Foley (2010) calls it a "rentier state system par excellence".

Gray (2011), however, thinks that classic rentier theory is insufficient to explain Qatar and other similar Persian Gulf states (e.g. UAE's richer emirates, Bahrain). He argues that these countries display traits of what he calls "late rentierism", where rents are also funnelled into the development of a positive international image, and where economies strike a balance between responding to global markets and retaining hallmarks of protectionism.

It could be argued that Qatar's transition to Gray's late rentierism took place in 1996 with the peaceful overthrow of Emir Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani by his son Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. Upon assuming power, the new Emir, Sheikh Hamad, immediately set about implementing a program of reform to project a modern and liberal face of his country to the world.

Traditional Arab media

To properly understand Al Jazeera's impact, it is necessary to be mindful of the state of the regional media landscape it entered towards the end of the 20th century.

The Arab world has long had abundant media choices, but, as Miles (2005, p.24) notes, "the problem with this abundance of media is that it was all controlled either by a Minister of Information or by the financial backers. Its main interest was in serving the government ..."

Pintak (2010), whose research into Arab media has revealed a world of self-censorship, overt censorship, government control, endemic conflicts of interest, and bribery of journalists, argues that modern Arab states and media were both born from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and that Arab media has historically been "a vehicle for the spread of Arab nationalism, Arab culture and the Arabic language itself." Arab journalists are popularly seen as mouthpieces for their host government or regime, or other elite forces in society. In this media environment there is a counterculture of rumour and conspiracy that thrives on information shared person-to-person, which is often more trusted than anything written or broadcast by a news organisation.

Much of this situation can be explained by the network of media ownership in Arab states, where it is safe to generalise that most outlets are owned by, or closely linked to, the state or powerful elites. These organisations are notorious for printing and broadcasting insipid nationalist propaganda and other material which won't stir political, religious or social dissent. In this context, Lynch (2006) is blunt in describing the Arab media landscape in the early 1980s as a "waste-land".

Arguably the most important developments in Arab media have been broadcast technologies such as transistor radio, television, CD and satellite. In a region where literacy rates for adults hovered around 50% for much of the 20th century (and were lower for women and rural citizens), non-written media opened up

access to information for great masses of people who were previously unable to participate in the public sphere (Miles, 2005).

However, all of this is changing in the 21st century, as explained by Pintak (2010):

> "Arab journalists at the dawn of the twenty-first century see their mission as driving political and social change in the Middle East and North Africa. They most closely identify with the pan-Arab region and the broader Muslim world, not with an individual nation-state; they see political reform, human rights, poverty, and education as the most important issues facing the region; and while protective of the Arab people, Arab culture and religion, they are not overtly anti-American."

Al Jazeera's launch

When Sheikh Hamad took power in 1995, the media environment in Qatar was little different to that in other countries all across the Arab world. In fact, Qatar was a late starter, having been one of the last Arab states to establish a national broadcaster (in 1970).

Al Jazeera Arabic was launched the next year, broadcasting six hours of content per day via terrestrial transmission to a small, local audience. The fledgling company took advantage of the recent closure of a Saudi-backed BBC Arabic project which had resulted in the release of many Western-trained Arab editorial staff into the job market. Over several years, AJA expanded via satellite across the region and increased its scheduled hours of broadcast to 24 per day (Miles, 2005). There are more details about this early growth in my book *18 Days* (Chapter 1).

The new channel very quickly differentiated itself by ignoring most of the explicit and implicit editorial "red lines" which constrained most other media organisations in the region. For example, AJA gave airtime to Israelis and their points of view, aggressively challenged (non-Qatari) governments and rulers, talked widely about religion and politics, and gave ordinary Arabs an uncensored

platform via live-to-air, phone-in chat shows. Al Jazeera programs encompassed a wide spectrum of opinions, forcefully argued and — crucially — in the Arabic language. AJA was as popular with Arabs at home and abroad, as it was unpopular with Arab rulers and the elite (see, for example, Miles, 2005; Lynch, 2006; Pintak, 2010). There are more details about Al Jazeera's early content in *18 Days* (chapter 1).

Al Jazeera even found an audience with Arabs outside of the MENA region. Miladi's (2006) research showed that, in 2001, AJA was the most popular source of news amongst diaspora Arabs, with 93% of those interviewed having watched the channel in July of that year. Those interviewed watched the channel because of its technical quality, the range of programs on offer, and its coverage of issues important to them such as democracy, human rights, freedom of expression and the Palestinian issue. Also playing into those viewers' decision were the perceived biases and blind spots of Western media such as BBC and CNN, when covering issues related to the Arab world (especially the second Palestinian Intifada) and the lack of diversity of Arab voices on those channels. Zayani (2010) quotes polls from earlier years that suggest viewers tuned to Al Jazeera because it provided what they believe to be "timely, instant, and comprehensive coverage of news that matters." Further, viewers enjoyed its populist nature and its perceived distance from authority — both domestic and foreign.

Johnson and Fahmy (2008) agree that AJA, in part, generated credibility with viewers through its use of Western journalistic techniques (see also Sultan, 2013). However, they also cite research from the early 2000s that showed AJA viewers tended to be young and well-educated, and overwhelmingly male (over 90% of viewers), which may suggest the channel did not appeal to a broad cross-section of Arab society, or it could also reflect common social structures which see men gather at coffee houses to watch television while women tend to domestic duties.

Satellite distribution was a game changer for all media in the MENA region. Not only did it allow the gradual entry of non-Arab and/or non-approved television channels into Arab homes, it also facilitated a revolution in Arab media itself. This occurred despite the fact that the two largest satellite companies serving the

region are owned by Saudi Arabia and Egypt respectively, who are also linked with much of the content distributed on those platforms (Figenschou, 2014).

Al Jazeera wasted no time in taking advantage of satellite broadcasting to build an audience across the region and further abroad. While terrestrial TV signals roughly align with national borders, satellite transmission allowed for the first time channels to build transnational audiences and bypass local state control (Pintak, 2010). Saudi Arabia soon felt its dominance of the regional news media under threat, as Al Jazeera broke its "virtual lock" on international Arab media (El-Nawawy and Iskander, 2002, p. 116).

Sheikh Hamad's initial funding model for Al Jazeera allowed the network a number of years to become self-sufficient through advertising and other revenue raising. However, the Qatari government continues to pay a significant portion of the network's annual running costs. The primary reason for Al Jazeera's failure to become self-sufficient is that, just like most Arab media (Figenschou, 2014), AJMN, despite its enormous viewership, is unable to support itself through commercial advertising. In reaction to Al Jazeera's aggressive editorial line and failure to show due respect to Arab leaders and governments, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states exerted pressure on Al Jazeera's advertisers and would-be advertisers to withdraw their business. This pressure turned into a formal call to boycott issued by the GCC in 2002. To this day, potential advertisers are wary of buying space on Al Jazeera for fear of risking access to markets such as Saudi Arabia (Figenschou, 2014). While a number of (mostly Qatari) brands are frequently seen in AJA and AJE ad breaks, those ad breaks tend to be short and infrequent.

This ongoing revenue dead-end leaves the Qatari Government with no choice but to continue bankrolling the network, scale it down, or shut it down. On the one hand, this strengthens the implicit bargain between network and benefactor, but, on the other, the low level of advertising dependency allows other kinds of editorial freedom not enjoyed by commercial media outlets.

It is worth quickly noting one of the more unlikely advertisers that never quite made it onto Al Jazeera screens: the US State Department considered in 2001 purchasing advertising space on Al Jazeera, clearly seeing it as an important conduit into Arab homes (Miladi, 2006).

Why Al Jazeera?

Much has been written about Sheikh Hamad's motivation in creating Al Jazeera (see, for example, Pintak, 2010; Kamrava, 2013; Gray, 2013; Youmans, 2012; El-Nawawy & Iskander, 2002). I have addressed this question in *18 Days* (chapter 1), but will provide a little more political context here.

As mentioned previously, Al Jazeera was a major part of Sheikh Hamad's strategy for the next phase in the country's development. Qatar is a microstate which lacks the capability to defend itself against security threats, while its natural resources surely make it a tempting proposition for prospective aggressors.

Al Jazeera was hardly the first mass broadcaster created by a state to advance its foreign policy objectives, and it has ample state-backed company in the 24-hour news field. As Powers (2012, p.6) asks rhetorically: "What motivates the creation of a global news network?" The answer, he says, is simple: power. "For private and publicly supported news networks alike, the first goal is to reach and inform a target audience deemed important by the network's managerial team, be it a board of directors or a Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

The key here is the goal of reaching an audience, as without an audience a soft power broadcaster cannot achieve that which it was created to do. Smythe (1981) contends that a mass media audience is a commodity — that consumers "work" for the advertisers whose funds are used to produce the cultural content which attracts them to the media. In Al Jazeera's case, the network's viewers are put to work to advance the state of Qatar's foreign policy goals, attracted by the network's news content produced using funds provided by the state.

Kamrava (2013, p12) argues that the overall strategy employed by Sheikh Hamad was a new hybrid of the coercive/persuasive paradigm of hard/soft power he calls "subtle power" which requires a balance of four ingredients: military protection; global branding; diplomatic hedging; and pro-active diplomacy:

> "Qatar benefits from two key ingredients of hard power, namely military protection, provided by the United States, and money, and thus massive international investments, with which comes influence. But when agency is added into the mix, in the form of a leadership determined to carve out a place of influence for itself diplomatically and regionally, then we are no longer looking at a form of power that is strictly 'hard.' In Qatar's case, the country's leaders try to maximize its powers by carving out for it a highly visible position of centrality in relation to regional peace and stability. This they have accomplished through aggressive branding and diplomatic hedging. I have labeled the new form of power that Qatar has carved out as 'subtle'."

Al Jazeera plays many roles in this Qatari foreign policy strategy of soft/subtle power, and is seen by some as one of Qatar's most impressive diplomatic achievements (Cooper and Momani, 2011). Cushion and Lewis (2010) note that, for the most part, 24-hour news channels are not driven by commercial imperatives, given the low to non-existent available prospect of profit; rather, they are created in the pursuit of corporate or nationalistic ideology and prestige. Boyd-Barrett and Boyd-Barrett (2010, p. 199) agree, arguing that "never has more than a half-drawn curtain separated 24/7 news from 'soft' diplomacy." Most analysts thus see Al Jazeera as an exercise of soft power by Qatar. However, Figenschou (2014) argues that the Qatari/AJ model of soft/subtle power is different to that of others in that AJ does not seek to communicate Qatari values — it is outward looking rather than inward looking.

Large portions of Qatar's rent receipts are funnelled into the kinds of state branding exercises now common across the Gulf: for example, Emirates and Etihad Airlines have branded Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Formula 1 races have branded Bahrain and Abu Dhabi, world expos and out-of-this-world tourist

infrastructure have branded Dubai. In Qatar, Al Jazeera, Qatar Airways, the Qatar Foundation, Education City, and the 2022 World Cup have branded the state (although as we're seeing now with controversy around Qatar's labour practices, the World Cup branding effort may yet turn out to be a rare backfire.) In addition to helping brand the increasingly corporatised Qatar as a legitimate state and a liberal force in the region, Al Jazeera helps build popular support for the Qatari ruling family across the Arab world through programming that is well regarded by Arabs and non-Arabs (Gray, 2013).

Hedging is a strategy that has worked incredibly well for Qatar as it positions itself as a key player in the region. As Gray (2013) argues: "the best insurance against security threats or economic coercion is to ensure that all the major actors in a position to be a threat have a strong stake in not being so." This is why Qatar has relations with both the US and Iran, Israel and Hamas etc. It is also why, in Al Jazeera's early years especially, the channel infuriated nearly all governments and regimes in the region equally.

Overall, Kamrava (2013) argues that post-1996 Qatar is attempting to define Arabism in the 21st century, and that in just a couple of decades it can justifiably claim to have taken on a leadership role in the Arab world despite its relatively short history, small landmass and tiny population. As El-Nawawy and Iskander (2002, p32) write, Al Jazeera is a "textbook example of what media scholars Joseph Straubhaar and Marwan Kraidy call 'asymmetrical interdependence'," where the network's influence on public opinion and geopolitics is disproportionate to relatively small amount of power that the Qatari state exerts directly.

Editorial control

Al Jazeera, like news operations the world over, is at pains to paint itself as an objective voice, free of bias and agenda. Like news operations the world over, it fails to live up to that impossible standard. But, as Gray (2013) notes, the

separation of state and Al Jazeera, as genuine as that may or may not be in practice, is crucial to the branding strategy at the core of the network's purpose.

Looking at a political map of the Arab world it seems incredible that a network such as Al Jazeera came out of Qatar. As Sultan (2013, p.252) says: "Significant in the case of Al Jazeera is the fact that the freedom it enjoys emanates from a country governed by a neo-patrimonial regime, and not from any of the post-independence and self-proclaimed 'revolutionary' and 'progressive' Arab regimes." However, Al Jazeera still works within editorial boundaries despite its relative freedom.

Most analysts (for example, Zayani, 2010) argue that Al Jazeera enjoys an unprecedented level of (although not complete) freedom from governmental control, with many agreeing that there are obvious editorial red lines, such as Qatari domestic politics and sensitive local issues, such as labour laws. Some have offered hard evidence of Qatari Government interference (see Davis, 2013) and I have outlined examples in *18 Days* (Chapter 8).

However, the arms-length, quasi-private operation of Al Jazeera does not stop the linking of Al Jazeera with its benefactor in the minds of viewers and critics. As El-Nawawy and Iskander (2002, pp140-141) write:

> "... most official Arab complaints are directed to the Qatari government, not the network. Because Al-Jazeera is a news phenomenon in the Arab world, and because Arabs are not accustomed to an independent Arab network free of government control, many refuse to accept that Al-Jazeera truly operated on its own. They simply cannot separate Al-Jazeera from the Qatari government ... The running joke is that Al-Jazeera is a country with Qatar as its capital."

Overall, as I argue in *18 Days* (Chapter 8), Al Jazeera is a sprawling and complex organisation, and it's too simplistic to suggest that the network's editorial line is controlled at a micro level by the Qatari Government. Kamrava (2013) agrees:

> "[Al Jazeera] as a complex institution and an important change agent, developed its own internal dynamics and preferences. Editorial choices were made based on the preferences of the station's editorial directors, many of whom had their own political and ideological backgrounds to promote."

In this respect, Al Jazeera is absolutely no different to any other newsroom.

Al Jazeera's effect

Very quickly, Al Jazeera reshaped the Arab media and news landscape through coverage of topics previously taboo and the provision of a forum for the kinds of debate previously unseen on Arab television (see, for example, Miles, 2005; Pintak, 2010; Lynch, 2006; Zayani, 2010). This led to an explosion in privately-owned or arm's-length-from-government Arab satellite television and other new media inspired by, and seeking to emulate, Al Jazeera's success — a phenomenon that, among others, makes up what Seib (2008) calls "the Al Jazeera Effect". The resulting wave of new Arab media represent a challenge to regimes and governments seeking to control the public discourse and maintain stability and the status quo.

In this vein, Lynch (2006) argues that Al Jazeera has been one of the driving forces behind the development of a transnational Arab public sphere (also Miladi, 2006), or a "new Arab public". Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan are classic touchstone issues reported heavily by Al Jazeera and others that help to grow a sense of Arab connectedness and transnational community. Zayani (2010) notes that pan-Arabism appeals to audiences as a powerful ideology. Pintak (2010) says the genre of open forum for debate pioneered by Al Jazeera allowed the creation a "common, core Arab narrative".

It is, however, important to not overstate Al Jazeera's positive effect on politics in the region. While it has certainly played a large role in broadening the scope of

topics considered "fair game" for news media, forced state media to review their own offerings to counter a loss of viewers, and helped create the transnational Arab public sphere, it is not a magic bullet for fixing all that ails the disconnect between Arab citizens and their political systems. As El Oifi (2005, p. 66) says, Al Jazeera has "placed the question of the gap between people's sentiments and governments' policies at the heart of both the Arab and international political debates," but, as Seib (2008) and Lynch (2006) note, there needs to be a political conduit between the new public sphere and a democratic state. This lack of an effective conduit continues to create frustration among the Arab people.

Al Jazeera's expansion

Rapid expansion has seen AJMN become a global, or near-global, broadcaster in the space of just 20 years. Rai and Cottle (2010) have mapped the satellite and cable distribution of many of the world's 24-hour news broadcasters, finding that only five channels meet their definition of "global" (inception date in brackets):

- CNN, both domestic and international variants (1980);
- BBC World (1991);
- CNBC (1989);
- Bloomberg (1994); and
- Fox News (1996 — one month before Al Jazeera)

This research was obviously limited by its focus on only two modes of distribution (notably putting aside online distribution), but it nevertheless found that AJA and AJE were distributed in all 9 regions of the world, except South America and parts of North America (the research was conducted before the launch of Al Jazeera America). While this did not qualify as global distribution for the purposes of Rai and Cottle's research ("substantial reach in more than 4 different regions"), it must be very close. Al Jazeera — launched in November 1996 — is the youngest of that group of global broadcasters, and apart from CNN all of the others grew out of established news organisations.

Given the topic of this thesis, I have obviously covered Al Jazeera's expansion in detail in the three published elements so I will only provide an overview here with some extra theoretical grounding.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no research that thoroughly addresses Al Jazeera's expansion in a general sense. Research, where it exists, is limited to specific regions or countries (especially the USA), or to simply outlining where Al Jazeera is available (for example, Rai and Cottle, 2010). A lot of the research focuses on the difficulties Al Jazeera has faced in its expansion due to cultural and political factors (see, for example, Tatham, 2005; Miles, 2005; Davis, 2013). Miles (2005) and Powers (2012), in particular, offer good overviews of Al Jazeera Arabic and Al Jazeera English's expansion histories.

Drawing on this existing research, and my own research into Al Jazeera's presence in the Australian market, I've noticed that there are four main ways in which Al Jazeera has expanded its footprint around the world:

i. Increasing its reach or footprint through satellite, cable or terrestrial broadcast;
ii. Launching new franchise channels or arms of the news operation;
iii. Making content-sharing or reciprocal broadcast agreements with other broadcasters (I call this "secondary" expansion in the journal articles); and
iv. Online

i) Satellite, cable, terrestrial

While Al Jazeera and other global news channels use many different technologies, they are often called "satellite" broadcasters in recognition of the main mode of distribution. What makes them similar is that they offer around-the-clock news to viewers anywhere in the world who speak the broadcasting language (often English).

Cushion (2010) identifies three phases in the era of 24-hour news: the coming of age (centred around CNN's 'moment'); the race for transnational reach and influence (Al Jazeera falls into this phase); and the competition within nations (think India and its multitude of channels). He argues that rolling news has of itself become a form and that it has been accepted by news consumers. Along with Lewis (2010), he argues that 24-hour rolling news has become the news-y wallpaper of our lives.

One of the more recent trends in the industry that Cushion (along with others, such as Figenschou, 2014) has identified, is the increasing localisation in global satellite news. CNN, for example, has its domestic service and its international version (CNNI). Al Jazeera, too, is localising through its franchises.

ii) Al Jazeera news franchises

Ten years after the launch of Al Jazeera Arabic, AJMN created Al Jazeera English to broaden the network's reach beyond the MENA region and the Arabic-speaking diaspora. AJE's remit differed from that of its Arabic sister, although the relationship between the two is incredibly important. I have outlined AJE's genesis at length in*18 Days* (Chapter 1).

There is within AJE and AJMN no specific understanding of who makes up its audience. As Figenschou (2014, p.51) notes: "the channel management does not have a distinctive conception of who their viewers are. In written internal editorial guidelines, the audience is described broadly as 'worldwide, English speakers.'"

During the course of my research I asked then-Managing Director of AJE, Al Anstey (personal communication, October 11, 2011), "What does AJE's audience look like?" His answer was revealing in its lack of detail and is worth quoting in full:

> "I'll give you an answer to that and you may think it's too glib. I think there's a vast number of people out there who are hungry for reliable information. A vast number. Hundreds of millions of people in the English language and other languages as well. So, who is our audience? It's people who are interested in what is going on, and I use this perhaps glib expression, in their world. Their world meaning their neighbourhood, their country and the world. I mean, what impacts on them is relevant to them, which is going on sometimes halfway around the world and sometimes just down the street. So I think there's a massive demographic of people who are not being provided with credible information and I think that's an enormous market. And that's why ultimately, underpinned by integrity, there is an awful lot more to do in terms of reaching out to those viewers. In English, yes, so that's through AJE, through the other enhancements we've got through AJE and the potentials in the future. It's also in other languages as well."

There has been no such confusion about the target audience for subsequent Al Jazeera franchises which are much more specifically localised.

In addition to AJA and AJE, there is currently only one other television franchise: Al Jazeera Balkans (based in Sarajevo and broadcasting in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian). Al Jazeera America (AJAM) closed in April 2016 after less than three years on the air. There are several other franchises reportedly in various stages of planning, as detailed in the journal article *Al Jazeera in Australia*.

It is worth considering AJAM as a special case. I have covered its launch in *Al Jazeera in Australia*, and to a lesser extent in *18 Days* (chapter 10), but a few points are worth emphasising here.

Perhaps the most significant chapter in the story of Al Jazeera's expansion drive has been AJE's long and largely fruitless battle to crack the US market, which Youmans and Brown (2005; 2011) and Youmans (2012) have written about at length. They have mapped in detail the cultural, political and commercial factors which have prevented AJE from gaining wide carriage despite a growing public

desire for access. Davis (2013) also looks at Al Jazeera's attempts to enter the US market and its (ultimately successful) efforts to enter the Canadian market. He found in both countries political and economic hurdles tied to culture and nationalistic politics.

After years of fruitless lobbying, Al Jazeera famously forced its way into the US market in 2013 by purchasing an existing cable channel and using it to launch a new news franchise: Al Jazeera America. Nearly one year after launch, AJAM's ratings were abysmal — a mere 15,000 viewers on average in prime time (Shafer, 2014), and they never significantly improved. But ratings were probably not the primary metric by which AJMN measured its success in the country.

AJAM sought to legitimise the Al Jazeera brand as a player in the news field and despite ratings failure, it attracted critical praise for story selection and a serious news focus that stood in stark contrast to its competitors. One study (Jurkowitz et al., 2013) found compelling evidence that AJAM framed its reporting from a particularly American point of view, aligning with Cushion's (2010) localisation theory discussed earlier.

When I asked Al Anstey (personal communication, May 13, 2013) in 2013 about possible audience fragmentation upon the then-impending launch of AJAM and the possible launch of Al Jazeera UK (AJUK), he claimed AJE would in fact gain viewers:

> "We'll build viewers in the United States and in the UK, and also some of that resource will come back in terms of enhancing AJE. But also, those centres, those channels — a centre in London and a channel in America — will be contributing back to AJE so that's an enhancement. So you can therefore argue, and this is partly why I'm being slightly formative at the moment, but if you look at AJE in the UK, actually AJE transmission stands to actually build its viewership."

Which perhaps makes sense if we consider that AJAM (I will ignore AJUK for now because there is significant doubt that it will ever happen) took a significant

proportion of AJE content and rebroadcasted it, meaning that AJAM viewers were exposed to it in much the same way Australian public broadcaster viewers/listeners are exposed to AJE content.

Ultimately, however, AJMN made the decision early in 2016 to wind up AJAM, citing an unsustainable business model. While AJMN has demonstrated over two decades that it is prepared to pay a lot of money for non-commercial outcomes, falling oil prices and the pressure they put on the Qatari budget forced the government's hand. AJAM closed after less than three years on air and after spending a reported $2 billion. Up to 800 journalists found themselves out of work (Hagey and Flint, 2016).

iii) Secondary expansion

Some of Al Jazeera's expansion has come about through content-sharing or reciprocal agreements with other broadcasters around the world. I term this "secondary" expansion.

Tatham (2005) provides some relatively rare examples in the literature of Al Jazeera's secondary expansion, in this case in Indonesia and South Africa via local broadcasters. In these cases and others, Arab journalism organisations are filling gaps left by Western outlets' shrinking correspondent budgets (Pintak, 2010). This is certainly the case with Al Jazeera.

In the case of Australia, as Rai and Cottle (2010) note, many satellite channels would count Australia within their *reach*, which may be technically true, but the real test is *access* which relies on additional factors that actually put the content in front of eyeballs. With its relatively low domestic satellite TV penetration — partly because of the unique shape of the broadcast market in Australia, a relatively weak pay TV sector, and little use of personal satellite receivers — Australia was never going to be a major market for Al Jazeera in the way that it had increased viewership in other regions of the world. I cover Al Jazeera's secondary expansion into Australia in detail in both journal articles.

As my research shows, a key plank of Al Jazeera's strategy in Australia involves increasing its name recognition and positive brand awareness through (among other things) its secondary presence on Australian broadcasters' airwaves in order to drive online engagement.

iv) Online

Beyond traditional broadcast technologies (terrestrial, satellite, cable), online distribution has been very important for AJE. Its online stream is popular across the world, but especially in the US (pre-AJAM launch) (Davis, 2013). Digital technology also allowed network planners to get a sense about the interest in the channel that is impossible with one-way technologies like satellite and cable. Three years after launch, 60% of AJE's Internet traffic was from North America, giving Al Jazeera administrators potential leverage with distributors concerned with market demand. Broadcasting via Livestation, Al Jazeera's online audience for 2009 Gaza coverage increased by 500%. Most revealingly, during the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, traffic to AJE's website increased by 2,500% (Davis, 2013).

It is understandable that Al Jazeera's online operation is often overlooked, as it is first and foremost a television news operation. But the channel's digital wing is growing, both in size and also in importance to the overall company. These non-traditional re-broadcast paths are especially relevant in an age of declining 24-hour news television audiences. Young (2010) argues that, with news consumption migrating online, rolling news TV viewership may have peaked. She suggests the format taught viewers to dip in and dip out, and to consume news as bite-sized pieces. Al Jazeera seems to have noticed this trend and is looking for ways to address it through new ventures, such as its social-first startup, *AJ+*, which attracted 2.2 billion Facebook video views in 2015 (Bilton, 2016).

Indeed, AJAM's inability to harness online, mobile and social media has been cited as one of the reasons it struggled to succeed. Farhi (2016) and Youmans

(2016) both outline how restrictions placed on AJAM by cable providers were onerous and succeeded in preventing any significant leakage of content from the cable networks' walled gardens to other platforms. Among other things, AJMN was required by these contracts to restrict American access to the enormously popular AJE livestream and its other online video content.

Just as newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* now publish as much for a global online audience as they do for their home city print readers, Al Jazeera is ramping up its online presence to augment, rather than simply replicate, its TV output. As I outline in *Al Jazeera in Australia*, it is online that Al Jazeera is making the most progress within the Australian market. This is partially attributable to the structural barriers to Al Jazeera on Australian television, but is also probably part of the general shift in news consumption away from broadcast TV to on-demand mobile and desktop internet consumption.

Theoretical context

This thesis in part rests upon five issues which, here, I need to address in more detail than was possible in my published work, in order to provide for context for what follows: eyes and ears, contra-flow, agency, post-broadcast and credibility.

Eyes and ears

An important concept that has emerged from my research involves the idea of a news organisation acting as the "eyes and ears" of a region through contributing to the reporting of news organisations in other regions. Pintak (2010, Introduction, Section 2, para. 2) argues that this not only sets up interesting flows of global information, but also has repercussions for global affairs:

> "Why should readers in other parts of the world care what Arab reporters think or how they approach their jobs? The answer is simple: Arab news organizations are helping to shape global attitudes.

> Whereas the American TV networks, the BBC and a handful of Western newspapers and wire services once wrote the international news narrative, today Arab journalists are the eyes and ears for half the globe as news organizations across the developing world rebroadcast coverage from the Arab channels. That, in turn, has an impact on relations between governments, religions, and peoples."

Al Jazeera, in its Arabic- and English-language versions, has, throughout its life, acted as the eyes and ears of the Middle East region for Western news organisations, and there is a close relationship between the most notable examples and Al Jazeera's moments. The Iraq and Afghanistan wars saw Western news organisations falling over themselves to make content deals with Al Jazeera because of its superior positioning (Miles, 2005). This continued through the bin Laden tapes, wars and uprisings in the Palestinian territories, and up to the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 when on the "Day of Rage" the world tuned to AJE as it comprehensively scooped the competition. As El-Nawawy and Iskander (2002, p.156) write: "In essence, Al-Jazeera is an unofficial two-way communications channel between the Arab and Western worlds. The Arab world tunes in for information, and foreign networks tune in for material and footage."

This idea of eyes and ears most closely links with the substantial body of literature that exists around the idea of "contra-flow" — the theory that news sources outside of the Western hemisphere are challenging the traditional media hegemony and offering information framed differently to the prevailing norm.

Contra-flow

Al Jazeera is often said to represent a contra-flow in global news media — from AJA informing Western news organisations, to AJE snatching Western viewers away from Western broadcasters. Boyd-Barrett and Boyd-Barrett (2010, p.201), for example, claim Al Jazeera adds "a counter-hegemonic voice to global news [and] applies Western journalistic principles to reporting the world through the lens of Muslim perspectives." Of course, AJE is much more complicated than

AJA, and, as al-Najjar (2009) notes, labelling AJE as an "Arab" channel is difficult, despite its headquarters in Doha — for example, over 50 nationalities are represented amongst staff and management and one of its major newsroom studios is in London.

AJE launched into an already crowded international TV news market, coming up against established players, such as the BBC and CNN. AJE, however, represented the first major global news broadcaster in English from a non-Western country. Its marketed point of difference was the idea of a contra-flow of information from the global south to the global north, challenging the hegemony of Western news sources (see, for example, Figenschou, 2014). Indeed, as Xie and Boyd-Barrett (2008) note, until the late 2000s, almost all of the major global communications actors were either Western or relied heavily on the US market. Al Jazeera challenges this hegemony.

There is certainly much discussion in the literature about whether AJE represents a contra-flow of information from global south to global north (see, for example, Thussu, 2007), and there is significant disagreement. Rai and Cottle (2010) nicely outline the two schools of thought on the contra-flow argument. One view is that the rise of non-Western global satellite news outlets, such as Al Jazeera, Russia Today etc., represent a challenge to the traditional one-way flow of information from the Anglosphere to the rest. The other view is that the international news field continues to be dominated by Western actors and processes and that all the new "contra-flow" channels represent a universal adoption of US-style journalism using the CNN model. As discussed earlier, Rai and Cottle demonstrate that, while Western channels are more likely to be available across the globe, non-Western channels are not, while Cushion (2010) demonstrates a shift to localisation, with channels catering to national and sub-national markets. Figenschou (2014) also dives deep into the issue of contra-flow and the question of whether Al Jazeera represents such a phenomenon. She seeks to differentiate between news and entertainment media content and concludes that it is doubtful that AJE represents a significant contra-flow of news.

Agency

I think, however, it is best to avoid getting bogged down in the contra-flow argument as it distracts from analysis of what role Al Jazeera is actually playing through its secondary expansion into Australia. In my view, it is far more valuable to conceptualise this flow of news content as a new or de facto agency feed. It is useful to start by considering the longstanding role of news agencies in global news gathering and reporting.

Three agencies, all Western, dominate the global news agency field: Reuters based in the UK; the Associated Press (AP), based in the USA; and Agence France-Presse (AFP), based in France. All provide copy and pictures to subscribing organisations, and the vast majority of global news organisations subscribe to at least one. Thussu (2006, p.132) notes that the three agencies are the source of about 80% of news content worldwide and that Reuters and the television arm of AP, APTV, largely control the global flow of audio-visual news material. While all three agencies enjoy excellent reputations for the professionalism of their work, their output "may often reflect Western, or more specifically, US editorial policies."

Almost all news organisations draw heavily, or exclusively, on AP, AFP and Reuters, or on secondary news sources that, in turn, draw heavily from the three agencies. It follows that these three agencies represent the eyes and the ears of the global news industry. Boyd-Barrett and Boyd-Barrett (2010, p. 199) say APTV and Reuters, and their biggest clients, constitute "an informational hegemony of the Western world". Similarly, Paterson (2011, p.101) argues that AP and Reuters are the most important and powerful gatekeepers in international news, and that they operate through a Western lens and according to presumed Western media values and economic priorities:

> "The productions processes of news agencies permit them to be efficient news factories, but these processes also perpetuate the problems scholars have identified in the western model of journalism. For instance, agencies typically seek out news elites for interviews in

> order to meet the expectations of their clients, thus legitimizing status quo news frames and reinforcing the exclusion of alternative perspectives on international affairs."

Paterson (2011, pp. 99-100) continues, highlighting a major drawback of the symbiotic relationship between news agencies and broadcasters:

> "As with dependency relationships, it isn't healthy (for the public, in this case). Journalistic quality and public understanding, and the breadth and diversity of debate, suffer from the very limited diet of images that flow from agencies to broadcasters to audiences, images that are all too often produced to be compelling, economical, and instant, rather than enlightening."

In Australia, only the ABC continues to operate a substantial network of its own foreign bureaus, and it is the only organisation operating correspondents based outside the Anglosphere (Meade, 2015). This demonstrates how heavily the Australian news media relies on news agencies and foreign broadcasters for international news content.

In Australia and elsewhere, Al Jazeera functions as a de facto wire agency by providing news content for organisations unable to gather and produce their own news from many regions of the world. For the Australian public broadcasters, Al Jazeera stands out as the only major content partner from outside the US and Europe.

This reliance on AJE has many factors, but their language and production style are obviously key. AJE presents a distinctly non-Arab face to the world, despite the diversity of its staff and its global news focus, which allows it to be more easily incorporated into Australia's very white, Western-centric media. I explore in detail exactly how AJE works as a de facto agency feed for the Australia public broadcasters in the two journal articles.

Post-broadcast

As the journal article *Al Jazeera in Australia* demonstrates, Al Jazeera's future expansion success, at least in Australia and the USA, will not be via traditional broadcast distribution. AJAM's early-2016 closure is perhaps most symptomatic of this shift. Al Jazeera's decision to abandon its US experiment was likely driven by two factors: tighter budgets across the hydrocarbon economies of the Gulf due to falling oil prices; and AJAM's distribution model. In its almost one-eyed pursuit of cable carriage in the USA, Al Jazeera lost sight of the realities of the media industry in the second decade of the 21st century.

The constraints imposed on AJAM by its cable carriage contracts succeeded in preventing any significant leakage of content from the cable networks' walled gardens to other platforms, forcing potential AJAM viewers to be sitting in front of a TV set subscribed to the correct cable package and watching in real time. In 2016, consumers expect to be able to dial up whatever content they want, on whatever device or platform they want, at whatever time they want.

As Youmans (2016) argues, broadcasting exclusively at the wrong end of the cable dial was a sure path to failure:

> "… the news public that Al Jazeera America imagined does exist, but it was on-line. As an NPR correspondent noted when it launched, many in the channel called it a "Field of Dreams" plan: 'if they build that channel, Americans will come.' They didn't.
>
> "This reflects a larger structural challenge known to television programmers. Linear television distribution is on the way out. We are moving towards an a la carte, on-demand distribution of televisual services"

Al Jazeera was also forced by its AJAM cable contracts to restrict American access to the enormously popular AJE livestream and other online video content. AJAM's failure is a testament to how ineffective this measure was in transitioning

existing American Al Jazeera viewers to the new franchise. Al Jazeera's pursuit of the prestige implied by cable carriage created a situation that prevented potential viewers of AJAM from doing so in a manner appropriate via their preferred channels of media consumption.

Zayani (2010, p. 189) writes that Al Jazeera English, as the first offshoot of the original news channel, is "symptomatic of the expansion of Arab media ventures from single channels to multi-channel, multi-platform, multi-lingual networks, but it is also indicative of the untenable model of one-size-fits-all media." The extension of Zayani's argument beyond the localisation of television news through language and geographic franchises, is that modern and future-facing media organisations must look beyond simple television broadcasting, serving content in a distributed way that acknowledges social consumption in the digital age, allowing consumers to pick and choose what they watch and read. In addition, media organisations must work to try to anticipate their audience's desires.

Television is still very much AJE's primary focus, but its online arm is increasingly central to the channel's operation. While only one TV signal is beamed across the world to all viewers no matter where they are, AJE's online arm targets specific content at different users based on a whole range of factors such as geographical location, social media preferences and the like. A large contingent of online journalists works alongside the main newsroom to augment the television output and create unique digital-only material. As a result, many AJE consumers never or rarely tune into the channel's main TV signal.

Having said all this, there is still a place for broadcast television in the distribution mix, even if its viewership is relatively small compared to other broadcast news offerings, and its audience is skewed. Lewis et. al. (2005) note that 24-hour news is "a news media that in some ways is providing more and more information into the public arena than ever before, but which is being consumed largely by the richer, better-educated, more politically active minority." As the two journal articles show, broadcast television news is doing the heavy lifting for AJE in terms of brand building in Australia, even if much of the payoff is in online and digital

growth. 24-hour rolling television news is still expected by news consumers to be there when big news breaks. In such situations many news consumers still seek out a television set and tune to their preferred news channel to catch up on what's happening.

One need only look at the way in which traditional broadcast media channels have adjusted their news offerings in response to the phenomena of 24-hour television news. Young (2010, pp. 257-258) shows how in Australia the free-to-air TV networks have over time adjusted their approaches to news in response to the phenomenon of 24-hour news channels and a seemingly endless news cycle. While these networks traditionally offered only a few bulletins per day, they now schedule news or news-like programs throughout the day from breakfast to bedtime. Young says "it is one of the paradoxes of our time that media companies are losing audiences for news and, in response, are creating more news ... The networks have accepted that they cannot capture the very large and consistent primetime audiences they once did and so are instead trying to capture smaller, more fragmented news audiences spread out across a day of programming."

Credibility

Youmans and Brown (2011, p. 7) note that a "crucial factor in shifting attitudes is perceived credibility of the source." Although they are referring in this case to Al Jazeera's reception in the USA where pre-existing prejudices against the network are far more negative, widespread and virulent than in Australia, it is just as relevant to Australia. Credibility is a commonly used term but is a slippery concept to define given that it is subjective and individual. As Johnson and Fahmy (2008, p. 341) remind us, "credibility is not inherent in a source, but rather it is a perception held by audience members."

There are many different ideas in the literature about how the credibility of news media can be measured. Bucy (2003) says media credibility is "most consistently operationalized as believability", although a multi-dimension approach is now the norm in research circles. Gaziano and McGrath (1986), for example, have

outlined 12 factors they believe combine to make up the umbrella concept of "credibility", including dimensions such as fairness, lack of bias, accuracy, the separation of fact and opinion, and trust.

Tsfati and Cappella (2003, p. 505) make a link between trust and credibility when they argue that trust "is the expectation that the interaction with the trustee would lead to gains, rather than losses, for the trustor ... Given the uncertainty embedded in the situation, credibility is a central element in trust." As both of my journal articles dealing with Al Jazeera's presence in Australia demonstrate, the ABC and SBS "trust" AJE's news content and more broadly the channel itself. For example, Gaven Morris (personal communication, October 24, 2013), Head of News Content at ABC and Controller of *ABC News24*, says AJE provides the ABC with "a trusted source of content" in exchange for the opportunity to expand its audience.

I argue in both journal articles that AJE gains credibility with Australian news consumers through its association with the well-regarded brands of the Australian public broadcasters. As noted in *Al Jazeera and the Australian Broadcasters*, both the ABC and SBS — but especially the ABC — enjoy very high positive perceptions of trust with the Australian public. Not only do these partnerships associate Al Jazeera's brand with that of the ABC, but with the brands of the other major content partners of the ABC and SBS, such as the BBC, CNN and Deutsche Welle.

Structure of thesis

The published component of this thesis has four elements: one book; and three journal articles.

The book, ***18 Days: Al Jazeera English and the Egyptian Revolution*** (2013, Editia), examines AJE's coverage of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. It addresses research questions 2 and 3 by unpacking the channel's coverage of the

event which lead to its 'moment'; and gives context to a discussion in other thesis elements about AJE's role in the Australian media landscape.

Any large research project evolves over time and *18 Days* stands as an early output of this project. It is an articulation of the first iteration of my findings, opinions and arguments, and for the purposes of this thesis must be read as such.

Journal article 1, ***Moments: A Heuristic for Understanding News Media Turning Points*** (submitted for review by *Communication Research and Practice*), problematises the concept of a news media "moment" and proposes a heuristic for analysing such moments.

Journal article 2, ***Al Jazeera in Australia*** (published online in 2016 by *Communication Research and Practice*; scheduled for print publication in volume 3(2), 2017), looks at the history of the network's presence in the Australian traditional media market and looks to its online future. This article addresses all four research questions and sets up a solid foundation for the second journal article.

Journal article 3, ***Al Jazeera and the Australian Public Broadcasters*** (published in volume 9(1), 2016, by the *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*), investigates exactly how the ABC and SBS use Al Jazeera English content in their own news bulletins, and what this means for all three broadcasters. This article addresses research question 4.

Built around the four published elements are three chapters. An introductory chapter expands upon the themes contained in the published elements, provides more theoretical context, and ties together all elements into a coherent whole; a methodology chapter explains the research process involved in all elements of the thesis; and finally, a conclusion chapter ties together all elements of the thesis and recaps my arguments.

Appendix A contains a letter from the publisher of *18 Days: Al Jazeera and the Egyptian Revolution* describing the process of review the manuscript went through before publication.

Appendices B-E contain non-peer reviewed articles I published throughout the course of my research for this thesis. These are included to demonstrate application of my research beyond the academy.

2. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Howell (2013) defines methodology as a *strategy* that guides a researcher's approach, while methods are the *means* of data collection within that strategy. The methodology I employed for this thesis was very heavily influenced not only by my own experience working around journalists, but the journalistic subject matter of the research. The practices and processes of journalism feel very familiar and effective to me and they shaped my approach to this work. As a consequence, I took up the task of researching the book, and to a lesser extent the two published journal articles, as an investigative journalist would: talk to people, gather material, analyse and recount findings in an accessible fashion, as faithfully and openly as possible, after analysing the data and making judgements. Research for this thesis was both qualitative and quantitative, although much more heavily the former.

Lamble (2004) shows quite nicely how there is a strong crossover between the profession of journalism and the academy, although it has been argued for some time that the academy lacks a well documented methodology of journalism. This is not to say that any journalism methodology is sound — as Lamble points out, too much of journalists' reflection on their work is undisciplined and unfocused — but nonetheless journalists do work within a methodological framework. And despite its lack of robust documentation, it is this framework that I adopted.

Underpinning this entire thesis is my personal experience as a freelance employee of Al Jazeera English — I worked as a director in Doha for nine months between October 2010 and November 2011. It was this professional relationship with the broadcaster that sparked my interest in researching Al Jazeera, and which allowed me to secure much of the access I required to do so. As I write in the preface to *18 Days*, I worked at AJE before and after the Egyptian Revolution, but not during. This coincidental timing of my contracts allowed me some distance from the events in question, but at the same time a unique insight into the channel that many other researchers do not have.

The network that I built while working for AJE gave me access to research data that I doubt I would have been able to gather had I not worked for the network. Starting with an initial interview with the managing director, and all the way down the editorial chain. My experience as an employee intimately involved with bulletin production helped me to ask questions that may not have seemed obvious to others. An understanding of work practices allowed me to dig deeper and in a more deliberately guided fashion.

Watt (2007) reminds us that the qualitative researcher is also the primary "tool" of research as it is through the researcher that all data must pass. This requires, above all, reflexivity with respect to personal beliefs, assumptions, biases, blindspots and the like. Indeed, not only was I an ex-employee of the organisation in question, I also had personal relationships with several of the research subjects. While these potential risks and conflicts could never be totally eliminated (and in some ways were advantageous in terms of the access they provided), I worked hard to constantly reflect on how my circumstances might be impacting the results generated by my research. This reflection included long, detailed conversations with my book editor, supervisor and fellow academic researchers. I was also alert to the dangers of cherry picking research data to reinforce personal opinions I'd developed about Al Jazeera during the term of my employment.

Notes on *18 Days: Al Jazeera English and the Egyptian Revolution*

By my reckoning, at the beginning of my research for *18 Days* there was no published literature about AJE specifically — only a reasonable body of work about Al Jazeera as a larger organisation. By the time *18 Days* was published, one dedicated book about AJE had been released ('Al Jazeera English', Seib, 2013) but it was an academic collection less likely to be accessed by general readers. I initially intended*18 Days* to be an academic project but was concerned about the general appeal of such material. Given the complete absence of published work about AJE for a general reader, I decided instead to

produce an accessible work of narrative non-fiction, albeit a piece built on detailed, academic research.

I selected the genre of narrative non-fiction due to the strong and obvious storyline of the events of the 18 days which in turn drove and framed events within the AJE organisation. I explored two simultaneous journeys: that of the protesters in Tahrir Square, and that of the AJE staff producing the channel's reporting. The broader purpose was to use the events of January and February 2011 as a hook for a larger examination of AJE as a news organisation and broadcaster.

Research methods for the book involved 23 interviews, on and off the record, between October 2011 and May 2013. I made two research trips to Doha, Qatar in January, 2012, and May, 2013, to interview key figures in person. A few interviews were conducted via Skype. The interviews included:

- AJE Managing Director, Al Anstey (twice)
- The three most senior editorial figures at AJE at the time
    - Head of news, Salah Negm
    - Head of newsgathering, Sarah Worthington
    - Head of output, Heather Allan
- Head of Online, Mohamed Nanabhay
- Three news anchors who were on air at key moments during the Revolution
    - Kamahl Santamaria
    - Adrian Finighan
    - Sohail Rahman
- Eight journalists who reported on the ground in Egypt during the Revolution
    - Hoda Abdel-Hamid
    - Ayman Mohyeldin
    - Jamal Elshayyal
    - Dan Nolan

    - Rawya Rageh
    - Jane Dutton
    - Sherine Tadros
    - Evan Hill
- Head of Operations, Ric O'Connor
- Six key editorial and operations staff based in Doha during the Revolution
    - Head Arabic-English interpreter, Mustafa Barakat
    - Director, Richard Filby
    - Director, Ben Bawden
    - Text producer, Alice Carruth
    - Program producer, Matthew Moore
    - Producer, [anonymous and off the record]

Most interviewees for 18 Days were selected deliberately, and I sought to ensure I had a representative cross-section of people across the newsroom and from in the field. I worked extremely hard to secure interviews with each of the most senior editorial staff and, indeed, the managing director of AJE. I set out to interview the most prominent of the on air journalists both in Egypt and in the studio, securing access to most of them, and then I took several opportunities to interview other journalists to whom I had access. Lower down in the editorial chain, I tried to interview at least one person in each key section, satisfying myself with whoever I could most easily organise an interview with.

Interviews were semi-structured. I went in with a list of questions and topic areas I wanted to discuss and followed up on interviewees' responses or thoughts as I thought necessary.

My research also drew on a comprehensive content analysis of AJE's televised output and online material: I watched tapes of all 18 days of coverage in real time taking thousands of words of notes along the way and going back to transcribe off air as necessary. These notes informed my research interviews. I also conducted a vast literature review of academic work, newspaper and magazine articles, YouTube videos and Twitter streams.

Although underplayed in 18 Days (as both a stylistic choice and after discussions with my publisher and editor), there events depicted within the AJE organisation involve much conflict between employees which was reflected in differing accounts given to me in my interviews. This was most obvious in the sequence of events told in chapter 7, Day of Departure.

As I was speaking to journalists, there were several occasions when interviewees requested to speak "off the record" or "on background" about controversial topics or events. I granted these requests because the information they revealed was useful to my overall research, and because it helped to develop trust. On one occasion I entered negotiations with one interviewee to allow me to use some of his off the record quotes on the record as they were quite necessary to add weight to the Day of Departure chapter. We finally settled on a form of words that he was comfortable with and that I believed to be a faithful representation of his beliefs.

I began researching and writing the book without seeking interest from any publisher, with the hope that a draft of the manuscript might make the project more attractive. The eventual publisher, Editia, offered me a contract for publication on the basis of my second draft.

Through Editia, the manuscript went through the standard commercial publication process. After I incorporated significant feedback from the publisher into subsequent drafts, an experienced editor was hired by Editia and assigned to the project. I worked with the editor over two subsequent drafts of the manuscript as she worked on flow and clarity, but also put the manuscript through a rigorous fact checking process. At the editor's request, I supplied her with links to all referenced material and had discussions about the synthesis of other research data.

At the end of the editing process *18 Days* was a slightly slimmer book (approximately 10,000 words shorter), but the substance had not substantially changed.

As I completed the book I became aware that it had raised a lot more questions than it had answered. In particular, I think the book merely touched on the major question of what the Egyptian Revolution meant for AJE and Al Jazeera in the broader context of the organisation's history. One area that seemed ripe for academic research was Al Jazeera's presence in Australia, given that it was, as far as I could tell, a completely unexplored aspect of the network's expansion around the world. It was also a research gap that I was very well placed to fill.

It was the concept of AJE's 'moment' that gave me the hook for a broader analysis of Al Jazeera for this thesis. I knew from my own anecdotal experience that the revolution had kickstarted a greater awareness of AJE in Australia. At the same time, I had noticed Al Jazeera content on the ABC and SBS and was curious to know more about the partnerships between those broadcasters. I decided to find out if there was any cross-over between the revolution, AJE's moment, and this secondary expansion in Australia.

As the publisher and I agreed to pitch the book at a general readership, I did not place the barrier of references in the reader's way, despite the highly researched nature of my work. For the purpose of this thesis I have gone back through the book page by page and inserted references for all cited material.

Notes on *Moments: A Heuristic for Analysing News Media Turning Points*

Moments: A Heuristic for Analysing News Media Turning Points has been submitted for review by *Communication Research and Practice*.

While presented in this thesis before the other two journal articles, this article was conceived and written last, and draws heavily on the research I conducted for the other published elements. While working on the book and articles I was constantly engaged with the idea of a news media "moment" and realised that it lacked a proper conceptualisation in the literature. To supplement research

borrowed from other published elements, I conducted an exhaustive survey of the literature to determine how the concept of a news media moment is currently understood and represented in the academy.

Notes on *Al Jazeera in Australia* and *Al Jazeera and the Australian Public Broadcasters*

Al Jazeera in Australia has been published online and is scheduled for print publication in volume 3, issue 2 of *Communication Research and Practice* (2017).

Al Jazeera and the Australian Public Broadcasters was published in volume 9, issue 1 of the *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research* (2016).

My research for these articles included, firstly, a comprehensive literature review which confirmed my suspicion that there was no existing research regarding Al Jazeera's presence in Australia. It has been touched on tangentially a couple of times, but nothing of depth exists in the literature.

I then conducted an exhaustive review of all available online material with respect to Al Jazeera's presence in Australia over time. I used this to put together a detailed chronology of Al Jazeera in Australia. There may be a few missing pieces but I am confident that my account is as comprehensive as is possible from publicly available material.

I particularly focused on AJE's reciprocal broadcast agreements with the ABC and SBS. To gain insight about these partnerships I negotiated access to senior figures at both networks, securing interviews with the ABC's Head of News Content, Gaven Morris, and SBS World News' Executive Producer, Andrew Clarke, along with senior editorial staff at ABC News24 and ABC NewsRadio. I also reviewed all available public feedback to the ABC regarding Al Jazeera and submitted a successful Freedom of Information request to SBS for access to their feedback.

After initially experiencing some difficulty in obtaining interviews with Al Jazeera staff for these two sections of the thesis, I eventually secured interviews with Hasan Patel, Senior Executive in the AJMN Communications Department, and Ziad Ramley, Online Analyst at AJE. These interviews allowed me to fill in some detail in the Al Jazeera in Australia chronology, but were especially important in understanding the relationship between Al Jazeera and the Australian public broadcasters. Most crucially, these interviews provided clarity about Al Jazeera's strategy in Australia and the importance of its online operation.

Finally, I conducted content analysis of the ABC and SBS's news output in order to put hard numbers on the amount and kind of AJE content the two broadcasters used. I analysed one distributed week of data from three sources to gain a reasonable overview.

18 DAYS: AL JAZEERA ENGLISH AND THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

Scott Bridges

Editia (2013)

PREFACE

When I started writing this book in late 2011, Hosni Mubarak was gone but the Egyptian people's struggle continued. By the time I was locking down the manuscript in mid-2013, Egypt's first democratically elected president had just been forced out of office by either a second revolution or a military coup, depending on who you talked to. By the time it was first published in November 2013, thousands more Egyptians had died in widespread clashes across the country.

A revolution's start and end points are rarely discrete, easily identifiable moments in time. While the Police Day protests of 25 January stand as the most likely starting point of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, there are many schools of thought on when it ended, although most believe it to be Mohamed Morsi's election in mid-2012. While in no way wishing to oversimplify what is an extremely complex series of events that have taken place over many years, for the sake of convenience in this book I use "Revolution" to refer to the 18 days between the first protests on 25 January 2011, and Hosni Mubarak's resignation.

I worked two stretches as a director at Al Jazeera English between October 2010 and November 2011. My first contract finished two days before the Revolution started, and I watched the Day of Rage unfold via AJE's web stream while travelling. Facing a sudden change in staffing requirements, AJE asked if I could return immediately but other work commitments prevented me from flying back to Doha. I started my second contract four months later at a channel that had changed significantly. While not having had the chance to work on such a historic broadcast is quite frustrating on a personal level, being away during the Revolution has allowed me to analyse AJE's coverage of those events with a combination of familiarity and distance.

While this is one of only a very few books that have yet been written about Al Jazeera English, it does not strive to serve as a definitive reference. What I hope is that by providing a critical account of the biggest moment in AJE's first five

years, this book will add to a growing body of work that, when taken together, helps readers better understand this intriguing and complex news operation.

INTRODUCTION

And just like that, it was over.

At a few minutes past 6pm on Friday 11 February 2011, Egyptian State Television broadcast a pre-recorded statement by the recently appointed vice president, Omar Suleiman. The grim-faced Suleiman, standing at a lectern in an anonymous room and accompanied by a single official, spoke briefly and without ceremony.

"In the name of Allah the most gracious, most merciful ..."

Inside a dusty suburban building in Doha, Qatar, Al Jazeera English presenter Adrian Finighan watched the statement live on air, accompanied by simultaneous in-house English translation. Around him, the usually raucous newsroom was utterly silent as journalists and producers huddled around monitors.

"My fellow citizens, at these hard circumstances our country is experiencing, President Muhammed Hosni Mubarak has decided to waive the office of the President of the Republic, and instructed the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to run the affairs of the country."

Egypt's ruler for over 29 years, toppled by 18 days of protests and a 32-second television statement; popular revolution on the streets sealed by a press release.

"May God guide our steps."

Omar Suleiman had barely finished speaking before Egyptian State TV's animated logo filled the screen and AJE's translator relayed Suleiman's final words. Viewers around the world, via satellite or internet live feed, watched as AJE cut away from the Egyptian broadcaster to its own now-familiar live camera overlooking tens of thousands of protesters in Tahrir Square, and heard Finighan calmly confirm what had just happened: "There you go, short but sweet. Hosni Mubarak has gone."

It was a moment of triumph for millions of Egyptians who had defied a decades-old police state and risked everything to demand change. As the streets of Egypt erupted in reaction to Suleiman's announcement, the contrast between AJE's coverage and that of its competitors was stark. CNN's translator stumbled over the Suleiman statement and then the network crossed for reaction to a correspondent standing on an anonymous street, well away from the action. MSNBC's anchor, as reported by the *New York Times* (Stanley, 2011), "turned to the correspondent Richard Engel in Cairo and asked him what he could 'glean' from Mr Suleiman's brief statement." Fox News' correspondent in Cairo, in response to a question about the meaning of the giant roar erupting from Tahrir Square, answered simply, "I don't know." (FoxNewsInsider, 2011). But on AJE, over a montage of multiple live camera shots of heaving crowds in Cairo and Alexandria, Adrian Finighan simply repeated, "That's what they were waiting for, Hosni Mubarak has gone." And then he stopped talking. For seven minutes and 20 seconds.

Seven minutes and 20 seconds — an eternity in TV news — with no sound except for the cheering of thousands and thousands of Egyptians. AJE's pictures were grainy, with washed-out colours, and the sound was muffled, but the jubilation and intense emotion captured by the cameras were unmistakable. Flags were held aloft, waves of humans jumped and danced, fists were pumped in the air. The thick orange text strap at the bottom of the screen, which had been the source of a constant stream of news for viewers around the world for so many days, now read simply, "MUBARAK STEPS DOWN".

Seven minutes and twenty seconds later, Finighan, his voice calm as ever, spoke over the pictures of celebration. "The roar of the crowd says it all," he noted, evidently deciding there was nothing else he needed to say. A few months later, *GQ* magazine (Paterniti, 2011) called it the channel's "climactic moment ... while the other networks fumbled for meaning and explanation."

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Barely four years old when protests kicked off on 25 January 2011, Al Jazeera English was an upstart Middle Eastern satellite channel that over the next 18 days outplayed and outclassed its more established competitors across the English-speaking world. It attracted millions of new viewers during the first week of the revolution as other broadcasters struggled to match the depth and quality of its coverage. Despite AJE being available worldwide to over 200 million households with a satellite dish, many new viewers (including almost all in the US) had no choice but to watch the channel via its live web stream, which registered an incredible 2500 per cent traffic surge in just hours (Mohamed Nanabhay, personal communication, January 18, 2012).

Many people who watched television coverage of the Egyptian Revolution noticed a difference between AJE and its competitors. Aside from the live, continuous, sentinel-like camera shots of Tahrir Square that came to be the channel's on-air hallmark, commentators suggested that AJE's reporting demonstrated a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of events, their context, and their implications. Robert F. Worth in the *New York Times* (Worth, 2011) said that AJE "provided more exhaustive coverage than anyone else"; Laura Washington in the *Chicago Sun-Times* (Washington, 2011) said AJE delivered "first-rate, incisive content"; White House television sets are reported to have been tuned to AJE during the revolution (MacNicol, 2011).

Overall, AJE's reporting of the story was unique in three ways: the depth and breadth of newsgathering, sheer quantity of airtime devoted to broadcasting the story, and a focus on the people at the centre of it.

In contrast with its competitors, Al Jazeera English at a whole-of-channel level had prioritised the developing crisis in Egypt to the exclusion of very nearly everything else. For over two weeks, the broadcast schedule was cleared and the regular day-to-day pattern of news bulletins was ignored. AJE dedicated itself 24 hours per day to reporting events in Egypt and airing special in-depth current affairs programs, and in the process made itself the channel of reference. This "journalism of depth", as managing director Al Anstey (personal communication, October 11, 2011) calls it, requires not just good journalists and support staff, but

a well-resourced organisation. And Al Jazeera English, funded generously by the Qatari government, is in a unique position compared to almost any other news outfit. It could afford to move people and equipment around the world to staff a specialised newsgathering operation that spanned multiple countries. Commercial breaks could be dropped for days at a time with no fear of diminished revenue streams threatening the integrity of the operation. Once the decision was made to "roll" with the Egypt story, the prevailing attitude at Al Jazeera English was "whatever it takes", and it had the resources required to do whatever it took.

In addition to three well-staffed newsrooms around the world, Al Jazeera English had more reporters in more places across Egypt, including no fewer than five correspondents who are either Egyptian-born or who have Egyptian heritage. Other reporters on the ground boasted long experience covering Egypt and were supported by producers with similar backgrounds. On the Day of Rage, when the world turned its attention to Egypt, AJE had five reporters plus their teams in three cities across the country, coordinated from the channel's long-established bureau in Cairo. Unlike journalists from other networks who were "parachuted" into the story, AJE's understood the historical context of events they were witnessing.

Having reporters on the ground equipped with local knowledge and language, and newsgathering tenacity, provided much of the channel's competitive advantage. Correspondents Ayman Mohyeldin and Rawya Rageh went knocking on doors and gained the trust of residents to secure exclusive live camera positions; Jamal Elshayyal and Hoda Abdel-Hamid tapped into local networks to get information that others simply could not; Dan Nolan and Sherine Tadros deliberately put themselves into situations of danger to report the story as best they could. The whole team in Egypt worked creatively in a difficult and fast-changing environment as communication systems were disabled and equipment was stolen and confiscated.

For all the success that AJE experienced in reporting on the Egyptian Revolution, there were many setbacks along the way. From time to time, the channel's presenters made low-key references to the challenges staff were facing in Egypt,

but there was a lot more going on behind the cameras than was apparent to viewers. A few days into the protests, AJE's Cairo bureau was shut down by security forces, necessitating a transfer of operations to a cluster of rooms in an adjacent hotel. A few days later, these hotel rooms were raided by the military and all journalists and producers present at the time were arrested for several hours. Out in the field, Ayman Mohyeldin was detained by the military for nine hours and Andrew Simmons was pulled out of a taxi and beaten by Mubarak supporters.

Journalists' lives were frequently at serious risk. In Alexandria, Rawya Rageh and her team were targeted by a mob of machete-wielding pro-Mubarak protesters and spent a night hiding in cupboards and under beds. Ten days later, Jamal Elshayyal and his team, also reporting from Alexandria, had knives held to their necks by a group of thugs. Dan Nolan spent a frightening night sheltering in a Tahrir Square mosque after getting caught up in vicious street battles.

Most controversially, midway through the revolution, a tense stand-off regarding safety took place between the Doha newsroom and staff on the ground, with some of the Cairo team unilaterally relocating to a new hotel base and management withdrawing them from Egypt the next day. The incident led to one journalist resigning from AJE shortly after the revolution.

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Many have drawn what appears to be an obvious parallel between AJE's Egyptian Revolution moment and CNN's so-called "Gulf War moment". The *New York Times*' Alessandra Stanley (2011) says, "Al Jazeera English seemed intent on using the upheaval in Egypt to assume the kind of authoritative role that CNN had during the 1991 Persian Gulf war"; NPR's Andy Carvin thinks AJE's coverage of Egypt was "very reminiscent of CNN and the start of the first Gulf War" (Bergman, 2011); Jeff Jarvis (2011) wrote at the *Huffington Post*, "What the Gulf War was to CNN, the people's revolutions of the Middle East are to Al Jazeera English."

But the difference is that in 1991, to many in the West, CNN was a known quantity, while Al Jazeera English in 2011 was not. The English-language offshoot of the original Al Jazeera had struggled since launch in 2006 to shake the network's "terror TV" reputation — throughout its life, Al Jazeera has been accused of broadcasting terrorist beheadings (it hasn't) and has been attacked for running Osama bin Laden statements (even though those same statements were also aired by competitors such as CNN). In 2004, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld famously said, "What Al Jazeera is doing is vicious, inaccurate, and inexcusable … [it is] peddling lies … [it is] a mouthpiece of Al Qaeda." (Douglas, 2011; Gornall, 2011). Fox News' Bill O'Reilly has been particularly scathing of the "anti-American" Al Jazeera, once saying, "If you go on that show and [speak against the editorial line] you'll get a bullet in the head when you walk out." (Biz Buzz, 2011).

Despite this, by 11 February 2011, Al Jazeera English was front and centre on the world news stage, and its name and logo had, in the eyes of many, come to stand for quality journalism. Praise for AJE came from unlikely sources — US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared in the wake of the Egyptian Revolution that AJE provides "real news" (Gornall, 2011); Donald Rumsfeld did an astonishing U-turn when he appeared on the channel in September 2011 and said, "[AJE] can be an important means of communication in the world and I'm delighted you're doing what you're doing." (Douglas, 2011).

Since Mubarak's fall, AJE has worked incredibly hard to capitalise on the success of its Egypt coverage and further impress these new viewers. But as the frontline of the "Arab Spring" moved from North Africa into the Middle East throughout 2011 and 2012, the network attracted criticism for what some saw as under-reporting of unrest in Bahrain (a close ally of Qatar) (Stelter, 2011, August 9), and reporting from Libya that aligned very closely with Qatari foreign policy (Baker, 2011). During the protests that led to Mohamed Morsi's ouster in 2013, AJE and its sister channels attracted accusations of bias in favour of the Muslim Brotherhood (Farhi, 2013), and Al Jazeera's Egyptian channel was shut down by Egyptian authorities.

In early 2013 Al Jazeera announced the purchase of Current TV in the US, giving the network instant access to an estimated 60 million homes across the country (BBC News, 2013). Al Jazeera America launched in August 2013 and preparations are underway for British and French franchises of the news network. As this book goes to press, more people than ever before are watching AJE and trying to decide what to make of this enigmatic Qatari organisation.

Whatever the future holds, there is no doubt that by making itself *the* authoritative source on one of the biggest stories of the 21st century so far, AJE established itself as a serious news source in the minds of new and old viewers alike. The revolution was not of Al Jazeera's making, but over 18 days Al Jazeera English reported an amazing story being written in real time by the Egyptian people, and reported it better than anyone else. This book tells the story of those 18 days.

CHAPTER 1: A NOISY MATCHBOX

"This matchbox! All this noise is coming out of this matchbox?"
— Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, visiting Al Jazeera's Doha studio in 1999 (Friedman, 2011)

The road from Doha International Airport to Al Jazeera headquarters glides around a horseshoe-shaped bay towards the tiny Gulf state's iconic cluster of mismatched, futuristic skyscrapers. An army of foreign workers from the sub-continent and south-east Asia tend to the road's median strip, watering lush grass and flower beds with large hosepipes gushing desalinated water in the middle of 40-degree-Celsius days. Signs along the road in Arabic and English wish drivers a safe journey, although safely negotiating the whites-of-your-eyes traffic requires more luck than hope.

About halfway along the Corniche, the route turns inland and allows brief acceleration past the international tennis centre, sticking up out of the sand like a large, purple Ikea flatpack construction, and then the enormous and modern State Mosque surrounded by a shopping-centre–style carpark. Constant traffic jams allow close-range observation of dishdasha-clad, mobile-phone–wielding men driving LandCruisers complete with still-attached import stickers and plastic-wrapped headrests. This is affluent Qatar, where citizens enjoy one of the highest levels of individual wealth in the world and cars are practically disposable.

The entrance to the Al Jazeera compound (shared with Qatar State TV) is off Television Roundabout, a massive intersection ringed by a 24-hour laundry, an Indian restaurant, a hair "saloon", a bicycle shop, and an electronics retailer. The entrance looks at once half-finished and rundown, with booths at either side connected overhead by a rusty awning. A gaggle of armed State security officers lazily check drivers' and passengers' ID in between cups of tea, while dirty cats sleep under whatever shade they can find. A second checkpoint at the entrance to the dedicated Al Jazeera carpark is manned by another security officer, who pokes a mirror under the odd car and checks boots and glove-boxes. A third security booth between Al Jazeera's carpark and inner compound houses an X-ray

machine and metal detector through which all employees and visitors must pass. ID is again flashed here unless the duty officer is one of the many friendly ones who are happy to wave through familiar faces.

Inside the Al Jazeera compound, neatly tended lawns ringed by palm trees are a surprising and pleasant antidote to the washed out, rundown and dusty environment of the carpark and surrounding suburbia. On opposite sides of a narrow driveway sit two squat, boxy buildings with white concrete walls and faded blue metal roofs — Al Jazeera Arabic to the right and Al Jazeera English to the left — practically identical except for the extra storey of height on AJE's building. A welcome blast of air conditioning greets visitors inside the sliding glass doors of the AJE building, where the foyer is filled out by a modest collection of trophies and awards in glass cabinets, a token scattering of ancient television equipment, a prepaid-phone recharge kiosk, and a branch of the Al Jazeera Network's travel agency.

AJE's newsroom and studio occupy a single enormous open space at the heart of the building that is instantly recognisable to anyone who has ever watched the channel. At the beginning of each bulletin, a crane-mounted camera swings cinematically from a mezzanine floor, over the heads of journalists and producers sitting at banks of workstations, towards the presenter's desk at the front of the studio which is hugged by a massive concave videowall. At the back of the newsroom, furthest from the on-air presenter to allow for louder conversation, sits the circular "superdesk". This raised platform, overlooking the rows of producers in the newsroom, seats the senior journalists — executive producer and Heads of Output and Newsgathering — and others who need to work closely with them such as satellite bookers.

The newsroom buzzes with activity and its well-worn scruffiness attests to the level of activity it has witnessed in only a handful of years. Set around the studio over two floors are dozens of offices, housing everyone from the managing director to logistical staff, the sports and weather departments, graphic designers, edit suites and special program teams. Two studio control rooms sit off to one side of the studio — one is on air with rolling news bulletins for most of the day,

while the second (almost technically identical) serves as a backup to the first, and produces recorded programs out of two smaller bespoke studios elsewhere in the building.

There is a certain lovable chaos about the place. Journalists shout at each other from desk to desk, earning stern rebukes from the floor manager who warns them to be quiet; cleaners wander around running dusters along things and occasionally starring in accidentally hilarious on-air cameos; staff gather in the canteen on their breaks to gossip about work and complain about the food.

The Independent's Robert Fisk once spent a week at AJE, working in the newsroom and appearing on air to offer commentary. He later wrote about his experience (mentioning Maurice the newsroom cat, who has her own Facebook page):

A bumblebee-sized fly whizzes round the head of the presenter and bashes into my nose ... 'My goodness!' I cried aloud to the presenter, live and on air, 'You've got a rogue fly in your studio.' Then my eye moved towards one of the cameras, only to see a stray cat wandering across the studio. Was it normal to have wildlife on this scale in their state-of-the-art studio? I quickly discovered that it was. There is another stray cat and he/she once went on air, a set of furry paws walking carefully along the top of the screen behind the presenter's head and visible to viewers around the world. (Fisk, 2011).

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The Al Jazeera Network, in addition to Al Jazeera Arabic (AJA) and Al Jazeera English, features no fewer than 16 sports channels, a children's programming channel, a documentary channel, and a live events channel. The Al Jazeera news brand continues to expand internationally with Al Jazeera Balkans and Al Jazeera America now on air and plans in the pipeline for Turkish, French and British franchises. (Al Jazeera Kiswahili was long mooted, but at the time of writing is "on hold" according to AJE's managing director.)

Al Jazeera's genesis is very much a story of one man: the now ex-Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. After Sheikh Hamad seized power from his father in a peaceful coup in 1995, he set about liberalising the country's media by abolishing the Ministry of Information and planning a new project. Al Jazeera ("The Peninsula") news channel launched on 1 November 1996, with an initial grant of 500 million Qatari rials (approximately US$137 million) and a recurring annual grant of about US$100 million. It started small, broadcasting for only a handful of hours a day and to a limited terrestrial audience, but expanded its broadcasting hours and reach (through satellite transmission) until it was broadcasting 24 hours per day by January 1999. Most of the launch staff were recruited from the BBC Arabic operation, which closed in April of 1996 due to issues of censorship with the Saudi Arabian co-owners. (Miles, 2005).

While opinion is mixed about the emir's motivations for investing so much money in a consistently loss-making venture, most analysts see it as an exercise in diplomacy by a rich and savvy ruler of a small and vulnerable nation. Philip Seib, author of a number of books on Al Jazeera and Qatar, argues in a Huffington Post article (Seib, 2011) that Al Jazeera was created to "increase international recognition of the country's aspirations in the Arab world and beyond. With great wealth but limited 'hard power', Qatar envisioned the Al Jazeera enterprise as a soft power equalizer, enhancing the nation's clout without resorting to the traditional process of building up military strength and then acting in menacing ways."

From the moment of its launch, Al Jazeera was a rapid departure from the kind of state-owned television that was (and still is) standard across the Middle East. Mohamed Zayani and Sofiane Sahraoui, associate professors at the University of Sharjah, note in their book The Culture of Al Jazeera that, "Broadly speaking, state-owned media tend to be dull, shallow and parochial ... A typical newscast and public affairs program advertises the achievements of the government and extols the virtues of high-ranking officials ... The cult of personality is imposing in Arab broadcasting, giving the impression that media exist to broadcast the activities of the local potentate and to glorify the leadership ... Media in the Arab

world have always been perceived as an extension of the government." (Zayani & Sahraoui, 2007, p. 14)

But Al Jazeera, despite its reliance on the state of Qatar for its very existence, broke this mould. Seib (2011), writing at the Huffington Post, says that, "Al Jazeera reshaped the Arab public sphere by discussing government corruption, the role of women in Arab society, and other matters long ignored by the staid government-run news organizations in the region." Seib and others argue that Al Jazeera was instrumental in building a transnational Arab public sphere (Lynch, 2006).

As Hugh Miles (2005) explains at length in his excellent book, Al-Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World, the original Al Jazeera had a long history of genuinely good journalism long before most of the non-Arab world even knew it existed, especially when seen in the context of what journalism and media looked like in the Middle East before it came along.

Wadah Khanfar (2011), the first director general of the Al Jazeera Network, saw one of Al Jazeera's original roles to be "staring down governments that want to monopolize information in the Arab world." And that staring down of governments caused lots of diplomatic headaches for its host country. By 2002, most Arab League countries had protested Al Jazeera's coverage of their affairs, and six (Saudi Arabia, Libya, Morocco, Kuwait, Jordan and Tunisia) had at some stage withdrawn their ambassadors from Qatar. By 2005, over 450 official complaints had been made to the Qatari government by other states. Miles (2005, p. 58) says that "Arab ambassadors in Doha said they felt more like ambassadors to a TV channel than ambassadors to a country".

Even on that most fraught of Middle Eastern issues, Israel-Palestine, Al Jazeera broke new ground, even if it didn't always get the balance right. Al Jazeera was the first Arab broadcaster to regularly give Israeli officials a platform for their views — something that many viewers found shocking. Miles (2005) notes that viewers used to phone the channel regularly to register complaints about "lying" Israelis on their TV screens.

Khaled Hroub of the Gulf Research Center, University of Cambridge, argues that Al Jazeera's growing engagement with all players was in line with the emir's foreign policy aspirations. "Qatar has created strong links with both Israel and many Islamist movements, including Hamas and Hezbollah," he says. "It has been an aggressive and risky foreign policy, but Al Thani clearly believes that he can fill a regional leadership vacuum" (Hroub, 2011). It's obvious to any observer that Qatar's foreign policy ambitions have only strengthened in the years since Al Jazeera's launch.

As far as the West, and especially the US was concerned, there was nothing much to worry about in the beginning. Al Jazeera, broadcasting in Arabic and to a fairly limited audience on a global scale, was not perceived as a threat to Western geopolitical interests. If anything, in its early years, Al Jazeera was seen as something of a democratic force in a region light on democracy. But then everything changed after 11 September 2001. With the Middle East suddenly central to the US's interests, Al Jazeera's coverage of events in the region became a concern.

Al Jazeera's reporting on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, coming as it was from a very different perspective than the reporting of Western media organisations, attracted criticism from governments and commentators. The channel was called "Jihad TV", "killers with cameras", and "the most powerful ally of terror in the world". The US government became increasingly frustrated with its inability to control Al Jazeera in a war fought via the media as much as it was via the military (Miles, 2005), and for many in the West, Al Jazeera became synonymous with Al Qaeda.

But even amongst the fierce anti-Al Jazeera sentiment of the early 2000s, there were some who saw through the spin. In 2003, responding to the New York Stock Exchange's revocation of Al Jazeera's press credentials, the New York Times wrote, "[I]f our hope for the Arab world is ... for it to enjoy a free, democratic life, Al Jazeera is the kind of television station we should encourage." (Why Al Jazeera Matters, 2003)

Al Jazeera English

Al Jazeera English went to air for the first time on 15 November 2006, after months, if not years, of delay. It launched to 80 million homes around the world, costing the Qatari government around US$1 billion in addition to existing funding for the Al Jazeera Network. The initial broadcast model was built around four centres — Doha, London, Washington DC and Kuala Lumpur — with a roster of bulletins scheduled from each centre so news "followed the sun". Each newsroom was set up to work independently, to give the channel an international, multipolar face (Powers, 2012). AJE's stated mission at launch was to generate a contra-flow of information from the "global south to global north," and to give "voice to the voiceless." With this editorial stance, AJE was boldly attempting to differentiate itself from other 24-hour global news broadcasters.

Conceived as early as 2002 as a translated, subtitled and dubbed repackaging of the Arabic broadcast, Al Jazeera English transformed a number of times before its eventual unveiling. An English-language website, run somewhat separately from the Arabic operation and a precursor to a future television operation, launched in 2003 and was immediately brought down by repeated cyber-attacks seemingly originating from within the US.

As plans advanced, the Qatari government was actively attempting to moderate the worst excesses of the Arabic-language operation in response to US government pressure. In late 2003, the Bush administration downgraded the status of scheduled visits by the Qatari foreign minister and the emir's wife, and Qatar cancelled the trips in response to this insult. Shawn Powers, assistant professor at Georgia State University's Department of Communication, writes in Al Jazeera English: Global News in a Changing World that the diplomatic incident "solidified Sheikh Hamad's decision to invest substantially to create a news network that would once and for all clear Al Jazeera's name in the West" (Powers, 2012, p. 18).

While Al Jazeera International (as it was originally called) was primarily designed to be another cog in the emir's foreign policy machine, it was also intended to fill a perceived market niche.

"AJE was launched in the context of vast market opportunities and geopolitical necessities," says Powers (2012, p. 7). "In the aftermath of the attacks on 9/11, and the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, there was a growing demand for high-quality, timely reporting from the greater Middle East and other parts of the non-Western world historically underreported by Western news networks. In the eyes of Al Jazeera's management, there was a 'market failure' in terms of there being a demand for reporting from Afghanistan and the Middle East in English, based on Western journalistic sensibilities, that, according to then-editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Helal, their channel was well situated and 'morally obliged' to meet, given its unique vantage point and expertise."

And as journalists and producers were recruited over the next few years, their determination to do good journalism above all else shaped the channel.

William Stebbins was AJE's Washington DC bureau chief from foundation to 2010, and is now an adjunct professor of communications and consultant to the World Bank. "The early recruits to Al Jazeera English, myself included, were drawn by a compelling vision," he recalls in an article for Columbia Journalism Review. "It was to be the first truly global channel that did not come from any fixed cultural or national context, but rather addressed a heterogeneous audience by originating from four separate broadcast centers scattered around the world." (Stebbins, 2011)

Al Jazeera International was initially designed to operate independently from the Arabic channel. But this perceived shunning of the Al Jazeera legacy, combined with the overwhelmingly British flavour of the early planning (the three men tasked with building the channel were all British), and the choice of name (implying that the original Al Jazeera was not international), put the existing Arabic operation seriously off-side (Powers, 2012).

"There was an expectation that the English channel would be a more sober and sophisticated Al Jazeera, less parochial and operating with higher journalistic standards [than Al Jazeera Arabic]," says Stebbins (2011). "While this perception may have played to the English service's favor, it reflected poorly on the broad Al Jazeera brand, and that implication was never strenuously enough denied. Almost the entire staff were imported, with few of them having any real experience of the Middle East, and fewer still speaking any Arabic. There was a barely concealed discomfort with the sister Arabic channel amongst many of the new arrivals, coupled with the widespread belief that the path to success for Al Jazeera International ... was to emphasize the distance between the two ..."

Originally slated for launch in late 2004, there was still no sign of an on-air date by early 2006 despite a full complement of staff having been recruited across the four broadcast centres. Animosity at the original Al Jazeera operation was growing as staff watched their English-language counterparts receive better pay and conditions, and work in a larger building fitted out with superior technology. One Al Jazeera presenter told Shawn Powers (2012, p. 21), "we felt used, unappreciated, and even 'colonized' a bit. Over the short period of two years, we had gone from Kings and Queens of the Arab world to peons when compared to a 'British Boys Network' that is trading on our names, our blood, and our reputations. Many of us are heartbroken."

In an effort to ease tension, the chairman of the Al Jazeera board of directors promoted Wadah Khanfar from managing director of the original Al Jazeera operation to director general of the whole Al Jazeera Network, taking in both the Arabic and English channels. In May 2006, Ibrahim Helal, one of the launch recruits of Al Jazeera, was appointed deputy managing director at Al Jazeera International, and he set about integrating the new channel with the old — for instance, freelance consultants were engaged to brief the English channel's staff on the history and importance of Al Jazeera in the region. Helal was successful in having the launch put back to the end of 2006 and used the time to recruit widely from around the world in order to spice up the relatively monocultural flavour of the channel.

A mere three weeks before the channel's launch — scheduled to coincide with the ten-year anniversary of the launch of Al Jazeera — its name was changed from Al Jazeera International to Al Jazeera English at the urging of Helal, who argued that the new name indicated two sister channels of equal status rather than one superior worldwide version of a parochial other.

"In just six months prior to its launch," says Shawn Powers (2012, p. 23), "AJE had been streamlined, rebuilt, reorganized, and restaffed under far different auspices than its architects had originally conceived." Due to agitation from some journalists and core management, the new Al Jazeera channel was about to launch as a much closer sister to Al Jazeera Arabic than its designers had intended.

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It is 1200 GMT, 15 November 2006. After months of rehearsals, Al Jazeera English goes live.

The launch broadcast begins with a dramatic montage of key news moments since the genesis of Al Jazeera in 1996, focusing heavily on major events relevant to the Arab world such as the Second Intifada, terrorist attacks in the West, and the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. On-screen titles, set to a cinematic soundtrack, suggest that global media changed forever on the day of the original Al Jazeera launch. The Arabic channel's calligraphic logo appears on screen floating over water, and slowly transitions to the English channel's stylised version featuring "ALJAZEERA" written in English beneath it. A voiceover declares, "Welcome to Al Jazeera."

Presenters Shiulie Ghosh and Sami Zeidan are revealed, standing in front of the giant video-wall on the AJE set. "It's November the 15th, day one of a new era in television news," says Zeidan. "This is Al Jazeera." He and Ghosh then preview the stories coming up in that first bulletin, including live reports from correspondents in Gaza, Darfur, Tehran and Zimbabwe, along with a long list of other cities around the world.

They introduce the channel's first packaged story, which looks at the launch of Al Jazeera English and the history of Al Jazeera, and discusses where AJE will fit in to that legacy. Director General Wadah Khanfar, in an interview for the package, says that global conflicts are caused in large part by people not understanding each other. "Therefore," he claims, "Al Jazeera will bridge that divide and will try to introduce nations and cultures and civilisations to each other." The package wryly juxtaposes the Iraq and US governments each blaming Al Jazeera for spreading propaganda for the other, and then pays tribute to a rollcall of Al Jazeera staff who have been killed, beaten or arrested in the line of duty. It solemnly notes the controversial bombings of Al Jazeera offices in Kabul and Baghdad. "Al Jazeera brought to the world a new vision that will now be carried forward," concludes the voiceover. "It's a vision rooted in a sense of democracy and in the idea that everyone has the right to know."

Perhaps conscious of the expectations and concerns of those watching on that day, the first actual news story after the promotional package was a report from Gaza about Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel and retaliatory Israeli action. A leaked US diplomatic cable reporting on AJE's first day of broadcasting indicates that in the opinion of the US embassy, the news story was balanced.

The channel's output in those early days was extremely feature-heavy, focusing on in-depth coverage from areas of the world largely overlooked by existing news broadcasters, rather than adhering to the more traditional 24-hour news cycle. But over the years, AJE has drifted away from this model and towards a more standard "breaking news" format familiar to viewers of channels such as CNN and BBC World. To this day, however, AJE still broadcasts enormous amounts of original documentary material in its non-bulletin timeslots and is rightly lauded for its focus on this quality current-affairs aspect of news programming. John Owen, a senior producer at AJE, quoted in a 2011 FT Magazine article (Lloyd, 2011), says, "There's so much extraordinary documentary, long-form and programme material hitting air that even those inside Al Jazeera English can't keep up with it and don't have time to see all the output."

On air AJE got off to a smooth start, but internally the early years were quite bumpy. In 2008, the Guardian (Dowell, 2008) reported that "in the past two months, more than 15 staff have quit [AJE] amid varying complaints ranging from contractual disputes to budgetary pressures". The report suggested that tensions between Al Jazeera English and Al Jazeera Arabic continued post-AJE's launch, and that morale inside AJE was low. The departures included Head of News Steve Clark (whose wife, former Head of Planning Jo Burgin, had recently taken legal action against AJE) and high-profile American anchor, David Marash.

Marash quit AJE in 2008 over what he saw as the independent Washington DC newsroom being overridden by Doha on editorial matters, affecting, he claimed, the quality of stories regarding the Americas. One series of stories in particular, called "Poverty in America," was pitched by Doha but rejected, says Marash, by the DC newsdesk for being "stereotypical and shallow". But Doha "literally sneaked a production team into the United States without letting anyone in the American news desk know," he says, "and they went off and shot a four-part series that was execrable" (Cunningham, 2008). Marash was also dissatisfied at being bumped from hosting headline bulletins and assigned to the production of special programs. Wadah Khanfar is quoted in a leaked 2008 US diplomatic cable (US Embassy, Doha, 2008) as allegedly saying Marash was "too old" and "didn't look right" beside a co-anchor who was younger and more attractive.

Throughout its early years, many AJE staff have been confused by the channel's shifting and indistinct mission statements. University of Oslo researcher Tine Ustad Figenschou spoke to AJE editorial staff in 2007/08 and found many were frustrated by a scattergun approach to slogans and visions. A Doha-based manager told her, "There isn't one AJE, there are about seven of them. Whether it's the 'voice of the voiceless' or 'telling truth to power' or 'putting human beings at the core' ... And it's almost like people take from the shelf whatever kind of vision happens to occur to them at the time as being useful. The problem is some of them are mutually contradictory ... the upshot is that it is too broad" (Figenschou, 2012). To this day, AJE tends to reflect the personalities and quirks of senior editorial staff more than any well-articulated overarching vision.

Despite operating with a generous budget, AJE started to feel the financial strain of its fast-paced expansion after only a few years. An internal email sent in 2009 by then-Managing Director Tony Burman warns, "The recent budget review has convinced us that too much of our resources are going into expensive operational duplication across our broadcast centres and to very costly items such as real estate, transmission, etc. ... Looking ahead, these increasing costs run the risk of undermining our news and programme budgets, and affecting our determination to expand AJ/AJE newsgathering into more under-reported areas of the world" (Tryhorn, 2009). Restructuring due to financial pressures continues, with changes to the structure of non-Doha broadcast centres in late 2010, and a major consolidation of Arabic and English bureaus in late 2011. However, the network in early 2013 spent a rumoured US$500 million to purchase US network Current TV (Salma, 2013), and is investing vast sums of money to crack the US market and launch yet more channels around the world.

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Al Jazeera English in 2013 employs over a thousand people, representing 50-plus nationalities, who work in Doha, London and dozens of bureaus around the world. The channel transmits via satellite to 250 million households dotted throughout one hundred countries, maintains a hugely popular live web feed of its television broadcast, and attracts more than 2.5 million views of its YouTube content per month (Al Jazeera English, 2013; Al Anstey, personal communication, October 11, 2011)

The current managing director is a tall, self-assured and personable Briton named Al Anstey, who has acted in the role since late 2010. He's worked at AJE since launch as Head of News and, later, director of media development. Prior to that he worked for ITN in the UK and US, along with APTN, Reuters and CBS. Anstey has a clear vision of the channel he now leads. "The mission for Al Jazeera English when we started was to follow on from the start of Al Jazeera Arabic ten years previously," he says. "Al Jazeera English was set up with a similar mandate [to Al Jazeera Arabic] but to apply that on a global stage. So, to apply the sharp-end journalism, the journalism of depth ... [But] we had the original mission of

what I call 'truly international'. So, we're not seeing the world through an Arabic prism, we're not seeing the world through a Western prism, we're not seeing the world through an American prism. We're anti-nothing and pro-nothing." (personal communication, October 11, 2011).

At the time of the Egyptian Revolution, Al Jazeera English's senior editorial team was made up of three key figures. The Head of News is Salah Negm, an Egyptian journalist formerly of Al Jazeera Arabic and Al Arabiya, and appointed in 2009 from BBC Arabic in London. Diminutive and softly spoken, in contrast to his clout and presence in the newsroom, he is, in his own words, "the final editorial reference, the person who gives the general direction about how we cover the news." (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

Reporting directly to Negm, and working symbiotically, are Heather Allan, Head of Newsgathering, and Sarah Worthington, Head of Output. Allan, a South African, is a 30-year veteran of NBC News in the US. At AJE she is in charge of the newsdesk, the Planning department, foreign bureaus and "pretty much anything that goes on in the field and comes in to [Doha]" (personal communication, January 23, 2012). Sarah Worthington, a Briton, has worked for various news outlets in the US, including CNN. She is a launch member of AJE and is now responsible for how the news gathered by Allan's team is packaged and presented, considering "what production we do around it, how much attention we give to different stories [and] how we treat them" (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

AJE in early 2011 was already a very different channel to that which launched in 2006. In addition to the changes in news focus and style, it had started to shift away from the original structure of four independent broadcast centres that share output duties throughout the day. In 2010, the Kuala Lumpur broadcast centre was stripped of its four hours of dedicated bulletins (Doha took them over, taking it to 12 hours per day) and was reduced to injecting ten-minute belts of content into Doha's programs. In early 2011 there was already talk of a similar fate for the Washington DC and London centres, and the Egyptian Revolution only hastened the transition process from four equal broadcast centres to Doha as a central hub.

By April 2012, Washington DC had ceased injecting content into Doha's bulletins and London was responsible for only four hours of bulletins, in the middle of the Doha night.

Anstey believes the broadcast model's change reflects the natural evolution of Al Jazeera English. "We're headquartered in the Middle East but that doesn't mean we're a Middle Eastern channel," he says. "What we are implementing now is a central broadcasting hub with global input ... it's to do with the story, it's not to do with the location of the broadcast centre." (personal communication, October 11, 2011).

Anyone who has watched both Al Jazeera English and Al Jazeera Arabic will know that sometimes the only similarity between the two is the network logo in the corner of the screen. For this reason, conflating the two channels is a fundamental mistake when analysing one or the other. AJA necessarily has a different news focus than AJE — typical AJA bulletins are packed with stories from the Middle East and North Africa, from the perspective of the Middle East and North Africa, with a cursory look at news from outside that region. This is due to the fact that each channel is serving a vastly different audience.

Salah Negm notes that both channels are bound by the same editorial guidelines but that output is tailored to their respective audiences. "The difference will be in the scope of coverage and the priority of news items, how they fit in the news agenda and how much concentration or airtime we give to each item," he says. "That is governed by our audience and their audience. If you are broadcasting to the Middle East, stories that are relevant to the Middle East will take priority; when you are broadcasting to a global audience you take stories on merit, according to how many people do they affect, do they change political situations of countries, [what's] the significance and relevance of the story to either the general political scene or people's lives."

While Al Jazeera Arabic's audience is relatively easy to identify, Al Jazeera English's is much more diverse and amorphous. Negm says that one of the questions he asks in meetings to shape the newsroom's editorial approach is: "If

I am a citizen in a village in Congo, how do I understand this story?" (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

Beyond content, there is also a difference in tone between the two channels. Heather Allan says that the AJA audience is more "conspiratorial" and that the minutiae of Arab affairs is not of interest to AJE's audience: "We're really not interested if the Sheikh said that and this tribe did that, we really aren't ... Whereas their audience is." (personal communication, January 23, 2012).

Sarah Worthington thinks that AJA is more "aggressive" than AJE. "I know that their culture is very different from ours, it's very reporter-driven ... we're very output-driven," she says. "At Arabic, they're more ad-hoc — reporters will call up and say, 'Right, I'm going to be live at such-and-such on such-and-such' — as opposed to the program editor saying, 'Right, I want you live at such-and-such on such-and-such.' ... But I think it's changing over there. I think they're moving more towards our model." (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

This difference between the sister channels has been apparent to staff of both since launch. Quality Assurance Unit head Jaafar Abbas Ahmed is quoted in a leaked 2006 US cable discussing the differences in newsroom cultures.

"Abbas said that in his opinion the November 15 launch of AJE has proved in many ways to be 'an eye-opener' for many of the Arabic staff," the cable reads, "particularly with regard to coverage of Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim issues. The AJE staff tend to be mainly 'from established democracies' and 'balance comes to them so naturally. It is second nature to them to tell the other side of the story,' [Abbas] said, adding that the AJE journalists' attitude of 'positive neutrality' is a new element for most of the Arab journalists (whether raised in 'Republics of Fear' and used to either toeing the official line in previous jobs, or used to not being able to express their own opinions freely, or used to unthinking emotional bias with regard to Arab issues). While AJE brings this benefit to AJA, AJA in its turn is able to inform and support AJE with its expertise and background on Middle Eastern/Arab affairs, he said." (US Embassy, Doha, 2006).

For all intents and purposes, the AJE and AJA newsrooms are independent entities. While there is a certain synergy in ethos and philosophy, and a growing operational cooperation in terms of bureau sharing and the like, there is little editorial coordination and a definite disparity in news culture and work practices. Information sharing is limited between the AJA and AJE newsrooms, although it is becoming more frequent and formalised. Heather Allan is blunt about how her department deals with AJA source material: "We use the information that we get from them but I'd say that we are very … we process it. We make sure we double check everything we get." (personal communication, January 23, 2012).

Unusually for a large media organisation, AJE has relatively little information about exactly who watches the channel — there is basic data about penetration in terms of household availability but more specific data about viewership was only starting to trickle in by 2012 (Al Anstey, personal communication, October 11, 2011). Some AJE staff find the lack of precise audience data frustrating, but many find it liberating. Richard Gizbert, presenter of the AJE program Listening Post, thinks the lack of data about exactly who's watching the channel prevents its news focus from being artificially shaped to match an audience.

"I worked at ABC News [America] for 11 years; they know their audience inside and out," he told Nieman Journalism Lab (McGann, 2010). "They have focus groups that tell them what their audiences want and then journalists at ABC News are then asked to do those kinds of stories. I disapprove, strongly, of that kind of audience research because you have a few people wearing suits in New York telling you what stories we should be looking at — and that's how people like Britney Spears and Paris Hilton end up on television. And I think if Al Jazeera did more audience research surveys then we would have some suits in Doha, in the Persian Gulf, telling us what kinds of stories that we should do. The luxury of Al Jazeera right now is that we really don't know that much about our audience; I hope it stays that way. And I've told people that the day that we start getting audience survey research back is the day that we're going to look back at this period that we're currently in, in a very nostalgic way."

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By 25 February 2011, just over four years since launch, AJE had built its own identity as an Arab broadcaster with an English-speaking face — a unique hybrid of Western journalism norms and the spirit of its game-changing, trailblazing sister channel. There had been some trial runs throughout its four years on air — for example, huge stories such as the Gaza War of 2008–2009 — but the Egyptian Revolution was going to be AJE's biggest moment yet, and this time the whole world would tune in and try to work out what to make of this upstart channel. Even if this upstart channel was a touch slow off the mark.

CHAPTER 2: WHERE IS AL JAZEERA?

"I can't remember another case of Al Jazeera simply punting on a major story in a political space which it has owned."
— Marc Lynch (2011), Foreign Policy

On 17 December 2010, a 26-year-old Tunisian man set himself alight in protest against continued harassment at the hands of government officials, triggering what many now call the Arab Spring. Over the next year or so, no fewer than a dozen countries across North Africa and the Middle East would see mass protests and civil unrest.

This "awakening" was driven by many factors unique to individual countries, although dissatisfaction with governments and standards of living seemed reasonably common to most.

Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation sparked protests and hundreds of deaths across Tunisia, and less than a month later President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and resigned his 23 years of rule. Al Jazeera English, as surprised as any news organisation by the suddenness of this revolution, had covered events and was continuing to provide follow-up reporting and analysis in the wake of Ben Ali's resignation. Initially caught on the back foot, AJE had thrown resources at the story, leaving a reduced presence in other countries such as neighbouring Egypt.

The sole AJE journalist left in Egypt at the conclusion of the Tunisian Revolution was Rawya Rageh. An Egyptian national who gained her master's degree from the Columbia Journalism School after studying for an undergraduate degree at the American University in Cairo, Rageh has been with AJE since launch and has served as a correspondent in Baghdad and Egypt. On the day of Ben Ali's resignation, 14 January 2011, she was reporting for AJE from a small protest outside the Tunisian embassy in Cairo. Although diligently contributing to the channel's overall coverage as planned and coordinated by the Doha newsdesk, Rageh was unsure if there was a link to be made. "I've got to say, deep down, I felt

that it was an exaggeration to bring in any reaction from Cairo," she remembers. "Because the protest I'm referring to, I'm talking about ten people outside the Tunisian embassy, the night that Ben Ali fled." (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

The next morning, the embassy crowd had swelled to about 30 people, and the newsdesk in Doha asked Rawya to put together a package about "Tunisia's nervous neighbours" that would connect the protest with larger ones happening across the Arab world. Rageh complied, and the package opens with shots of a small group of protesters chanting and Rageh's voiceover. "Calls for a revolution — Egyptian activists alluding to Tunisia's uprising and wanting one of their own," she begins. The camera then shows protesters chanting, "Down with corruption! Down with autocracy! Down with dictators!" before Rageh summarises the protest in a piece to camera.

"While it's not clear if these limited protests could gain enough traction to replicate what happened in Tunisia, the sentiment is clear: change is coming, Tunisia is the inspiration."

Rageh distinctly remembers the opening line of her script for that package, and the uncertainty she felt while writing it. "I was saying that there are calls for a revolution," she recalls, "but nowhere in my head was I convinced that anything remotely on that scale was going to happen. And this was really the discourse that was happening until literally one hour before the protests happened on January 25th." (personal communication, April 25, 2012)

One day after change in Tunisia, there were already rumblings about a demonstration planned in Egypt for Tuesday 25 January — the Police Day public holiday. Buzz about the protest, organised mainly by activist groups using Facebook and other social media, was growing. A few days before the holiday, the newsdesk in Doha asked Rawya to put together a preview story.

"I emailed back and said, 'I'm not going to preview something that may or may not happen. We've had these calls so many times before and they've almost always

fizzled out. And even if protests happen on the 25th,' and I used those exact words, 'I guarantee you this will not be the protests that will topple the Mubarak regime.'" (personal communication, April 25, 2012)

Asked if anybody within AJE had an inkling of what was to come, Rageh replies emphatically: "Believe you me, nobody knew that this was coming on any scale." (personal communication, April 25, 2012). When asked directly if they knew what was coming, the employees of AJE, almost to a person, say that they didn't. Some say they knew something was up, but nobody predicted a protest that would ultimately lead to revolution.

Besides a general failure by AJE (and its competitors) to predict the scale of the 25 January protests, AJE was distracted in those days by an enormous and heavily promoted network-wide story that many within the channel expected to be the biggest of the year. The Palestine Papers — a release of thousands of leaked documents from a decade of Israel–Palestine negotiations — were a major scoop for the network, and the planned broadcast of special programs from 25 January represented the climax of months of work by a large team of journalists. The Palestine Papers were scheduled to dominate AJE's output for a week or more, but protesters in Egypt had other ideas.

As the first slogans of the Egyptian Revolution were about to be chanted, AJE had one eye off the ball.

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On the morning of 25 January, protesters gathered in front of Cairo's High Court before breaking a security cordon and marching through the city. Up to 15,000 people converged in Tahrir Square, met by tens of thousands of police who attempted to disperse the stone-throwing crowd with tear gas and water cannon. By the end of the day, the Cairo demonstrations had been matched by similar efforts in cities across the country including Alexandria, Mahalla, Ismailia, Aswan, and Suez where two protesters were killed.

Marc Lynch is a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, and the author of a number of books on Middle Eastern history, politics and media. He is also a prominent and respected blogger on Middle East affairs at the Foreign Policy website. Late in the afternoon on the 25th, Cairo time, Lynch (2011) wrote a post at his blog entitled "Watching Egypt (but not on Al Jazeera)":

> "The images and stories of protests today have been impressive, both in numbers and in energy and enthusiasm. The Egyptians are self-consciously emulating the Tunisian protests, seeking to capitalize on the new mood within the Arab world. Their efforts are not new, despite the intense Western desire to put them into a narrative driven by Twitter, WikiLeaks, or demonstration effects. Egyptians have been protesting and demonstrating for the last decade: massive demonstrations in support of Palestinians and against the Iraq war from 2000 to 2003; Kefaya's creative protests for political reform and against succession which peaked in 2004 to 2006; lawyers and judges and professional associations; the Facebook protests and April 6 movements; the plethora of wildcat labor strikes across the country.
>
> "One key factor was missing, though, at least early on. Al Jazeera has played a vital, instrumental role in framing this popular narrative by its intense, innovative coverage of Tunisia and its explicit broadening of that experience to the region. Its coverage today has been frankly baffling, though. During the key period when the protests were picking up steam, Al Jazeera aired a documentary cultural program on a very nice seeming Egyptian novelist and musical groups, and then to sports."

AJE was not completely missing, but its coverage of the protests certainly was limited. In Cairo, Rageh, the only AJE correspondent on the ground, had attended the protests and knew straight away that something was different. "It was immediately clear to me that this, at least what I was seeing at the time, was bigger than anything I had ever seen in Egypt," she remembers. "I was doing a

phono [on-air interview via phone] as the people were marching from Tahrir, and it was the very first time we [had seen] people succeed — this was not going to be a stationary protest, they were going to march through the city. Police were cordoning them but not preventing them from advancing … onto the headquarters of the ruling party at the time, Mubarak's National Democratic Party." (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

One of AJE's anchors over the course of that day, Teymoor Nabili, was baffled by Rageh's quick turnaround from doubt to belief in the scale and importance of the protests. She had appeared on air regularly throughout the day, but the tone of her reporting had changed as the nature of the protests shifted.

"I was doing a phono with Teymoor and he was saying, 'What's happening?'. I was explaining that they were marching onto this ruling party headquarters, this symbol of their anger and frustration, and he was like, 'Well, just less than an hour ago I was having this conversation with you and we were discussing is this just a Twitter and Facebook revolution or is this a real revolution, what is your assessment?' and I was like, 'All I can tell you from what we are seeing at this stage is that this is bigger than any protest we've ever seen. And this is certainly an unprecedented type of protest.'" (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

After spending some time reporting live from the protests in Cairo, Rageh compiled a news package that went on to be named as one of "50 Great Stories Reported, Investigated, Written, Produced, Filmed, Edited, Photographed, Anchored, and/or Tweeted by Columbia Journalists" from that prestigious school's hundred years of existence. It opens with shots of a large crowd marching along the street, chanting and holding hand-painted signs, and Rageh's voiceover:

"If these scenes are any indication, anger is at boiling point in Egypt. A populace known for its apathy, making history on Tuesday. Thousands marching against poverty and a government they hold responsible."

Then, in vision, walking alongside the crowd and speaking to camera, Rageh says, "Just listen to the chants roaring in downtown Cairo. The hundreds of people, walking to the streets — it's unprecedented for people to march to the streets this way as an act of protest without security trying to prevent them."

Later in the piece a young female activist being interviewed by Rageh is interrupted mid-sentence by a much older lady who steps into shot, screaming and gesticulating at her with passion. "We're tired, ma'am, we're tired!" she shouts at Rageh. "Stop the price hikes, we're suffering! We're Egyptians! We love Egypt but stop this! We want to eat! We want to live! We want our children!"

Rageh ends the package with a voiceover, set to pictures of tense security cordons and clouds of tear gas. "For once it seems internet cliques in Egypt have translated into action on the ground, and for a short while there security allowed it to happen before once again it became the Egypt activists know all too well. Many here fully aware that though come tomorrow change may not be there quite yet, they have at least broken the fear barrier."

Back in Doha, as the day progressed, the newsroom started to grasp the enormity of what was happening in Egypt.

"I can remember small protests around in Alexandria, in Cairo, in a couple of other places, it wasn't just Cairo," recalls Head of Output, Sarah Worthington. "The thing that stuck in my mind was a tweet that said, 'Where is Al Jazeera?' [And] that's when my ears pricked up ... I think from that moment on I had a sense that something was going to kick off, somewhere, but you never really expected it in Egypt because it had been that way for 31 years ..." (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

At the time of the Egyptian revolution, the manager of AJE's 60-strong online division was Mohamed Nanabhay. Initially as blasé as the rest of the newsroom about the importance of the protests, Nanabhy's attention started to turn to Egypt via reaction on the internet.

"As you got into the evening on the 25th we'd covered the protests, we'd covered what was going on in Egypt, we'd done some packages out of there, we'd done some [live crosses], but it was [just] a news story," he remembers. "And the main thing we were still going with was Palestine Papers. And what we started seeing on Twitter, Facebook and other social networks was everyone was talking about what was going on in Egypt, so clearly attention had moved and shifted. And early evening, the narrative online started talking about how Al Jazeera was not covering Egypt even though we were. I was sitting in the office and I noticed that … on our website, even though the main story was Palestine Papers on the top of the page with a big banner, the audience was sitting on the Egypt story and started growing over time … our traffic started picking up and picking up. It started reaching levels [we'd not seen before] … So, even though we hadn't had a huge focus on Egypt yet because clearly it hadn't become a big thing yet, we were already becoming the reference point for what was going on in Egypt even though everyone was criticising us." (personal communication, January 18, 2012).

Nanabhy then made a bold decision, considering the prominence of the Palestine Papers story in AJE's television news broadcasts, and flipped the AJE website homepage so that Egypt appeared at the top. It didn't take long for the television newsroom to follow Nanabhy's lead, and Palestine Papers coverage was wound back ahead of schedule in favour of a primary focus on developments in Egypt.

Obviously, with so many months of work having gone into the production of the Palestine Papers story, there was some internal politics about its relegation. Nanabhay says there was a "huge fight" with the Palestine Papers producers, but "it was the right decision and we had good data to back it up" (personal communication, January 18, 2012). Sarah Worthington says, "I think probably 'discussion' is the better word." (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

The shift in focus was too late for those viewers who had already formed an impression about AJE's slow reaction to such a major story on its own turf. Later in the evening, Cairo time, Marc Lynch (2011) updated his blog post:

"Al-Jazeera's lack of coverage of the protests has become a major story. It doesn't seem to have gotten any better since this morning — since getting back on line I've seen an episode of a talk show, more Palestine Papers, and only short snippets of breaking news on Egypt ... Egyptian activists are complaining bitterly, and most seem to think that Mubarak cut a deal with the Qatari and Saudi governments."

Robert F. Worth and David D. Kirkpatrick (2011) expanded on this in the New York Times a few days later:

> "... critics speculate that the network bowed to the diplomatic interests of the Qatari emir, its patron, by initially playing down the protests in Egypt ... On Tuesday afternoon, as the street protests in Egypt were heating up, Al Jazeera was uncharacteristically slow to report them, airing a culture documentary, a sports show and more of its 'Palestine Papers' coverage of the leaked documents.
>
> "Many Egyptians felt betrayed, and Facebook and Twitter were full of rumors about a deal between Qatar — the Persian Gulf emirate whose emir, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, founded Al Jazeera in 1996 — and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who visited the emir in Doha last month."

Far from political conspiracy, AJE's slow start had a lot more to do with the newsroom's failure to predict the magnitude of the protests and allocate resources adequately, combined with organisational inflexibility when it came to the scheduling of special programs. But the channel was determined to make up for missing the starter's pistol.

Deploying

Egyptians woke on Wednesday 26 January to a changed country. As Rawya Rageh suggested in her package the previous day, protesters had broken the fear barrier

created by decades of emergency rule and an oppressive police state, and suddenly, anything seemed possible. Events had continued to escalate, with more clashes taking place around the country. One protester and one policeman were killed in Cairo; government and police buildings were set alight and live rounds were fired at protesters in Suez. In an attempt to thwart activists' efforts to organise, the Egyptian government ordered the nationwide blocking of Facebook and Twitter. These measures were not completely effective — those with sufficient technical know-how could circumvent them — but they were extremely disruptive and sent a clear signal to protesters.

After the unexpected scale of Tuesday's events, and with activists planning a "Day of Rage" on Friday 28 January, AJE swung into action. "We just deployed," says Sarah Worthington bluntly. "There were meetings with [Director General] Wadah [Khanfar], I'm sure." (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

When Worthington says they just deployed, she means the channel went from having one correspondent and a small complement of support staff in Cairo on the 25th, to over a dozen journalists and producers across Egypt in a matter of days. "We were able to get in there very quickly from here," says Heather Allan. "We got in. We got in with a lot of people." (personal communication, January 23, 2012).

Producer Jamal Elshayyal was one of those people. On 19 January, five days after the resignation of the Tunisian president, he had published a blog post on the AJE website entitled, "Viva la revolution? Let's not get ahead of ourselves." In the post, Elshayyal (2011) wrote:

> "The events in Tunisia have taken the whole world by surprise. An Arab people demonstrating, rejecting repression, revolting en masse and overthrowing a corrupt, despotic dictator … But as much as we want to believe that this revolution against tyranny will quickly spread across the Middle East, let's not get ahead of ourselves.

> "In the past few days I've had dozens of discussions with people who've asked me, "So do you think the same could happen in Egypt?"
>
> "And the answer is no, at least not within the coming months."

Less than a month after publishing that blog post, he would be in Alexandria reporting on the resignation of Hosni Mubarak.

Scottish-born Elshayyal, an economics and Arabic graduate from the University of London, joined AJE prior to its launch. He moved on from political and journalism roles in the UK to work for the channel as a freelance consultant helping to better integrate it with the Arabic operation, then as a full-time employee who helped to set up the Middle East desk. After a few years of working in the Doha newsroom, Elshayyal started going out into the field to produce news reports and feature stories. His first news reporting for AJE was in May 2010 during the Palestinian flotilla incident.

Elshayyal spent the day and night of the 25th working in the newsroom and trying to comprehend what he was watching take place in Egypt. On the morning of the 26th he arrived at the office, preparing to appear on set during news bulletins to help analyse events, but instead was told that he was headed to Egypt to report from the ground.

Only recently returned from his honeymoon, Elshayyal arrived in Cairo later that day with his wife, who would travel on to Alexandria to be with her family. They caught a taxi from the airport to Cairo's central train station where the couple said their farewells, but due to chaos on the streets the taxi could travel no further. So Elshayyal set out on foot for the AJE bureau a few kilometres away.

"I was in the middle of Cairo wearing a suit, dragging a suitcase, in the middle of riots — burning tires and stuff," he recalls. "I'm thinking, 'I can't believe what's going on,' because these are streets I've walked down a hundred times in my life, these are areas that I know like the back of my hand … Maybe to a foreigner or to someone who hadn't been there, they would be seeing riots … but I'm seeing —

and I don't think this is a biased approach to it, actually, just an understanding of the situation — people trying to liberate themselves … Never in my life had I heard chants like that in the middle of Cairo against Mubarak, against the regime, against the interior ministry. I mean, [previously] you could barely tell a joke in the middle of the street in Cairo without having to check your back to make sure there wasn't a secret police[man there] or something." (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Once at the bureau, Elshayyal and the senior producer tasked with coordinating AJE's in-country effort, Simon Harrison, were joined by Dan Nolan. Nolan, an Australian journalist, was AJE's Dubai correspondent who had also been flown to Egypt to report on the revolution. The team was waiting for Cairo correspondent Ayman Mohyeldin's imminent return from Tunisia before formulating a plan for the next few days, so Elshayyal and Nolan took the opportunity to go out and have a look around the city.

After touring a number of downtown locations, they visited the offices of the city's journalists' union and attracted unwanted attention almost immediately.

"We were just sitting down, on the phone, and non-uniformed police kept coming up and harassing us," Elshayyal remembers. "And it was a good introduction for [Nolan] because it gave him an idea of the seriousness of what was going on. Because sometimes it's easy to say, 'oh my God, there's no freedom or you can't even speak on the phone,' but when it actually happens to you, just two guys standing on the sidewalk looking at what's going on and you see non-uniformed people chase you down the street …" (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

That evening, Mohyeldin flew into Cairo, fresh from reporting on the Tunisian Revolution. An AJE employee since the channel's inception, he served as Gaza correspondent and a senior producer in the Doha and Washington DC newsrooms before being posted to Egypt. Prior to his time at AJE, Mohyeldin worked for CNN in Baghdad and NBC News in the United States. By the time of Hosni Mubarak's resignation, Mohyeldin would be, to many, the face of AJE's Egyptian coverage, and to new viewers, the face of AJE itself.

He tweeted his arrival at the airport:

> **@AymanM**: Just #arrived in #egypt bracing myself for a nice welcoming experience from security at #cairo airport #jan25 (Mohyeldin, 2011, January 26a)

> **@AymanM**: airport security questioned us about #tunisia other than that mostly business as usual at #cairo airport. (Mohyeldin, 2011, January 26b)

Mohyeldin had been watching the events of the 25th from Tunisia and was keen to return to Cairo. Despite his own Egyptian background, and an intimate knowledge of the country, he was as shocked as anyone by what he had seen that day.

"Having covered several protests in Egypt, [I thought] at best there would be hundreds of protesters but thousands of police — a disproportionate ratio of police or security to protesters," he recalls. "And I just assumed that the 25th would be something along those lines. I didn't think it would reach the critical mass that it did." (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

As soon as Mohyeldin arrived at the bureau on the evening of the 26th, he started reporting on air and took part in the team's planning for the Day of Rage. As official correspondent, Mohyeldin would stay in Cairo to front the channel's coverage. Nolan was also going to stay in Cairo to report from the ground around the city, Rawya Rageh was assigned to Egypt's second city, Alexandria, and Elshayyal was asked to stay in Cairo to provide additional newsgathering and reporting. But Elshayyal had a different idea.

For Elshayyal, an experienced journalist and producer, but relatively junior at AJE, the Egypt story was his big chance.

"If you're going to be part of a team, you be part of a team," he says. "But, as with every other journalist, in the back of [your head] is how can [you] make [your] own personal mark on the story as well, because everyone wants that chance." (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Elshayyal instead proposed a different assignment for himself.

"I had this discussion with Simon and thankfully he was convinced straight away. I said, 'Look, so far the only people to have been killed were in Suez. You have one extra cameraman … So, why don't you give me that cameraman, I'll go to Suez, we'll do a story on the family of those who've been killed?'" (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

They discussed the logistics — Suez is 60 to 90 minutes away from Cairo by car — and decided that if nothing newsworthy was happening in Suez, Elshayyal could easily return to Cairo. AJE's decision to send Elshayyal to Suez ensured that it was the only international TV broadcaster with a presence in the port city on the Day of Rage; between him, the team in Cairo, and Rawya in Alexandria, the channel's spread of coverage across the country was unparalleled by its television competitors.

Elshayyal and his small team comprised of cameraman and driver set off for Suez the next morning. Upon arrival they found the scene confronting.

"My first impression of what was happening there, visually, was just bringing back memories of the Second Intifada in the West Bank, 2001 — the street battles that would take place between Palestinian youth and Israeli troops in Gaza and the West Bank," remembers Elshayyal. "For all intents and purposes it was a war zone. There was a ridiculous amount of armed security personnel on one end of the main street … and a massive amount of very, very angry youth on the other end." (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

He started doing phonos during AJE news bulletins almost immediately, appearing on air as he would for most of the revolution: as a crackly voice

sometimes accompanied by a headshot photograph and a location map. He also recorded a "walk-and-talk" (one-take read to camera, walking through a location and describing the scene) and sent it to Doha for broadcast.

Back in Doha, senior AJE presenter Jane Dutton was also preparing to travel to Egypt. A South African veteran of CNN, BBC World and CNBC, she was being deployed to host a special edition of the daily current-affairs discussion program Inside Story. Usually produced in Doha with guests appearing via satellite, this episode was to be shot in the Cairo bureau on the 28th with three on-set guests and a Tunisian satellite guest.

But getting on the plane wasn't as easy as it should've been. At Doha airport she was refused permission to board without a visa because Egypt's entry rules for South African nationals had apparently changed. Desperate to solve the problem as quickly as possible, she rushed to the Egyptian embassy and was informed she didn't need a visa, and then back to the airport where an immigration official told her, "I think you do need a visa but you can go anyway." At Cairo airport she was initially refused entry, but was eventually allowed into the country after a robust exchange of views.

Arriving much later on the 27th than planned due to these flight difficulties, Dutton threw herself into researching for the recording scheduled for late the next morning — just before Friday prayers and the expected start of protests. She was excited about the show as it would likely generate some interesting discussion.

"I was looking at Tunisia and trying to draw some sort of comparisons or work out what the potential [was] for a change in Egypt, and researching its history and trying to get up to date with its politics," she remembers. "But there's nothing like being a correspondent on the ground to really get up to speed with politics and characters; it's really the only way to do it." (personal communication, May 1, 2012).

In Suez, as night fell, Jamal Elshayyal and his team were preparing for the protests the next day, which, crucially, would require a live position overlooking

the likely scene of action from which Elshayyal could report. He was in luck because the locals appeared very happy to see a journalist and pointed out a number of good vantage points. One man offered him the use of his apartment overlooking the main road where, despite the late hour, battles between protesters and police were already being fought, so the crew went upstairs to set up. London, which had taken over broadcasting from Doha overnight, wanted to take a live cross from Jamal straight away. As he and the cameraman stood by, waiting for the director to come to them, the BGAN (a mobile internet device, used for transmitting a highly compressed video and audio signal via satellite; pronounced "bee-gan") stopped working.

Elshayyal was understandably frustrated about these technical problems.

"I'm stuck on the phone, doing phonos, and the cameraman's trying to fix [the BGAN]," he recalls. "We'd [already] filmed really good pictures because right below us is literally a battle that's taking place ... [one side's] shooting at one side and the other side's lobbing Molotov cocktails and shit on the other." (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Wondering if it was a problem with location — BGANs can be temperamental in some environments if physical objects interfere with the signal — Elshayyal suggested that the cameraman move away from the centre of town and try to send some of the footage they'd recorded. The BGAN worked outside the city and the footage was transmitted to London; it was clear that the team needed to be careful when choosing a live position the next day.

In an ominous development foreshadowed by the recent social media restrictions, all Egyptian mobile phone providers' text message services were disabled at around 9pm. And then just after midnight, the government started taking the country's internet service providers (ISPs) offline, achieving a shutdown of all but tiny pockets of the Egyptian internet by daybreak. Mobile voice services were also suspended early on the Friday.

Rawya Rageh departed Cairo for Alexandria late on Thursday the 27th. As she was driving into the city she noticed the loss of text capability and heard rumours of further communications crackdowns to come. She knew immediately that her team was going to have to rely on their satellite phone and BGAN for basic communication with the bureau in Cairo and the newsroom in Doha. Without mobile phones and internet, a live-news TV reporter's job becomes incredibly difficult, and all of those on the ground in Egypt were preparing contingency plans for the Friday.

Once they arrived in Alexandria, Rageh and her team immediately set about trying to find a live position for the Day of Rage. They struck gold with a hotel room that had a great view from its balcony overlooking the mosque where the main protests were expected. Unfortunately, like Elshayyal, Rageh was having trouble with her BGAN and unless a technical solution could be found it looked like the only reporting she was going to be doing was via satellite phone.

The team had done all they could to get ready for the Day of Rage protests, but nobody on the ground in Egypt or in the newsroom in Doha was fully prepared for what happened the next day.

CHAPTER 3: THE DAY OF RAGE

"Anyone who thought they could predict what was going to happen was a liar."

— Jamal Elshayyal, AJE correspondent (personal communication, April 12, 2012)

It's just another back half hour on AJE. After a standard thirty-minute news bulletin and half-hour headlines, Al Jazeera English viewers around the world are watching a pre-recorded episode of *Inside Story* that analyses recent political turmoil in Albania. It's afternoon in the Middle East, midday in Europe, morning in America, and night-time in Australia. Without warning, the screen dips to black, cutting off the host mid-sentence, and resolves to a frame filled with AJE's signature bright orange. The words "BREAKING NEWS" appear on screen in bold capitals, and then animate off to reveal a large crowd of protesters walking east along the October 6 Bridge into central Cairo. A short fanfare sounds and fades low for the voice of presenter Kamahl Santamaria.

"We are breaking into programming here on Al Jazeera. 1145 GMT, about quarter to two in the afternoon in Cairo, Egypt," he says. "Live, continuing coverage here on Al Jazeera of a day of mass protests. They called it a Day of Rage, it is fast turning into that."

It is day four of 18, and the start of what would turn into two weeks of almost non-stop coverage by AJE.

Santamaria remembers that day clearly.

"I was due on air at 1200 GMT, which is 3 pm [Doha] time … a Friday," he says. "So, it's not just protests but it's prayers day as well in the Middle East — Friday prayers. And it was just building … by 1145 GMT we thought, 'Nup, this is too big, we need to get on air now.' So, we busted into programming." (personal communication, October 20, 2011).

Across the Islamic world, Muslims congregate at their local mosques around midday each Friday for the most important prayers of the week, including a sermon led by the Imam. As Egyptians finish their prayers this day, those wishing to protest immediately begin to gather and move through Cairo, Alexandria, Suez and other cities.

On AJE, the shot of the crowd crossing the bridge is long and shaky — clearly at the extent of a zoom lens. Protesters are chanting, pumping their fists, and waving Egyptian flags, although viewers can't hear them. The camera is located inside Al Jazeera's bureau in a high-rise building overlooking a major traffic artery and one of the main protest flashpoints. This prime position is a stroke of luck that will allow AJE to broadcast live pictures of some of the most amazing events that will take place on the Day of Rage.

On air, Santamaria continues to set the scene for viewers.

"The pictures tell the story there. As we go to air, mass protests right across Egypt from the capital, Cairo; Suez, Alexandria as well. The anger towards the Egyptian government has manifested itself, you see, in very large numbers. There was talk earlier today, up to a million people could demonstrate. Certainly, the numbers are getting up at this stage. Friday prayers, which [were] a focal point for today, have finished, and now the crowd's coming onto the streets."

As he finishes his sentence, the crowd turns and runs back over the bridge, fleeing from something out of shot. The camera zooms in on a small group of men who are wearing face masks to ward off tear gas and angrily pumping their fists.

Santamaria takes a moment to report that prominent opposition figure Mohamed ElBaradei has been arrested, and that several international journalists, including one from Al Jazeera Arabic, have been beaten. He then refocuses on large clouds of tear gas that begin rising from an unseen ruckus beneath the road overpass. The camera pulls out to reveal that protesters on the bridge have started to clash with police — rocks are being thrown, crowds are surging, police are rushing.

Behind his desk and under the studio lights in Doha, Santamaria is just settling in. Originally rostered to be on air for only a few bulletins, he is about to present over five hours of the day's chaos with only an hour's break in the middle. At the time, though, it was just another breaking news story — something that happens fairly frequently at AJE — where the crew temporarily enters rolling news mode. The start of a busy breaking news shift is always tricky, Santamaria says.

"It's really scattergun when you first get on air like that because as a presenter you've just got to find your feet ... get across the live picture, get across the taped picture, get across the breaking news of the correspondents. The first 15, 20 minutes are always pretty rough and it's just a case of bubbling along on air ... You talk about what you know and you don't want to speculate too much." (personal communication, October 20, 2011).

But within 15 minutes of going to air, there is a temporary lull in the protests and Santamaria is forced to resort to that tragically necessary mainstay of 24-hour news: the speculative time-filling interview. He is talking to his on-set guest, Shadi Hamid, Director of Research at the Brookings Doha Center, when a prophetic exchange takes place.

"Just looking at these pictures," begins Santamaria, "just the fact of what we're seeing, that it's actually happening in Egypt. It is quite something, isn't it?"

"It is incredible," replies Hamid. "No-one saw this coming. If you had said that tens of thousands of people would be protesting in such a manner under such a threat of loss of life, even; if you'd told me that a month ago I would've said, 'That's impossible, it's not going to happen in Egypt.' So, people didn't see this coming ..."

"Did they need Tunisia for this to happen?"

"Tunisia was the spark. It wouldn't have happened without having something, an impetus to kind of push it forward, almost lighting the fuse. The anger has been building up for so long in Egypt, really over decades to be quite frank, and now

finally, Tunisia showed Egyptians that they too can do this and that they have a chance. Because up until then it was hard for the opposition to visualise their leader falling but Tunisia showed that it's possible."

"It's possible," begins Santamaria, cynicism and incredulity in his voice, "but, I mean, the idea of Mubarak falling?"

"That's what people said about Ben Ali before he fell. So, if it happened in Tunisia it can happen anywhere else."

*****

AJE had been reporting all morning on the build-up to this explosion of protest following Friday prayers. Presenter Shiulie Ghosh had opened the 0500 GMT bulletin with a wrap of overnight events.

"Egypt's government is warning it will take decisive measures against protesters after another night of demonstrations," she reported. "In the city of Suez the police building and a fire station were torched and street battles raged late into the night. So far, seven people have died since the protests began on Tuesday and hundreds of people have been detained, including several members of the top opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood, who were arrested overnight. Now, anti-government protesters are calling for a mass rally in Cairo after Friday prayers."

Ghosh had then thrown to Dan Nolan in Cairo, where it was 7 am, for an update on the latest state of communications in Egypt.

"Shiulie, this is quite an unexpected development, as we wake up here in Cairo this morning the internet services are blocked throughout all of Cairo," began Nolan. "Everyone I've spoken to this morning says that they are indeed blocked around the country. Now, in the past few days there has been disruption of services of social media sites like Twitter and Facebook to try and stop people from communicating with each other and explaining where to go to demonstrate,

but this move today to shut down the internet is not something that has been seen before in Egypt. A US-based internet monitoring site says it's an unprecedented event in history, the Egyptian government has effectively wiped their country from the global map."

Events continued to escalate throughout the morning. A few hours later, at 1100 GMT — 1 pm in Cairo and just 45 minutes before Kamahl Santamaria broke into programming — Ghosh led the news bulletin with news that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon had called on the Egyptian government to respect the rights of citizens to protest. She then spoke in turn to AJE's correspondents around Egypt: Rawya Rageh in Alexandria, Jane Dutton in Cairo, and Jamal Elshayyal in Suez.

Rageh, who had become separated from her team in the chaos, reported via satellite phone.

"Very intense scenes, Shiulie, to say the least," she said. "As soon as Friday prayers ended at one of the main mosques here in the heart of the old city of Alexandria, people emerged from the mosque waving Egyptian flags and chanting, 'The people want a regime change! The people want a regime change!' And it took security forces a matter of seconds to respond with heavy-handedness — tear gas was immediately fired ... we've seen lots of people coughing, passing out from the tear gas ..."

A loud siren passed close to Rageh who spoke up to compete with the noise, distress and adrenaline clear in her voice.

"This is the same mosque, Shiulie, from which protests began early last year in June when people were protesting against police brutality after a 28-year-old man here was beaten to death by police. So, very symbolic scenes, indeed."

Ghosh then asked her to describe the people in the crowd.

“A collection of all sorts of people from all walks of life, Shiulie,” replied Rageh. “We’re seeing hundreds of people being chased away by police. I’ve seen in the morning activists driving from Cairo, known activists, from both local and international human rights organisation[s], here to monitor the situation. Some of them say they’re here to take part in the protests ...”

She broke off mid-sentence to cough violently.

“I’m sorry, I’m going to have to move away from the tear gas.”

There was a long pause before she continued.

“It literally took seconds for police to start firing tear gas, people had just emerged. The moment people started chanting about a decent opportunity ... and started marching and breaking through the security cordon, they started firing tear gas, it literally took them a matter of seconds to react. Now, this is in stark contrast to the incredible leniency by Egyptian standards that Egyptian security forces have shown on the first day of protest on Tuesday, January 25th — security forces allowing protesters to chant and march through the capital for hours before they finally began firing at them. This just tells you how police have perhaps reached their limits, how clearly they now have a zero-tolerance policy towards these protesters.”

Ghosh then moved on to Jane Dutton in the Cairo studio. As Dutton spoke, viewers saw fresh pictures of lines and lines of troop-carrying trucks parked on the streets, and police and security forces preparing for the protests.

“I’ve literally just come off the streets, I was on my way to Tahrir Square, and of course that was the scene of some 60,000 demonstrators, protesters there on Tuesday,” reported Dutton. “I wanted to film a piece to camera; I was stopped by a plain clothes policeman, in the background we could see security forces, they were putting on their helmets and their visors, so they clearly are preparing for some type of action after Friday prayers.”

Dutton then explains that the plain-clothes policemen are well known to the Egyptian people and that nobody is interpreting their presence as benign. "Everybody we've spoken to who's witnessed them and know[s] them by reputation [tells us] they go into crowds and they provoke fights and then they get involved; they beat people up despite cameras being on them and then the police join in and they take everybody away."

In Suez, after a night spent struggling with technical problems, Jamal Elshayyal felt confident that he and his team had finally sorted them out. Earlier that morning, they'd found a rooftop belonging to a trade union leader on the outskirts of town, fired up the camera and BGAN, and had successfully broadcast a signal to Doha. When Ghosh threw to Elshayyal at around 1130 GMT for an update on the situation in Suez, he was visible to viewers against a backdrop of the town.

"Well, Shiulie, Friday prayers have just finished in the past few minutes or maybe 15 minutes ago," he began, "and already we are hearing reports of thousands who have taken to the streets in the central area of Al Arbayin where the main police station is. Earlier in the day, security forces were—"

And then the picture froze and broke up. The signal was gone. Ghosh apologised for the technical problems and moved on.

Standing in the sun on that rooftop in Suez just as the Day of Rage protests were beginning, realising that he'd been kicked off air once again by equipment failure, Elshayyal had had enough.

"We start working, working, working on the BGAN and unfortunately it's just not working," he recalls. "So we say, 'Sod the BGAN.' We take the camera to go do some filming."

The first hour

As AJE rolled advertisement-free through what would usually be the 1200 GMT commercial break — a broadcast pattern that would continue for much of the next 14 days — everyone on the ground in Cairo and back in the studio in Doha scrambled to keep pace with the developing story.

The Director General of the Al Jazeera Network, Wadah Khanfar, is said to have personally issued the instruction to drop everything else and roll with it. Being a Friday (the weekend in the Arab world), and with Head of News Salah Negm away from work, Khanfar visited the AJE newsroom to ensure that permission to do so was explicit. He followed up with an email to all AJE staff:

> From: Wadah Khanfar
> Sent: Friday, January 28, 2011 5:10:24 PM
> To: AJE-ALL-STAFF
> Cc: Salah Negm; Al Anstey; Sarah Worthington
> Subject: Egypt Coverage
> Dear AJE Newsroom,
>
> I want to congratulate everyone for the outstanding coverage you are bringing to our viewers on the ongoing events taking place all over Egypt.
>
> Be sure this is our top story for the coming days, both due to its unprecedented nature and because of the importance and status Egypt enjoys in the broader Arab world.
>
> We must continue to refresh our viewers with new voices, pictures, and continue to rely on our strong and courageous field teams deployed in cities across Egypt.

> Think carefully before cutting away from Egypt related news, as our viewers are turning to us with the expectation that we will bring them the best, most concentrated and professional coverage.
>
> Our teams in the field deserve our full encouragement and support in bringing this story to AJE"s [sic] global audience.
>
> Along with them, I wish you the best as you focus every effort on this story.
>
> Thank you,
>
> WADAH KHANFAR

Head of Output Sarah Worthington remembers that the newsroom initially treated the breaking Egypt story just like they would any other, although it quickly became clear that this was not ordinary news.

"[Breaking news is] incredibly intense but everyone's very focused," she says. "When you've got one story that you focus on it's a fun process because you bat around ideas and you ping off each other on 'What angle should we go for,' 'What should we be doing,' all those different things. It was also very frightening, because it was a very scary situation for people on the ground … A lot of what Heather [Allan, Head of Newsgathering] was doing was making sure that security was in place and that we had a plan, like you do with any story … I don't think we thought it would be that dangerous because it's Egypt — we operate there continually … But the mood changed, obviously … Mubarak's government, while potentially in denial [about the scale of the protests], reacted quite viciously to what was happening and the media can often bear the brunt of that …" (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

Compromising the channel's ability to gather, report and broadcast news was the almost complete shutdown of Egypt's communication networks. Teams on the ground in Cairo and around the rest of Egypt couldn't reach each other on their

mobile phones, and lines of communication between Egypt and Doha were sketchy.

Jane Dutton found herself on air for the 1200 GMT hour with Kamahl Santamaria, reporting on the scenes she was witnessing from the bureau. The tone between the two presenters — Dutton acting as correspondent — was conversational and unscripted; together they tried to process and make sense of the limited news AJE was able to gather independently as well as patchy reports trickling in from other sources. Viewers were privy to the kinds of conversations that might have otherwise taken place off-air.

Santamaria tries early to clarify for viewers the state of communications.

"Internet's gone, SMS messaging is gone," he observes. "Can you pick up a mobile phone and call someone or is that just sort of intermittent?"

"The only calls we are getting are on our satellite phones so that's the only way that we know what's happening," Dutton replies. "And from our crews downstairs; we've got to keep running up and down the stairs to find out what's going on."

Despite the crackdown, some people in the country with sufficient technical know-how had managed to use the internet, and AJE was relying heavily on Twitter to get a sense of what was happening.

"We have been getting a few tweets through," reports Dutton, reading out selected excerpts. "We've heard that police smashed cameras of CNN and German TV crew … At the Egypt airport, activists and journalists from the Arab world and Europe are detained and/or refused entry into Egypt. Apparently police are dividing protesters throughout Cairo. And [there are] something like 50,000 people around Ismailia …"

Reflecting on those "insane" first hours, Dutton remembers having to resort to unorthodox methods of communication.

“It was really difficult because the only thing we could get were faxes,” she says. “Our main producer on that story was Rosie Garthwaite, who was sending through faxes to update on what they were hearing [in Doha] … people [were] going down into Tahrir Square and updating us. [We were] trying to get as much information as we could. It was busy, busy, busy …” (personal communication, May 1, 2012).

In the newsroom, Garthwaite was compiling all the information coming into Doha from correspondents, radio networks, agencies and other sources, verifying content where possible, and then hand-writing digests of this material to fax to Cairo — all as quickly as possible in order to maximise its timeliness. A couple of minutes after each fax was sent, someone in the Cairo bureau would hold it up in front of the camera to acknowledge receipt.

These communication challenges were apparent to viewers. A bank of small TV screens embedded in the presenter’s desk allows the anchor to monitor all outside sources available to the control room. At one point, Santamaria breaks off his narration of taped footage and throws abruptly to Dutton in Cairo.

“A quick update from you, Jane?”

The director follows Kamahl’s lead and cuts to Jane who looks harried and distracted. There is lots of studio noise in the background.

“Sorry, Kamahl, I missed you there. Lots of chaos here in the office. What did you ask me?”

“Actually, I saw you waving your hands, Jane. I thought you had an update for us.”

“I was sticking up a piece of paper saying, ‘Talk to me,’ we need … it’s so hard getting any type of communication so it’s all paper and satellite phone.”

During crosses from Jane Dutton and interviews with on-set guests, viewers watch montages of incredible pictures filmed from on the ground and amongst the crowds: shots of protesters marching and being confronted by lines of heavily armed riot police; old men with their faces inches away from the visors of helmeted security forces, shouting at the top of their voices; young policemen barely out of their teens, wielding batons uncertainly and looking around with confusion and fear in their eyes; groups waving large Egyptian flags; police moving forward in a line and beating indiscriminately; and protesters picking up tear gas canisters and throwing them back towards the police.

One particularly striking camera shot looks directly down a narrow street packed with flag-waving protesters, punching their fists and making the most deafening noise. They are trying to move forward and exit onto a larger perpendicular street but are held in by a plug of riot police across the intersection. Santamaria, obviously seeing the shot for the first time as well, is audibly moved.

"That's an incredible picture, isn't it?" he asks viewers rhetorically. "That tells the story. The wall of police there, they look about, what, seven or eight deep they must've been? Against an absolute flood of protesters."

He vividly recalls seeing that particular shot for the first time.

"That's one of those moments where you just stop," he remembers. "Presenters can just talk about what's happening and let the pictures run as wallpaper. This was not wallpaper, this was so real ... and this is where I say I let the disbelief come through ... because the people at home are watching that and going, 'Fuck me,' and as much as I'd love to say that on air myself ... They were pictures you hadn't seen before; [you'd] never seen them in Egypt, that's for sure." (personal communication, October 20, 2011).

AJE could not be accused of producing polished TV during those first hours. Visually, it was a mess — video was played out unedited and included flashes to black, on-air rewinds, and cuts to test patterns and random agency feeds.

"I remember the director, Richard Filby, was saying to me, 'Reuters is flashing some taped pictures, three minutes' worth coming up,'" says Santamaria. "And when it did we just let it run and I just had to talk to it — had no idea what was coming on ... That's when we saw the police armoured vehicles firing the tear gas under an underpass in Cairo. People scattering and all of that." (personal communication, October 20, 2011).

On air, as that sequence plays out, Santamaria pauses.

"Let's take in these pictures," he says, and stops talking.

The footage shows a policeman firing tear gas canisters from the top of an armoured vehicle directly at crowds crossing an overpass. Sirens blare in the background and men next to the camera shout "Allahu akbar!" The camera tilts down in time to catch a few dozen riot police charging a crowd of protesters hurling rocks at a retreating armoured vehicle. It is full-blown urban warfare.

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AJE has multiple correspondents spread throughout the city of Cairo for the end of Friday prayers, including Dan Nolan roaming around the downtown area. With streets gridlocked due to protests and security operations, and mobile phones non-operational, Nolan has walked back to the bureau to file his report and send video footage back to Doha.

"Dan Nolan has just come back from two of the main mosques in Ramses Square," reports Jane Dutton at around 1230 GMT. "He said it was 'quite incredible.' He was there at the end of Friday prayer. Thousands of people came out of these mosques, they were clapping, women and children, and they were faced with this barrage of riot police — thousands and thousands of them. They started shouting at the riot police, 'Down with the regime! Down with the regime!' to their faces. Eventually the police cordoned them off, they tried to pin everybody down, and then they started shooting tear gas into the crowd. Men, women, children, it

didn't matter — everybody was a target at that stage. Dan was saying that a lot of the protesters then ran off to try and regroup in other areas—"

Kamahl Santamaria interrupts.

"Jane, can I cut in because what you're saying about Dan, his report's come through on the satellite, they've fed it through to us here in Doha, I want to play it, stay there for me."

In the piece, Nolan is wearing a scarf around his neck, used recently to ward off tear gas. There is a large pack of police visible at the edge of the Square behind him.

"This is the scene here in downtown Cairo," he begins. "We're at just outside the biggest mosque in the Ramses area of downtown. We've just witnessed very severe clashes between hundreds and hundreds of State security forces who've clashed with these people who've come outside ..."

A protester positions himself in the background of the shot, scarf wrapped around his head showing only his eyes, and holds up a handmade poster with Arabic text. Nolan walks towards the mosques; the camera tilts up to show a minaret.

"Just outside this mosque, immediately at the end of Friday prayers, they've come outside and have been met with tear gas, police wearing heavy riot equipment, shields, helmets and wooden batons, and this has turned into the main area where they've been firing tear gas. The air is still thick with the smell of tear gas and they've been clearing it but then people will continue to come back here, more tear gas comes in to scurry them back into the side streets. You can see the police over there in their heavy numbers still waiting. The situation is far from over here and the people are all chanting, 'Down, down with the regime!' There is nothing more clear than the messages ..."

A protester walks up behind Nolan and screams into the camera, in English, "Don't stay here, Mubarak!"

“There you go, exactly that: ‘Don’t stay here, Mubarak,’” repeats Nolan. “It’s their clear, simple message that they want to get across.”

Meanwhile in Alexandria, Rawya Rageh is attempting to regroup and focus on her reporting after getting caught up in the post-prayers violence.

“[After prayers I became] separated from the cameraman and the producer. And then we got in touch again at the hotel,” she recalls. “What happened at that point is we were relying on the [satellite] phone but it became clear that I needed to be in a position where I could sit down, not be tear gassed or not be in the middle of bullets flying around my head because they were just firing randomly. It was urban warfare. It was tear gas everywhere and fires. And everyone was setting police cars on fire. When it became clear to us at 2 pm [1200 GMT] that the protesters were outnumbering and outmanoeuvring the police, I needed to go back to a place where I could sit down and do live phonos without being in danger. So, the producer, Adam, would run around through the streets, take pictures with his small camera — not even a professional camera ... bring back to me reports of what’s happening on the ground ... I would try to run down quickly, see what’s happening on the street, run back to the balcony, to the relative safety of the balcony.” (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

Santamaria takes a phono from Rageh on air.

“There are intense confrontations on the side streets here,” she reports. “The crowd has dispersed from the main seafront highway to the side streets, taking their clashes to the side streets. We’re hearing women screaming, we’re hearing the sound of glass breaking, but the people are not stopping their chants, ‘God is great, the people want a regime change!’”

In Suez, Jamal Elshayyal is in the thick of the action after abandoning his live position due to the malfunctioning BGAN.

“Crazy shit’s taking place. Fire engines are being used to run over demonstrators, stuff like that,” he remembers. “We film that stuff, at which point I’m thinking, do I go back and try to fix the BGAN or what? I decide to take the tapes, give them to the driver, and do it old school. ‘Listen, drive all the way to Cairo and give this to the office.’ I mean, thinking about it, it was going to take roughly the same time anyway, because the BGAN would’ve taken about an hour to send, whereas I can send it by car to Cairo in an hour and a half and then he can then feed it down the line via satellite. So that day the driver must’ve done, I think, two or three runs between Suez and Cairo with different material to send.” (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Santamaria crosses to Elshayyal on the phone and they talk through the scenes he’s been witnessing.

Accompanying Elshayyal’s report are pictures from the night before — the most recent vision the Suez team has managed to file. But suddenly, halfway through the phono, fresh daylight pictures appear on screen. They are the unedited contents of the tapes sent back with Jamal’s driver, being played straight to air as they feed into Doha from Cairo. The pictures show large crowds fighting street battles with security forces, tear gas being fired and lobbed back and forth, police lines being overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of people, shopfronts destroyed by fighting, and vox pops [on-the-spot interviews] with protesters.

Kamahl interrupts Elshayyal to explain the new pictures to viewers.

“We’ve managed to bring up some very recent pictures coming in from Suez at the moment,” he says. “There’s the wide shot that shows what Jamal was explaining to us before, the sheer number of people on the street. That is anger. Jamal, we’re looking at these pictures now.”

“It’s important to mention that there’s been confirmed reports that two security officials have had charges brought against them because they refused to use live ammunition against the protesters late last night,” reports Elshayyal. “As you know and the viewers know, late into Thursday evening, up until maybe 4, 5 am

actually, there was up to a thousand protesters who refused to go home. And the police did try their best to disperse them using water cannons, rubber bullets and what sounded like live fire. Now we know that it most likely was, considering these charges against these two police officers here."

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Santamaria takes a moment to update viewers on some new developments: a police car has been set on fire in central Cairo, Al Jazeera's Mubasher (live) channel has been dropped from the Egyptian-owned Nilesat service, and 40,000 protesters have been reported gathering north of Cairo. His presentation feels ad hoc, but timely and responsive. As often happens at AJE during breaking news situations, the program rundown no longer represents a script to be followed, instead turning into a repository of content that the presenter, director and program editor can call on as needed while they make up the show on the fly. Each combination of those three people deals with such situations in their own way, but Santamaria is a presenter who likes to "drive" from the studio floor.

"As a presenter you can sit up there and wait to be told what to do — 'Okay, we're going to Alexandria next, we're going to Cairo next, Ayman's there' — or you can drive it yourself, and I'm one of [the latter]," he says. "I think some directors probably don't like it, but I feel like in that situation I've got to take some sort of control up there. Because you know, [the director is] watching 14 different sources and waiting to be told do we have comms with so-and-so, and have we got this and that graphic … as much as I can, I drive that. And when I go to something I'll try to give the director a nice big heads-up. And the nice thing is that after a while, yeah we have our live picture and live correspondent cameras, but we can look at the rundown and see what pictures have been [edited and are ready], and I can call them. So, I'd start saying, 'Right, let's go around the country … we're looking at Cairo now, but let's go around the country and look at what's happening.' The director knows then, right, let's line these up and go to Alexandria first, we've got these pictures from earlier, talk to them, then we can go to Cairo … That's really important, I think, that the viewers know the

presenter's in charge up there, that they've got control of the situation." Santamaria, Kamahl (personal communication, October 20, 2011).

For several hours that day, Richard Filby was directing from the control room and he was quite happy to let Santamaria take a degree of control. Filby says that directing in a breaking news situation involves "mediating between what the program editor wants and the presenter [wants]... some presenters will like to lead it editorially, other presenters will like to be told and are quite happy to go along with that ... I don't mind it because people like Kamahl can actually drive the show and they know what's going on because they're very aware of the story, very aware of the live shots that we can see, and will talk to the pictures ..." (personal communication, January 21, 2012).

As 1300 GMT approaches, Santamaria throws to Jane Dutton in Cairo. Behind her, through the bureau window, is an overexposed and out-of-focus view of the October 6 Bridge. The air is hazy with smog and pollution in the bright afternoon sun.

"Kamahl, I just want you to hear something," she says. "I've closed the window because the tear gas is just flooding into our studio, but I'm going to open it for you and you can hear the crowds outside."

She half-stands from the chair and reaches back to open the window; the camera tilts up and follows her movement, revealing details of the room's interior. As the window opens, there grows a distinct sound of large crowds chanting from outside. Dutton sits and looks over her shoulder, through the window.

"That's amazing," says Santamaria.

"Typical," chuckles Dutton, "they've tapered off just a little bit as I opened —"

"No, that's incredible because that's just coming off your [lapel] microphone, I presume, so that's got to be a lot of people making that noise."

Dutton points over her shoulder through the window.

"I mean, there are thousands on the bridge. I'm not sure if you can see behind me. They seem to have run all the way down here ..."

She motions towards the base of her building. "As I said to you earlier, there is this real cat-and-mouse — you know, they push towards the police, the police push them back. Very close, again, to Tahrir Square — that is where they want to go, it's very symbolic for them, to get to that point."

There are several dull popping noises in the distance.

"Do you hear that?" she asks. "That's tear gas being fired behind me, Kamahl."

Urban warfare

As mass protests began that afternoon, Ayman Mohyeldin was at a mosque in Giza where prominent opposition figure Mohamed ElBaradei was attending Friday prayers. Just like Dan Nolan, he'd headed back to the bureau afterwards on foot.

"I had walked all the way from the south-west part of Cairo to the north-east part of Cairo," he remembers. "I made a cross-city trek, almost, to get to where I was because transportation had come to a standstill because people were not driving, it was impossible to catch a cab ... It was almost two to three hours to make it across town, the producer and I. And on our way back we essentially walked past all the protests on the bridges taking place. So, I guess when I got back to the bureau I had a good sense of what was unfolding on the streets below to be able to describe it ..." (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

Taking over from Jane Dutton at 1300 GMT, Mohyeldin describes to Kamahl Santamaria the scenes he had witnessed.

“Various parts of the city we can safely say are under complete lockdown,” he reports. “Behind Tahrir Square where the American embassy is, where the Australian embassy is, and other foreign embassies, that area is an absolute no-go zone. We tried to cross it on foot and they wouldn’t even let us do that. So, there are various parts of the city, at least no pedestrians are allowed into … And in the parts behind me, immediately near Liberation [Tahrir] Square, police are trying their best to prevent the scene that occurred here on Tuesday evening. They’re vowing not to let anyone enter that square and have the kind of public demonstration against the government that took place there.”

After setting the general scene out on the streets, Mohyeldin recounts an encounter he had on his journey to the bureau.

“We came across a young man who had just transferred the body of a girl that had died. He told us, this eyewitness told us, that the girl that was standing next to him in the protest had been hit in the head by a gas canister. His body and all of his clothes were soaked in blood and he was visibly shaken as we spoke to him. Now, the people that were around him also told us, all of their colleagues immediately took the body of this young female protester away. We weren’t able to see it, but the person that was there at the scene very visibly shaken, told us that it was a very tragic disaster.” (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

New phone updates shortly afterwards from Jamal Elshayyal in Suez and Rawya Rageh in Alexandria help paint a picture for viewers of a whole country rapidly turning into a war zone.

“It seems like the main police station has actually been taken over by the protesters here,” reports Elshayyal, “and those that have been detained over the past 48 hours have been released. Prior to that, three armoured vehicles — and thankfully we’ve been able to film this, we’ll try and get these pictures across to our bureaus one way or the other, obviously communications are very limited here — three armoured vehicles were set alight by some of the protesters … And the protesters managed to take control of three of the armoured vehicles [that] transport these riot police.”

Rageh reports that “scenes are getting worse by the moment” in Alexandria.

“From where I’m standing, earlier there were merely confrontations — not just ‘merely’, but remarkable confrontations between protesters and the police firing tear gas. But right now there seems to be a huge fire, I’m seeing thick smoke billowing from behind the buildings in front of me ...”

As she speaks, the director cuts away from taped pictures to the live camera shot from the Cairo bureau. It shows rows and rows of men kneeling in prayer on the street. The camera is shaking — it seems to be mounted on the operator’s shoulder at an awkward angle. Santamaria wraps up the phono with Rageh to focus on these pictures.

“Rawya Rageh there on the line from Alexandria. These are live pictures we’re seeing from our office, the Al Jazeera bureau office in Cairo. And those are people praying in the streets there. I’m just getting a little closer to a monitor so I can see exactly what we are seeing there.”

The camera pulls out to give some perspective. The men are praying on the street directly in front of AJE’s building, the October 6 Bridge visible behind them where something is burning and thick black smoke is billowing. Santamaria brings in Mohyeldin to narrate the scene.

“Hundreds of worshippers are kneeling in prayer right now,” begins Mohyeldin. “I’m just going to have the camera pan out and show you a little bit of a wide picture.”

He speaks softly in Arabic to the operator; the camera whips out and repositions.

“You can see there on the bridge there seems to be a large cloud of black smoke coming out. We don’t know what the cause of that is but you can see that something has been set on fire. That is, as I was saying, that is one of the major intersections here in the heart of Cairo ... we know that on our way into the office

where we were, police had blocked off that intersection and there [were] a lot of clashes taking place between the protesters throwing stones at the police that were there, plain-clothes police officers as well as riot gear, and that was the scene that was repeated all over. Right now you're seeing another line of worshippers have gathered ..."

Mohyeldin hesitates momentarily in the middle of his sentence and another person can be heard whispering very faintly in the background. The lines of worshippers rise and fall in unison, their chants audible to viewers. Santamaria invites viewers to listen to the sound of prayers and stops talking. There is more whispering behind the camera.

"Kamahl, can you hear me?"

"Yeah, go ahead, Ayman."

"Kamahl, we are getting some information right now from the son of Ayman Nour, who's one of the prominent opposition figures here in Egypt. He's standing right next to me, actually, he came to our studio and he's telling me that his father is in the hospital. I'm just going to have a quick conversation with him while we're on the air over these pictures."

The person who had been whispering to Mohyeldin was Dan Nolan.

"I opened the [office] door to Ayman Noor's son," recalls Nolan. "Ayman [Mohyeldin] is such a professional I could whisper information in his ear while he was on air and then he could just switch over seamlessly to an interview with him." (personal communication, May 23, 2012)

While Mohyeldin and Jane Dutton had been on air, fronting the Cairo bureau's reporting efforts, Nolan had been working hard behind the scenes, gathering and preparing information for the newsroom and on-air talent. He had also managed to do a little bit of direct reporting himself, circumventing the Egyptian

government's communications shutdown by contacting his wife in Dubai and dictating tweets for her to send from his account:

> **@nolanjazeera**: Now tweeting via a third party who is outside Egypt. #egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 28a)

> **@nolanjazeera**: Holed up inside Al Jazeera office. Unbelievable scenes on the streets below #egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 28b)

As Mohyeldin finishes his impromptu on-air interview with Ayman Nour's son, Santamaria jumps in with an impromptu interview of his own.

"Ayman, thank you for all that, excellent reporting there, and I want you to stay and listen to this because on the phone now we have, I'm told, a senior member of the ruling NDP. His name is Mustafa Al Fiqi. Mr Mustafa, thank you so much for you time, thank you for joining us. Let me ask you a very broad question: what is going on today? Does the government have any control over what is happening?"

"The situation now is unprecedented in the last decades in Egypt," replies Al Fiqi in heavily accented English, "and I don't think that we have seen like that in the last thirty, forty years. That's why it needs a non-traditional way of dealing with it. I don't think that if the government or the whole regime responds to the demands of the demonstrators, this is a sign of weakness at all. No. I feel this is a moment of wisdom and Egypt has to take actions against corruption, against poverty, upgrading the standard of living of people, giving more freedoms ..."

"So, you're saying it's a moment of opportunity to listen to the protesters?" interrupts Santamaria. "However, look at the pictures, look at what's happening. There are riot police batting back the protesters. The two things can't work together."

"Yes, it's very sad to see these confrontations because your police and the demonstrators both are Egyptians and we feel sad for the victims in both sides,"

replies Al Fiqi. “You know, we were not expecting that situation at all and we kept asking that some changes should take place immediately. The government has to leave ...”

“I’m sorry to interrupt you, sir, I’m sorry to interrupt. Is President Mubarak going to face his people at any point?”

“I’m sure that he’s a man of confrontation, he’s going to face the people I’m sure within the coming days to say something and to take actions to relieve the people. Otherwise the situation will be escalating and we can’t find the limits to what’s going on now. People are going to the streets with no political agenda but they feel that they need change, they need reform.”

“Do you believe this government could fall?”

“The government?”

“Yes.”

“No, I don’t think so.”

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The live pictures being broadcast by AJE that day were almost unbelievable. From its vantage point above the October 6 Bridge and looking south towards the Egyptian Museum and down the Nile, its camera captured some of the most iconic images of the Day of Rage.

One of those was a long, long shot down the river towards the Qasr el-Nil Bridge, through the haze and glare. Giant plumes of water from water cannon sprayed along the bridge, and dramatic parabolas of white smoke trailed behind canisters of tear gas fired over water towards the October 6 Bridge. Santamaria, watching the pictures live with the channel’s viewers around the world, is almost lost for words.

“This is extraordinary,” he says on air. “This is the capital of Egypt. On a Friday afternoon …”

Ayman Mohyeldin’s voice can be heard in the background, urgently repeating, “I’m ready. I’m ready. Kamahl?”

In the chaos of the studio, Santamaria hasn’t heard him. “I’m just finding out if we’ve got Ayman Mohyeldin … can you hear me, Ayman?”

“Yes I can, Kamahl, I can hear you.”

“Great. Ayman, talk me through this.”

“I’m just going to have our camera pan to the right a little bit and show you what’s happening on the bridge … what you’re seeing there in the foreground, you’re actually seeing hundreds of protesters crossing from the eastern banks of the River Nile across the bridge. In the background you’re seeing all that white smoke, you can probably hear the explosions as well in the background. It seems that riot police are firing tear gas and it seems that it’s being shot in the direction northbound … towards the October 6 Bridge where some of the protesters are … you can see the water cannon being fired there, which indicates that at least in the vicinity of the riot police there, there are some protesters. But what seems to have appeared right now from where we are standing, riot police have taken over … the Qasr el-Nil Bridge, riot police have taken over that entire bridge, protesters are on the October 6 Bridge and they are just several hundred metres away from each other, but what you’re seeing is the riot police essentially trying to disperse the protesters that have gathered on that major [thoroughfare].”

A close-up, shaky camera shot shows a man running away from armoured vehicles, another man slumped in his arms. As he makes it back to the main crowd, they gather and help carry the injured protester. While Mohyeldin commentates this scene, the director for some reason cuts away from the live shot to footage recorded earlier. When Mohyeldin notices this (some seconds later due

to the satellite delay), he exclaims, “Go back to live pictures!” and the director complies. The crowd on the October 6 bridge rushes across it from east to west and storms the armoured vehicles, throwing rocks and other projectiles. The vehicle reverses, turns around, and heads back to the main police line from where more tear gas is being fired.

Throughout all this, Santamaria and Mohyeldin are engaged in a free-flowing conversation, almost directing the coverage between them.

“Ayman, could you ask your cameraman to widen out a bit again?” requests Santamaria. “I want to get a look at what we were seeing earlier.”

Mohyeldin issues some instructions in Arabic. As the camera begins to reposition, a fire appears to break out within the group of riot police defending the bridge from protesters.

“Oh, hang on, no!” says Santamaria. “Stay on that.”

Mohyeldin has another hushed conversation in Arabic with his camera operator before speaking.

“It looks like some sort of projectile that had flames on it was thrown at the riot police and did ignite once it exploded.”

The sounds of explosions and gas canisters being fired are now close and loud, people are shouting, and there is a steady background drone of angry car horns. At the base of the bureau building, a large number of protesters has gathered and Mohyeldin translates their chants.

“What they’re saying really is, ‘where is the international media?’ And they are saying, ‘this is State terrorism.’”

A massive cloud of tear gas expands in the middle of the crowd and scatters the protesters. A few of them attempt to pick up and lob back the canisters while the

mob breaks barricades protecting the area in front of the next-door Ramses Hilton hotel. The battle is now less than 50 metres from AJE's studio. Mohyeldin, his head poking out of a studio window along with the camera, narrates.

"Now what you're seeing, the protesters are being dispersed by tear gas. They've managed to break through the barricade of the hotel and are trying to find refuge somewhere there. You can see more tear gas being fired [on] the protesters ..."

A huge boom drowns out his commentary as another tear gas canister is fired. Panic is clear in Moheyldin's voice.

"And more of them are coming our way!"

The camera operator and Mohyeldin roughly pull themselves back inside the window and drop towards the floor. There is a brief and urgent off-mic exchange in Arabic. Through the window and out of focus, a tear gas canister trailing its signature white smoke falls out of the sky about 30 metres from the building.

"Are you all right there, Ayman?" asks Santamaria, concerned.

"Yeah, yeah, sorry, Kamahl, it's just that more and more tear gas canisters are being fired in the direction of us."

As Mohyeldin speaks, a wider but still out-of-focus camera shot reveals the entire scene. The sun is setting in the west through thick clouds of white smoke, the sky painted with a dozen criss-crossing gas trails. He sounds disorientated and distracted.

"Unfortunately, because the tear gas is kind of ... we're just going to ... just one second, stay with us, Kamahl ..."

The cameraman has given up trying to operate the camera — he is too busy trying to escape tear gas and find a safe position. As the camera whips around, viewers watch protesters escaping down an alleyway and see the Ramses Hilton's

balconies packed with stunned tourists. Mohyeldin issues some urgent instructions in Arabic, then resumes his reporting.

“There what you’re seeing right now are pictures, Kamahl, of the tear gas. We’re just going to switch out — one second — our cameraman so that he can try to bring you these unprecedented pictures, but as you can imagine, the tear gas is making it very difficult for us to see.”

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In the meantime, Jamal Elshayyal’s driver has completed his second run from Suez to Cairo with camera tapes, and the latest footage has been fed to Doha. Corresponding to Elshayyal’s phone report an hour earlier, it shows a large crowd that has overrun and set alight an armoured vehicle with several men fighting for possession of firearms captured from the police; one man walks away from the crowd with a gun, holding it victoriously in the air. Protesters are violently rocking the police van and pelting it with projectiles. A second armoured vehicle drives through the scene and the protesters scatter; it then veers straight into the crowds and mows down at least one person. As the camera shot pulls out, thousands of protesters crowd the streets and throw rocks and other projectiles at the retreating vehicle.

Santamaria interviews Elshayyal on the phone over the new footage.

“Jamal, it looks like it’s almost gotten worse there again, the chaos increasing.”

“Yes, Kamahl, it doesn’t look like letting up anytime soon. The fact that there is such anger on the street and there is no-one to contain nor manage it is making the prospects of the rest of the day, and as we go on to the night later on, quite harrowing for the people here. We’re hearing unconfirmed reports from eyewitnesses — we personally cannot verify this, but there are eyewitnesses — who say one person has been killed and his body has been carried through the streets. But the violence is widespread — all the shops have been closed and

boarded up, the main police station ... has been set alight, there's several armoured vehicles [that have had] the same [done to them] ..."

The camera returns to the overrun van, revealing that it has been set alight. Santamaria remembers that footage well.

"This is mental, this is absolutely mental," he recalls thinking to himself at the time. (personal communication, October 20, 2011).

Elshayyal vividly recalls the sense of growing danger as he reported from Suez that afternoon.

"There are some things I did in Suez that were, I look back at and think I'm pretty lucky I wasn't killed or attacked or something," he says. "The town pretty quickly turned into a lawless town to a certain degree ... On the Day of Rage, several prisons were opened up by the Mubarak regime to allow criminals to come out ... early afternoon, 3 pm tops, was the last time I saw a police officer." (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

In Alexandria, Rawya Rageh was reporting from the relative safety of her hotel room, which had clear sight-lines to the protests.

"From my balcony I could see everything," she recalls. "And then I started seeing people marching with the first fatality. I could see them carrying a man on the Corniche with his clothes bloodied and with them chanting." (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

Rageh phones into Doha and reports live at about 1330 GMT.

"Kamahl, the situation is worsening here by the moment," she begins. "I'm seeing in fact in front of me a bloodied body being carried through the streets. A march following it, people chanting, 'There's no God but God, the martyr is loved by God.' Clearly evidence, first-hand here, that there have been civilians who've lost their life in the confrontation ..."

Back in Cairo, there are yet more incredible scenes as the sun sets. New footage shot at ground level shows protesters walking through the street, tears streaming from their eyes, handkerchiefs held over their mouths and noses, wide-eyed and chanting; injured protesters being treated by their comrades; teenaged boys passed out on the ground; and men running from armoured vehicles, blood streaming from their heads. In the Doha studio, Santamaria does his best to add context to the vision, but knows he is not at his most coherent.

"These pictures coming in raw to us, too, we don't know what's in them. Forgive the vagueness of how I may sound at times," he apologises.

Protesters throw large chunks of concrete to the ground to break them into small pieces for throwing at police. There are shocking, confronting shots of a protester being beaten with truncheons by a group of men — presumably plain-clothes security forces. One man lies on the ground with blood all over his face; no fewer than four men are wiping it away. The camera focuses on a pool of blood on the ground, fresh drops falling into it from a wounded protester.

"Blood being spilled quite literally there," Santamaria says.

Raided

Presenter Laura Kyle opens the 1500 GMT bulletin from the Doha studio, standing in front of the video-wall. Kamahl Santamaria has left the set for his first break in three-and-a-quarter hours. It is 5 pm in Cairo. After recapping the main developments for viewers who have just tuned in, Kyle throws to Ayman Mohyeldin in Cairo.

"Ayman, are the streets now cleared or are they still clashing?"

“Laura, absolutely not,” he begins. “In fact, you can see from our cameras … protesters are really engaged in a kind of cat-and-mouse with the police. What is happening is we’re hearing chants from …”

An unknown voice in the bureau with Mohyeldin shouts loudly off-camera, “The army! The army!” Out on the streets, protesters turn and run towards something unseen by the camera, and the noise of the crowd turns to cheering. The camera zooms in, searching for the subject of protesters’ attention. Mohyeldin, trying to work out what is happening, stalls.

“Hold on one second, hold on one second because we’re going to try to …”

Again, the voice in the background exclaims, “The army’s there! The army’s there!” as a troop carrier drives into shot, heading towards the Ramses Hilton. Dozens of cheering protesters overrun the vehicle, climbing on top of it and hugging the soldiers popped up through hatches in the roof.

“Laura, we’re showing you live pictures right now of protesters that have run to an armoured vehicle that they believe is the army,” narrates Mohyeldin. “Now, I cannot confirm that. You can see the celebration on the faces of the protesters. A short while ago, a few minutes ago, protesters were chanting, ‘Where is the army? Come and save us. Where is the army? Come and save us.’ [They have been asking] the Egyptian military, which is very much respected and revered by the public … to intervene and protect them from the riot police.”

The appearance of an army tank and the protesters’ reaction to it suggests a circuit breaker for the street clashes, but as darkness begins to fall, riot police gather directly in front of the AJE building and prepare to confront protesters once more. They move gingerly towards a crowd in front of the Ramses Hilton, firing tear gas and throwing the protesters’ rocks and projectiles back at them, the loud noises of clashes clearly audible to viewers. As the two sides engage in a pitched battle, Kyle informs viewers that Egyptian State media has announced a government-imposed curfew in Cairo and other flashpoint towns from 6pm local time that night — less than an hour away.

“That is a very significant development,” notes Mohyeldin. “We haven’t seen curfews like this established in recent protests that have happened so it gives you a sense of the anxiousness that has gripped the security services here. Now, it’s safe to say that where we are, in the heart of Cairo, the scene has definitely turned chaotic ...”

A loud boom as another tear gas canister or stun grenade is fired.

“... you can hear the sounds of the explosions that are taking place. Every time there’s an attempt by the police to take ground and hold that ground, the protesters are able to push them back.”

Soon, though, police and protesters start motioning to each other, arms out, palms down. A few protesters appear to be calming others and asking them to stop throwing rocks; some police are similarly appealing to their colleagues. Mohyeldin tries to interpret events.

“The protesters right now seem to be ... We’re just trying to make sense of ... one second ... because it seems that they have been able to push the riot police back ...”

Someone behind the camera is speaking to Mohyeldin in Arabic. There is a long, long pause during which the sounds of the crowd can be heard.

“It seems right now that some of the protesters ... are telling other protesters to halt throwing rocks. I can’t see from the vantage point ... I’m just going to stick my head out the window. One second.”

As Mohyeldin repositions himself, the protesters begin to form into lines on the ground for prayer. The sound of wind buffeting his mic indicates that he is now outside the studio window.

“Can you hear me?” he asks.

“Yes we can, Ayman.”

“Okay, there’s one protester who’s making his way towards the riot police right now. I don’t know if our cameras are capturing that, but what we are told is that it’s prayer time and the protesters are trying to organise another prayer like they [did] earlier this afternoon.”

As the hastily negotiated ceasefire plays out on camera, Mohyeldin is having an off-mic exchange with some other people in the office. When he begins speaking to Kyle and the viewers again, the tone of his voice has changed.

“I just wanted to give you some news that’s happening in our building right now. We are told that State security has entered the building from which we are broadcasting a live signal. They’re probably making their way through the floors. This is a building which is concentrated with a lot of news agencies and media organisations. We’re one of them but we are told that State security is now in our building here in the heart of Cairo so it is an attempt obviously by the government to try and restrict these images that are being broadcast around the world from getting out.”

By this stage, the tension and anxiety is clear in Ayman’s voice. He is trying his best to give a coherent commentary but is distracted by events taking place within the office.

“What we do know is that right outside the building, you can see the protesters trying to assemble for what we understand is evening prayer time.”

“Ayman, stay with us while you can,” implores Kyle.

“I will, I will. I’m here.”

On screen, a policeman falls to his knees, injured and dazed. He is helped by a number of his comrades to stand and leave the road. They lift his visor and fan his face.

Dan Nolan is still sending tweets via his wife:

> **@nolanjazeera**: I have seen riot police inside our building, unsure if they will enter our office. Al Jazeera broadcasting live #egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 28c)

Mohyeldin remembers what is was like to report on events taking place right outside his window while considering the growing threat to his ability to do so.

"We'd get these reports from people who were downstairs … 'Police are coming, they're looking for the Al Jazeera offices,'" he says. "So, I think that's why there was panic, because at any moment they might come up. And you are trying to kind of weigh in your head scenarios that could happen. 'Who's coming up? Are they thugs? Are they police? Are they going to arrest us and shut us down? Can we keep a camera signal up discreetly without them knowing it?' So, you're trying to multitask with that sort of stuff, so it's probably why there was a little more anxiety in my voice or nervousness in my voice. Sometimes you're thinking of all these things and you're still trying to make sure you're reporting what's happening outside the window as well." (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

It isn't just the Cairo team facing growing threats. Kyle crosses next to Rawya Rageh in Alexandria who is forced to abruptly cut off her phono.

"We've been trying for hours to feed you these pictures to show you the intensity of what's going on but it's been incredibly difficult with the crackdown on communications," she begins. "We understand protesters have been setting dozens of police trucks on fire and just in the past hour or so we've seen people carrying a bloodied body away … And actually, we're going to have to end this phone call because as I mentioned, people in charge of this building are actually escorting us away from this vantage point."

Back in Cairo, in the dull, pinkish light of dusk, a thick wall of men have gathered at the western end of the October 6 Bridge in preparation for their prayers. Kyle crosses back to Mohyeldin.

"Ayman, it seems that from what we're seeing in these pictures that people are indeed assembling for evening prayer. You're not hearing the stun grenades, you're not hearing the tear gas canisters at the moment, is there a momentary calm in the capital?"

"Indeed it is quite a very unique and very historic image there," he reports. "What you're seeing is, all these people on that bridge who were engaging in the protests just a few minutes ago, as if they suddenly stopped and began to line up so that they can perform the prayers. And almost on cue, the riot police that was firing at them stun grenades and tear gas canisters suddenly stopped. And it seems like it has at least for the past few minutes, we're not hearing any of the explosions or grenades being fired ... it'll be very interesting to see what happens in the few minutes immediately afterwards."

The kneeling men lie flat as they pray. Eddies of wind blow paper and other garbage in lazy circles around the streets. Cars flow with relative ease along one lane of the bridge.

"Let me give you two quick updates," continues Mohyeldin. "One is we understand that Egyptian police or at least security forces are still currently in our building. We know that communications have been hampered in the building as well, so, there is some concern, though I have to emphasise that no-one has come to us yet, but there is some concern given the fact that communications over the past 24 hours have been interrupted including the internet, cell phone networks have been turned off, social media sites have been inaccessible. There is concern as well that our images and our communications may be cut off. I can tell you right now, though, we're going to keep these images live as much as possible until there is any other development. We have at least for the time being closed our offices and we're reporting live. You're seeing these images outside our

window overlooking the 6th of October Bridge … you can see more and more police reinforcements being sent."

The live camera shot shows a stream of dozens of troop-carrying vans driving down a bridge off-ramp into the centre of Cairo.

"Now, as we were reporting, the curfew is set to take place in about 15 minutes local time. You're seeing a great number of police reinforcements being deployed to the area. There's no sign, though, that the protesters are going to be dispersed, so it could potentially be a very, very explosive showdown in the next few minutes as the police tries to impose this curfew."

Indeed, as soon as prayers finish, the protesters stand and rush the police lines, indicating no intention to obey the curfew. The police prepare to engage.

"You can see there," begins Mohyeldin, before pausing. In the background you hear him say to someone, "What's that?" before turning back to his microphone.

"Listen, I just want to tell you that it seems that police are knocking on our door …"

There is a conversation behind the camera in Arabic. Outside the window, protesters are screaming and pushing an upturned tourist police stand along the street.

"Sorry, Laura, just because there were some people knocking on the door outside and we weren't sure if it's police or not but we're told the police are on the way up to our office. They have just been to the office of our Al Jazeera Arabic colleagues, so I will stay on the air if I can until the police come and knock on our door but we are in an inside office. We are going to keep these images for you guys, live until we are actually forced off the air, either by the police or if our signal is somehow interrupted."

Mohyeldin then gets distracted and Laura Kyle cannot regain his attention, so she starts recapping events for viewers over the live pictures, with faint conversation taking place in the background at the Cairo bureau. The camera is abruptly picked up and moved around with zero consideration for the viewers around the world watching its signal. When it resettles on a shot looking out the bureau window into the dark city, Ayman talks over Kyle's commentary.

"Um, you guys ..."

"Ayman Mohyeldin, what's happening there?" responds Kyle.

"Well we've just, as I was saying a short while ago, we were told that police [were] in the building, we were told that police did visit the Al Jazeera Arabic office a short while ago. There was some police that came and knocked on our door. We're in an inside office, really, on the balcony broadcasting these images for you. We've moved the camera inside so you're still getting a sense of the city but we're still a little bit further away. The images are just as they were. We're just a few minutes away from that curfew that's supposed to go in place. I don't know if you can hear outside — we did have to move the camera inside so it may affect the audio — but you should still be able to hear the chants and the rants of the protesters, as well as the explosions there."

Over the next few minutes, confusion reigns. Mohyeldin and the crew in Cairo are obviously rattled, expecting police to enter the bureau at any moment and shut them down. Mohyeldin's reporting of the situation outside the bureau is faltering and distracted. Kyle and the Doha newsroom are as captivated as the viewers, all of them watching and listening in real-time.

"We're going to try to put the camera back outside," announces Mohyeldin on air. "It's a bit of a risk but what we're hearing is that once again ..."

The camera moves around, zooming in and out, searching for framing and focus. There is a loud noise in the bureau and some urgent conversation. A long pause from Ayman, then he speaks again.

“Okay, guys, hold on one second.”

A conversation in Arabic.

Kyle interrupts as the top of the hour approaches.

“Ayman, we are going to have to interrupt for a moment because we are going to have to take a very short break in about a minute.”

Mohyeldin tries interjecting over Kyle — “Laura! Laura! Stay with me!” — but she can’t hear him.

“Actually, I’ve just been told we won’t be taking a break,” Kyle announces after communication from senior producers. “Ayman, we’re not seeing any signs of people leaving the streets.”

“No, we’re not and we’re just a few minutes away from the imposed curfew and I’m being told right now that Egyptian State media is reporting that the President has ordered the army on the streets to add reinforcements to the police in imposing the curfew.”

Egypt burns

Slowly, across every timezone, the world was catching up with the past four hours of chaos in Egypt, and people were tuning in to Al Jazeera any way they could. Outside of AJE’s satellite and cable footprint, the only way to watch was via the live web stream.

Head of Online Mohamed Nanabhay was monitoring realtime analytics for the website and spotted something quite amazing.

"[Our live monitoring tool] measures the number of concurrent users on your website and where they are on your website," he says. "Our subscription to [the service provider] allowed us 10,000 concurrent users. Previously we'd never got anywhere near 10,000 concurrent users."

They now had over 10,000 concurrent users on the site, so Nanabhay made a phone call.

"[The monitoring company] increased it to 15,000 and within half an hour we were at 15,000. So, we called them up again and ... they increased it to 20,000. An hour later, we're at 20,000. And this just went on. We doubled it to 40,000, we hit 40,000. We went up — they increased it to 100,000. And at some point the max hit at 150,000 or something. And this was in the [Doha] night, right? It was just growing." (personal communication, January 18, 2012).

This explosive growth occurred in mere hours. Managing Director Al Anstey says there was a "2500 per cent increase [in overall web traffic] in the first couple of days" (personal communication, October 11, 2011). According to internet traffic monitoring service alexa.com, demand for the Al Jazeera website on 28 January was greater than that of the New York Times.

Those viewers who were just tuning into AJE were about to witness some of the most iconic scenes of the Day of Rage and the whole revolution.

In Egypt's largest cities, thousands and thousands of protesters are still on the streets in breach of the government's curfew, which has had absolutely zero effect on the demonstrations. Kamahl Santamaria has taken back over from Laura Kyle after his hour's break. As he welcomes new viewers, AJE's Cairo bureau camera shows lines and lines of police and army vehicles driving along roads into the city, the air crackling with the boom of tear gas canisters, stun grenades, and what occasionally sounds like gunfire. Santamaria throws straight to Ayman Mohyeldin who has news of a dramatic development.

“You can see there a thick black cloud of smoke … there is a fire behind that building,” Mohyeldin reports. “We are told it is the NDP headquarters — the National Democratic Party headquarters … belonging to the ruling party of President Hosni Mubarak.”

The camera whips away and repositions to focus on the October 6 Bridge where flames are leaping from the cab of a vehicle surrounded by protesters.

“There you are seeing people gathered and you can see at least some kind of fire that has been set ablaze on what seems to be a vehicle, a troop vehicle that carries troops. I can see flames on top of that vehicle and protesters have surrounded it. And those cars that you’re seeing are personnel carriers, they ferry the soldiers back and forth.”

While Santamaria summarises the day’s events for new viewers, Mohyeldin has a conversation in Arabic with someone off-camera. Suddenly, the protesters begin to rock the vehicle from side to side, its doors swinging open and closed. Mohyeldin urgently calls for Santamaria’s attention.

“There! Kamahl! Can you see that!”

The vehicle is being rocked in such a way that it begins to edge towards the railing of the bridge.

Santamaria tries to confirm what the protesters are up to, but there is confusion as he and Mohyeldin talk over each other.

“I remember saying to Ayman, ‘Is that a police van?’” Santamaria recalls. “‘Are they pushing that into the Nile?’ And my program editor, actually, was telling me to shut up.” Santamaria, Kamahl (personal communication, October 20, 2011).

Mohyeldin jumps in and narrates the scene.

“Kamahl, unbelievable pictures you’re seeing there of crowds of protesters trying to dump the vehicle … they’re trying almost to knock it over into the Nile. It’s very difficult for us to confirm but you can see clearly they have the momentum of the vehicle wobbling. I can’t tell if there’s anyone in there from where I am seeing it, but all of those people around it are protesters and an indication that the police who tried for hours to bring the situation here under control have failed to do so.”

Eventually, however, the protesters give up trying to topple the vehicle and once again surround it. One man climbs onto the roof, waving and pumping his arms in an attempt to motivate the other demonstrators. Protesters throw more fuel at the growing fire in the cab of the truck, and the mob has another go at tipping it into the river.

These pictures of Egyptians attempting to throw a burning police van into the Nile have become some of the most recognisable of the Egyptian revolution. To Mohyeldin, they were more than just good television.

“I think symbolically it was … just because those boxes, those police armoured vehicle carriers, were really notorious symbols of oppression,” he says. “People really feared them in this country because … whenever they were deployed they would always have dozens of people on board, and also that’s sometimes what [the regime] would use to round up people, throw them in and then take them off. Symbolically, to see that vehicle under the control of protesters, being pushed to the edge of the Nile, and then being set on fire, I think was a tipping point. I mean, it was really a sign that that bridge, or at least that part of the bridge, had fallen under the control of the protesters because they had so defiantly taken it and really shown no mercy.” Mohyeldin, Ayman (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

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The footage shot earlier in the day by Rawya Rageh and her team in Alexandria has finally been fed to Doha and is now playing out on air. It shows street-level scenes of riot police and protesters exchanging tear gas canisters and makeshift

projectiles, injured people being treated, and chanting crowds. Rageh reports via satellite phone over the footage.

"I don't know if you can see the pictures we sent to you earlier," she begins. "Those included pictures of protesters tearing down posters of Gamal Mubarak, the son of President Hosni Mubarak, who the opposition said was being groomed to succeed his father ..."

A large crowd passes close to Rageh's position and she pauses so viewers can hear their chants.

"What are they saying, Rawya?" asks Santamaria.

"They're saying, 'Illegitimate! Illegitimate!' People are marching through the streets as we speak, in clear defiance of the curfew."

Santamaria crosses next to Jamal Elshayyal in Suez.

"Kamahl, five army tanks have just rolled past me in the past 20 minutes, headed towards the centre of the city," he reports. "Earlier, as night fell, the protesters in their thousands have taken over, literally, the centre of the city, have set ablaze two police stations and dozens of armoured vehicles belonging to the State security."

Elshayyal had been very busy all afternoon, witnessing some amazing scenes.

"I was walking around trying to take in what was going on," he recalls. "We filmed a few things, and you're just looking around and suddenly you saw human chains being set up in front of banks, but in front of those human chains, or close to those human chains you would see a group of people gathering. And you could tell that the intent was, they really want to smash into that bank."

Demonstrating the many dimensions of chaos on the streets, some citizens were fighting back against random criminality.

“There was a Vodafone store,” says Elshayyal, “and I’ll never forget seeing this which was, by the time the locals had got there that Vodafone store had already been smashed up but not everything had been taken from it. I remember seeing some guy was running away with a red chair. As I was doing my phono describing what was going on … the next thing I saw was the guy being dragged back towards the Vodafone [store] with the chair, the chair put back into the smashed-up shop, and the guy essentially made an example of in front of everyone.” (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Back in Cairo, Ayman Mohyeldin has turned his attention back to the NDP building fire.

“Kamahl, it’s slightly difficult to see from where we are, but I can make out, I don’t know if the camera’s able to get that cloud of smoke, the big, black cloud of smoke, that fire that is on a building. We believe that to be the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party, just close to it at least. If it’s not the ruling National Democratic Party headquarters it is the building adjacent to it … that is a very iconic building in the heart of Cairo because that building symbolises not only the government but the entire ruling establishment of the country.”

He pauses, receiving information from someone off-camera.

“I am being told, yes, it is the NDP headquarters … it is, in fact, the building where just yesterday the senior leadership of that party met, including the President’s son, Gamal Mubarak, and the secretary general.”

Mohyeldin knew immediately the significance of the fire.

“I think for me it was a huge defining moment on so many levels — symbolically and also operationally it was a significant blow to the regime,” he says now, reflecting on that night. “The NDP building was at the heart of the regime and that had been completely gutted out. Symbolically, it was like this key institution, again, kind of like that vehicle, not on a security level but on a political level. And

the fact that you had destroyed that kind of symbol of the regime was, I think, very powerful ... we [could] actually smell the smoke and we [were] several hundred metres away from that building." (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

On air, that thick, black smoke severely inhibits the camera's view of the NDP building and the streets below. Ominous and alarming sounds fill the air.

"We're hearing outside the sound of ... gunfire, we're not sure if it's live ammunition or whether they are some sort of rubber-coated bullets," reports Mohyeldin. "But you can hear from where we are standing, ammunition is being fired. There are massive explosions."

Mohyeldin has now moved outside the bureau window onto the "balcony" which is more like a glorified window ledge. Loud bangs are drowning out Ayman's voice over the microphone.

"You can hear the loud gunfire. By most accounts that is ammunition. Now, again, we're not confirming that it is live fire, but there is certainly heavy, heavy, heavy gunfire coming in from the direction of the radio and television building towards the centre of the city where we are."

Protesters have gathered once more at the base of AJE's building for their final prayer of the day. The camera provides grainy images of men prostrating themselves through the blue haze of tear gas.

*****

As the evening wears on, viewers who have been tuned in for many hours see two new things on their screens: an "AL JAZEERA EXCLUSIVE" tag on the live picture — AJE finally signalling the exclusivity of its content — and Ayman Mohyeldin's face. The Cairo camera, sticking out of one bureau window, is now shooting along the outer wall of the building towards Ayman, who is leaning out of another window a metre or two away. He has a foot propped up on the outside

ledge and is holding a lapel mic to his chest for sound. He is buffeted by a brisk breeze and has a scarf wrapped around his neck for use when tear gas wafts in his direction. The shot glows an eerie green-blue due to poor lighting and white balance.

"I'm standing on the balcony and I'm looking down at the scene in this intersection where these protesters were gathered," he begins. "I can hear a loud rumbling in the direction of the end of the street."

The camera pans away, refocusing on the NDP building fire. Mohyeldin has spotted something else, closer to the studio: "Unfortunately the camera is not showing you this but, hold on, I'm going to get the camera to pan ..."

He issues instructions to the camera operator in Arabic but the camera can't shoot at the required angle. Mohyeldin attempts to describe the unseen to viewers.

"In between us and the Hilton Hotel there's a very tight street. There's a police car that carries troops — one of those similar to what we've seen on the bridge — the protesters have completely overwhelmed it. What you're hearing is the stoning of that vehicle. Every once in a while some of the policemen who were in that vehicle open fire on the protesters, perhaps with ammunition; I have not seen any protesters on the ground which indicates from where I'm standing, no injuries. But they are setting ablaze that vehicle that was a police carrier. It's right in front of our building. Protesters have surrounded it. The police that was in that vehicle seems to have managed to escape ... If you give me a second I will give you a chance to at least see these pictures. Just one ... it may be difficult ..."

The director takes this opportunity to compare and contrast AJE's depiction of central Cairo with Egypt's State broadcaster, cutting to a split screen — AJE's live camera on the left, State TV's output on the right. Egypt's channel features a tranquil, tourist-postcard–style shot of the Nile River, traffic calmly inching along a parallel road, and then a view of the downtown skyline. It shows no sign of unrest whatsoever.

Santamaria jumps in to explain to viewers what they're seeing.

"We've just put up a bit of a comparison. On the left-hand side is your live camera from our bureau, the right-hand side's State television, Egyptian television. The contrast could not be more stark."

"The distance between our two cameras is probably no more than several hundred metres," adds Mohyeldin for clarity, "but focused on two very different realities in Cairo tonight."

Santamaria crosses to Rawya Rageh on the phone, who confirms that the military has arrived in Alexandria. Underneath Rageh's phono, Mohyeldin can be heard shouting:

"Guys, come back to us! Come back to us!"

This is obviously lost in the chaos of the studio and control room where it can often become difficult for the director and others to hear sources underneath the channel's main output and the noise of the crew shouting. Santamaria also misses Mohyeldin's plea, and throws instead to Jamal Elshayyal in Suez.

As Elshayyal speaks, the camera in Cairo is picked up and moved live on air. When it resettles, it shows the bright blue neon Hilton sign in Arabic and a burning vehicle, presumably the police vehicle Ayman spoke of just before. But the signal keeps dropping to black and popping back up, with Santamaria revealed in vision each time trying to keep across Jamal's report and the pictures he's seeing from Cairo.

Elshayyal wraps his report, and when Santamaria tries to throw to Mohyeldin, there is no camera signal and only a deafening background noise. Mohyeldin either can't hear Doha or there's some sort of technical problem. Eventually the live pic comes back up and Mohyeldin explains to viewers what they're seeing.

"Just about five minutes ago before our signal was interrupted, the rioters or the protesters managed to pull out a police van that was in the alleyway that I was describing for you earlier," he says. "They brought that van out to the main square, right outside the hotel, right outside our office building, and they torched it. After completely ripping it apart, after bashing its windows, they set it on fire, and that is what you're seeing right now. Now, that is only one of several vehicles that we've seen something similar to [this] happen."

The wind has picked up and can be heard blowing into Ayman's mic. It carries off the thick black smoke from the burning vehicle at a dramatic angle, and sends paper and other rubbish scuttling across the surface of the road.

"What we are also hearing a short distance away from where we're standing," continues Mohyeldin, "is thousands of protesters trying to storm the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is off to the right of where we are."

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While the protests would continue for several hours before finally settling in the hours before dawn, it was the end of Kamahl Santamaria's marathon five-and-a-quarter-hour shift, including his on-air partnership with correspondent Ayman Mohyeldin. Later, as he reflected on that afternoon, Santamaria was aware of his role as many people's point of contact with not just Al Jazeera English, but the events in Egypt.

"You just keep it in the back of your head that you're part of history," he says. "You're helping to form people's opinions. And there's a sort of a responsibility with that." (personal communication, October 20, 2011).

For Egyptian-born Mohyeldin, there was a personal dimension to his experiences that day.

"I've been covering Egypt, I've covered elections here, I've covered protests and marches and rallies. I've lived in here as a journalist … what is so important about

Egypt is that it's the Arab world's most populous country; it is in so many ways seen as the cultural capital of the Arab world; it is a religious capital of the Islamic world ... In my years of living in Egypt as well as covering this country through a lot of sometimes difficult periods, never [had] I seen images like this." (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

Mohyeldin would go on over the next couple of weeks to become the face of AJE's coverage of the revolution. Santamaria, long scheduled to anchor again the next day, was instead assigned to the web desk.

Mubarak speaks

So much smoke fills the air that AJE's camera struggles with the low visibility, sirens seem to blare from every direction, and the sounds of clashes are still audible off in the distance. New pictures shot in the streets of Cairo begin to make their way to Doha and are played out for viewers, showing scenes of demonstrators joyfully greeting military tanks and vehicles.

By around 8pm local time, Dan Nolan has carefully made his way through the streets to find a better view of the NDP fire. He reports on air via satellite phone.

"Where I actually am is 24 floors above the NDP headquarters, in a building not far from our bureau, to try and get more of an idea of what is going on out there," he reports. "Now, at the moment the NDP headquarters is impossible to make out, even the shape of the building, there is so much black smoke pouring out from it. Now, the source of the fire that seems to have engulfed that building, or at least that compound, is there are several vehicles on fire around it, we assume would be police vehicles that may have been protecting it. There would be at least ten or a dozen of those vehicles that are on fire around the building as well as the building itself ... There are what appears to be more fires along the street leading to Tahrir Square, and what appears to be some fires that have been set in Tahrir Square. This is, of course, the symbolic heart of Cairo, the square that was taken over by protesters on that first day of rallies that we saw on Tuesday."

Being early evening in Europe, and with the US now well and truly awake, statements from international leaders and figures have started to trickle in — US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton fronts a live press conference to express "deep concern" over the violence and to call for calm. And then finally, after a remarkable and historic day in his nation's long history, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak appears on State TV, rebroadcast by AJE and others, to address Egypt and the world.

"In the name of God almighty," he begins, solemn and serious (AJE's translator provides live English translation).

Citizens, I talk to you in a very critical situation.

I have been closely following the protests and what they were asking for and calling on. My instructions to the government have stressed on providing it with an opportunity to express the opinions and demands of the citizens.

I deeply regret the loss of innocent lives among protesters and police forces.

The government stayed committed to those instructions and that was obvious in the way police forces dealt with our youth, in taking initiative to protect them ... before those protests turned into riots that threaten the system and obstruct the daily life of citizens.

There is a fine line between freedom and chaos and I lean towards freedom for the people in expressing their opinions as much as I hold on to the need to maintain Egypt's safety and stability. [...]

I have requested the government to step down today and I will designate a new government as of tomorrow to shoulder new duties and to account for the priorities of the upcoming era. And I state once again that I will not be lax or tolerant.

I will take all the steps to maintain the safety and security of all the Egyptians. I will guard the safety of Egypt and the aspirations of our people. It is the duty and responsibility for which I have taken the oath to safeguard and maintain.

May God save Egypt, its people, and may He guide our steps. May peace be upon you all.

*****

With no real sign of let-up, AJE was starting to consider forward preparations. In Cairo, Ayman Mohyeldin and the team would continue to report live on air until daybreak. The Doha newsroom, instead of handing over to London overnight as scheduled, stayed on air for a few more hours, and was staffed by senior producers and managers throughout the night. Presenter David Foster was called in to anchor the extra, unplanned hours.

Rawya Rageh was in constant contact with Doha.

"It was midnight and [Head of Newsgathering] Heather Allan and [others] were sat on the newsdesk taking phone calls," she recalls. "It was that big that they actually called in all the bosses and they themselves were taking in the calls, not the staff. And Heather, I remember, goodnighted us [released them from duty for the day] but the city had finally calmed down to an extent that enabled us to venture out with the car and film the aftermath and we really, really wanted to film the aftermath and a walk-and-talk so we went out at night ... I remember calling back the desk and saying, 'I have this walk-and-talk of multiple parts, we can send it in.' Heather was like, 'I thought I goodnighted you!' We sent it in and we finally went to bed at 2 am or something like that." (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

Jamal Elshayyal found that he only had the time and headspace to reflect on events and his reporting of them after the fact. He says of stories such as the Day of Rage, that they "almost force themselves upon you. So, I never had an issue of keeping any sort of views in check because for me there were no views ... Because

things were happening really quickly so all I had to do was relay what was happening … I didn't have time to give a personal opinion because I still didn't understand what my opinion was."

Regarding AJE's advantage over competitors that night, he cites as key the channel's knowledge of the country and ability to better translate events for viewers. In his own case, he says he could give historical and geographic context that a "parachuted" reporter could not.

"I was in Suez and I was talking about the main police station there and the main road where the battles were taking place," he cites as an example. "One of the significant things about that was … that was the furthest point that Israeli forces had reached in one of the wars with Egypt. That road in Suez, and that police station, was then transformed into a command centre headed by Ariel Sharon. The people of Suez are always reminded of that. Now, during the revolution, that was also the command centre of the interior ministry and that was the furthest point that the police would go to. There was a lot of similarities people [noticed] with that, and it angered the people even more …" (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

That day, AJE had broadcast continuously for over 12 hours and had attracted the attention of many around the world, including other media outlets who liked what they saw.

"… its anchors were careful to present opposing points of view, citing the Egyptian official media and airing interviews with figures close to the government, including Mustafa al-Fiqi, the chair of the foreign relations committee in the Egyptian Parliament," wrote Robert F. Worth (2011) in the New York Times. "After quoting wire service reports that the Foreign Ministry had been engulfed by demonstrators, it followed up with denials from Egyptian officials. A string of analysts appeared on screen or over the phone, including a former American ambassador to Egypt."

The network even allowed itself a moment of self-congratulation. As Egypt burned and staff worked frantically, everyone at AJE and AJA received an email from Director General Wadah Khanfar:

> From: Wadah Khanfar
> Sent: Friday, January 28, 2011 8:21:22 PM
> Subject: Network Coverage of Egypt--A First Draft of History
> Dear Staff: Before the moment passes, I want every employee of this Network (English & Arabic) to understand why they should be proud of this day.
>
> As the evening arrives, we are on our way to closing yet another day in what has been an unprecedented month in Al Jazeera news coverage.
>
> Let me briefly recap what the challenges were even before we turned to today's Egypt coverage.
>
> In anticipation of large demonstrations following Friday prayer, the Egyptian government shut down the Internet and closed cell phone services. The government-owned NileSat went on to reassign Aljazeera Mubashir channel, burying it in hopes that our coverage would no longer be readily available. They infiltrated our Cairo Bureau and shut down some of our landlines. No doubt the intent was to deny our ability to inform the world of events taking place in Egypt, preferring instead to leave the media monopoly to the State-owned media and Ministry of Information.
>
> Undeterred, our teams dispersed with cameras throughout the country, in areas including Suez, Alexandria, Cairo, and Malhalla. Braving the same violent attacks by policemen against demonstrators, including physical assaults, rubber bullets, and tear gas, Al Jazeera journalists were on location, doing their jobs, and capturing the scene faced by the Egyptians to help carry their voices to our audience around the world.

This is the pedigree of journalism we have built our foundation on. It is why we have become the Network of choice for accurate and professional information coming from the region. It is why our website has seen a more than 2000 percent increase in traffic. And it is why you should know that your journalism matters greatly at this time of great change and opportunity throughout the Middle East.

This has been a month unrivaled in the number of major stories in Al Jazeera's young history. From Sudan to Tunisia to Lebanon to the Palestine Papers and now Egypt—the region is moving in ways that our competitors cannot grasp or do not care to. As we continue covering these stories, keep in mind the awesome responsibility you are fulfilling. You are a credit to yourselves and to this daring institution. As you are proving right now on our screens, journalism of depth is not a slogan.

My congratulations to you all.

Sincerely,

WADAH KHANFAR

CHAPTER 4: OWNING THE STORY

"Once you have a big news story, you focus on it, you own it, concentrate on it; make yourself the point of reference."
— Salah Negm, AJE's Head of News (personal communication, January 24, 2012)

As dawn breaks across Egypt on the morning of 29 January, Ayman Mohyeldin does a live cross from the Cairo bureau. Sounding utterly exhausted, and with bloodshot eyes, he reports tanks driving around the streets of the city and gunshots off in the distance.

Most of the Cairo team has been awake all night.

Throughout the night and between crosses, Mohyeldin has been wandering around the streets of the city in the eerie pre-dawn hours.

"You walked outside and you were seeing plumes or columns of black smoke rising up from various parts of the city," he remembers.

"A lot of the personnel cars had been set ablaze, police stations had been set on fire. And then the military had deployed, they had blocked off certain streets with tanks ... Everywhere you looked, walking around the streets there was very little traffic, so it was a pretty crazy scene." (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

With the streets still relatively deserted and easy to navigate, Dan Nolan leaves the bureau and heads to the burning NDP building where smoke still billows from the windows of the blackened high-rise. On the way, he uses his mobile phone to call his wife so she can continue tweeting on his behalf:

> **@nolanjazeera**: Internet still down here in #Egypt but phones back up so tweeting via abroad #Jan25 (Nolan, 2011, January 29a)

At the NDP building and at various other nearby locations, Nolan records pieces to camera, which he edits together and sends back to Doha.

"The headquarters of President Hosni Mubarak's ruling NDP party are still ablaze on Saturday morning," he begins in the piece.

"You can see the smoke and still some flames coming from the higher windows."

The camera tilts down to show Nolan. He is standing in a courtyard littered with debris and at least a dozen burnt-out cars.

"Down here on the grounds of this compound you can see that every vehicle in sight here has been set alight by protesters. They stormed this compound last night, they didn't spare any vehicle. There must be fifty vehicles in total, all of them have been torched by protesters furious with President Mubarak and calling for an end to his thirty years of rule."

Cut to Nolan standing on a street alongside the Nile, tanks blocking the road.

"This is President Mubarak's answer to restoring order on the streets: Egyptian military tanks rolled into many Egyptian cities overnight. This is the street in Cairo that leads to the State Television and the Foreign Ministry, it is now blocked by the military to prevent any demonstrations that may take place today from getting access to these key installations."

> **@nolanjazeera**: Army tanks all thru Cairo. Just filmed in gutted NDP compound, still burning, 50 vehicles torched in the grounds. Pics on AJE #Jan25 (Nolan, 2011, January 29b)

> **@nolanjazeera**: Civilians welcoming army so far. Smiles & waved [sic] from soldiers we see. #Egypt & perhaps the world praying that holds! #Jan25 (Nolan, 2011, January 29c)

AJE then takes viewers around the country for updates, first checking into Alexandria. The director plays the walk-and-talk that Rawya Rageh recorded late the previous night, in which she tours several scenes of violence, including burnt-out government buildings and locations now held by the army. These reports are augmented with newly fed pictures shot during the peak of the clashes in Alexandria which show burning trucks being hosed by citizens, crowds fleeing clouds of tear gas, and lines of riot police firing rubber bullets.

Jamal Elshayyal reports next, live via phone from Suez.

"It seems like there is some sort of orderly chaos here in Suez," he begins.

"The army has now been dispatched across the entire city. I've just taken a stroll down the main street which stretches roughly about a kilometre-and-a-half long ... and outside every bank and retail store there are tanks, there are soldiers. It's interesting to note that in all of these tanks and armoured vehicles belonging to the army, there are banners ... slogans such as 'The army is with the people,' and, 'Let us unite together against the common enemy.' However, it seems that people are questioning whether the army's enemy is the same as theirs."

"Obviously, they've made their enemy known to the world through the chants of the past few days and they've named that as President Mubarak."

Soon afterwards, Elshayyal appears on screen in a pre-recorded walk-and-talk. He is on the street, standing in front of a tank, surrounded by men and boys.

"As you can see behind me, the presence of the army is very much visible," he begins.

"They're guarding the main institutions and businesses like the bank behind it. However, the sentiment on the streets here is still very much that of anger. They say the remarks made by President Mubarak late on Friday night were not enough. They say they will not leave the streets, they will not stop protesting until President Mubarak himself leaves the country."

The camera moves, following Jamal's instructions, the shot obscured by people on the road.

"If I can pan across slightly to the other side of the street, maybe you can make out smoke rising. There is still a police armoured vehicle that was set alight that is still there. These are remnants of what was an unprecedented day in the history of Egypt. The anger of the people of Suez, of which at least 15 people lost their lives during these protests, is still boiling over. They say they will continue protesting into the day, despite the presence of the army, and that is until President Mubarak leaves the country."

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Back in Doha, AJE's head of news had arrived at work for the first time since the Egyptian protests began and took immediate control of the channel's coverage.

Salah Negm is one of the most interesting characters at AJE. Egyptian-born and well educated, Negm started at AJE in 2009 after serving in similar roles at BBC Arabic, Al Arabiyah, and the original Al Jazeera operation. He is short, slightly built and softly spoken, but exudes a force of personality in the newsroom inversely proportional to his stature. With oversight of all newsgathering and news reporting, plus direct management responsibility for on-air presenters, Negm shapes AJE like few others in the building.

Negm has a reputation for being demanding in his quest for detail and rigour, and has clear ideas about what he wants to see on screen; nobody dares take an underdeveloped idea into a planning meeting, and everyone knows when Negm's word is final.

He has a habit of popping up in all corners of the newsroom at any time of the day or night, and many producers and directors have at least one story of him quietly issuing an instruction into their ear when they had no idea he was even in

the room. Negm, however, was not even in the building on the Day of Rage, having taken leave a week earlier at the start of AJE's Palestine Papers series.

When Negm started work at the then barely three-year-old AJE, he set about moving the channel away from its original focus on longer, more deliberative reporting.

"Let me tell you about one change — I don't talk about myself — but one change I put," he says.

"If you do that more deliberate, bespoke news reporting only, it will turn you from a news channel into something more like Discovery Channel or National Geographic. [AJE pre-Negm] lacked the immediacy of the news and that made people not [watch] it ... [because] you are out of the news agenda or you have a late reaction. So, one of the things that I tried to establish in the newsroom is combining the two parts together. You still have the bespoke, well-thought-of, well-produced series about, for example, the environment ... The second part is the breaking or immediate news ... So, we are not only now reactive, but pro-active as well. And this is the difference." (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

Negm knows that he is competing with established giants in global 24-hour TV news, and is adamant that AJE can and does outperform them, plus offer something different.

"[You] know the principle of BBC and CNN: it's better late than sorry? What we say here is you cannot be late and not sorry. And you cannot be the first and wrong because if you are wrong you are out. So, you have to be the first and the most accurate and we aspire to do that and I think we are successful at doing that most of the time ... we have to be accurate, we have to be balanced, we have to be objective — I would say, neutral — and I think the thing that distinguishes Al Jazeera from every other channel [is that it's] a network with attitude. So, we have attitude ... Attitude means your tone and voice you take, not a stance or opinion." (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

The Egyptian Revolution was a perfect demonstration of the difference between AJE and its competitors. While others treated it is just another breaking news event, AJE fundamentally altered its broadcast model and dedicated every effort to the story.

Negm speaks a lot about making AJE the "channel of reference" on big news stories, and informing this phrase is his understanding of how global 24-hour news works and how audiences engage with it.

"No-one watches 24-hour news 24 hours a day," he says. "They usually, if things are quiet and there's no breaking news, dip in for 15 minutes every three or four hours, see headlines or whatever, but people stick with you with the big stories. And then when you own the story and you become the reference point, people will come to you. Let's say, 100 people come to you, five will make you their favourite and then the audience will grow, gradually. It's a process." (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

In trying to make AJE the channel of reference for the Egyptian revolution, he cites a simple formula.

"You deploy proper resources … I'm talking about correspondents, cameras, field producers. And then [it's] how you treat it on your screen, how much airtime you give to it. If you do that, your audience might go to other channels to see different stories but they'll come back to you always because they know that the latest developments [are on] your screen because you're doing focused, comprehensive coverage. That's what makes us different." (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

When Negm talks about his philosophy of news, and what makes a story, he refers often to "the people" and his responsibility as a journalist to empower those who lack it.

“We deal with the news that actually affects people’s lives, rather than men in suits … you take stories on merit, according to how many people do they affect, do they change political situations of countries, [what is] the significance and relevance of the story to either the general political scene or people’s lives,” he argued in an interview for this book (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

“We empower the people with knowledge. This is our job. We give them information,” he has been quoted as saying elsewhere (Haschke, 2011).

It is no surprise, then, that Negm, seeing tens of thousands of people on the streets in Egypt, and having a deep knowledge of the politics of the region, decided it was a story that warranted intense coverage.

“We dedicated so many hours of rolling news to what was happening in Egypt and that [made] every single development of what’s happening in the country appear on your screen … because the magnitude of a change in Egypt was going to change the Middle East in general, and of course it was going to affect international policy. Egypt is an ally to Europe, it has a peace treaty with Israel, it has very strong connections with the US. Its effect on all, let’s say, political systems around it is great so we knew that it was going to be a very big story.” (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

*****

After the chaos of the previous day, when it was too difficult and dangerous to venture far, AJE’s journalists begin moving around on Saturday to gather more news first-hand. Among other things, they are able to start verifying anecdotal reports of protester deaths. Over the course of the morning, presenter Shiulie Ghosh puts together some hard stats live on air.

She speaks first to Jamal Elshayyal in Suez.

“The news that has come out today so far is that there have been confirmed to us at least 15 people killed yesterday,” Elshayyal reports. “As I was walking and my cameraman was with me, a car that was driving towards the morgue stopped us, asking if we were Al Jazeera. They told me that their father had been killed yesterday going out of the mosque and he wasn’t part of the protest, at least that’s the story they gave me. We’re going to head to the morgue and see.”

Rawya Rageh then phones in from a morgue in Alexandria and speaks over fresh video that she’s managed to send back to Doha. The pictures show a dirty, cramped room with dead bodies crudely wrapped in colourful household blankets.

“We can confirm from a number of workers here at the morgue, they are telling us they have received at least 23 bodies since the beginning of the clashes here on Friday morning,” she begins.

“There are a lot of families gathered here, very sad as well as angry, family members outside the morgue trying to look for their loved ones. There’s clear agitation here at the morgue, the families are angry, but also workers of the morgue seem to be under a lot of pressure. We went inside the actual room where the bodies are kept, we had to leave quite soon because as I said, the morgue workers weren’t particularly happy about us being there. We’ve seen at least—more than 20 bodies there in the morgue, not exactly in the best of shape … some of the faces appeared as if they were clearly stepped on, we’ve seen injuries of bullets in the neck, in the head.”

“We’ve seen at least three elderly people but also most of the people were young, in their twenties, at best in their early thirties. The refrigerators are clearly full of bodies, some bodies were even not refrigerated, at least six bodies were not refrigerated … the government has not made an official record yet or an official estimate, which is why we are saying that have to be very cautious, but it seems there are at least 23 bodies.”

Ghosh next crosses to Dan Nolan who has just returned from a morgue in Cairo. Viewers see some very disturbing pictures of a white tiled room, dirty and smeared in blood, dead bodies crudely laid out on trolleys with feet and hands sticking out from underneath blood-stained sheets; faces and gory details are pixelated and there is an "AL JAZEERA EXCLUSIVE" tag in the corner of the screen.

"These pictures you're seeing now were filmed at a morgue at Salaam City on the outskirts of Cairo," he narrates.

"Now, we went there this morning, we were told [there were] large numbers of fatalities from these protests yesterday and through the night. We counted 15 dead bodies ourselves and there were another 50 people injured who were still in the hospital. Now, since we've left a morgue official has told us that the death toll has now risen from 15 up to 22, that some of those who were injured have also passed away. Now, this is in addition to the news that you were reporting earlier from a separate hospital in Cairo ... with that report of 30 dead bodies brought in there during the past 24 hours. And that also contained that information that was from Reuters that a hospital source had told them that there were two dead children, one seven years of age and one four. So, we are expecting that the death toll is going to rise quite dramatically."

The shot changes to an angry crowd of people shouting at the camera. Women sit at the side of the road, wailing.

"And the pictures you are seeing now is outside the morgue at Salaam City. These families, to describe them as angry is not doing them justice whatsoever. It is complete fury that their loved ones have been shot and killed. Now, we couldn't determine, obviously, the cause of death for ourselves, but morgue officials said that they had been shot with live ammunition and the families outside were telling us that out in the demonstrations in Salaam City yesterday, where no media was filming — obviously, we're all filming the ones in downtown Cairo and other places — but when there was no media there the police didn't bother with the tear gas or the rubber-coated steel bullets and just went straight to live

ammunition. Now, we can't confirm if that is correct, that is what they are telling us and there are 15 dead bodies that I have seen with my own eyes to indicate that something quite severe was used by the police to shut down those protests."

Ghosh pauses while referring to notes she's been taking during these reports.

"If my maths is right, Dan, taking into account the bodies you've seen, the 30 that were reported at the [other] hospital, and the bodies that have been reported by our correspondents in Alexandria and in Suez, if my maths is right that is 83 people dead because of these protests. And of course, they're only the ones that we know about."

Shortly afterwards, AJA starts running AJE's pictures from the Cairo and Alexandria morgues in its broadcasts, but without AJE's pixelation of gory details and faces. As most Egyptians watch the Arabic version of Al Jazeera, it is only now that such clear evidence of deadly violence and police brutality starts to spread widely within the country.

Dan Nolan argues that Al Jazeera's reporting inadvertently played a role in growing the size of demonstrations in the days to come.

"[We filmed] 15 dead bodies, and together with footage that Rawya shot in Alexandria, [it] was the first real proof of live rounds having been fired. AJA ran the footage, unedited, and this fed into events the next day. People were saying, the next day, that they only came out to protest when they saw those bodies." (personal communication, May 23, 2012).

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As the streets of central Cairo burned the previous evening, correspondent Sherine Tadros had been watching the coverage from AJE's Jerusalem bureau. British-born to Egyptian parents, Tadros is a launch employee of the channel and holds two degrees in Middle Eastern politics. She was working in Egypt as recently as a couple of weeks prior to the Day of Rage.

“I was in fact in Egypt when the Tunisian revolution happened,” she remembers, “and the big question was ‘Was this going to happen in Egypt?’ and everyone was talking about that. But nobody, nobody really believed that [Mubarak] was going to be toppled. Even on the 25th when I was in Gaza I remember I was watching Rawya Rageh … and she was sort of saying in the morning that nothing’s happening, nothing’s happening, and it felt so anti-climactic. And I remember tweeting something about ‘follow Rawya Rageh for the latest [developments] or lack of developments in Egypt.’ So, you know, everyone was sort of making fun of the whole thing.”

Tadros was in Israel and the Palestinian Territories to contribute to AJE’s Palestine Papers coverage. But as the Day of Rage played out across Egypt, there was only one place she wanted to be.

“I called up our bosses in Doha and I said to them that I really need to be in Cairo right now. And I had already spoken during the Tunisian revolution to Salah and I told him I wanted to go. And he said, ‘no, we’re fine, we’ve got enough correspondents.’ And I said, ‘okay. You know, if this ever happens in Egypt you know I’m going to be calling you.’ And he said, like the rest of us, ‘It’s never going to happen, but sure.’ So, on the 28th, I called and I said it’s happening and he really did stick to his word and he said go.”

Getting from Jerusalem to Cairo wasn’t as easy as booking a plane ticket, though. Flight schedules were in disarray and an overland journey was out of the question. Tadros — keen to hit the ground and start reporting as soon as possible — strung together an unlikely series of connections that put her at Cairo Airport by dawn on Saturday morning.

“I kind of did this crazy journey to Jerusalem, to Tel Aviv; Tel Aviv to Jordan; then [got] stuck in Jordan,” she remembers. “In the middle of the night someone called me saying there’s a cargo flight leaving [for Cairo].”

Once in Egypt, the country-wide curfew was still in effect, meaning no taxis and no company-provided transport waiting at the arrivals gate. So, dipping into her supply of US cash, and fully aware of the risk, Tadros paid a random young man at the airport with a car US$200 to drive her to Suez, via the Cairo bureau.

The drive through the city at dawn was an eye-opener.

"I just couldn't believe that this was Egypt," she recalls. "Even driving through the streets of Cairo, I drove past my [family's] house and there were tanks by the house, we live literally next to the Presidential Palace. So, it was incredible to watch. And all the graffiti. I mean, you have to understand that this is a country where you get into a cab and trying to talk politics and nobody would want to say anything about Hosni Mubarak. I can't tell you the amount of fear that was in this country. And then to see openly on the streets, people standing there burning his picture, writing obscenities about Hosni Mubarak on walls, I mean, I was in shock for the first 24 hours when I came here. I just couldn't believe that this was the same Egypt I left about a month before. I really didn't know what to do." (personal communication, January 14, 2013).

With the phone system down, Tadros had no way of communicating once inside Egypt. Doha had provided her with the Cairo hotel room numbers of key staff, so when she found the bureau empty she went knocking on doors.

"[I found] the coordinating producer, and he's the one who said, 'You need to go to Suez'. He was speaking to Jamal by satellite phone and he said 'Sherine's coming and Jamal said bring batteries' ... But there was no, 'Okay, you can get this car or go here,' there was none of that. I didn't have a cameraman. I was totally alone. The idea was I was going to do phonos and use the cameraman that was already in Suez ... And when I got into that car, I mean, I don't know this guy from Adam, I just paid him $200 to take me to Suez, and I really had to hope and pray that he wouldn't take me somewhere else and rob me. That was a very big leap of faith and one of those things you shouldn't really do. [But] I talked to him all the way to Cairo and he was a revolutionary and he wanted to help so I took that chance ... there was no way to tell anyone if anything did happen to me.

They'd only realise, like, five or six hours [later] when Jamal would say, 'Sherine hasn't arrived.'"

Following the plan devised via satellite phone from the Ramses Hilton, Tadros found Elshayyal in Suez and they immediately got stuck into reporting. They found a rooftop overlooking the main scene of unrest. As many journalists suggest, in some ways the biggest stories are the easiest, and this was also the Suez team's experience.

"All you had to do was look around you and you had so many stories. I mean, people were looting everything," says Tadros. "We could watch people coming out of houses carrying washing machines; I saw a car stripped down — a normal car, and then maybe 25 minutes later it was stripped down to nothing, they had stolen everything from this car, it was just a piece of steel; and then the looting of the houses, a police station was looted right next to us, you could see the guns being taken, the guards on the floor. It was just completely lawless."

However, with the frantic activity came a much heightened safety risk, and Tadros found the atmosphere in Suez threatening.

"We were walking around the street in the evening, there were these sort of neighbourhood watches and they would have these grown men with swords. I felt like I was in some sort of movie and not even a very good movie. People with swords and machetes were walking around and they were protecting their own homes but it was a very intimidating atmosphere. You know, Suez was really crazy. And when I went to Cairo there were certainly elements of crazy but I still maintain that Suez — and God knows what the other provinces were like — but Suez was in a league of its own." (personal communication, January 14, 2013).

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In Cairo, as Omar Suleiman is sworn in as Egypt's new Vice President, the team is making preparations to set up a replacement office in the increasingly likely event that its established bureau is shut down by Egyptian authorities. The plan

involves moving next door to the Ramses Hilton — already host to several media outlets — which would ensure continuing access to downtown Cairo and sight-lines to the action in and around Tahrir Square.

Ayman Mohyeldin, in the meantime, has set out from the bureau to find a camera position even closer to the action. He, his camerawoman, and an office assistant grabbed their camera and sound equipment, along with a BGAN, and headed for Tahrir Square. Their goal is to find a vantage point from which they can broadcast a live shot and do live crosses.

Dan Nolan is on air from the Cairo bureau, reporting on the growing crowds of anti-Mubarak protesters.

"In the last ten minutes or so there's been quite a large crowd of people gathering down in the streets here behind me."

He looks over his shoulder through the window.

"It would indicate from what we can see out the window that they are getting bigger in numbers and they are planning to demonstrate today. There doesn't appear to be any day off as far as these people are concerned. There is a huge military presence across Cairo, and it's also worth pointing out that I just drove about two hours through Cairo and I did not see one police officer in the entire city. Now, in a city of almost 20 million people, to have no police on the streets at all is completely foreign ..."

The director plays out pictures filmed recently on the streets of Cairo which show crowds gathering and military personnel blocking off sections of the street by forming human chains.

"We've driven through intersections where normally traffic police would control that intersection," continues Nolan, "and it's now being controlled by the military in some cases, but also in other cases by civilians themselves."

Mohyeldin, walking the streets on his way to Tahrir, calls in to Doha and gives an on-air account of his journey to the Square.

"It's clearly just a few hours to go until the curfew and [there's] no indication that the curfew is going to be imposed," he begins. "On a day like this you would normally see all kinds of different security services between the central security services, the police, as well as traffic cops, but you are not seeing any of that on the street today. It is almost as if all of the entire security apparatus, internal security apparatus belonging to the Ministry of Interior, has simply melted away. The only semblance of law and order on the streets of Cairo right now is being provided by the Egyptian military which is out in force but in a very, very kind of non-confrontational mood; there is no confrontation whatsoever between the soldiers and the tanks and the people on the streets."

Mohyeldin notices a far more patriotic tone on the streets than in previous days.

"We're just around the corner from the Hilton Hotel but I can tell you that the attitude is 180 degrees different to what it was yesterday. People waving Egyptian flags, it has been a populist movement, a grassroots movement. There are Egyptians, men, women, young and old, no political party can claim it was behind the mobilisation of these masses ... People taking photos with their cell phones, people saying things they tell me they wouldn't have said 24 hours ago. People moving towards Tahrir Square saying they will liberate Egypt — 'We will liberate Egypt from Tahrir Square.'"

Meanwhile, in Suez, Jamal Elshayyal and Sherine Tadros are still trying to get the flaky BGAN working. They think that if they can find a better, higher, more open position they might be able to make it connect. In the process of looking for such a place, Elshayyal says he did "one of the stupidest things" in his life.

"We ended up going to a massive building," he recalls, "a massive building that hadn't been built, it was just the concrete skeleton, so it has no walls. Six floors, seven floors. And it was right next door to the police station ... it was myself,

[Sherine, and] the cameraman. We're on top, trying to sort out the BGAN, still not working, so we're filming [the street] from above."

A couple of local men walk onto the roof.

"One of them looks, you know, scars across his face, he looks a bit dodgy — obviously, someone who's been into a few fights. But he's very nice, polite, starts speaking to me, all these things. Actually, goes down and gets some food for us, a few snacks and juice and stuff like that. My jacket's on a chair; there was a chair on top of there. I then take a few minutes out to pray. My instinct tells me … take your wallet from your jacket, but for some stupid reason I don't listen and I'll never forget it. I pray, I finish praying, I look around, the guy's not there or his friend. I look into my jacket and the wallet's gone … I run down to try and find this guy, can't find him because below me in the streets are thousands of people setting fire to police cars, destroying the police station. Literally, walking out with desks, walking out with filing cabinets, whatever they can take from the police station. It is straight-up Armageddon-like chaos below. So, I can't find the guy. And obviously, retrospectively I'm thankful it was just the wallet because very easily any one of us could've just been pushed off that massive building." (personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Back in Cairo, Mohyeldin has made it to Tahrir Square and is craning his neck looking for a good spot. He walks into some of the multi-storey apartment buildings that ring the Square and begins knocking on doors.

"There were several people that turned us down who said that they didn't want to have anybody reporting from their balcony, didn't want to have a camera on their balcony," he recalls.

But then Mohyeldin and his team see a man standing on what seems to be a likely balcony, so they go looking for him. After some trial and error, they find the right apartment.

"I knocked on the apartment and he opened the door. There was this really old, long-haired, dishevelled guy who was wearing a Che Guevara t-shirt with 'revolution' on it. So, I said to him, 'You look like a revolutionary.' He said to me, 'I am. What can I do for you?' And I said, 'Do you want to make television history?' And he said, 'Who the hell are you?' And I told him, 'I'm a reporter for Al Jazeera, will you let me use your rooftop to report overlooking Tahrir?' And he actually agreed to it and that's where we reported from for the better part of the next two weeks." (personal communication, April 5, 2012).

At 4:30pm, Egypt time, AJE's viewers got their first look at the channel's exclusive camera shot from a rooftop overlooking Tahrir Square. The signal was being sent to Doha via BGAN so it was of low quality — pixelated video and poor audio; washed-out colours, lacking in detail — but it allowed people around the world to watch Egyptians gathering at the physical and symbolic heart of the country. A camera playing a sentinel-like role, accentuated by the CCTV look of the footage.

The camera shot pops up on screen unannounced during presenter Folly Bah Thibault's interview with a guest, and underneath that conversation viewers can hear Ayman Mohyeldin counting from one to ten, repeating "testing" to get an audio level. Mohyeldin's out-of-focus face then appears in front of the camera, looking down the lens at something. He gives a quick thumbs-up and the director cuts away as it becomes clear the shot is not ready. Quickly, though, it appears back on screen with an orange AL JAZEERA EXCLUSIVE tag.

Bah Thibault thanks her guest and asks, "Ayman, what are you seeing there? What are you hearing?"

"We are several storeys above one of the buildings that overlooks the heart of Midan at-Tahrir, Liberation Square," he replies. "And as you can see from the pictures, thousands of people have gathered here amidst the presence of the Egyptian Armed Forces. They are waving Egyptian flags, they are chanting the national anthem, they have been celebrating throughout the course of the day.

They have been demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak and the end of his regime and the end of his sons' presence in the country."

Mohyeldin then recounts a scene that happened a few minutes before they were able to get the camera live.

"One of the most impressive and unimaginable shots that we've been able to see … in the midst of this crowd, what appeared to be a fallen protester, someone that was soaked in blood, was carried on the shoulders of several protesters. They made their way through that crowd you see below, in fact, you can probably make out that some of those below are currently praying. We are told that as the body was going through, thousands of people here began to chant on behalf of the fallen martyr."

Bah Thibault and Mohyeldin stop talking for a minute to listen to the crowd and let viewers soak in the camera shot that would come to define AJE's coverage of the revolution.

Sunday 30 January

"Thousands of protesters in Egypt have been defying curfew for a second night. They're demanding President Hosni Mubarak steps down after thirty years of power. More than a hundred people have now died since the protests began on Tuesday, and in one of the most recent developments more than 6000 prisoners have escaped from a jail after rioting broke out."

Presenter Adrian Finighan brings AJE's viewers up to speed as Egyptians wake to the sixth day of unrest in their country. It had been another long night, with calm on the streets offset by a tangible atmosphere of tension. Finighan throws to a package by recently arrived correspondent Jacky Rowland, who'd spent the night filming groups of Cairo citizens protecting their local areas.

“Beneath a flyover in Nasr City a group of young Egyptians are blocking the road,” she begins. “It’s a sign of the lawlessness sweeping Cairo. The men armed with sticks, knives, anything they can find. They say they are here to protect their homes because if they don’t, no-one else will … A car approaches the roadblock. The men jump to attention. They want to know, ‘Who goes there?’ This time, it’s someone from the neighbourhood and they let him pass. The army patrols the main arteries into the centre of Cairo, but when you get off those main roads it’s the people who own the streets. And one question on everyone’s lips is where is the police? The police — a hated symbol of the Mubarak regime — are conspicuous by their absence.”

Rawya Rageh paints a similar picture in Alexandria via phone.

“The sense here is that there’s not enough security, whatsoever, and the military, despite being here, isn’t exactly doing much if anything at all,” she reports. “That’s according to the people … We’ve seen first-hand groups of young men parading in the streets with weapons, knives and clubs. Very scary scenes, really. The people are very concerned about it and that’s why neighbourhood patrols have sprung up around the city.”

Just as he did the previous morning, Dan Nolan hit the streets shortly after sunrise to shoot a walk-and-talk around Central Cairo.

“You can see here behind me soldiers are manning a roadblock which is shutting off one of the busiest streets in downtown Cairo, no cars are now allowed to pass through here,” he begins in the piece. “If you turn around behind me, behind this roadblock, the backup to that is another tank, sitting there as backup support to that roadblock. On the front of that tank, the graffiti reads, ‘No Mubarak.’ The message still remains clear despite this increasing presence of military on the streets.”

Cut to Nolan standing in front of a wall with more anti-Mubarak graffiti written in English and Arabic.

“These are images that you would never dream of seeing written in such public places in the streets of Cairo. It’s another example that the people have now lost their fear of speaking out against this regime, and it’s also an indication of the fact that there are no police doing any protection of public property at the moment, anywhere across Cairo, and that’s what’s led to these huge amounts of looting that’s gone on overnight.”

> **@nolanjazeera**: LOT more army on streets today. Roadblocks on traffic on Gala St. More tension btw soldiers/civilians. Situation feels different now #Jan25

> **@nolanjazeera**: Sources tell us military now in streets of Sharm el Sheikh! This can’t happen w’out Israel approval under terms of Camp David accords #Jan25

After rounding up other news from around the country, Finighan crosses to Jane Dutton in the Cairo studio. Dutton has arrived at work from the next-door Ramses Hilton where she has been sleeping, despite being booked into another hotel across the city. The protests have made it extremely difficult to make the cross-city journey so she has been without her luggage for a couple of days.

“The rest of my team, including the producer, was staying at the Hilton,” she recalls. “So, I shared a room with my producer and I borrowed everything of hers, and I had a few shirts with me for some reason so I just kept on wearing the same old shirts and I would keep on tucking them in or pulling them out [to make them look new]. There obviously wasn’t much change in my outfits at that stage.”

It wasn’t the only logistical issue that she and the team faced.

“We had problems trying to get SIM cards for our phones for some reason — I think the little shop across the way that was selling them sold out so quickly, we weren’t able to get local SIM cards. I remember we had to do all the calls on our Doha numbers, the international numbers. [But] there was no problem with the food at the hotel,” she adds, tongue firmly in cheek, “other than it being the most

mundane food and the red wine quite dire." (personal communication, May 1, 2012).

On air, Finighan asks Dutton about the atmosphere in the city.

"You've just walked to work," he begins. "We were hearing from someone earlier in the night who was out on the streets in the early hours, he was saying he felt pretty safe out there among all the people who defied the curfew. How do you describe the mood on the streets right now?"

"It does seem safe, I must say," she replies. "I tried to get to my other hotel a little bit earlier on … and there were no taxis on the road so I wasn't able to do that, and then I walked over to the office here. There is nobody on the streets, Adrian, and as you've seen from the last couple of days the curfew hasn't been effective … I was able to see a few hundred people or so in Tahrir Square, that is the main square, I would imagine that they are going to be staging some sort of sit-in until they get what they want. The streets are very dirty, there is debris everywhere. As I'm sure you've been hearing, the police have just disappeared. Any security at this stage is in the hands of the army."

Dutton recalls one particular anecdote from her walk that morning.

"I ended up walking [in Tahrir] with a very charming man who was a locksmith — he said that demand … had gone soaring, that he was making a bomb of money selling locks." (personal communication, May 1, 2012).

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By Sunday, the Doha newsroom had started bedding down most of the changes to procedure and scheduling that it had implemented in response to Friday's events. Most prominently amongst those changes, AJE had switched to 24-hour broadcasting from Doha instead of handing over to UK and US broadcast centres overnight. This presented a unique set of challenges, primarily amongst them staffing. With many dozens of people required across AJE's large operation to

staff a single shift, an extra eight hours of on-air time was not simply a matter of adding a column to the roster.

Manager of Studio Operations Ric O'Connor wasn't sure it could be done.

"My undying memory of that period was receiving a call from Kate Ivens [Director of Operations] on a Friday evening saying that Salah Negm wanted to go 24 hours from Doha to cover the uprising in Egypt," he recalls. "I said, 'When?' and Kate replied, 'Tonight.' My immediate reaction was we could not accommodate that request."

Even prior to Egypt, O'Connor was struggling to roster a 16-hour Doha operation after picking up the downsized Kuala Lumpur broadcast centre's four hours of bulletins three months previously. His department was already working very close to its limit and any new significant demand would push it to breaking point.

"We somehow managed to find enough staff to carry us through the weekend and we then frantically parachuted people in from across the broadcast centres," he says. "They started to arrive early the following week. We used quite a few people from KL and London. After this we recruited a large number of freelancers ... The bureaucracy within Al Jazeera meant for every freelance person coming in we had to acquire six signatures of approval all the way up to the Director General of the network. It often took weeks before we had the necessary signatures and it all became very stressful. We also had to try and accommodate leave requests from the staff, so as you can imagine it became all-consuming. We were proud of the fact that we didn't turn down any leave for staff within studio operations, unlike the editorial side who pretty much had a blanket ban on people taking holiday." (personal communication, March 29, 2012).

The decision to go 24 hours from Doha was in line with Salah Negm's philosophy of "owning" a big news story and becoming the channel of reference, with the key to this style of rolling coverage being flexibility built into your scheduling and production capability. Negm made sure that even if the channel went to a pre-

recorded program on Egypt or any other topic during quieter periods they would be able to cut away to live news coverage at a moment's notice.

Managing Director Al Anstey (personal communication, October 11, 2011) says there were two reasons for the choice of Doha as hub for the channel's coverage: one technical and one editorial. From a technical point of view, he says Doha "is a much more capable place to handle a story of that magnitude ... It doesn't mean others are incapable of it, but this just adds on a little bit of technical capacity that made us more flexible." In basic terms, the Doha broadcast centre was by many orders of magnitude larger than its sisters around the world, and more capable of dealing with the technical requirements of large, ongoing stories.

Anstey also says a switch to continuous Doha broadcasting allowed "an editorial momentum and continuum." Perceived discontinuity between the broadcast centres' relative independence has divided staff and commentators since the channel's launch — some saw it as a strength that each newsroom could focus on local stories in a more authentic fashion than its peers, but others found the disjointed nature of the coverage as it moved from city to city during the day a weakness.

Despite the staffing challenges that she faced in her own department, Sarah Worthington (personal communication, January 19, 2012) found the breaking news environment exhilarating.

"My experience — and I've been doing this since 1985 at one level or another — is that breaking news is a) what we live for, and b) actually easier because everybody knows the formula for breaking news. It's get the very latest on the air immediately. I mean, it's different if you're talking production or management, but for production you want constantly updated, you want fresh material, you want different ways of telling the story, your guest bookers are focused on one thing. In certain circumstances you'll break away and do a certain desk, you'll contact social media, you'll talk to the web ... [Whereas] I always say that you earn your money when it's a slow news day because that's when you really have to sell the news product."

But Egypt wasn't just another breaking news story.

"The challenge with something like Egypt is that, I think especially for us because we have this special responsibility that we have to know more about the story than any other outlet out there … You know, you almost need to set someone aside and say, right, who are the main players, I need two paragraphs on each one, why are they important, what makes Egypt tick currently, and then you have to get that information to the presenters, to the producers, like downloading what's in Ayman's mind to the newsroom … not so that we appear intelligent, so that we are intelligent … I think people look to us to be the authority, partly because of where we're located but also partly because it's our region. The world is what we cover but we should be the authority in this region."

Worthington altered the newsroom's workflows to reflect the ongoing, rolling nature of the coverage. Instead of program producers alternating their bulletins hour to hour, program teams worked in three-hour on-air blocks to ensure editorial continuity for news that didn't fit neatly into the arbitrary one-hour bulletin structure. Kamahl Santamaria, for one, was a fan.

"We had [three-hour] blocks with a program editor, and assistant program editor, producers and a presenter. And whether you rolled those entire [three] hours or you took some half-hours off, [the team] was set … you didn't have this chopping and changing, editorial-wise … You weren't coming off the boil and coming on again."

All staff, be they editorial or operations, had to work extraordinarily hard. Double shifts were common, days off not — a couple of producers remember doing 16-hour stints. Shifts were extremely demanding, with few breaks and a manic workplace atmosphere. In addition to the long hours, staff would often arrive for work an hour or two early — voluntarily — in order to get across new developments in the story so they could hit the ground running.

Wadah Khanfar (2011, October 7) referenced the hard work of Al Jazeera employees in his 2011 James Cameron memorial lecture.

"The al-Jazeera newsroom worked flat out during those days; leave was cancelled, working hours were stretched and our editorial teams worked nonstop," he said. "Although food and drink is customarily banned inside the newsroom, during those breathtaking days we resorted to providing journalists with meals as they sat working at their desks. On several occasions I had to intervene personally to oblige some colleagues to go home and have a few hours of rest."

One of AJE's directors, Ben Bawden (personal communication, January 23, 2012), puts it a bit more bluntly.

"It was definitely, to use the cliche, Blitzkrieg," he recalls. "People working through, not having any breaks; people were grabbing food and drink whenever they could, people would be eating sandwiches at the back of the gallery. Because we weren't staffed properly it was very difficult to stay on air."

But despite the challenges, Bawden and other staff found the experience rewarding.

"It was very, very enjoyable. It was fun to be a part of it. We all found it very exciting. Everybody knew that it was a big, big deal, you know, and we were also excited because news was trickling in to us about how important our coverage was. It was coming in to us that people in Tahrir Square were showing our pictures on television screens."

AJE's text producers found themselves particularly affected by the extended on-air hours and increased workload. Text producers work in close collaboration with the senior editorial staff and television control room to write, create and play out the bottom-of-screen news ticker and thick orange lower-third fact straps. During most of the revolution, AJE was in "orange" mode (requiring bright orange breaking news graphics, as opposed to the white theme of "standard" news), meaning text producers were writing and playing out all straps from the

start to the end of their shifts, instead of in short bursts as they would on a normal news day. It is a high-stress and high-intensity role for an hour, let alone days or weeks at a time.

Alice Carruth is a senior text producer and one of only a handful who were on duty when the Egypt story broke.

"We were actually short-staffed in the text producer team so there were three of us in the country at one point doing seven days straight during the most difficult part of Egypt," she remembers. "We [did] eight hours straight, we can't do any more than that because we don't move. Literally, I had days during Egypt where I did not have a break." (personal communication, January 23, 2012).

Carruth worked closely with AJE's senior Arabic translator, Mustafa Barakat. Barakat was himself working incredibly hard — "18 hours a day, or 20 hours a day some days" — and viewers would regularly hear his voice translating speeches and statements by Hosni Mubarak, Omar Suleiman and a long list of other Arabic-speaking figures and guests who appeared on air. Barakat has a reputation for being an exacting translator, possibly owing to his legal background. He works hard to accurately turn "flowery, very figurative" Arabic into English, working with the many similes and metaphors used by Arabic speakers that, if translated verbatim, would make little sense to English speakers.

"My job is really hard because one single word makes a hell of a difference," he says. "One single word may mean six or eight different meanings. And here there is no space for guessing, there is no space for speculation ... And to pick to the right word in a fragment of seconds is a challenge."

While not translating live, Barakat monitored a wide range of Arabic TV, print and radio sources — including Al Jazeera Arabic's output — and fed updates and information from these to the newsroom.

"I used to translate many things," he says. "I used to monitor, like, four or five channels at the same time — Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera Arabic — some online papers,

some online bloggers, all the different Arabic sources. For example, I see a strap on Al Arabiya saying Mubarak has fled the country, so I have to topline [send an intra-newsroom message] to the [news]desk, alert them over the phone or go myself. I translate also reports from, for example, if our Al Jazeera Arabic correspondent is doing a piece, and [AJE has] no reach [into] those places or those pieces, I translate them into English and they make use of them on the [news]desk." (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

Carruth also remembers some rather more practical cooperation between the newsdesk and Barakat.

"Mustafa actually learnt how to come and play out straps for me so I was able to go and have toilet breaks. Between the two of us it was the only way we could kind of keep things going." (personal communication, January 23, 2012).

Brian Stelter (2011, February 6), a journalist for the New York Times, visited the AJE newsroom during the revolution and observed this frantic working environment.

"As the protests in Cairo showed no signs of winding down, dinner was delivered for the newsroom. Just after midnight, a female producer wearing a traditional head scarf dozed at her desk, headphones still firmly in place. Meanwhile, the protesters kept chanting and the anchors kept talking."

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By mid-afternoon Sunday, Egypt time, observant viewers would have noticed the absence of a live camera shot from AJE's Cairo bureau for the first time in days — the channel had reverted to using old footage on a loop, minus the LIVE tag. There was no on-air acknowledgement of this fact, and the coverage continued on as usual until just after 2pm.

@nolanjazeera: #Egypt state TV reporting Aljazeera office in #Cairo is to be shut down today. Licenses revoked #Jan25 (Nolan, 2011, January 30c)

“We’re going to cross over now to Cairo, the Egyptian capital, and talk to one of our correspondents there,” announces presenter Darren Jordan. “We obviously can’t name them because of security and safety concerns.”

This was the first time that AJE had refused to name its correspondents — something it would continue to do on and off for the rest of the revolution.

“What’s happening there in Cairo where you are?” Jordan asks.

“Let me just tell you about the targeting of Al Jazeera for our coverage.”

It was Jane Dutton’s voice on the phone, but there was no on-screen graphic identifying her.

“In the last hour or so, our offices were entered,” she reports. “Firstly, by the press centre, then shortly after that they were asking for our passes and permission for filming here. And then shortly after that, intelligence … They came in, they told us, ‘Please stop filming.’ They said that we are causing great damage to their country. We were told to stop destroying their country and stop destroying the future of Egypt, that our reports have been inflammatory. We asked them why we had to stop filming, why we just couldn’t carry on telling the story; they told us to immediately stop the filming for those reasons, otherwise they would take away our camera. Shortly after that they left … they hadn’t given us any official papers telling us to stop filming so we carried on filming and they came back shortly afterwards and demanded that we remove this camera. They said that we cannot broadcast live anymore from Cairo. Apparently the service provider — now, the service provider that puts Al Jazeera on air — they were called by the Egyptian Radio and TV Union and said that we can no longer work down here and that they have to pull the plug on our broadcasting. So, that is the latest status as far as we are concerned. Al Jazeera has clearly responded, strongly denouncing and condemning the closure of the bureau because they’ve closed down our sister station Al Jazeera Arabic. The fact that we weren’t given any official explanation, and the fact that we’ve received wide, very positive coverage for our explanation

or pictures of the stories here. And Al Jazeera has said it will continue its global coverage regardless."

Throughout this raid, Dan Nolan was tweeting away, keeping his followers informed of developments. Something he didn't tweet was that the agents were calling out AJE's Egyptian camera operators by name.

> **@nolanjazeera**: 8 guys here. Angry discussion at our live position that's been bringing u all those dramatic pictures #Jan25 #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 30d)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: Packing our equipment. We have been kicked out of office. Jazeera only network being shut down according to these guys #Jan25 #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 30e)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: Gov't agents say they've been watching our coverage but also listening to our phone calls. #Jan 25 #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 30f)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: AlJazeera official statement being released soon. Jazeera Arabic service now scrambled in Cairo #Jan 25 #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 30g)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: My story from Cairo morgue yest seems to have played a role in all of this. #jan25 #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 30h)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: We were just asked why we're only network to show those victims? #Jan25 # Egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 30i)

As Dutton finishes her report, the director cuts to the live BGAN camera shot from Tahrir and Jordan throws to Ayman Mohyeldin without using his name.

"We are in the middle of Tahrir Square," begins Mohyeldin. "You can probably hear above me the military helicopter that's been hovering overhead for several

hours now at least … the crowd continues to grow, they've just finished afternoon prayers — a scene that's been repeating itself time and time again. On cue, the protesters lined up here and began to pray. And a scene we've been witnessing for days — protesters lined up and chanting against the regime waving only Egyptian flags. Earlier today there was a very powerful image of a fire truck trying to make its way into the heart of the Square, and the immediate speculation amongst the protesters was that the fire truck was going to come down and begin to try and waterhose the people out. Now, that is not an official comment, but officially it's the reaction of the protesters on the ground … they stood in front of the fire truck that was making its way into the city and denied it entrance. The fire truck continued to push further into the Square and it kept being met more and more by the protesters. And then ultimately, one of the soldiers that was near the fire truck fired shots into the air to try to disperse the crowd but that only drew more protesters from in and around the circle to confront the fire truck and it ended up backing down to the applause of the thousands of protesters that have gathered here."

The director juxtaposes the scene in Tahrir with Egyptian State TV pictures of Hosni Mubarak meeting with military advisers to reinforce the connection between him and the army. State TV newsreaders and guests have started calling on Egyptians to stop watching Al Jazeera because only State TV could tell the "full and only truth."

Jordan next crosses to Jamal Elshayyal in Suez.

"Hundreds of people have begun to gather in the main streets of Suez … after what was probably one of the more dangerous nights since the confrontation between the protesters and police finished over 24 hours ago," reports Elshayyal. "The fact that there was no visible presence of the civilian security services led to quite a lot of attacks, quite a lot of robberies. However, the army has bolstered its presence now. They tell us they have arrested at least 76 criminals overnight. There are neighbourhood watch groups and other community efforts to try to secure the streets. However, from a journalistic point of view, our presence has become more difficult and more dangerous. Ever since the announcement came out to

close Al Jazeera's offices in Cairo, a state-sponsored minibus, one of these minibuses that carries people around, had a banner on the back demanding people not to talk to Al Jazeera and not to speak to Al Jazeera. Almost certainly accusing us of being liars. So, the situation is very tense, we will be pulling out because of this situation. However, from a political perspective, the demonstrations continue in the middle of the city ..."

It would be the last report by an AJE correspondent from Suez for the remainder of the revolution. Elshayyal, Sherine Tadros and their team felt that in the wake of the Cairo bureau shutdown, and with a tangible rise in anti-Al Jazeera tension in Suez, their safety was too compromised to stay.

"People had really turned against Al Jazeera," remembers Tadros (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "We started seeing people put these signs on the back of their cars saying 'Al Jazeera out of Suez'. They were talking about the Arabic channel but still, you know, you couldn't take that risk. And they found out where we were staying because we were staying in the same place as the Arabic correspondents — there's only two hotels anyway so it wasn't hard to figure out — and we had this really awful morning where they put us under siege in the hotel and they were all around the perimeter and they wanted to come in, and the hotel [management] was, like, 'We really need you to go.'"

Elshayyal supported the decision to leave Suez, but he maintained hope that he might be able to come back to further enhance his on-air profile.

"'I'm going to go back to Cairo because I'm not going to stay throughout this revolution just doing phonos,'" he remembers thinking (personal communication, April 12, 2012). "'I really need some sort of vision.' So, I wanted to go back and either swap a BGAN or fix it. But when we got to Cairo I was asked to spend my time in Tahrir Square doing phonos from there because whilst we had Ayman above we wanted some atmosphere from the ground, we wanted to understand, speak to people and so forth."

Elshayyal and Tadros secured the assistance of the army in evacuating the hotel safely, and their vehicle was escorted to the edge of town.

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Sunday's protest in Tahrir Square has grown into a large, peaceful event, with many sections of the community represented. Presenter Darren Jordan is talking on air to Ayman Mohyeldin, who is standing on the roof next to AJE's Tahrir camera. Mid-sentence, Mohyeldin is drowned out by the sound of a low-flying helicopter. As the sound of the helicopter's rotors fades away, he apologises.

"Sorry, Darren, that was the sound of one of the military helicopters that flies overhead ..."

Jordan replies, slipping up and accidentally naming his correspondent. "Yeah, we can hear it, too, in the studio, Ayman, don't worry."

Mohyeldin continues on his previous line of thought about the Muslim Brotherhood, but a minute later he is again overwhelmed by a loud noise. This time, however, it is clearly not a helicopter, and whatever it is completely kills the phone line. After 15 seconds of no response from Mohyeldin, Jordan moves on.

"All right, well, obviously some problems talking to our correspondent there in Cairo. We'll come back to him." As Jordan fills time, recapping events for viewers, the same sound that we heard drown out Ayman is now audible on the live BGAN shot overlooking Tahrir. Eventually, the control room re-establishes contact with Mohyeldin.

"Darren, I can tell you from where I'm standing I can see two Egyptian Air Force fighter planes," reports Mohyeldin. "They have now looped around several times, right above the crowd where we are standing. The sound of those afterburners on those planes was overwhelming, actually they're flying back towards us one more time, you may be about to hear it down the line with me because this is really something extraordinary ..."

His voice fades away as the planes pass by and flood the phone with noise.

"An absolutely extraordinary sound coming in there from Tahrir Square," says Jordan. "We're just talking to our correspondent who's listening to the sound of Egyptian Air Force fighter jets."

"As you were hearing, and another helicopter is now flying overhead, which seems to happen every time these planes, these fighter jets, loop around overhead," continues Mohyeldin, "the crowd goes completely … just erupts in chants against the regime."

Despite the blocky, desaturated BGAN picture, viewers can just make out protesters pumping their fists in the air towards the planes.

"It seems now every time they're coming back around again, and you can possibly hear the sound of the crowd. They're saying in Arabic …"

Some terrible interference cuts across Mohyeldin's phone line and obscures his voice as the jets buzz the Square once again, clearly audible over the camera's microphone. Jordan pauses to make way for the sound of the crowd chanting in response to the plane, and tries to throw back to Mohyeldin as yet another jet buzzes the crowd. Mohyeldin can be heard talking urgently to someone else in Arabic but Jordan finally gets his attention.

"Unbelievable, Darren, what's just happened. The fighter jets have looped around for a fifth time, this time much, much lower to the crowd … clearly there's something trying to be communicated to the people below by this very strong show of force. But I can tell you, regardless of what their message is, the people below are seeing [this] as an attempt to intimidate them out of the Square. They are immediately, after the helicopters and fighter jets fly overhead, they are shouting in Arabic, 'Get out!' They immediately look up into the sky and start waving their hands. I don't know if our images are capturing those for you but you can see them waving up into the sky …"

Again the interference cuts in and Jordan lets Mohyeldin go. A new live BGAN shot appears on air for the first time, probably a news agency feed. This camera is positioned high upon the Ramses Hilton Hotel, looking over the Egyptian Museum towards Tahrir, perhaps 700 metres away as the crow flies. The Square is visible in the distance and a blurry helicopter wanders across the top of frame. The fighter jets can be heard but are not visible in the shot.

By this stage, Sherine Tadros is back in Cairo. She remembers hearing the first pass of the fighter jets.

"I was with Dan Nolan and we were in the hotel," she says, "and we suddenly heard it [the planes]. And he [Nolan] goes ..."

She laughs fondly.

"I remember this very clearly — he goes, 'That's a fighter jet,' in his Australian accent. And we're going, 'There are no fighter jets in Cairo, we've never heard a fighter jet, Dan, I mean obviously it's not a fighter jet, it's a plane flying low, it's not a fighter jet.' And suddenly, as I'm making this speech about how there's no way there's a fighter jet over central Cairo we hear this other swoosh and I'm thinking, okay ..." (personal communication, January 14, 2013).

On air, Jordan interviews an activist on the phone from Tahrir Square.

"It is important for you to know that no-one is leaving," she says excitedly in accented English. "People don't give a damn anymore."

Jets can be heard approaching.

"Here are two coming!" she exclaims. "There are two coming very, very low. Very low."

Jordan goes quiet as Tahrir Square is blasted with the sound of afterburners. For 80 seconds he does not talk. The director alternates between the two camera shots — one in the Square and one on top of the Hilton. Crowds chant in response to the repeated jet flyovers. When they are over the Square, the noise is so loud that the phone signal breaks down completely into random digital noise.

Mohyeldin was sure that the jets were sending some sort of message to the protesters, and he felt certain he knew what that message was.

"We really weren't sure who the military was going to side [with] in terms of the protests," he recalls. "So, it was one of those things where the military was still very much on the streets but you still weren't sure if at any point they were going to crack down. I mean, the people seemed to think that the military could be trusted. I think the fighter jets flying overhead certainly scared a lot of people in terms of what could possibly be orchestrated ... it intimidated the crowds."

Jordan crosses next to Jane Dutton, who is on the ground in Tahrir.

"We've heard gunfire ... we've heard at least five gunshots," she reports. "Once again those jets flying over: incredible. They've been shaking their wings going from left to right which is being read as a sort of a [warning] to the protesters, that's what we are being told ... You get the sense on the streets of an eerie feel, they are bracing for something big to happen."

Just before heading to the Square, Dutton had finally made it to her old hotel to pick up her luggage. She now recounts that trip for viewers.

"The hotel that I checked out of, it was all boarded up. A lot of the lights had gone down in the hotel ... much of the staff had left to go home ... The taxi driver that's just picked me up from the hotel, he said, 'I spit on the president.'"

After nearly an hour of pass after pass over Tahrir Square, the jets fly off into the distance, only to be replaced by something equally curious.

“We’re trying to show you what’s happened here in the last few minutes. A very, very interesting development,” reports Mohyeldin while viewers watch his rooftop camera. “We’ve seen a small helicopter that we believe to be part of the presidential fleet [because of] the fact that it has the presidential seal on it. And it flew very low over the heads of the crowd, it circled a few times, before flying off into the distance. Now, again, we don’t know anything about that flight or why it was flying so low, but what we can tell from where I’m standing and according to other people who are familiar with that, they described it as a presidential plane. Now, we don’t know who was on it … it circled a few times very low, and it almost looked as though it was circling just to look down into the crowd because as it made its way above it swooped and flew on its side for a little bit, tilted sideways just to get a peek of the crowd, before circling off into the distance.”

Mohyeldin’s voice raises with excitement.

“In fact, the plane is flying back again! Hold on one second.”

He barks in Arabic to the camera operator, who zooms in abruptly towards the helicopter flying into the Square from the north at about camera height.

“Here you can see the [helicopter] that we were talking about, it’s flying back and looping again.”

The shot is good, revealing the presidential seal on the side of the helicopter. Viewers get a lovely look at the machine as it lazily banks so its passengers can view the crowd. After a slow lap of Tahrir Square, it flies off towards the west.

Monday 31 January

With Al Jazeera’s bureau now closed by authorities, the Cairo team has moved next door to the Hilton and set up a makeshift office. Hotel rooms became equipment stores, beds became edit stations, and balconies became studios. The

loss of the satellite uplink to Doha was AJE's biggest setback so far in covering the revolution, but the team was determined to work through the challenges.

Only three days had passed since the Day of Rage, but already the frenetic pace of events and ad hoc nature of the coverage was starting to take its toll.

"Everyone was so exhausted and there was something very messy about it," recalls Sherine Tadros (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "I really felt that the whole way through that there was a sort of lack of cohesion to the way that we were all working and that was a product of the fact that it was a very fast-moving story and there were a lot of correspondents on the ground and communications in general were so poor ... however big a story is, if you're all in the same place there's not much that everyone can do."

The team would begin each morning by planning the day's coverage as best they could, and giving package assignments to each correspondent, but the story was developing so quickly that these plans were often redundant before a single frame of footage could be shot.

"In the morning there would always be this planning session. You know, 'You go and do something on this, you do something on this.' But by two hours later the story had moved on," recalls Tadros. "You couldn't call [the bureau] to say the story had moved on so there's no point me doing this package, so everyone would just go and do their own thing. The only way I found out what my colleagues were doing during the day was when I would do a phono and I would hear them on air [talking] before me.

Not satisfied with just closing its bureau, the Egyptian government continued to crack down on Al Jazeera's ability to broadcast news to Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. The measures, mainly targeted at AJA but also affecting AJE, meant that Al Jazeera needed to start thinking creatively. Director General Wadah Khanfar (2011, October 7) recalled this battle in his Cameron memorial lecture.

"The Egyptian authorities managed to switch off al-Jazeera transmission via the most popular satellite in the Middle East region, Nilesat," he said. "In the meantime, the Libyan regime ordered the jamming of the channel's transmission on the other satellites. They succeeded in obscuring the channel from its viewers across the Arab world ... Our engineers managed to find new frequencies on alternative satellites. Yet, we still could not reach our viewers quickly enough via those new frequencies. Then we were contacted by a small-size satellite TV channel asking for permission to relay the al-Jazeera transmission via its own frequency. I immediately granted permission and instructed my colleagues to announce that we would grant permission to whoever wished to relay our transmission. Within less than two hours, al-Jazeera was being transmitted via 14 different satellite channels, which chose to suspend their programmes in favour of al-Jazeera."

Over the next few days, constantly updating information on how to watch AJA in the affected areas scrolls on the bottom-of-screen AJE news ticker.

> TO WATCH AL JAZEERA ARABIC AND MUBASHER ON NILESAT:
> 10949 VERTICAL SR:27.5000 MSPS FEC:3/4

> TO WATCH AL JAZEERA ARABIC AND MUBASHER ON HOTBIRD:
> 12111MHZ VERTICAL SR:27.500 MSPS FEC:3/4

Viewers who tune in on Monday morning find Kamahl Santamaria back in the presenter's chair after a few days on the Egypt web desk. He runs them through the latest news developments as the director cycles through three camera shots: one in Tahrir Square, one high up upon the Hilton Hotel, and one somewhere on the east bank of the Nile. The streets seem calm but empty without the usual choking traffic, and a lazy cloud of smoke continues to billow from the NDP building three days after it was set alight.

Ayman Mohyeldin reports to Santamaria that police are back on the streets in limited numbers, mainly acting as traffic officers, and that the army has started erecting barricades in central Cairo. Protesters' calls for a Million Man March the

following day have already starting filtering through to him and other correspondents. A Jacky Rowland package shows long queues for bread, burnt-out shopfronts and business, and angry citizens on the streets reacting to her and other foreign media. Santamaria takes a phono from Jamal Elshayyal in a poorer suburb of central Cairo, who he once again doesn't name "for their own security because of the restrictions" placed on AJE.

"What are you seeing, what are you hearing?" asks Santamaria.

"Kamahl, I don't know if you can hear the sounds around me ..."

Elshayyal pauses to make space for the sound of chanting. "Roughly a thousand people left a mosque after midday prayers," he continues after a few seconds. "As they walk past every street corner, dozens are added onto this demonstration ... Now, as I was coming to the demonstrations, Tahrir Square was on total lockdown. The army were much more present and we had to walk to get to this demonstration. There [were] no cars leaving the area and they were banning anyone from filming, any journalists that were seen were dealt with maybe more strictly than we have been in the past few days ... As we know, the police in Egypt have been redeployed across Cairo and we're hearing also across parts of the country and other cities. However, people are very peaceful; possibly the most organised march that I have seen in the past week. Young, old, men, women, children even."

Shortly afterwards, Ayman Mohyeldin reports on similar scenes in central Cairo.

"We noticed that the military had taken a slightly different posture today," he says. "They were very keen on trying to regulate the flow of traffic of people. They didn't want to make it too easy for them to get into the heart of the city but I can assure you there are various sideways and alleyways and people made their way in. As we came in through a sideway, we actually saw volunteers, a lot of simple, organised people, trying to ferry people into the middle of the Square. They were also handing out flyers telling them about tomorrow's big One Million Man March. They are saying they want to commemorate one week of these protests

since last Tuesday, January 25th, when the first confrontation happened with the protest and the government … The internet, which was so crucial on that first day and also on Friday, has been completely shut down so the word of mouth and simple cell phone use [is important]. SMS and text messaging is very limited and the internet has not been restored, so people are just spreading word person by person."

Viewers see pictures of trucks driving into the centre of town hauling large concrete slabs and other barrier-building material. These shots are juxtaposed with Egyptian State TV pictures of a helicopter doing slow circles around Tahrir Square. The atmosphere is starting to grow tense and ominous.

*****

"We understand that five team-members of the Al Jazeera production team in Cairo have been arrested … oh, it's six that have been arrested."

Darren Jordan broke this news to viewers, the calmness in his voice revealing none of the anxiety felt by everyone in the newsroom. There was very little information about where the six had been taken and what was happening to them other than some limited communication between Dan Nolan and the newsdesk. Twitter users had already learned the news from Nolan, who kept sending Twitter updates throughout his arrest, transportation and detention.

> **@nolanjazeera**: Arrested by military #jan25 #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 31a)

Arrested alongside Nolan were Simon Harrison, two producers and two camera operators.

> **@nolanjazeera**: 4 soldiers entered room took our camera. Wr ae under military arrest #Egypt #jan25 (Nolan, 2011, January 31b)

> **@nolanjazeera**: Unsure if arrested or about to be deported. 6 of us

> held at army checkpoint outside Hilton hotel. Equipment seized too. #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, January 31c)

Jane Dutton had narrowly avoided getting caught up in the situation alongside her colleagues. "I walked out of the room about ten minutes prior to their arrest," she recalls (personal communication, May 1, 2012). "So, obviously I felt a little bit lucky, a sense of relief ... it didn't take too long to find out where they were, but clearly we were spooked because there'd been this build-up, the closing down of our offices, the start of the chanting— of the anti-Al Jazeera chanting, you'd often see billboards with people saying 'kill Al Jazeera' ... It certainly was a picture of the rising tide against us."

The military had taken the six to a staging area in the grounds of the Egyptian Museum where they were detained while the military worked out what to do with them. Nolan remembers sitting there in the museum grounds and seeing a large pair of mounted binoculars trained on the front face of the Hilton from where AJE and other news outlets had been reporting from balconies. Soon, the military confiscated their phones and other electronic equipment.

> **@nolanjazeera**: Losing my phone now. Think we are ok. #Egypt #Jan25 (Nolan, 2011, January 31d)

On air, AJE focused on reporting the protests and made only passing references to its arrested staff, but behind the scenes it was working furiously to have them released. And it had some powerful allies. For instance, Philip J. Crowley, then the US Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, tweeted:

> **@PJCrowley**: We are concerned by the shutdown of Al-Jazeera in Egypt and arrest of its correspondents. Egypt must be open and the reporters released. (Crowley, 2011)

And US journalist Liz Heron was impressed:

> **@lheron**: Amazing that Al Jazeera reporter @nolanjazeera live-tweeting his own arrest, w 6 others. Says it's military arresting them #Egypt (Heron, 2011)

Wadah Khanfar sent an email around the network to assure staff that Al Jazeera was doing all it could.

> From: Wadah Khanfar
> Sent: Monday, January 31, 2011 3:51:54 PM
> Subject: we will not be detered!
> Dear Colleagues
>
> Security forces in Egypt have conducted raids on our operations in Egypt, confiscated much of our equipment and arrested six AJE staff. This is the latest in a series of moves taken by the Egyptian regime in a so far futile attempt to censor all information coming out of the country.
>
> We will use every avenue available to ensure their safety. Yet we should be clear — regardless of the pressure placed on us, we will continue to courageously report from the Egyptian street. If anything, our resolve to get the story has increased.
>
> The world has been watching our screens and reading our websites to understand the events taking place in Egypt and we will continue to bring them the news.
>
> Kind regards,
>
> WADAH KHANFAR

Within three hours of their arrest, all six were released, but with conditions. After confiscating the team's electronic newsgathering equipment, the military declared that Al Jazeera's permit to report had been revoked and if they were

caught again they would be deported. This was obviously a more worrying prospect for the non-foreign passport holders in Al Jazeera's employ, as any Egyptian caught breaking the law would face much harsher penalties than deportation. The safety of Egyptian employees without the backup of foreign embassies was very much at the forefront of Doha management's minds.

The next day, after managing to purchase a new phone and SIM card in a tightening consumer market, Dan Nolan tweeted more details of the arrest for his followers:

> **@nolanjazeera**: Ok I'm back on the airwaves, pretty hairy day yest! Soldiers seized cameras,laptops,phones. Now got a nokia circ 1995 but its workin #egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 1a)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: 4 soldiers entered our room armed with ak47's, bayonets swinging carelessly as they grabbed camera etc. Marched 6 of us down goods lift.. (Nolan, 2011, February 1b)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: Then marched us towards Liberation Sq ironically enough but took a right into grounds of Cairo museum for questioning #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 1c)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: Commanding officer said he knew we're doin our job but it makes his job v difficult! "Jazeera is a problem" also told us stop reporting (Nolan, 2011, February 1d)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: So these tweets are no longer from me as a journo but as a free man in Cairo! &there's 1000's of free men/women streaming toward square rite now (Nolan, 2011, February 1e)
>
> **@nolanjazeera**: And jazeera won't stop reporting this story no matter how many of us are detained/arrested #Egypt #Jan25 #freedom (Nolan, 2011, February 1f)

*****

Crowds in Tahrir Square continue to build into Monday evening, along with a sense of nervous anticipation about the Million Man March planned for the following day. The changing dynamic between protesters, security forces, the military, and the media is causing anxiety for all concerned, and making it impossible to predict what might happen next.

Ahead of a day that many expected to involve a repeat of earlier clashes on the streets, AJE screens an incredible package of new and shocking amateur pictures from the Day of Rage. The footage was shot from a building overlooking the Qasr el-Nil bridge and is of very poor quality, obviously captured with a low-range consumer camera. But it is clear enough. It shows thousands and thousands of people trying to cross the bridge into central Cairo and meeting lines of fierce police resistance. Tear gas and projectiles are flying indiscriminately in all directions; the fierceness of the battle is stark.

"The day Egyptians lost their fear. Friday the 28th of January, a battle that would last for hours," begins Hazem Sika's voiceover. "These pictures shot from the eastern side of the river show protesters trying to cross from the upscale neighbourhood of Zamalek on the far side; downtown Cairo and Tahrir Square, epicentre of the protests, awaits them on the near side, along with the brute force of the country's hated State police. Sirens wail and the crackle of tear gas canisters, but people remain undeterred. Some even catching the canisters in mid-flight and throwing them into the Nile."

A distressing shot of water cannon being sprayed into protesters' faces from close range as they kneel in prayer. The men refuse to retreat and continue to pray, some in obvious pain. "At one point a column of protesters observe the call to prayer even as water cannon is sprayed just metres away from them."

Armoured vehicles drive through the crowds, trying to escape the hordes that, in turn, are trying to overrun them. In the process, the vehicles drive through groups

of people, with one reversing straight into a few men while other protesters hang off the front. These are incredibly confronting scenes of insanity in battle.

"The police trucks make a retreat, while the crowd continues to swell, chanting slogans and defying the riot police again and again. As the sun begins to set, the bridge will finally be theirs, and the thousands of ordinary Egyptians from all walks of life have finally crossed the fear barrier."

CHAPTER 5: THE MILLION MAN MARCH

> "I think when people talk about the beautiful days of the revolution it was probably those first couple of days when there was no fear of attack, people were just letting loose … those were the days of celebration, unity; people were very positive, optimistic, they felt like they had accomplished something. It was truly people power at that time."
>
> **— Ayman Mohyeldin, AJE correspondent (personal communication, April 5, 2012)**

Anti-Mubarak protesters start gathering early on Tuesday 1 February, the crowd in Tahrir Square easily the largest so far. Incredibly, it looks as though organisers might actually get close to achieving the hyperbolic one million people they were aiming to assemble before marching to the Presidential Palace. Egyptian State TV dutifully relays the government's attempts to thwart the demonstration, warning viewers that it is likely to turn violent, and pleading with citizens to stay home. In addition, the one or two ISPs that had until now managed to continue providing internet access have finally been shut down, and it appears that intercity train services have been cancelled to prevent people from travelling to Cairo to join the protests.

The military is also starting to strategically redeploy around central Cairo, suggesting it has some idea about what is to come.

"[We'd] started seeing a military strategy getting into place," recalls Jane Dutton (personal communication, May 1, 2012). "Suddenly the tanks were forming into certain [locations and patterns] on the streets. You really got the sense that the military was now gaining some sort of sense of control … I guess they were expecting possible problems."

The team in Cairo is scrambling, trying to coordinate coverage out of its makeshift hotel room offices.

“We’d had a couple of meetings to work out who is going to do what,” says Dutton. “I went down [to Tahrir Square] again to do a piece to camera and a walk-and-talk, so everybody was going to go off to their main points. And by that stage, Ayman was in the Square in his secret location. So, it was mainly me and Jacky Rowland reporting from the hotel rooms. The story that I was going to do, before we decided it would be negated by the massive march, was a story on the rising food prices. So, all those things when a country is slowly grinding to a halt was the backdrop of so much of this enthusiasm.”

At 10am local time, Dutton reports on air via phone from Tahrir Square.

“The Square is absolutely packed. I mean there’s hardly standing room for the people there already, they’ve been there overnight,” she begins, her voice accompanied by fresh pictures shot earlier in the morning showing protesters asleep in the Square wrapped head-to-toe in blankets, crude tents providing scant shelter for some.

“Tens of thousands of people are still streaming towards the Square … People are stopping their cars at the side of the bridge, dumping their cars there and walking towards the Square. This is despite what we’ve been hearing from an eyewitness that thugs in certain parts of the city have been trying to prevent people from driving into Cairo to join the march. They’ve been stopping and searching those cars and stopping people from attending. Not sure who they are at this stage. At the same time, Egyptian TV is reporting that people are breaking— protesters are breaking into stores which sell military uniforms and they say that they will be using them to rob and to loot. Obviously, that’s been such a big concern for Egyptians: widespread looting across the country.”

The pictures show a large group of demonstrators chanting slogans in front of a KFC restaurant, tanks parked across the access points of streets feeding into the Square, and bayonet-wielding soldiers searching protesters.

“I’ve just gone through the security check, it’s very well organised,” continues Dutton. “There’s been an increase in the conservative Egyptians here and to that

end the army has separated the queues — one for the women and one for the men to protect their sensibilities. They're checking all of us about five times: where we're from, what are we doing here, what is it that we want, making sure that we've got no [weapons]. You get the feeling here that nobody wants to cause any trouble, they want the game to come to an end. I'm looking at a gentleman now with his son, he's holding up a sign that says 'Game over, next player' and his son, who looks about 11 years old, is holding up a sign saying 'You've had your time but now it's our time.' I was talking to another guy who had a dustbin in front of him, it said 'Mubarak and his party' and he was spitting in it, using it as a spittoon. The kind of sights and scenes that you would never dream of taking place in this country just over two weeks ago. People are walking around with bottles of water and food, they're here for the long haul. I'm trying to get a sense of when everyone's going to start moving towards the Presidential Palace and I don't think it's any time soon."

Dan Nolan was also down there amongst the protests, tweeting between on-air hits.

> **@nolanjazeera**: Still no internet in #Egypt & with so much kit seized by army yest, facing enormous challenges to bring u our story from square today (Nolan, 2011, February 2a)

> **@nolanjazeera**: Reports that mobile networks will be blocked soon tho i don't see the point as msg already out n people on their way #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2b)

> **@nolanjazeera**: 10.30am crowds in Tahrir Sq already the size they were at peak last nite! Imagine how big in few hours?!?! Could be an historic day 4 #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2c)

> **@nolanjazeera**: Down in Tahrir the crowds chant "The army, the people are one" Some soldiers reply with "We are with u we are with u" Amazing scenes!!! #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2d)

@nolanjazeera: "no to Mubarak no to Suleiman" on 1 sign "usa thats enough" on another #Egypt #jan25 (Nolan, 2011, February 2e)

@nolanjazeera: "We're looking for a leader who's stupid, oppressive & been here 30yrs. If u find him pls take him to the airport" protestor on loud speaker (Nolan, 2011, February 2f)

@nolanjazeera: Woman behind me screaming "down with regime" so loudly her voice is almost finished for the day! Its midday #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2g)

"Right now I'm standing in the very heart of Tahrir Square," Nolan reports on air via phone, "right in the centre where all those roads coming in to this key intersection all meet. I can tell you from where I'm standing there is a sea of people in every direction, every road leading into this square, I cannot see the end of the numbers of people that are coming in here ... the atmosphere down here is one of joyous celebration, it's very peaceful, there are all sorts of different chants that we're hearing. The most common one we're hearing is, 'Hey, hey, Hosni is leaving tonight,' which a lot of people have been coming up and saying to me. I've just spoken to a 59-year-old woman called Maraya who's said she's come out here today for the first time, and I've said, 'What made you come out today? What made you join this protest today?' And she said, 'We really think he's going to leave tonight, we really do,' and they want to be here in as many numbers as possible."

The high and wide live shot of Tahrir shows the crowd starting to get energised, with call-and-response chants booming around the Square led by men with loudspeakers; the mass of people pulses forward and back as they shout in time. Occasionally the live shot is interrupted by pre-recorded footage as it is slowly fed to Doha. It shows lines and lines of men kneeling in prayer, Mubarak effigies hanging from lamp posts in the background. Close-ups of individual faces give personality to the masses.

Jamal Elshayyal is also down in Tahrir Square.

"A celebration of democracy, as a protester put it to me," he reports on air. "Tens of thousands of people from all walks of life ... [I've been] speaking to one of the protesters, and I asked them, you've been here for over a week, the president still hasn't left, do you think that will make any difference? They said, today, as far as they were concerned, February the first, will be a day to live in Egypt's history, a celebration of democracy when all walks of life have come to downtown Cairo and brought the city to a standstill ... As I'm talking to you right now, a banner of maybe at least 20 feet wide with 'Mubarak Will Leave Today' is being erected in the middle of the Square."

Sherine Tadros had that morning travelled to the outer suburbs of Cairo so she could follow one of the marches heading into Tahrir Square. She took with her a satellite phone to ensure a better connection than the still-temperamental mobile network, but the bulky equipment stood out.

"I was doing a phono and [the army] saw me and they took me into this tent and said, 'You're a journalist,'" she recalls (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "I had nothing on me, I did not even carry my ID. I had nothing. And I just said, 'No, I'm looking for my friend and my dad gave me this phone and said it's the only phone that's going to work now and I'm looking for my friend, she lives in this area, I was just meant to stay with her because everyone's worried about the protests today.' And eventually, half an hour or forty-five minutes later, they just let me go. So, at that point I couldn't do the phonos so obviously so I ended up hitching a ride with these five guys who had never gone to a protest in their lives and were just for the first time going to Tahrir Square because they wanted to join in. And that was a really interesting experience — there was this excitement and this buzz."

Once inside Tahrir, where it was safe to again use the satellite phone, Tadros reports on air.

"It's testament to the sheer resolve of these protesters that they are coming in these numbers because I can tell you it is not an easy journey," she begins. "As we came in in our car we could see military cordoning off most of the area; a lot of people have decided to just leave their cars and walk to downtown — a four-kilometre walk, but people are still making it in their hundreds. What the army is doing is not closing off the roads, they're still letting protesters through, but each car is taking around seven or eight minutes to check — [people] have to get out of their cars, they are searched, [soldiers are] checking their ID. It's a really slow process which has caused hundreds upon hundreds of cars [to be deserted]."

Dan Nolan isn't the only TV correspondent reporting online — Ayman Mohyeldin is also tweeting via phone calls to a third party.

> **@AymanM**: Ayman continues 2 report live on #aje from tahrir square and tweets via phone calls due to no internet in #Egypt #jan25 #feb1 (Mohyeldin, 2011, February 2a)
>
> **@AymanM**: Muslims Christians religious and secular all united at tahrir square now #Egyptians feeling their history has been changed #jan25 #feb1 (Mohyeldin, 2011, February 2b)
>
> **@AymanM**: Whats happening in #Egypt will reverberate in region #Egyptians hope 4 #egypt's reemergence as leader in Arab world #jan25 #feb1 (via phone) (Mohyeldin, 2011, February 2c)

He expands on these sentiments in frequent live crosses from his rooftop vantage point.

"Excitement really is an understatement because from where I'm standing overlooking the heart of Tahrir, I have seen crying, I have seen people kissing one another, I have seen people celebrating, shaking hands, hugging," he reports. "The atmosphere has been one of incredible peace and celebration. The entrances into the Square itself have been very well organised. We've seen ordinary citizens, really, handing out water, we've seen doctors and volunteers taking care of the

elderly, there are people here helping each other out. Over the past few days we've seen young people, ordinary citizens, volunteering to pick up garbage, trying to keep the Square clean because a lot of people have been using this space really as a refuge for the past several days. And it's been very well organised from a perspective of citizen engagement ... it's been very organised and comfortable, nothing tense about it, no confrontation, a very celebratory atmosphere ... a quite impressive and historic scene unfolding here in the heart of Cairo."

These words and phrases — Mohyeldin's "incredible peace and celebration", Nolan's "joyous" and "peaceful" — kept appearing over and over again in correspondents' descriptions of the scene. Jane Dutton, later searching for adjectives to describe that day, rejected "beautiful" but said it was "amazing because you really felt that Egyptians felt that was the tipping point. And there really was change on the horizon and there was a sense of disbelief ... I definitely got a sense of their excitement that really change was afoot. And the fact that everybody could be on the streets — women, children, babies, all political groupings, all together, for the first time, was quite incredible." (personal communication, May 1, 2012)

Jamal Elshayyal has similar recollections of day eight of the revolution.

"That is one of the days I will never forget," he says (personal communication, April 12, 2012). "I was there throughout the day and one of the expressions I used was 'This is more of a carnival or a celebration of democracy.' Because people there were there from all walks of life, all backgrounds; songs were being sung, chants. It was really one of the most joyous events that I've ever seen. Literally, 'joyous' was the word because whilst they were demanding the collapse of the regime, Mubarak step down and whatnot, but Egyptians for the first time felt national unity had brought them to the ability to finally express themselves without any fear ... You've got all of these laws on one hand, and on the other hand, you have very easily more than a million people in the centre of Cairo, breaking all of these laws, but doing it with happiness. 'You know what? We're finally doing what we wanted to do.'"

Sherine Tadros saw in the Square a vision of a better Egypt.

"The atmosphere in Tahrir [was] one that anyone who was there will never forget because it was utopia," she says. "You wanted the whole of Egypt to be like Tahrir. To walk around as a female and feel like you weren't being harassed, and to feel that everyone was just speaking what was on their mind, and the kindness that people were showing each other. The solidarity." (personal communication, January 14, 2013)

Hoda Abdel-Hamid is an Egyptian Al Jazeera English correspondent and ten-year veteran of ABC News in the US. She arrived in Cairo on Saturday 29 January and reported from in and around Tahrir Square until Mubarak's resignation two weeks later. She became the fifth AJE correspondent on the ground with Egyptian heritage.

Abdel-Hamid split her time between her mother's Cairo house and an apartment at the edge of Tahrir Square. The Tahrir apartment was being used by a group that belonged to the loose collective of youth activists who were the main drivers of the 25 January protests and subsequent demonstrations. She called the apartment the "Ministry of Information" because it was a rich source of stories and leads for a journalist. Abdel-Hamid made contact with the group through her cousin — a member — and a few of the others who were acquaintances before the protests began.

"There was a lot of the youth that were based there and they were doing the internet stuff," she says (personal communication, January 24, 2012). "And there was a whole group of girls who were preparing ginger tea every night for the guys sleeping on the Square ... cooking lentil soup and whatever. [People had] gone down to the street on the 25th really not imagining that it would snowball into this major event. I would call [the people in the flat] the organisers of Tahrir because they took it in hand and they made sure that blankets were coming in, food was coming in, the right slogans were being said ... So, it was quite interesting to see their ups and downs and have these sleepless nights when they didn't know what to do ... I was very up close, very emotional."

Abdel-Hamid was in Tahrir Square on the day of the Million Man March and was particularly taken with some of the humour on display.

"Someone on Egyptian State TV had said that all these youth were paid, I can't remember whether it was 50 euros or 50 dollars, and were given Kentucky Fried Chicken. Egyptians are very sensitive to foreign plots ... So, a lot of people would come there and say, 'Oh, we can't find any of [the foreign money and American chicken].' And then you had some of the youth who were there, the activists, who had falafels and were going around saying, 'Kentucky Fried Chicken! Kentucky Fried Chicken!' [And] there was a guy walking around with a sign saying, 'Come on, [Mubarak,] leave! I miss my wife!' And another one saying, 'My wife is due to give birth in two weeks, I'm going to call the baby and tell him to wait!'"

Due to the broad range of demographics represented in the Tahrir crowd, Abdel-Hamid called the Square the "Independent Republic of Tahrir." She witnessed many fascinating interactions between social groups that otherwise would not taken place.

"I reported on a conversation between a Muslim Brotherhood guy and a hash-smoking, long-haired Facebook kid," she remembers. "And the Muslim Brotherhood guy said, 'you know, I always thought you guys were about drugs, sex and rock and roll. I thought that God had chosen us to make this happen and it turned out you guys made it happen and this has changed my opinion.' It was a very emotional thing. And then [another Muslim Brotherhood member] was talking to a girl and she was saying, 'I like to wear my bikini and swim and drink alcohol' and this and that. And he was saying that he thinks in the new country, everybody should be doing whatever they want but then don't drive drunk in my street and I won't come and put a loudspeaker in your ear. So when you look at that it gives you a lot of hope."

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Back in Doha, beginning a three-hour shift in front of the camera was presenter Sohail Rahman. Rahman is a launch employee of AJE and has worked both as a presenter and a foreign correspondent. He is well known around the newsroom for bringing with him to the presenter's desk a large stack of annotated printouts — personal notes on every conceivable event that may occur during his shift, from deaths of major world figures to flare-ups in obscure international conflicts.

As AJE receives and relays reports of massive protests in Sinai, Mansoura and Damnhour, of barbed wire being erected around Mubarak's residence, and of US government employees being ordered to leave Egypt, Rahman attempts to measure the size of demonstrations around Egypt. He speaks first to Rawya Rageh in Alexandria.

"It is safe to say, Sohail, that hundreds of thousands of people are gathered here in Alexandria," she reports. "It's very difficult, of course, to get a sense of the numbers, just because of how spread out the protesters are."

In Cairo, pictures of the crowd are almost unbelievable despite the now-extended 3pm curfew having come into effect. Tahrir is packed and there seems to be no end to the sea of humans as cameras zoom in on the streets feeding the Square. Rahman crosses to Ayman Mohyeldin, who is back at his vantage point atop a tall building at the edge of the Square.

"I would probably say that now a million people have gathered here, comfortably, in the Square," reports Mohyeldin. "I've seen large crowds before and this by a very easy estimate has reached one million if not several hundreds of thousands of people."

Correspondent Jacky Rowland, who is watching the Square from a different high vantage point, is more cautious in her estimation of the numbers.

"Safely, hundreds of thousands," she tells viewers.

In the calmer weeks after the revolution, and with the benefit of time and resources to make such measured calculations, security firm Stratfor used aerial photographs and crowd modelling methods to estimate that Tahrir Square could, at best, accommodate 200,000 people. Meaning that even after counting people gathered in surrounding streets, it's unlikely that the crowd in that one location could've exceeded half a million people. But taking into account protests taking place in suburban Cairo and other cities, the total number of demonstrators may have exceeded one million.

In the middle of the largest gathering in Tahrir Square, an enormous banner held by protesters reads in large, hand-painted English letters: 'PEOPLE DEMAND REMOVAL OF THE REGIME.' Amongst the sea of people, a man has climbed to the top of a tall lamp post and sits precariously, waving an Egyptian flag. Multiple sources of music and singing can be heard floating around the Square and competing for attention.

Dan Nolan tweets some of the colour.

> **@nolanjazeera**: Its pretty hot for a winters day in Cairo. Some people have made sun visors out of old newspapers. Egyptian ingenuity at its best! #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2h)

> **@nolanjazeera**: So hard to judge numbers now we are in crowd. But it is an enormous mass of people here & in every street leading here! #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2i)

> **@nolanjazeera**: Pausing now for call to prayer. Nowhere near enough room for everyone to get down & pray tho. sea of people becomes virtually silent #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2j)

> **@nolanjazeera**: Protestor handing biscuits out to all in the heart of the square. It feels like an Egyptian version of Woodstock at the mo! #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2k)

> **@nolanjazeera**: 59yrold woman Loraya, a shade over 4ft tall, face peaks out thru headscarf 2 tell me she joined protest today so "Hosni leave tonight" #Egypt (Nolan, 2011, February 2l)

"An incredibly positive atmosphere here ... there doesn't seem to be any animosity, any tension," reports Sherine Tadros from the centre of Tahrir. "I'll just read for you or translate some of the banners around, all along the same lines as you can imagine: 'Mubarak it is time for you to go,' one I can see says: 'Game over,' one I can see says: 'Checkmate,' with a big chess game printed on the banner. I'm looking up and just above me there's an effigy that is hanging of Mubarak, and just now someone has taken off their shoe and thrown it at that effigy. There's a lot of that going on — the message really, really clear from people here. A lot of them telling us that they will not leave Tahrir Square this evening, they are going to sit in right here and they're not going to move until President Mubarak leaves."

Rahman next crosses to Jamal Elshayyal, who is also in Tahrir.

"There is a hardcore group of this crowd that has been here for a week [and] haven't left," he reports. "They have brought water pipes, kilometre-long water pipes to bring water, they've also brought food and blankets. There is no sign whatsoever that they are going to leave ... The chants change hour to hour, minute to minute, one of the most recent chants was taunting the Egyptian police, or State police, it was, 'Where is the police?' A taunting chant showing that they were able to overcome comprehensively these riot police who for years had been seen by the people and several human rights organisations as the iron fist used to rule them. Just a few moments ago, the organisers in one part of the Square, speaking on a loudspeaker, announced that across Egypt eight million Egyptians had turned up to the streets. Whether or not that was true was irrelevant because the people on the ground started cheering and it just emboldened them even more."

A correspondent lines up a phone interview with one of the demonstrators.

“I’m dead tired but really happy,” she says on air in a hoarse voice and accented English.

“Are you going to go home?” asks Rahman.

“I’m not going home.”

The director plays out some fresh footage filmed in Tahrir on a small, non-professional camera. Trays of bread are being carried through the Square above protesters’ heads, small trolleys are pushed through the throng of people by street vendors distributing food.

“We want to live a clean life, I want a better education system, better medical services, I don’t want to pay taxes which are wasted by the Interior Ministry,” says a woman, speaking in translated Arabic. “They beat us, and they put our children in prison. I just want to be a citizen. To Mubarak’s regime we’re just cockroaches.”

“Turn off the regime, turn off Mubarak, turn off the injustice, turn off the tyranny and corruption,” demands a man in English. “No injustice, no to dictatorship. Go, go Mubarak, he has to go. We won’t go, he will go, he will go, we will stay, we will stay.”

It was this kind of rolling coverage that set the channel apart from its competitors that day. Mary McNamara (2011), writing in the Los Angeles Times, specifically praised AJE’s coverage of the Million Man March.

“Al Jazeera English used the typical network tools of wide overhead shots to show the growing numbers gathering in Cairo’s Tahrir Square in answer to the call for a Million Man March but also sent cameras darting in among the protestors,” she wrote. “Viewers could all but smell what mass protest looks like. The satisfying snap of a waved flag, the rustle of tents being set up for the long night, the murmur of the crowd hunkering down to wait, the blue firefly glow of cellphones held aloft in the dark. Revolutionaries have never before been so precisely human.”

Darkness falls

At the conclusion of the first brief commercial break in many hours, AJE opens a new, distinct bulletin with a scripted opening sequence.

"They called for a million man march and their calls were answered," reads Ayman Mohyeldin over the live shot of Tahrir Square and the AJE musical theme in the background. "Egyptians of all walks of life united here today, calling for the end of President Hosni Mubarak's term in office."

The director cuts to Mohyeldin, standing against the now-dark sky, jumper and scarf warding off the cold evening air.

"Hello and welcome, I'm Ayman Mohyeldin live in Tahrir Square. Thank you for joining us for this special coverage of Egypt's massive protests."

After the rest of the headlines, and the opening titles, it's back to Mohyeldin in Cairo. The noise of the crowd and nearby helicopters hovering over the Square is deafening.

"It's a scene that's been described as unprecedented and historic. Hundreds and thousands of Egyptians gathered here still after hours of curfew ... All across the Square they have set up televisions, they are watching news channels; they feel like they are on the cusp of something very important. Now, whether or not anyone in the leadership of this country is listening to the demands of the people, you wouldn't know it from the political developments that have happened over the last week. The president initially very slow to respond to the demands of his people, coming out and trying to close the distance between him and the masses, sacking his government then slowly beginning to piece together a new cabinet, a cabinet that reflects very strong military allegiances with very few new names, very few changes. That only fuelled the protesters more. We heard from the speaker of the parliament, trying to say that he was going to entertain some of the judicial challenges to previous elections about their legitimacy of those elections.

And there were also suggestions that maybe the parliament was going to be dissolved and a new election would bring in the will of the people. None of that has worked. Yesterday, we heard from the vice president saying that he was going to reach out to political opposition forces. That didn't work. And today the minister of finance once again saying that the government was going to do everything it can to improve the economic situation for ordinary Egyptians, but that only seemed to fuel the crowds even further because this is not about economics, it is not about policies, it is not about ministers. This is about a complete and entire regime change. And once again you can hear the crowd, the helicopter flying overhead, the crowd reacting as they have every time it's done so."

The first live pictures of the day from Alexandria have reached Doha and they show a reasonable crowd of several thousand with lots of flags and placards, many of the people singing.

"[W]e had finally been able to set up a live position where we [could] take pictures from [a protest]," recalls Rawya Rageh (personal communication, April 25, 2012). "We had finally been able to take a livestream from Alexandria like we were doing from Cairo. None of the other networks had managed to do that … taking in live footage of an actual protest [in Alexandria] while it's happening."

The director puts the live cameras from Cairo and Alexandria side by side on the screen while Rageh describes the Alexandria event.

"These absolutely iconic scenes here mean that the sentiment here is so elated, it's such a national sentiment here," she reports. "People singing the national anthem as you can probably hear … the moment [it] started playing here 15 minutes ago, people were unable to [hold back] the tears. And whoever's playing the national anthem hasn't been able to stop playing it."

Jamal Elshayyal reports next from Tahrir Square in Cairo.

“They’ve just erected a giant projector screen and it’s no surprise that it’s actually Al Jazeera [Arabic] television that’s being broadcast on it as many Egyptians here believe the coverage being provided by the network has managed to encompass all the events that have taken place over the country over the past few days,” he begins. “There is no doubt that people here are prepared to stay the night and many days. Many people I’ve spoken to, I’ve told them, ‘Don’t you think it’s getting a bit cold? Are you not tired?’ And they really see this as a small sacrifice for the greater good, as they say … But the general sense here is that they’re in their final hours, in their final days, and they will do whatever it takes until their demands are heard. The simple sentiment here is that they’re waited and endured 30 years so a few days or weeks isn’t much in order to achieve the freedom, as they put it, and liberation from Liberation Square, as they put it to me.”

Presenter Sami Zeidan interrupts Elshayyal.

“I’m sorry but I need to jump in here … we are hearing reports now, State television in Egypt is reporting now that the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, will speak shortly … one of the ideas that’s been floated around is that he might be about to say he’s not going to stand for presidential elections in September. And that at least, according to US diplomats, is what he’s been advised or urged to do by the US president Barack Obama.”

Zeidan throws to Ayman Mohyeldin for reaction to the announcement of Mubarak’s intention to speak.

“I can tell you just from the reaction of the crowd that as soon as it appeared on various television screens … you could just feel a sense of celebration in the crowd,” reports Mohyeldin. “I think perhaps people are just a little bit wishful thinking, that this is going to be the moment that he announces that he is going to step down. There’s no indication that that’s what this message is going to be about, but the reaction from the crowd was definitely one of huge celebration … It will be very interesting, and I can promise you, when the president speaks, this is going to be one of the quietest times you will hear [in] Tahrir Square. Everyone here will be watching very closely and listening very closely to every word that

comes out. They're going to be trying to read between the lines. We simply don't know what that's going to be, but I can tell you, the people below— anything short of President Hosni Mubarak stepping down is not going to quiet these people tonight or for the next several days."

Nobody at AJE, in Cairo or Doha, actually thought that Mubarak was going to step down, but they knew whatever he had to say was going to be very interesting indeed. The newsdesk had been about to release Rawya Rageh from duty for the evening.

"I remember ... one live shot after another, and then they [the newsdesk] were, 'We'll goodnight you, we'll goodnight you now,'" says Rageh (personal communication, April 25, 2012). "And then suddenly [there was] word of Mubarak giving a second speech and they were, like, 'No, no, no, you have to wait and we'll take live coverage of the reaction.' And I was, like, 'Sure, yeah.' So, we stay there and we take this live reaction from the Square."

As hundreds of thousands of people in Cairo and around the nation wait to hear from the president, the crowds' energy only increases. Protesters have worked themselves into a frenzy by the time Hosni Mubarak appears on Egyptian State TV at 11 pm to deliver an 11-minute speech. AJE relays State TV with simultaneous English translation.

Mubarak starts by attempting to paint the protests as honest and peaceful expressions of opinion, tainted by malicious outside forces.

"My fellow countrymen, I address you ... where Egypt and its people are facing a test," he begins. "These conditions are about to take us to the unknown. The homeland is facing harsh moments and difficult tests, started by honest youth and men who exercised their right of peaceful demonstration and expression of concern and aspirations. Which were highly manipulated and took advantage of by those who wished to wreak havoc, chaos, confrontation and violence, and to violate the constitutional legitimacy and to devour it."

After running through the changes he has already made since protests began, and declaring that he never intended to stand for re-election in the coming presidential election, Mubarak lays out his offer to the Egyptian people.

"My top priority and responsibility right now is to restore the security and the stability of the nation. To ensure the peaceful transition of power in an atmosphere providing security and safe-guarding the people. To pave the way for this who is to be elected by the people in the coming elections. I tell you in absolute veracity, regardless of the current circumstances, that I did not intend to run for the coming presidency ... I tell you in plain words that in the few months remaining in my current term I will work towards ensuring the measures and procedures that will guarantee the peaceful transition of power by virtue of the powers and authorities vested in me by the constitution."

He runs through some proposed constitutional amendments, and makes a plea for authorities to seek justice regarding the recent violence, before finishing with a clear statement of his intent to stay in power until the next election.

"My fellow citizens, Egypt will brave through the current circumstances more strong, more confident, more coherent, and more harmonious. Our people will brave through the crisis more cautious of what materialises their interests, more keen on to held steadfast to the future. Hosni Mubarak, who is addressing you today, takes pride in the long years he's spent serving Egypt's people. This dear and beloved homeland is my homeland as it is the motherland of all Egyptians. In which I lived and for which I fought. I defended its soil, sovereignty and interests, and I will die on the soil of Egypt. And I will be judged by history for my merits and demerits. Homeland will live on, people will not. People is eternal, we live on. Whose banner and trust will be handed over among and by its people, and we should ensure this in absolute dignity and pride. One generation after the other. May God preserve and save this nation and its people, and may God's peace be with you."

Egyptian State Television cuts to its animated logo, and as the fanfare fades out and AJE cuts back to Tahrir Square, the crowd's chants fade in. People are

gathered in large groups around whatever TV screen or radio loudspeaker they can find, and flags are waving in response to Mubarak's speech.

"'I do not intend to run for the coming presidential election,'" back-announces Sami Zeidan. "'I'll be happy to hand over the banner in a manner that preserves stability in Egypt, I will work towards a peaceful transition of power in the few months which are left for me.' The words there of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, but you can see the reaction to those words already on the streets of Tahrir Square. Let's go now to our correspondent Jacky Rowland who's been watching this. This falls far short of the demands of those protesters, I think the evidence of it is on the streets there, Jacky."

"Even during the speech itself, Sami, I have to say I was listening to the speech in stereo — I was listening to it in my earpiece and also I was hearing it echoing across from the Square where they've been watching on huge screens," she reports. "And even as the President was talking, people were really heckling and chanting in the crowd. Clearly this falls far short of what their demands were."

The screen now shows the Cairo and Alexandria crowds side by side, equally worked up and agitated. Zeidan thanks Rowland and pauses for a full two minutes to allow viewers to listen to the chants of those in Egypt's two largest cities.

"'Leave! Leave!'" he eventually translates. "If President Hosni Mubarak was hoping his words would come down as soothing balm on the nerves of Egyptians it doesn't appear to be going that way as this crowd, as you can see, is even more ecstatic and defiant and firm in its message to the president after his speech there."

As an Egyptian and a journalist, Jamal Elshayyal found it difficult to listen to Mubarak's speech and remain focused on reporting.

"That was one of the testing times for me," he admits, "making sure I kept opinions to myself" (personal communication, April 12, 2012). Elshayyal, with a

keen understanding of politics in Egypt, knew that the speech signalled big things ahead.

"[A] lot of people were convinced by what he said, or they said, 'he's promised to step down in six months, he's not going to run again, khalas. Let's everyone go home.' And even there were several cameramen and other staff on our coverage and we had our own discussion about this ... [But] I have a political background, I worked for a political party. I was like, 'Are you guys retarded?' ... I was like, once a million a people have taken to the streets there was no going back, from my personal perspective. On that day, 1st of February, that's when I believed this was going to be a revolution. There was no doubt in my head. Full stop. Nothing's going to happen until this guy steps down."

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It is midnight in Egypt.

Mubarak's speech has triggered a drastic change of mood across the country, and introduced an element of danger. Live pictures from Alexandria show people running all over the place, some forming human chains in an attempt to block entrances to the large park in the centre of Elshohada Square. Presenter Dareen Abu Ghaida is speaking to Rawya Rageh, who is standing next to the live camera.

"There seems to be a sense of commotion," says Rageh. "We're hearing a report from people down on the street from the scenes you're seeing that there may have been a pro-President Mubarak [element] that joined the crowd, where people started chanting, 'If you support Egypt do not engage in vandalism,' so perhaps that's a new, interesting dynamic here of two ongoing, different protests at the same time. People who came out here to ask Hosni Mubarak to leave, and others who joined, asking the president to continue staying."

Abu Ghaida crosses to Jamal Elshayyal in Cairo, who notes similar developments.

“The feeling here has gone into possibly that of anger,” he reports. “They are extremely furious at the President for what they see as an audacious speech to say the least. They don’t understand how the sheer amount of numbers that have come out on the streets in recent days has not been enough to convince him. But I want you to listen in to this chant for a second …”

A moment of silence as he holds up the phone in the air. The chant is not easily audible.

“… the protesters here are saying, ‘Where is the Egyptian Army? Where is the Egyptian Army?’ And obviously, despite the fact that the army here is deployed, this chant is almost a call for the Egyptian Army to remove Mubarak themselves. [The protesters] believe that they’ve done their part as patriotic Egyptians, as they put it, and it’s now the role of the army to intervene and convince the president that he must depart.”

As Elshayyal speaks, viewers watch a tank move into Alexandria’s Elshohada Square, protesters mobbing it with fists pumping in the air. Soldiers on top of the tank wave the protesters away.

“If you can just hold on one second there, we’re just looking at live pictures as you’re speaking,” interjects Abu Ghaida. “You’re talking about the military there, we’re just looking at live pictures out of Alexandria where there seems to be an army tank on the move. It’s not clear where it’s going or what it’s doing right now, but this crowd of people are surrounding this army tank. It so far looks peaceful, nothing extraordinary going on. Let’s bring in our correspondent from Alexandria … what do you make of these pictures, I’m assuming you’re looking at them as well of this army tank on the move?”

“Certainly very interesting scenes ever since the protest began here and the army had arrived,” replies Rageh. “The [anti-Mubarak] crowd was joined by another much smaller but significantly different crowd chanting pro-President Mubarak chants, clearly saying, ‘Go ahead with your reforms and we are with you,’ in reference to the reforms President Mubarak has listed in his speech … we’ve seen

no confrontation so far between the two crowds but the anti-Mubarak crowd tried to prevent the new gathering from entering the Square, which is why the military clearly had to step in with the tank, trying to separate between the two crowds."

Two soldiers stand atop the tank, one of them holding a loudspeaker and walking back and forth to speak to protesters on all sides of the tank.

"It seems as though it's one of the soldiers on top of the tank now trying to address the crowd over a loudspeaker. I will try to listen to what he's saying but I don't think we'll be able to get it all the way from here."

Abu Ghaida moves on to another interview while Rageh listens to the soldier's address, but soon the director cuts back to the Alexandria camera which shows the crowd frantically running into the centre of Elshohada Square, as if away from something. A few people vault over shoulder-height hedges to safety. As people reach the park they once again form human chains across the narrow entrances. In the background, men are arming themselves with sticks and other crude weapons.

The interview is cut short so Rageh can narrate the scene.

"Clearly, the confrontations seem to have begun between the two sides. We have seen dozens of the protesters run in different directions, clearly a sense of panic here in the crowd. The anti-Mubarak crowd is trying to block the pro-Mubarak crowd from entering the Square. Clearly, their attempts are not exactly successful."

She pauses.

"I think I am hearing clashes. In fact, we're actually seeing ..."

The protesters have begun to attack each other with sticks and rocks, and fists when necessary. A rough line delineates the pro- and anti-Mubarak protesters. The air fills with projectiles.

“We’re seeing people throwing stuff at each other,” continues Rageh. “I’m seeing the military tank advance again to try and stop these clashes between the two sides. What was a fairly peaceful gathering is no more …”

The tank is driving slowly around the Square

“Perhaps the military’s trying to psychologically scare the crowd by circling the Square with the tank, but they certainly don’t seem to be firing any shots. There are people …”

No sooner has Rageh mentioned the absence of shots than incredibly loud automatic gunfire blasts the Square, echoing off surrounding buildings. The camera operator jerks reflexively with shock; the protesters on the street scatter in all directions.

“Okay! Okay! Do you hear the gunfire?” shouts Rageh.

“We hear shots being fired.”

The crowd’s screams are louder and more panicked.

“Who’s doing the shooting?” asks Abu Ghaida. “Is it the military?”

A pause.

“We had to duck, we had to duck,” replies Rageh, a little out of breath.

The anti-Mubarak protesters within the Square are retaking their positions at the entrances and begin to throw rocks at the retreating pro-Mubarak protesters. The tank positions itself between the main entrance to the Square and the scattered pro-Mubarak protesters.

“Are you safe from where you are? We don’t want you to put yourself in any danger so make sure that you are safe …”

A long, long pause from Rageh before she replies. The camera looks to be barely controlled.

“We are in a safe distance,” she replies finally. “It’s just when the gunshots are fired that we have to duck because you never know how far these things can ricochet. The scene’s starting to get pretty ugly here, a very unfortunate turn of events … This, of course, is a key Square here outside the biggest train station in Alexandria.”

The tank is turning on the spot so that its turret points towards those inside the Square.

“We’re just looking at pictures there … an army tank on the move, presumably trying to contain the situation I would imagine?” asks Abu Ghaida.

“I suppose it’s nearly a psychological factor, that they’re trying to scare the protesters, but it doesn’t seem to be working so far.”

“And of course we need to remind our viewers that this is after curfew, we’re talking nine, ten hours now after curfew that supposedly imposed …”

Abu Ghaida is cut off by the sound of more automatic gunfire. The protesters don’t seem to be as spooked this time around, though, as the tank drives directly towards the entrance to the Square with a soldier sticking out of the top, motioning for protesters to move inside.

“All throughout these protests since the military arrived here, they made it very clear that they had no intention to fire at protesters, there was no intention to harm any Egyptians,” says Rageh. “They made it very clear that protesters and the army are one … you can see them continuing this policy, they’re clearly not firing at the protesters, they’re clearly firing in the air.”

“Is there any sign at all that people are dispersing?”

“There were definitely a group of people that dispersed, but a bunch of others who are …”

More gunfire. The camera briefly drops behind a wall, and when the gunfire stops, the camera settles on a group of men standing across the road from the Square, watching. A large fight has broken out in the centre of the Square while men continue to block the entrance.

“The numbers have dwindled but there’s a group of people from both sides still holding their ground in the heart of the Square,” says Rageh. “I can still see both groups present there.”

The tank moves once more towards the Square.

“People are trying to communicate with the soldiers, they’re perhaps trying to ask them to step down from the tank. The people are chanting, ‘Long live Egypt.’ There is some sort of discussion going on, or at least a one-sided discussion, protesters are clearly trying to communicate their sentiments to the soldiers on the tank, but all we can see is that the soldiers are waving their arms, asking the people to move away from the tank, but not particularly engaging them in a discussion. And there goes another armoured personnel carrier from behind the tanks joining the crowds. I can clearly hear … let me step closer to the ledge to let you hear this … I think it’s too far for you to hear it but people are chanting, ‘We want Mubarak! We want …’”

And then the camera feed from Alexandria freezes and breaks up on air. It’s gone.

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In Cairo, Jamal Elshayyal was also starting to see the first signs of trouble.

"[A]fter Mubarak spoke, Ayman came down from the balcony position where he was doing his [live crosses] and we started roaming around Tahrir just talking to people," he recalls (personal communication, April 12, 2012). "And I'll never forget that I saw two people and I said, 'Ayman, I will guarantee you these guys are undercover informants.' And that, again, is more to do with experience of, firstly, prior to the revolution I knew a lot of people who worked in intelligence and there was a certain signature kind of look to them, the way they acted, the way they looked, the way they dressed and whatnot. And funnily enough, other people started looking at them and gradually, there was the kind of Neighbourhood Watch of Tahrir, or the vigilantes or whatever you want to call them, who kind of kept order in Tahrir, approached them and asked for their ID cards and it then transpired that they were informants. So, I had the idea, I had something in me that said, this isn't really going to work out, there is something wrong. You know, you had the people gathered, Mubarak's speech managed to divide the people, and this is when you strike. No-one ever expected it to be how it was going to be, but there was something that was brewing."

As Elshayyal and Mohyeldin make their way out of Tahrir Square, Mohyeldin speaks on air with Abu Ghaida.

"Are you seeing anything [like Alexandria] in Cairo?" she asks.

"Yes, absolutely," he replies, panting. "In fact, Dareen, we're on the street actually in Cairo and the reason why we're slightly out of breath is that as we were making our way out of the Square there was indeed a convoy of cars, and you can probably hear it off in the distance, they're chanting, 'We love you Hosni! We love you Hosni! We love you President! We love you President!' You can hear them honking horns."

The horns are clearly audible behind Mohyeldin.

"I can tell you first-hand, we just heard the convoy, people on their motorcycles, they're driving around the Square from where we are now. We got the sense when we were leaving the Square that the situation had quickly changed. In fact, I can

tell you there's some security being deployed to the streets where we are. What happened was as we were leaving the Square, we got a sense that the military had been on a heightened state of alert because we immediately noticed that the men and soldiers had begun to put their flak jackets on … one of the [commanders] told me that indeed they went on a heightened state of alert because they raised their red flag around the tank. I can sense now outside one of the hotels that security here is really nervous about the fact that there are a lot of demonstration and protest, about 50 or 60 people on motorcycles. You can hear them … they're chanting they don't want him to leave. There are pictures of Hosni Mubarak. You can hear, there are about 300 people or so."

Mohyeldin pauses and holds up the phone so viewers can listen.

"'With our blood and with our souls we will defend you, Mubarak,'" he translates. "They don't want President Mubarak to step down … I haven't seen any — or, hang on I see some with sticks. They are coming back towards the Square. The hotel security has deployed more forces around. You can hear them saying they're not going to leave."

Elshayyal, at Mohyeldin's side, remembers another detail of the pro-Mubarak protests outside the hotel.

"[W]e were going towards the Hilton Ramses which was where a lot of the people were staying, so I can get my stuff, so we can go to Ayman's place," he says (personal communication, April 12, 2012). "We suddenly saw motorbikes, loads of motorbikes coming, all of them chanting pro-Mubarak stuff, or mainly chanting anti-Al Jazeera and anti-revolutionary slogans. They ended up gathering outside the Hilton Hotel and literally for about half an hour just swearing at Al Jazeera."

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Back in Alexandria, Rawya Rageh and her team have found themselves in an extremely dangerous situation. It turns out that their live camera shot had not frozen earlier due to technical fault.

"As I'm doing the live shot, we suddenly see a group of people joining or marching onto the Square," Rageh remembers (personal communication, April 25, 2012). "It transpires that this is actually a pro-Mubarak crowd approaching the protesters in the Square and we're, like, 'Whoa, wait a minute, this can't end well.' And sure enough, they arrive to the Square and the clashes began, they start attacking the [anti-Mubarak] protesters with firebombs, with sticks, with stones, and this is all being taken live, and obviously the [news]desk goes crazy over it."

In fact, the shot is so good, it ends up being broadcast much more widely than Rageh expected.

"Al Jazeera Arabic, obviously, is monitoring our output and they see [the clashes] and so they take our signal live, they too start carrying this footage of this battle. And remember, this is the very first time we see the thugs being sent like that on the street to attack the protesters during the 18 days. And it becomes very problematic for us because obviously whoever sent them is watching Al Jazeera Arabic and everybody in Egypt at that time was watching Al Jazeera Arabic. For Al Jazeera English, you don't have the same viewership in Egypt like you have, obviously, for the Arabic channel, which is what the majority of the population see. So, it became a major security problem because they realised that these pictures were being beamed on Al Jazeera of these thugs attacking the protesters."

The Square is ringed by coffee shops which are mostly blaring Al Jazeera Arabic on their television screens. And unfortunately, it's relatively easy to work out from looking at a camera shot where the camera might be located.

"[The thugs] turn around and go building to building looking for us to attack the live position … We're talking about 20 machete-wielding thugs below the building looking for us. So, we immediately bring down the live shot."

The crew head back downstairs into the apartment of the residents who gave them permission to film from the rooftop.

"They start hiding us, literally, in kitchen closets and under the beds and stuff. And these [thugs] are going door to door, knocking on doors, looking for us and looking for our equipment and literally searching the apartments. Obviously we had to call the [news]desk immediately and ... I think this was the very first big major security incident that an Al Jazeera team had had during the revolution."

In Doha, the newsdesk sprung into action and activated contingency protocols. Managing Director Al Anstey was notified of the situation and he arrived at the newsroom around 3 am Doha time.

Rageh's predicament was "unforeseen, but shall we say, not unpredictable," says Anstey (personal communication, May 13, 2013). "[The newsroom] had a number of different conversations that I was involved in or briefed on ... what is the right thing to do? Hunker down, keep yourself, as it were, out of view?"

Among other ideas being considered in those conversations was calling on the services of risk management firms such as AKE and Pilgrims Group to extricate Rageh and her team. While an exact plan was being formulated, a strict routine was established, requiring the team to call Doha every 15 minutes to maintain contact.

Management finally decided that the team should stay put. "There was an evac plan in place if we needed to get them out," remembers Anstey, "and we made a decision that they hunker down and keep out of view."

In the end, Rageh and her team remained holed up inside that apartment for seven hours.

"We had no doubt that if we came out they were going to hack us, that they were going to attack us," she recalls (personal communication, April 25, 2012. "I

remember there was at one point talk of a helicopter being flown in and all sorts of crazy ideas like that because we were just cornered there. We can't get out, they're not going anywhere with their weapons."

But by 9 am the next morning Egypt time, Rageh and Doha decided that the risk had probably lessened enough to attempt escape. Plus, Rageh was conscious of further compromising the safety of the apartment's residents.

"They [the residents] were telling us, these are the election thugs. We see them, the ruling party candidates, they use them and we know them and they're going to have no mercy, they're going to kill us ... So, we were in this really precarious position where we had to balance our security with the security of these people who gave us refuge."

Abandoning the television equipment because it would only attract attention, the team made its escape.

"[W]e stepped out of the building one by one. I covered my hair. I walked out with one of the building residents, and the producer and the cameraman were going to walk out on their own ... the thugs had largely left but they left two guys behind and these two guys were, like, 'We know that you are in this building because we had been through all the other buildings and this is the only building you could've been in.' ... They didn't catch me, but they immediately identified that the producer and the cameraman were strangers. They caught them and then they shook them down for money."

Rageh distinctly remembers Doha's instructions as she walked away from the building: "We want you in the first car out of Alexandria, all of you."

CHAPTER 6: DAY OF THE CAMELS

"Every single day that I've covered this story I feel like I'm saying the same sort of words: this is unprecedented, I've never seen anything like this. But I feel those words are even more relevant today."

— Sherine Tadros, AJE correspondent

After the previous day's massive demonstrations across the country, Mubarak's inflammatory speech late in the evening, and overnight events in Alexandria and Cairo, 2 February — the ninth day of protests in Egypt — was shaping up to be huge. AJE's ability to gather and report television news, however, was now dangerously reduced — so much equipment had been confiscated, lost or abandoned that even basics like shooting and editing footage were proving difficult.

One person working in Cairo described the situation as a "disaster" from an operational perspective. Salah Negm wanted to continue capitalising on AJE's great work and reinforce the channel's presence by producing as much original material as possible on the ground, but equipment was just "spread too thin". With only one editing laptop shared between five crews, some tried to argue with management for packages to be cut in Doha from a combination of agency footage and anything original that could be sent from Cairo, but Doha wanted stories produced on the ground. The channel's coverage in terms of the spread of correspondents gathering information and expertly analysing events was still unparalleled by competitors, but it is hard to make compelling television from little more than a low-quality camera shot and a series of phone calls.

However, the team didn't dwell on these problems, instead convening in one of the hotel rooms to organise logistics for the day — Jane Dutton would report from the Hilton balcony with the live shot while Sherine Tadros, Ayman Mohyeldin, Dan Nolan, Jacky Rowland and Jamal Elshayyal hit the streets. Elshayyal and Rowland headed towards the pro-Mubarak protests that were starting to appear around the State television building, while the others spread themselves around Tahrir Square.

Meanwhile, Rawya Rageh was on her way back to Cairo from Alexandria. En route, she saw first-hand the mobilisation of pro-Mubarak citizens that was contributing to the growing sense of tension across the country.

"We took the agricultural road [from Alexandria to Cairo] which is full of towns, a lot of industrial towns that have all these factories that are run by pro-Mubarak businessmen who hire workers that are normally used in pro-Mubarak rallies," she remembers (personal communication, April 25, 2012). "So, we started seeing those pro-Mubarak rallies coming out from towns as we were driving and [they were] stopping the cars. And obviously we were freaking out … they'd stop us, but because I was covering my hair and pretending to be sickly, they would let us drive by … particularly as we approached Cairo, from these industrial towns, we started seeing these scenes of these workers or farmers who had been clearly brought out to intimidate people and chant in favour of Mubarak and stop cars and try to identify people's political affiliations."

Once in the capital, Rageh planned to go home and stay there.

"The orders from Salah and Al [Anstey] were very clear: that I needed to be taken off air," she says.

As an Egyptian national without dual nationality, Rageh faced dangers that other correspondents did not. Ayman Mohyeldin, for instance, has an American passport, Sherine Tadros and Jamal Elshayyal British passports; Dan Nolan is Australian and Jane Dutton South African. Rageh did not have the safety net of international consular support if she was taken into custody. To offset this risk, there was talk of getting her back to Doha, but Rageh was having none of it.

"I remember that even Salah had suggested I get on the first flight out of Cairo and I was like, no way, I'm not going to the airport, if I go to the airport I'm effectively handing myself in … And in fact, right after that day they [the Egyptian authorities] had started rounding up Al Jazeera Arabic people — not even reporters, but some guy who was in Egypt, I think an editor who was on holiday

and was flying back to Doha, and they just arrested him at the airport. It was clear that I definitely needed to lay low for two days so I stopped tweeting, and I remember I put out a tweet saying, 'this is going to be my last tweet for a while.'"

Sherine Tadros and a camera operator had visited Tahrir Square early that morning and sent footage of the sleepy scenes back to Doha: men are lying on sheets of dirty cardboard, some have no covering and some are wrapped head-to-toe in colourful blankets; people are eating wrapped sandwiches, hunched over to ward off the cool morning air; and a few small campfires are burning on the bitumen road, bodies huddled around for warmth.

"When you were walking around [Tahrir] and it was slightly more quiet, say the early hours and people were sleeping, you really got a sense of the resolve that people had," she remembers (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "These people are not going anywhere. They're really staying here for the long haul."

Tadros had also filmed a walk-and-talk in the centre of the Square, surrounded by makeshift tents and banners, the ground littered with sleeping bodies and rubbish.

"They braved the cold night weather and it's not much warmer now," she begins in the piece, "but everyone here says that they are not moving until President Mubarak goes, however long that takes."

A man in the background of the shot gives a V-for-victory sign with his fingers.

"And they have their supplies, they have their blankets, they have their food, their water. There aren't enough tents which means a lot of these people spent the night outside, just in the open air in this freezing cold weather."

Tadros squats down next to a youngish man who sits amongst a group of men trying to warm themselves in the rising sun.

“I want to introduce you now to Faraq because Faraq has been here since Saturday night, sleeping here every night. He’s a father of two, his youngest son is just three months old, he’s a teacher that earns just $50 a month. Now, I asked Faraq before why exactly is he here? Why has he braved this weather to be at this protest. Faraq?”

She holds the microphone out for the man and he answers in Arabic. She translates.

“He says he wants freedom, he wants justice, and he wants change to a regime that’s brought nothing for 30 years. I’m going to ask him also about Mubarak’s statement, what he thought of that.”

The question in Arabic, then the answer and translation.

“Faraq says that the point of that statement was to try to pacify the protesters here but really it’s just words and nothing has come of this 30-year regime.”

Tadros remembers that exchange with Faraq well.

“I could’ve interviewed anyone that day.” she says. “It didn’t come down to theoretical ideas of democracy and wanting to vote and my vote counting, it was much more basic. The demands of people were much more basic. That’s what we were trying to show and it was so genuine … His story was replicated all over Tahrir Square. Everybody had a story about the injustice.”

Later in the morning, Jane Dutton reports on air from the Hilton, speaking over the live shot from Tahrir Squre. The camera reveals a thin but evenly spread crowd as the sun rises higher into the sky.

“There are two important developments I can tell you about,” she begins. “State TV is reporting that they are warning people of expected violence around the protests today. They didn’t elaborate but they say that unless you have to, don’t go because it could turn violent. They are also saying that foreigners are handing

out pamphlets with anti-government, anti-President Mubarak slogans and that you have to be careful for that. This foreigner element seems to be creeping in to the broadcast, that it's not Egyptians that are behind this, but rather foreigners. And at the same time, the army has confirmed that four men that they arrested who had escaped from jails over the recent days of outbreaks are Palestinians with Hamas links, so that's a very interesting angle that the government is pushing out."

Shortly afterwards, the army issues an unprecedented statement asking people to return home.

"That's a worrying development, isn't it?" Dutton asks rhetorically on air. "The first time we've heard the army issue that warning and it follows after State TV broadcast a similar warning this morning saying that they believe there's going to be some type of violence on the streets surrounding these protests. If I can possibly draw some conclusions, it could be linked to the fact that we're seeing an increasing number of pro-Mubarak supporters on the streets."

She turns and points down to the street behind her.

"Just to the left of me there's a group of people walking towards the State television building which has been broadcasting those announcements and anti-government demonstrators. They have a bit of a verbal stand-off at the moment but we've seen that turn into violence in Alexandria. Obviously, real concerns that that is likely to happen here. At the moment, let me just tell you, some of their chants: they were saying, 'Mubarak, we don't want you to go, we don't want a change of regime,' and they were also saying, 'We'll sacrifice our blood and our soul for you.'"

The sounds of the pro-Mubarak crowd from a dozen or more stories below are clearly audible over Dutton's lapel mic.

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By early afternoon Sherine Tadros was back at the Hilton, editing a story she'd managed to shoot that morning after the walk-and-talk. Incredibly given her proximity to the story, but indicative of how tenuous communication was in the first week of the revolution, Tadros was not yet aware of the mass mobilisation of pro-Mubarak protesters. So, when she looked out the hotel window and saw a large demonstration on the road below, it took her a moment to work out what she was seeing.

"I had no idea what was happening in the news," she recalls (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "I mean, maybe people knew about it from the morning that there were going to be pro-Mubarak protests, but I didn't. But I could see that they were [carrying] pictures of Mubarak and they were pictures of Mubarak looking young [while] all the pictures of him these days [featured graffiti crosses and horns] ... So I immediately said, this is a pro-Mubarak protest and it's heading right towards Tahrir."

Tadros consulted with the Cairo executive producer and took a camera operator down to join the protest.

Evan Hill, one of AJE's web producers, was already down with the pro-Mubarak protest. Hill had arrived in Cairo four days earlier to produce content for the channel's website and was working independently from the television operation.

An American, Hill had graduated from university in 2007 with an interest in the Middle East and a developing grasp of the Arabic language. AJE was his first job with a major news organisation, and the revolution was his biggest field story to date. He'd studied in Egypt in 2005, and had been in Cairo three months prior to the revolution to cover the 2010 parliamentary elections.

After a dramatic trip from the airport and some time getting up to speed on local conditions, Hill had that morning walked across the Nile to the Mustafa Mahmoud Mosque where pro-Mubarak protesters were rallying.

"I interviewed several people and I remember at that point we were not telling anyone we were from Al Jazeera because Al Jazeera had become the centre of the conspiracy in the State media rhetoric," he recalls (personal communication, December 28, 2012). "And I remember I was talking to a young guy ... and he was very kind and I let it slip to him that I worked for Al Jazeera and he didn't care, but I think he repeated it and someone next to him heard and then everyone around us heard and so I was quickly surrounded by a group of people who were not violent, but they were yelling. And there were a couple of guys who were just screaming angrily about Al Jazeera and asking me why [we weren't filming the pro-Mubarak protests the same as we were] filming in Tahrir, and why [Al Jazeera wasn't] reporting on pro-Mubarak sympathies."

The crowd seemed quite disorganised, but after a while everyone started to move towards Tahrir Square. Hill tagged along.

"I remember walking with them and I had no idea what was going to happen. Are they going to fight? Are they going to just yell at each other? Should the army be separating them? Where are these tanks? Shouldn't there be a barricade?"

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With pictures now coming into Doha from pro- and anti-Mubarak protests, the director juxtaposes both crowds with a split screen for viewers; the anti-Mubarak crowd in Tahrir is still building, while the pro-Mubarak crowd becomes increasingly energised.

Dan Nolan calls in from Tahrir where the two groups of demonstrators are beginning to make contact.

"There is a stand-off happening right now that is right in the heart of Tahrir Square," he reports. "A few thousand supporters of President Mubarak have come marching down the street beside the Cairo museum. These rallies of pro-Mubarak supporters have been roaming through the city all morning but they've all formed together and come down in large numbers and have been met by anti-Mubarak

protesters who have been set up here for days. So, they attempted to block these pro-Mubarak people from making it all the way into Tahrir Square but they weren't able to stop that from happening so there is now a very tense stand-off right in the middle here ... There is absolutely nothing separating the two groups apart at the moment, so they are right in each other's faces — it is Egyptian on Egyptian. One side supporting President Mubarak, the other very much against him."

Hill has reached the Egyptian Museum with the pro-Mubarak protesters and is seeing the same flickers of violence as Nolan. He knows that the scene is likely to turn ugly any second.

"The crowd suddenly ran back towards me in my direction," he remembers (personal communication, December 28, 2012). "These were all the pro-Mubarak people who had been in front of me and now they were fleeing. So, I stepped to the side, stepped up on the sidewalk, and tried to figure out what was going on. Then I saw there were suddenly rocks that were falling from the sky and I'd never been in that kind of situation before ... there was this tense moment where I was, 'Huh? I don't understand what's happening right now.' And then I realised that a fight had begun and that the pro-Mubarak protesters were throwing rocks. So, everyone was running and rocks were landing, people were holding cardboard above their heads and newspaper above their heads like it was raining. I got hit in my shins a couple of times, and I was, like, okay, I should get out of here."

He moves away from the main crowd far enough to feel safer and then calls the newsdesk to do what Hill remembers as "a short and probably terrible phone interview." On air, viewers listen to Hill report over pictures of chaos on the streets.

"The situation is incredibly tense, there's rocks flying back and forth through the air, about 100 metres in front of me," he begins. "I've been hit in the leg twice now by rocks bouncing off the ground. I'm with the pro-government demonstrators, they're breaking up rocks and they're throwing them. They're searching back and forth, sometimes they retreat and sometimes they press forward. Right now

they're getting closer and closer to the Square, they're past the museum, and the rocks are just non-stop, they're flying back and forth, it's like birds in the sky there are so many."

"What sort of numbers are we talking about in terms of the pro-government supporters?" asks Sohail Rahman, who is doing another shift in front of the camera.

"Hundreds. There's definitely hundreds. I was with them when they were having a peaceful pro-government demonstration across the Nile ... and they streamed across the bridge to the foreign ministry to meet up with the demonstration there. And then it seemed that there was a collective decision that they would try to make it into Tahrir Square and I walked with them the entire way, and right as I arrived in Tahrir Square there was a sudden surge towards me, a frightened crowd of a hundred people turned and ran. I don't know who started it but the rocks started flying and it's hundreds on both sides—"

A screaming man runs past in the background, drowning out the rest of Hill's sentence.

Sherine Tadros was also with the pro-Mubarak protesters, but on a different section of the street.

"[They] were so angry and they were looking for a fight," she recalls (personal communication, January 14, 2013), "and I knew that this could not end well. And we marched with them and as we got close to the perimeter of Tahrir Square I could see that they were starting to throw rocks, you couldn't tell who started [it], I really don't know how it began, but they started throwing rocks at each other and within seconds there was this huge stampede."

Charge

"I go to the television building and start doing some phonos," recalls Jamal Elshayyal (personal communication, April 12, 2012), "and then suddenly, in the middle of it, I do a double-take — this was more bizarre than seeing the fighter jets — I'm seeing herds of camels and horses charge down towards what I'm assuming is towards Tahrir Square. I remember [telling] the guy on the newsdesk [and he replied,] 'What are you talking about? I didn't hear you, can you repeat yourself?' So, I told him [again], and he said, 'I don't understand what you mean, there's camels?' It was difficult to explain that with a straight face."

Jane Dutton was on the Hilton balcony and had a bird's-eye view.

"And then suddenly out of nowhere, the camels came through," she remembers (personal communication, May 1, 2012). "And I must say, that was one of the weirdest experiences I've ever had. It was like being transported into the medieval times. Seeing these men on camels and then those old wagons attached to the horses, flying into the crowds."

AJE's camera shot from the Hilton to Tahrir is long, but it clearly shows the animals rushing along Meret Basha Road, past the Egyptian Museum, and towards Tahrir Square. Sohail Rahman pauses in disbelief as he speaks to Dutton.

"We can see clashes between two different groups of people there," he says, "it seems some even on horseback … Jane, I think you can see the same shots we are. Who do you believe those groups of people are?"

"I think they're pro-government supporters," she replies. "Literally within the past five minutes or so, men on horseback, in carts, and on camels, have started rushing past the area that I'm in towards the anti-government demonstrators in the park there. I can't see that they're holding any weapons — they've been cracking their whips. And there are still more of them coming, tens and tens of them entering into the Square."

The director cuts to a new camera shot which gives a fantastic view straight down the street. It shows clashes between horseback riders and anti-Mubarak protesters, riders being pulled off horses, and mobs of men beating people up. The scene is chaotic, with people running in every direction and no way of telling who is who.

"You can just see there is absolute mayhem now," continues Dutton. "People scuttling off in all directions. I'm looking closer to the bridge now and you're seeing women running away from the scene … we are still seeing tens more people entering into the Square, a lot of people coming back, they're jumping over the barricades and trying to make their escape down the tiny roads just off the Square."

Dan Nolan is down near Tahrir Square and in retrospect, he says the camels and horses charging along the street was the "freakiest thing I have ever seen" (personal communication, May 23, 2012). For a better view he climbs a fence, joining a camera operator from another network, and watches the crowd part. From this position he phones into Doha.

"[T]he protesters were in each other's faces cheering and chanting at each other," Nolan reports on air. "Then, from nowhere a charge of eight people riding horses and one guy riding a camel have come charging up the street on the pro-Mubarak side and have hit the anti-government protesters who had linked arms to stop this, hit them at full force and burst through on these horses, [and] charged all the way through to Tahrir Square. I saw a cameraman get trampled by a guy riding a camel and they've continued to ride all the way through. Now, I don't know how far the horses actually got. At least two of the riders on the horses were pulled off the horses by the anti-government protesters, an absolute barrage of rocks came flying from the anti-government side to try and hit these guys on horses and camels. But some of the horses, maybe four or five of these guys made it through Tahrir Square. The anti-government protesters who've ripped some of them off their horses have now got control of those horses, as well, and then the anti-government protesters have started pushing back against the pro-Mubarak supporters."

The horses and camels are now heading back down the street away from Tahrir Square. A new low-resolution BGAN camera shot shows a mob of men beating other men trapped on the ground. Anti-Mubarak protesters overpower a horse and lead it away victoriously.

Sohail Rahman crosses to Jamal Elshayyal, who has a different view of the clashes.

"Just moments ago roughly 60 animals, horses, donkeys, camels rode past at pretty fast speeds," Elshayyal begins. "Down the main road which is on the Nile, past the Egyptian state-run television headquarters, heading towards Tahrir Square. The army didn't try and stop these people despite the huge safety hazard that they [posed], and they were accompanied by several uniformed police officers from the State security services. There are still hundreds of pro-Mubarak supporters here and I just want to read you one of the placards here. It says ..."

He reads out the Arabic before switching back to English.

"... 'Father Mubarak, Mother Suzanne,' his wife, obviously, Egypt's first lady. 'The people of Egypt are already regretful,' or, 'sorry'. And I spoke to one of the protesters here, I said, 'Why are you here today?' and he said, 'I'm here because it wouldn't be patriotic of me to allow my President to be seen weak as he was seen yesterday.' I think while Mubarak's speech yesterday might not have resonated with the hundred of thousands of anti-government protesters, if not millions, it did resonate with those that haven't been partaking in the protest who felt that regardless of whether they like him or dislike him, as an Egyptian it would be seen as unpatriotic to allow your leader to appear weak."

The director has found a new shot of the road beside the museum. It shows men running away from Tahrir holding makeshift weapons while others stand in lines and face off. Men throw rocks while others shelter their heads with jackets. Soldiers can be seen standing idly on rooftops and atop tanks, lazily waving at the protesters to disengage.

“The situation is that this will escalate,” continues Elshayyal. “There is no doubt that the crowd I’m looking at — they are maybe one demographic of the Egyptian people, they do not have that variety that the anti-Mubarak crowd has — but it is very evident that they are very rowdy, they are not well organised, and in essence they do look to be potentially extremely violent. And unless the army does take a stance there could be potentially fatal consequences right in the heart of …”

He pauses for a couple of seconds.

“… I’m just getting a call now from the people in Suez saying that a similar situation is taking place in the heart of the city where some pro-Mubarak supporters have arrived.”

Sherine Tadros and her cameraman together try to escape the stampede of protesters but became separated after, burdened with equipment, he falls under the feet of the crowd. Tadros, alone, has run into the series of side streets that branch off Tahrir Square and starts doing phonos when she can safely pause.

“The first thing I did is I went into a petrol station near the corner of Tahrir Square,” she remembers (personal communication, January 14, 2013), “and I could see what was happening and I was on the phone describing and I was right next to a car that was in the petrol station. And then in seconds, I don’t know how it happened, this car was set on fire and so I was running as this car was alight. [I] ran into someone else’s backyard and jumped over their fence and they were shouting, saying ‘Get out’ … And then for the next few hours that’s all I did, I was doing phonos from one place to another. As soon as that place got unsafe, you’d move to another place and it was mainly people’s yard[s] or apartment block [doorways].”

On screen, the pro-Mubarak protesters can be seen pulling back and regrouping, then surging forward towards the anti-Mubarak protesters. The two groups clash and mix together, making it again impossible to differentiate between them.

Sticks are being swung, rocks and stones thrown; large sheets of metal and wood have appeared and are being used as shields.

The two sides slowly form themselves into deep opposing lines, separated by no more than 50 metres of empty road. A second camera angle from Tahrir Square shows lines of prayers, a third capturing a mob engaged in hand-to-hand combat. The director mixes between all of the shots before settling on the Tahrir camera, which slowly zooms out to reveal that the lines of praying men are being protected by a cordon of protesters, arms linked to keep the Islamic worshippers safe from the clashes taking place a mere 20 metres away. The AJE live blog reports that the cordon is made up of Christians.

Rawya Rageh, now on the outskirts of Cairo, receives an urgent call from Doha telling her to not go anywhere near Tahrir Square.

"Then I went home and I switched on the TV," she remembers (personal communication, April 25, 2012), "and then I saw it all unfold and it was absolutely …"

She pauses, lost for words.

"I mean the one word to describe it was 'surreal'. It was definitely surreal."

Elshayyal has stayed with the pro-Mubarak crowd and is keeping viewers updated on their movements.

"Just a few minutes ago a group of dozens of pro-Mubarak supporters split from the main protest and directed themselves towards the hotel where the Al Jazeera crew are and started chanting, 'Where is Al Jazeera? Where is Al Jazeera?'" he reports. "They were quickly dispersed by the military … now it seems that the pro-Mubarak demonstration, because it is very poorly organised … has been split into different segments — some are outside the state-run television [station], some are on the street with the Nile on it, some are on one side of Tahrir Square. I'm looking at them now surrounding three tanks in front of me … I was speaking to

some of them, asking them, 'Where do you think these horses came from?' Some of the donkeys are used to take tourists down the Nile, and the assessment I got from some of the people was these horses were rented by pro-government factions, that the horses and riders were paid by pro-government factions. Obviously, we can't confirm this but it is one of the views that I got from the street."

The anti-Mubarak protesters have starting constructing makeshift barricades with sheets of scrap metal and other materials. An incredible close-up shot from an agency feed reveals people's faces, stress and fear clearly visible in their expressions. A man falls over after throwing a rock with all his strength and another man helps him up. One man has his jacket wrapped around his head with only a small gap for his eyes. The pro-government line advances and the anti-Mubarak demonstrators retreat, dropping the sheets of metal for a faster escape. One man falls over as he tries to turn and run, but before he can stand he is overrun by the pro-government forces. They surround him and appear to beat him with fists and weapons.

"Sohail, just in the past few minutes, 50 young men have taken off their shirts, each one wielding a stick, rock and some machetes, and started charging towards the Square," continues Elshayyal. "They were followed by hundreds of other pro-Mubarak supporters ... the call was to charge the cordon around the Square."

In Doha, Sohail Rahman is working hard to keep up with all the different pictures and correspondents coming into the newsroom, and the confusing flood of information. Even though there is so much going on, a presenter's job in such a situation is deceptively straightforward. In his trademark deadpan, Rahman says that in times like these he is a "gob on a stick," because all he can do is describe what he's seeing.

"Half the time we didn't know what was going on," he notes bluntly (personal communication, March 5, 2012). "We would listen to directors who would say, 'We're going open-ended on this, just keep with it, stay with it.' But stay with what? You know, we had images of a location where there was some disturbance

and we had to try and make sense of it. We were as much in the dark as were the program editors, as were the directors, as were the cameramen on location. Because those people fighting each other didn't have labels on their T-shirts saying I support Mubarak so you're trying to make sense of who's fighting who and why."

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The sudden outbreak in violence seems to have taken the army by surprise. Soldiers can be seen running frantically around the grounds of the Egyptian Museum, which they've turned into a field base. Loud bangs can be heard intermittently in the background, although nobody is sure whether they are caused by gunfire, tear gas or something else.

During the afternoon, State security again visits the Hilton and moves from room to room, systematically confiscating yet more television equipment.

On air, Jamal Elshayyal continues to report from the centre of the clashes.

"Three army vehicles have been taken over by the pro-Mubarak supporters," he begins, his tone elevated by adrenaline. "They've literally smashed the windows of the vehicles — they're not armoured tanks, they're just army carriers — they've been taken over. They're now driving them and they are filled with pro-Mubarak people, and they are now trying to drive them ... there are thousands of people running towards me ... these vehicles are now in the possession of the pro-Mubarak activists who are trying to turn them around and drive them towards the other side of the Square."

"You say there is no sign of the security personnel that either were using them or guarding them?" asks Sohail Rahman.

"None whatsoever. Where I'm standing there are no soldiers. I can see them on the other side of the Egyptian Museum fence, guarding the inside, but where I'm standing right now there are three armoured vehicles that have been taken. There

are people now breaking rocks, people with sticks, machetes ... the words coming from them are extremely violent ... okay, the truck is moving towards the anti-Mubarak campaigners, they are driving these trucks towards them to try and disperse the crowd ... there are now hundreds of rocks flying in both directions and the army's just standing by."

Viewers get a brief glimpse of one of the trucks as it passes through a shot. Another camera angle reveals two trucks that have been parked across the street as a sort of barrier. The line of pro-Mubarak protesters draws back level with the truck.

Sherine Tadros has taken shelter in the front garden of a house as battle rages on the street before her. The violence forces her to abort a phono mid-sentence.

"I'm sorry ... I have to ... the clashes are right in front of me ..."

When she calls back shortly afterwards, both sides are preparing to resume their fighting.

"It's all happening right now in front of me," she says. "I can see hundreds of anti-government supporters as far as the eye can see, coming towards this area. There are already 200 pro-Mubarak supporters here. Now, there's an area in the middle where the clashes are taking place, they're throwing rocks at each other ... this is gearing up to be a huge clash right in front of me as these hundreds of people will soon be clashing with the Mubarak supporters."

A tank tries to position itself between two groups but fails. Some men are trying to set fire to a large building.

The three stolen army trucks have now been positioned together so they form a more substantial single barricade. But even with the aid of the trucks, the anti-Mubarak protesters' line has advanced beyond them and overwhelmed the pro-Mubarak forces. A group of pro-Mubarak demonstrators drag an injured comrade back to their line as they regroup and begin once again to take on the

anti-Mubarak protesters. Large sheets of metal are being lifted onto the trucks to serve as barricades for those in the trays.

Tear gas is being fired into the crowds at some locations around the conflict frontline and a massive cloud of white smoke is rising behind buildings around Tahrir. Curfew is due to begin in ten minutes, although it seems certain to have no effect.

The anti-Mubarak protesters have retreated, and the pro-Mubarak supporters have moved up to army trucks and broken through the line. Some men have climbed to the top of tall apartment buildings along the streets where battles are taking place and are throwing rocks and other projectiles at their opponents below.

Dan Nolan reports on air that those atop the buildings are pro-Mubarak protesters.

"What has happened is that this flurry of pro-government supporters have got up there armed with a lot of rocks, a huge amount, and have thrown them down very quickly," he says. "Now, that has changed the balance of this battle. It was somewhat of a face-off down the bottom because people could only throw a rock so far, but now [they] have the higher ground."

The anti-Mubarak protesters mount a charge against their enemies and overrun the trucks with ease. The battle continues to ebb and flow too fast for any observer to properly keep up with it.

In the course of his reporting, Elshayyal has attracted unwanted attention from pro-Mubarak protesters, probably due to his speaking in English. Some of them have realised he is a journalist and have challenged him in the middle of a phono. The mobile phone is live to hundreds of thousands of viewers around the world, so Elshayyal decides to use this as insurance.

“I want you to hear this,” he says into the phone on air, before holding it up so the protesters know people are listening. Then, without skipping a beat, Elshayyal continues reporting.

“… several attempts by the pro-Mubarak protesters to try and force some sort of resurgent attack on the Square. So far, the three attempts previous have failed, all that it has resulted in has been huge chants from them directed against the anti-government protesters, an increase in rock throwing, but they’ve been comprehensively pushed back by the anti-government protesters.”

The strategy hasn’t worked, however, and the pro-Mubarak protesters are about to give him a “very good beating,” but luck is on his side.

“Thankfully, again, by chance, the army shot up in the air,” he remembers. “I guess it was the first shots that the army had shot in the air. I later found out that they did that because people were trying to converge on their tanks, so they shot in the air to disperse the crowd. Those shots in the air caused chaos, which ended up causing a stampede. So, me and the people who had surrounded me to beat me up were thrown onto the ground as everyone started running over us. That chaos gave me a chance to escape.”

The long night

After hours of non-stop fighting on the streets of central Cairo, the battle between pro- and anti-Mubarak demonstrators shows no sign of slowing. What began as ad hoc hand-to-hand clashes has now evolved into the use of more advanced weapons and strategy by both sides. Protesters on rooftops are throwing rocks, satellite dishes and petrol bombs at those on the streets below; the effect of falling flames against the darkening sky makes the television footage all the more dramatic. White smoke rises from the front of the Egyptian Museum.

People have fashioned makeshift helmets to ward off the endless barrage of rocks — one man wears a bright orange traffic cone on his head. A camera shot shows

protesters sitting down in a circle, smashing the road surface into small projectiles, collecting the small rocks on blankets for ease of carrying. Barricades are slowly taking shape at an entrance to Tahrir Square, constructed from corrugated iron sheets and other detritus taken from nearby construction sites.

Jamal Elshayyal has withdrawn slightly from the worst of the fighting and approaches a group of soldiers. He asks if they have any intention to step in and quell the violence, but they respond that no such orders have arrived. Evan Hill reports from the heart of Tahrir that the crowd of anti-Mubarak protesters is trapped due to every exit from the Square being blocked.

Ban Ki-Moon addresses the world from UN headquarters in New York City. "I'm deeply concerned at the continuing violence in Egypt," he says. "I once again urge restraint to all the sides. This is very much an unacceptable situation that is happening. Any attack against the peaceful demonstrators is unacceptable and I strongly condemn it."

Sherine Tadros is still wandering the streets around Tahrir Square, trying to stay safe and report on the running battles. Eventually, she decides that she needs to seek shelter.

"I knocked on someone's door and I said to them, 'Can I please just come in for a little while, just an hour or two?' And they said, 'Yeah, that's fine, come in, we're having dinner,'" she recalls (personal communication, January 14, 2013).

The family that takes her in is watching Egyptian State Television and making comments that indicate they might not be terribly supportive of the revolutionaries. Tadros notes this and makes sure to give them no reason to be suspicious of her. But circumstance intervenes.

"I'm sitting there eating with the family and of course I'm not telling them I'm a journalist, let alone that I work for Al Jazeera … And then some guy, a young guy, must've been in his early 20s, and he wasn't even a family member, he was a friend of a family member, he came in and he said, 'You're Sherine Tadros from

Al Jazeera.' And I said, 'No, of course not.' And he said, 'Yes, I recognise you from Gaza and you're the correspondent who was in Gaza.'"

She tries over and over again to convince the young man that he is mistaken, but he won't relent. The situation begins to look less safe.

"You could see in the room people starting to look at each other and I thought, what are they going to do to me? So, as I'm talking to this guy I tell him, 'Let's just go out and discuss this outside.' I get up and I run down the stairs and I just run away from that house because you can't guarantee at that point what they're going to do to you, even if you're female and Egyptian and whatever. You work for Al Jazeera, they're going to think they're doing a national duty by at least arresting you or handing you to the police or the army."

During the afternoon, Dan Nolan had also become separated from his colleagues and now found himself in the middle of Tahrir Square with no way out. He was in constant contact with the team back at the Hilton and was advised against attempting an exit. Nolan wasn't particularly pleased with himself.

"[I did] everything you're trained to avoid as a journalist and found myself stuck in a dangerous situation with no exit stategy," he says now (personal communication, May 23, 2012).

Elshayyal and Ayman Mohyeldin both suggested to Nolan that he head for the Tahrir Square mosque, which had been transformed into a makeshift field hospital, and seek shelter. Elshayyal wanted to go in to Tahrir to get Nolan straight away but it was deemed too dangerous. The plan was to wait it out until the morning.

Nolan was taken in and offered protection by the mosque, and spent a long and harrowing night there. He was clearly a foreigner and couldn't properly explain himself to those inside in case word got out that an Al Jazeera journalist was in the Square.

“There were about 300 people in there being treated, mostly head and limb injuries from flying projectiles,” he remembers (personal communication, May 23, 2012). “The sounds of fighting waxed and waned during the night as the line of fighting approached and receded. The shouts of Allahu akbar would get really intense.”

Nolan kept in touch with his wife throughout the night via text message, and found himself experiencing sympathy for the anti-Mubarak demonstrators in the early morning hours.

“There was an element of Stockholm syndrome,” he admits on reflection. “I felt bad sitting there and not helping as people out there were fighting to keep attackers away from the mosque. I wanted to get out there and help them.”

The live camera from the Hilton balcony shows green laser lights being pointed by each group of protesters at the other to try to blind them. An ambulance is inching its way into Tahrir through the crowds. Gunshots echo around the streets as black smoke rises from the scene of earlier clashes. Petrol bombs continue to drop from rooftops onto the streets below. There are reports of pro-Mubarak supporters putting on balaclavas in preparation for something. The three army vehicles that had earlier been stolen and used as barricades have now been set ablaze.

Video shot with a small consumer Flip camera during the initial clashes has been fed back to Doha and the director now plays it out for the first time. Recorded in the middle of a stampeding crowd, it shows compelling glimpses of protesters’ faces etched with anger and fear, a man shielding his head with a large cardboard poster of Hosni Mubarak, and the sheer desperation of demonstrators as they run away from the sudden explosion of violence. The camera operator is nearly thrown to the ground and obviously has to fight to avoid getting trampled.

The Egyptian Ministry of Health officially announces 1 dead and 403 injured, and later updates the figures to 3 and 1500, although the real figures are likely higher.

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After heading back to the Hilton earlier that afternoon, Evan Hill has spent the rest of the day filing material for the website and tweeting reports to his growing list of followers. Around midnight, watching the battle rage on and on outside his window, Hill starts feeling restless and considers getting back out there.

"This is the definitive moment when they're [pro-Mubarak protesters] either going to overrun the Square or not," he remembers thinking (personal communication, December 28, 2012), "and if they don't overrun the Square then basically these people [anti-Mubarak protesters] are going to stay here until Mubarak falls, and if they do overrun the Square then it's going to be this bloody disaster. So, I left the hotel and snuck off down the Corniche and went in [to Tahrir] ... through a barricade and showed them my ID and they let me in because they wanted coverage."

The scene inside the Square is confronting.

"A couple of guys were brought back [from the front line of fighting] bleeding and doctors said they had been shot. In the middle of the Square it was really empty because most of the people had tried to leave because they thought it was too dangerous, and [some of those who stayed] were sleeping or praying. There was this sense that they could get overrun tonight and they might all die. At the time it was pretty scary."

Hill walks around talking to people and taking photos with an SLR camera, finding a makeshift prison where the anti-Mubarak protesters are keeping captured pro-Mubarak opponents. He slowly makes his way to the frontline of the battle and takes shelter behind one of the barricades.

"I was crouched down behind the metal barricades near the Egyptian Museum and there were rocks clanging off the barricades and guys were crouched behind it like it was World War I. And dudes were walking behind the lines with buckets of water offering water to people."

After he makes contact with the newsdesk, presenter Veronica Pedrosa interviews Hill on air.

"I'm crouched here on the barricades between the anti-government protesters and the pro-government protesters, watching them throw rocks and Molotov cocktails right in front of me," he begins. "They don't seem to be very afraid of the pro-Mubarak crowd anymore, they've driven them back again and again. They're walking around picking up the debris that literally covers the entire ground here, right near the museum, it's full of rocks, and they're flinging them, the air is full of them along with Molotov cocktails that are just being exchanged back and forth."

"We've been hearing reports from our sister channel Al Jazeera Arabic that witnesses are saying they've seen live gunfire. Have you seen any of that in Tahrir Square?" asks Pedrosa.

"It's possible that there was gunfire in other parts of the Square but where I am, which I believe is where the fiercest clashes are, here near the museum, I see no gunfire, no gunfire from the pro-Mubarak side, none from the anti-Mubarak side. However, there are some government vehicles here, like an armoured personnel carrier that's pretty close to about 75 metres away, and I believe it has fired in the air and some others have before to disperse the pro-Mubarak crowd."

"Have you seen people being injured, deaths?"

"Yes, I've certainly seen people being injured. I haven't seen with my own eyes anyone being seriously injured. I've seen people take rocks in the arms and the legs … a lot of people here have bandages around their heads, blood on their shirts. The number of people here with bandages on their heads is probably around 25 per cent."

After leaving the anti-revolutionaries' apartment, Sherine Tadros spends another hour moving around on the streets, trying to stay out of sight. With bands of men

roaming the city it is an extremely unsafe environment and she is becoming increasingly worried about where she will spend the remainder of the night. Tadros stops for a rest and is approached by a man who has come down from his apartment. He invites her upstairs, reassuring her that he has a wife and kids and is not intending to cause harm. She accepts the offer because she "had no choice by that point."

Once upstairs, Tadros can tell that this is a poor family.

"They offered me something to eat even though they had nothing," she recalls (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "They had literally the last scraps of bread and cheese ... I actually ended up spending that night in their balcony because it was a very small apartment — they were sleeping all on one bed."

But she does not sleep that night. Instead, she continues to report from the apartment's balcony, from which there is a good view of the fighting.

The hour or two before dawn make for chilling television viewing. Regular bursts of automatic gunfire echo around the centre of Cairo, while fires on the streets and between buildings continue to burn. AJE's cameras catch images of unconscious men being roughly dragged by the legs away from hotspots, the nature of their injuries unknown. The barricaded front lines of the battle resemble a bona fide war zone. Wires from the Reuters agency quote witnesses' claims that pro-Mubarak supporters have opened fire at demonstrators in Tahrir, wounding seven. The agency later reports one person dead.

At around 4am, Evan Hill starts to make his way out of Tahrir the same way he came in. After his on-air interview he'd seen a man being carried back from the frontline who appeared to have died from a gunshot wound. Hill had also heard the volleys of automatic gunfire echoing around the city, although he couldn't be sure of where it was coming from.

At the checkpoint, a soldier who clearly doesn't understand digital technology asks to see his camera. Thinking ahead, Hill has already taken out the SD card and tucked it inside his knitted hat.

"[The soldier] asked for my film. I said, 'There's no film, it's a digital camera.' He said, 'No, where's the film?' I said, 'It's digital and I haven't been taking any pictures.' He wasn't one of these evil guys who wanted to arrest me or anything, he was just this bewildered young soldier who was manning the checkpoint. And eventually he settled for taking the battery out of the camera and then he let me go and I went back to the hotel." (personal communication, December 28, 2012)

Nobody on the AJE team slept properly that night, even if there was nothing they could contribute in terms of reporting or support. Jane Dutton remembers finishing up on air late that night but being unable to settle for sleep.

"When I'd finish my shift, I just loitered in my room, or loitered with somebody else who was doing their bit," she remembers (personal communication, May 1, 2012). "You kind of felt that you didn't want to go back to your room or you didn't want to come down off duty. I went between the restaurant and the room where the central command [was] … you just heard, boom, boom, bang, all these noises of fighting happening. And you'd look out of the window and it would be like watching a movie; you'd look out of the window and you'd see tanks moving and rocks and barricades."

As the first hints of dawn light the sky, Sherine Tadros reports on air from the apartment balcony where she's spent the night.

"I'm just one street back from Tahrir Square and just in the last 20 minutes I can hear increasing sounds of gunfire," she says. "The really chilling sounds of people screaming, shouting; ambulances as well in the last 10 minutes or so. Because they have just started the morning prayers in the last few seconds I can't hear anything right now but really it's the only moments of silence that we've had in the last half hour and really it's been a very, very difficult night for everyone in

this area and in the surrounding areas. It’s been almost continuous, these sounds of explosion, gunfire."

CHAPTER 7: DAY OF DEPARTURE

"And so started the beginning of the end of my time at AJE."
— Dan Nolan, AJE correspondent (personal communication, May 23, 2012)

The camera zooms out slowly from the detritus-strewn battle frontline to reveal a sky tinted faint blue, wrapped around the outline of Cairo's suburbs. The operator is adjusting to the brightening conditions live on air, changing filters and shifting white balance.

Burning cars smoulder on the street and go ignored by the last, lingering groups of protesters who continue to throw rocks back and forth. A group of men stand on the roof of a burnt-out minibus behind their barricade, watching soldiers lead protesters away to checkpoints. One of those arrested is wearing a bloody bandage wrapped around his head. Witnesses are reporting at least five dead overnight. It's Thursday 3 February; day ten of the revolution.

Jane Dutton watches from the Hilton balcony as reports arrive of more demonstrators heading into Cairo as reinforcements.

"On the streets right now the army seems to be moving, putting some sort of strategy in place, the tanks are starting to move," she reports on air. "I'm also looking at a group of soldiers, there must be about 15 of them, they put on their helmets, they put on their bullet-proof tops, they've all got sacks on their backs which are full, they're all carrying guns, they're all getting a briefing from one of their superiors, so clearly they are preparing for something. If these busloads of anti- and pro-government demonstrators are indeed heading towards Cairo I think we can expect another day of rage, another bloody day."

Sherine Tadros was watching the sun rise from the balcony of her hosts' apartment.

“Throughout the night I just got increasingly depressed for the country because these are scenes I’d only really seen in Lebanon,” she remembers (personal communication, January 14, 2013). “To see the country being ripped apart like this, Egyptian-on-Egyptian fighting. I felt like the revolution was over, to be honest. I really didn’t think it was going to survive.”

After a long and draining 24 hours, she was at the end of her tether.

“I called Ayman [Mohyeldin] and I said to him, ‘Please, can someone come and get me?’ By this point the army [was] still not letting me go and there’s no-one out on the street and I couldn’t leave and I just wanted to go home. I was so tired and hungry and needed to go home.”

Having waited all night to retrieve Dan Nolan from the mosque in which he’d taken shelter, Jamal Elshayyal made his way into Tahrir via the single rear entrance that was secure enough to navigate. Once inside, Nolan was easy to find and the pair made their way back out of the Square.

“I’ll never forget what Dan told me, and this will give you an idea of … what it meant for me as an Egyptian,” recalls Elshayyal (personal communication, April 12, 2012). “Dan said to me, ‘The things that I saw in the mosque in terms of the injured people, and people were coming in with their eyes out and shit like that. It took a lot for me to keep myself in the mosque and not go and join these people.’ And that resonated with me a lot, in that [Dan’s] Australian at the end of the day, this is the first or second time [he’s] ever come to this country, [he has] no ties here. What about someone who does?”

After getting Nolan back to safety, Elshayyal joined up with Ayman Mohyeldin and they followed Tadros’ directions to the apartment. They found her safe and well, but someone had chained and locked all of the doors and gates leading into the building and it took some time to find the keys. Tadros thought of the petrol bombs that had been flying around all night and breathed a sigh of relief that she had not ended up stuck inside a fire trap.

As soon as he could, Elshayyal went back into Tahrir to start filing updates. His impressions of the scenes inside the Square were similar to Evan Hill's through the night.

"I'm actually in the middle of Tahrir Square, of Liberation Square, and this is a scene of a battlefield," he reports on air via phone. "There is no other way to describe it. There are still many injured people here, the faces I'm looking at are of sheer exhaustion, of fear, of panic. I've spoken to two doctors or makeshift doctors, one of them is a university professor at the medical college here in Cairo, and the other is a pharmacist, and they tell me they've counted seven dead bodies yesterday. Having said that, despite the fact that these people have endured what can only be described as one of the most violent scenes that Cairo has witnessed in recent years, there is still huge resistance here, the chants are still going ... a man is walking towards me now, his entire garments are bloodstained, the man next to him has some sort of eyepatch covering his eye. It's really difficult to look around without seeing someone with some sort of injury or some sort of bloodstain on their clothes."

One of the things Elshayyal remembers vividly from that morning is the "smell of death" (personal communication, April 12, 2012). The atmosphere in the Square stood in stark contrast to when it played host to the Million Man March three days earlier.

"[The Million Man March] was one of the most joyous events I had covered," he says now. "[It was] still etched in my head, I still hadn't absorbed that because it was such a massive deal. And then suddenly to see this, it was so strange and a massive contrast. Millions of people had come out on the street singing, chanting, smiling, laughing, and then those same people — and bear in mind, so many of them women or young people or old people — two days after, it's essentially a war zone. That was one of the more difficult things to relay on the phone because you really had to see what was going on. What helped was there was a group of people who were just keeping the momentum up — I'm talking about 50 people who were just marching around Tahrir Square from the centre, and they were singing, like, revolutionary songs, nationalistic songs, so I just started translating some of the

chants that they were saying. And that was the first time I'd heard the chants of, 'The people demand the execution of the President.' I used that to give an idea of the magnitude and the feeling of what many people were feeling."

Mohyeldin is also back in Tahrir now, slowly making his way through the crowd to his live camera position. On his walk through the Square, while doing an on-air phono, he witnesses a group of anti-Mubarak protesters confronting a pro-Mubarak demonstrator.

"They've actually grabbed someone who's a pro-Mubarak supporter and they are bringing him right here in front of me," he reports. "I can see him being hit by some of the people ... I can see a group of about ten or 15 people beating this one man who seems to have got inside and seems to be a pro-Mubarak supporter. I don't understand why."

He pauses and approaches some bystanders to ask what's going on.

"There is somebody here who they are saying is a pro-government, pro-Mubarak supporter who managed to get inside ... A group of people started to beat him but a group of other people tried to take him out of the little scrum and move him to one of the exits to throw him out of Tahrir Square. As that happened, the people around started saying, 'People, people!' They want this to be a people's protest. The army's trying to calm people right now."

Another long pause as Mohyeldin lets viewers listen to the crowd chanting Allahu akbar.

"You can probably hear the protesters," he says. The protesters are trying to take this one person out ... He doesn't seem to be too badly injured."

Doha has now received copies of the photographs that Evan Hill smuggled out of Tahrir in the early hours of that morning. Kamahl Santamaria is back on air and he interviews Hill about his overnight experiences while the director cycles through some of the best shots. The images are yellow-tinted from the sparse

street lighting and have that ghostly look of photos taken in a fast-moving and pressured situation. The photos show people squatting on the road and chipping away at it for small projectiles, protesters hoisting sheets of metal to form barricades, a man looking up at the camera with blood streaming down his face from a wound on his head, another man being roughly held down by a group, and urgent prayers offered on makeshift mats of broken posters and waste cardboard.

Santamaria next interviews a journalist from the state-owned Nile Television channel.

"I've been told on the line is Shahira Amin," he begins. "She is a senior reporter from Nile Television who I believe has just resigned, saying she will no longer participate in what is going on in State media. Shahira, talk to me. What have you done?"

"I'm here in Tahrir Square and I'm determined to be on the side of the people, not the regime and that's why I'm here," replies Amin.

"And you've resigned from Nile Television?"

"I walked out yesterday, I can't be part of the propaganda machine. I'm not going to feed the public lies."

"So, tell us about that. I'm really interested to get an idea of the propaganda, as you call it, from the inside."

"Well, what's happening right now is that they're just showing the Mubarak loyalists, calling them the Egyptians, and that they are in support of President Mubarak. I mean that's what we've been showing all day on Egyptian television. We're not showing what's happening in Tahrir Square. People are dying here, the clashes yesterday, we don't have the right figures, everything is distorted."

Meanwhile, Sherine Tadros has made it back safely to the Hilton Hotel. She goes straight to the restaurant where many of the guests are taking breakfast and runs

into a friend who works for Reuters. The friend takes one look at Tadros' state and offers her a room key so she can use the shower and bed. Within the hour, she is clean and asleep for the first time in well over 24 hours.

On AJE, viewers are learning about reports of gunfire near Tahrir Square and yet more troop carriers unloading soldiers onto the streets. A strap at the bottom of the screen reads "TWO AL JAZEERA JOURNALISTS ATTACKED BY THUGS." (Correspondent Andrew Simmons and a producer were waylaid and beaten en route from the airport.)

The day passes without major incident, although the atmosphere of tension grows. At around 4pm local time, the channel's live camera shot from the Hilton disappears, replaced by poor quality agency feeds and replays of earlier footage. No explanation is given on air. Shortly afterwards, Jamal Elshayyal does a phono as he makes his way out of Tahrir. "I just left the Square moments ago and there were definitely numbers of people who were coming to bolster the pro-democracy campaigners there," he reports. "Now, unfortunately, things have become extremely dangerous for us as journalists, particularly Al Jazeera, to be present on the streets of Cairo with the military, with secret services, violent thugs looking [for] and trying to attack journalists and journalists being attacked."

Evacuated

What happened next is difficult to piece together due to several conflicting accounts. What is clear, however, is that it took place very quickly in an atmosphere of extreme stress, fear and confusion, and in what one person present called a "vacuum of communication".

As Jamal Elshayyal exited Tahrir Square due to the sense of growing hostility, those at the Hilton Hotel began feeling the same pressure — an aggressive anti-Al Jazeera protest was taking place out front, the military post nearby had been abandoned, and hotel security appeared to have evaporated. Some hotel staff were saying they'd been given permission to go home and others suggested that

it would be better for everyone if the journalists checked out and left. Some news organisations had already moved from the Hilton or were making preparations to go. Dan Nolan spoke to another Australian journalist at the hotel whose security consultant had come to the conclusion that the hotel wasn't safe and it was time to evacuate. A senior member of the AJE team was witnessed by his colleagues unilaterally evacuating the hotel. They later learned that he had been the target of a specific threat, however this threat had not been extensively communicated, meaning that many misinterpreted his departure.

Nolan, Jane Dutton and other AJE staff retreated from common areas to their rooms for safety, even though those rooms — by now raided several times each — were widely known as belonging to Al Jazeera. They turned out the lights and pushed furniture up against the door for extra security, and devised contingency plans for escaping through the window if required.

A producer used one of her contacts to organise Egyptian military transport from the Hilton to another hotel just across the river in Zamalek. The military's offer of assistance would only stand for a short period of time so the team faced a tough and time-critical decision: accept military transport to a new hotel a safe distance from the protests, or decline the ride and continue taking their chances at the Hilton. The team spoke to Doha and managers there made their opinion clear: stay where you are. But one person on the ground wasn't satisfied with Doha's assurances.

"We didn't feel as though we were getting the sort of support from Doha that we should've," this person says. "To be told that, 'Don't worry, you'll be looked after, go and speak to the security at the hotel,' — I was like, 'There is no security at the hotel. Where is it?'"

"A number of conversations [were taking place in Doha]," says Managing Director Al Anstey (personal communication, May 13, 2013). "There was quite a lot of prep for that [situation] … that was one of the things we legislated for, including talking to hotel security, to the various embassy securities, to get a full picture of exactly what defences there were for that particular location, and also what evacuation

options there were should we need to evacuate. We'd also talked to all the other broadcasters. We were all in the same boat at that particular location. The decision was taken not to move people out into the thick of it, at the beginning of the scenario."

The Hilton's location ensured line-of-sight camera angles to Tahrir Square and naked-eye views of the main scenes of protest and battle. Staying at the Hilton made excellent sense in terms of television and newsgathering, and would strengthen AJE's competitive advantage while other networks moved away. But some of the team in Cairo had had enough of what they felt were unacceptable safety risks amid a growing climate of uncertainty. As two armoured personnel carriers arrived at the hotel, some of the AJE team decided to evacuate.

On the way through the hotel foyer towards the door, Nolan was called by one of his managers, who requested again that he and the others stay at the Hilton. Nolan says he asked for one good reason, and the request to stay became an order. This was unacceptable, according to Nolan. "The team on the ground has the final say. It's the golden rule," he says (personal communication, May 23, 2012).

They loaded their luggage onto the roofs of the army vehicles and drove away from the Hilton, noticing that the streets were now mostly deserted, in contrast to the masses of violent protests less than an hour earlier. It was a short 1.5-kilometre drive to the Marriott hotel in Zamalek, where they checked in and found dozens of journalists from other networks working away in relative safety.

Sherine Tadros had been napping in her friend's room all afternoon, oblivious to this drama. Unable to find any of her AJE colleagues upon waking, she called one of them and discovered they were in the process of evacuating.

"I went downstairs to see what was happening and I could see them driving away in this APC [armoured personnel carrier]," she remembers (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "Everyone was telling me, 'Oh my God, the Al Jazeera crew just all left in this APC.' And I called the newsdesk and I spoke to Heather Allan and she told me, 'No, just stay put for now, we don't completely

understand what's happening in terms of this evacuation.' Salah and [Allan] just wanted me to stay put in the hotel."

Heather Allan's recollection of the incident is that AJE was asked to leave. "The press were asked to leave the Ramses Hilton at a certain point, I think," she says (personal communication, January 23, 2012). "I think they were worried about their whole hotel at that point."

Clearly, some of these accounts differ. Regardless of the truth of the matter, it is handy to remember the context in which the situation took place.

It was day ten of the revolution and everyone, in both Egypt and Doha, was beyond exhausted. Dan Nolan had barely slept for well over 24 hours after spending the night in Tahrir, and nobody else in Cairo was doing much better. In the six days since the Day of Rage, most of the team on the ground had been detained at least once, the bureau had been shut down, their hotel rooms had been raided, they had watched nervously as Rawya Rageh escaped a machete-wielding mob in Alexandria, and everybody had been working at or beyond capacity for days in the most trying circumstances imaginable.

For the previous 24 hours especially, the threat against all journalists in Egypt and central Cairo had been growing. There had been constant reports of journalists from many countries and outlets being attacked. AJE's own live blog reported that afternoon:

> **3:00pm**: Man with camera who was wearing a blue "PRESS" vest just being beaten on the street. The army had to step in and fire shots in the air to disperse the crowd, and the man was led away.
>
> **3:12pm**: Security forces order all journalist and reporters in and around Tahrir Square, as well as hotels overlooking it, to leave the area now. (Al Jazeera English, 2011)

Al Jazeera journalists were being specifically hunted by pro-Mubarak protesters. CNN's Anderson Cooper had been famously mobbed and beaten the previous day after being misidentified as an Al Jazeera reporter. Another journalist later tweeted:

> **@allawati**: Protesters are hunting down Al Jazeera journos. I keep having to clarify that I'm not one of them (Al Lawati, 2011)

"I was not a part of this conversation [to decide to evacuate]," says Sherine Tadros (personal communication, January 14, 2013), "but I can tell you that that night was a very difficult night on the back of a very difficult week, and I think it was the last straw for a lot of people because it was getting out of hand. You didn't know where it was going, it was so unsafe. We didn't have a plan. We as a channel didn't seem to know — certainly us on the ground didn't really feel like we had a plan for what we were doing ... I think that when people went there was an element of tiredness and confusion and fear because we really were in territory that we didn't understand. But also ... panic spreads very fast in those situations where one person says, 'We need to get out of here, the Ramses Hilton isn't safe,' and then suddenly it just goes around to everyone, 'Yeah, we have to go.' And everyone just ramps themselves up into 'we have to go.' And the source of the panic isn't ever really looked at in a very clear way ... I'm telling you it was so confusing. Most of the time you didn't even know who was in the country from Al Jazeera. I've never experienced anything like that ... where you felt like you had no idea what was going on on the ground."

Jamal Elshayyal, also not present at the hotel at the time, says he can understand how the team was feeling, even if he didn't share that feeling.

"Although I saw the danger, I did feel it at times but I didn't feel it as much as others did," he says (personal communication, April 12, 2012). "And therefore, my assessment of how the situation was being handled at the time was flawed, very simply, because you can't get someone who's less frightened than someone else and ask them, do you think enough is being done for the person who is frightened? But obviously there was panic and there was a sense of unease, and I

think it's fair to say it wasn't dealt with with everyone being happy, with everyone being satisfied."

Dan Nolan says he emailed Doha management as soon as he was set up at the Marriott to open a calmer dialogue after the disagreement, but never received a reply (personal communication, May 23, 2012). Some people who were in Doha at the time claim that senior managers were visibly furious with the team's decision to relocate.

"I think that there were differences of opinion ... In fact, I know that there were differences of opinion about different decisions that could be made," says Anstey (personal communication, May 13, 2013), rejecting a suggestion that there was antagonism between some members of the AJE team. "I think [communication] broke down at a very immediate level ... In a matter of minutes there were some decisions taken by people close to an exit to go for an exit, when actually there were people within, literally within a matter of yards away, in the same hotel at the same time, who had a much clearer picture about what other elements of precautionary measures had been taken."

He reiterates that the channel was working on plans and that management in Doha and senior figures on the ground in Cairo were fully briefed, but concedes that information did not properly "cascade" down the chain.

"It's especially critical when you've got something as fast-moving, as dangerous, as changeable as this, that the communication is absolutely seamless so there's a clear understanding amongst everybody at the sharp end what the considerations are elsewhere and what the full picture is. And I think that was an important lesson learned, and ultimately, thankfully, everyone evacuated that hotel safely, a number of them stayed behind, stayed in the hotel, and some people moved out afterwards."

*****

AJE's coverage for the rest of the day was more subdued than normal. Ayman Mohyeldin reported from Tahrir but the channel's lack of pictures greatly affected its product. As usual, no big deal was made on air of the challenges faced by staff on the ground in Egypt. But as night fell, presenter Adrian Finighan made passing mention as the quality of video feeds started to degrade.

"Just before we move on I want to just say something about the pictures you're seeing on the screen," he says. "As you can see in the top right there it says these pictures were filmed earlier. As you know, we're working under incredibly difficult circumstances at the moment. A lot of our equipment has been confiscated. The pictures we're able to provide you are coming largely via internet satellite and as soon as it becomes night, obviously the picture quality degrades even more so it's very difficult to show you live pictures once the sun has gone down, once darkness has fallen on the capital, which is why we keep playing you these pictures from earlier. But all the voices that you're hearing from the streets of Cairo, they're all live, they're down there, they're amongst the protesters, they're amidst the news as it breaks."

Just after midnight, a rough package of pictures from the previous night's violence plays out, cut to a voice track recorded by Dan Nolan in which he describes his experience in Tahrir Square. He had recorded the voiceover soon after returning from Tahrir, and it sounds rough, rushed and semi-scripted. Exhausted and strung-out after his night in the Square, Nolan says it was probably more "raw and emotive" than he would normally like but it accurately reflected his experiences.

> The scenes I witnessed over the past 24 hours can really only be described as one thing: it's like a civil war. This is Egyptian on Egyptian, in hand-to-hand combat of the most intense nature. I was down in Tahrir Square when these clashes broke out and I watched them intensify as the afternoon went on. But as the sun began to set I tried to get out of Tahrir Square but at this point all the roads were blocked by pro-Mubarak supporters.

There was no way I could safely get out of the Square. So, I've had to stay in there for the night and some of the anti-government protesters took me in and gave me shelter to look after me for the evening.

These are educated men — pharmacists, university lecturers. At least 50 men with bloodied bandages around their head from the battles that had taken place. And they'd come in to the shelter and rest for a few hours and then go back out to defend the lines and stop the pro-Mubarak supporters from taking over Tahrir Square. And I spoke to many of these men and I asked them what the message is that they wanted to get out to the world, and they said that they want everybody to know that they're not terrorists, but that they are suffering from state-sponsored terrorism. You can see etched in their faces the struggle for freedom that is taking place. But you can also see a hint of terror, of fear, that the taste of freedom that they got two days ago may be all that they're going to get.

One of the men asked me if President Obama saw their peaceful rally when a million people came out into the same square, peacefully calling for a new government, and I said 'Yes he did, because he spoke about it.' And he asked, what would President Obama be making of the scenes he's seeing in Cairo now?

The protesters still have control of Liberation Square but they are very much under siege and the question now is, who is going to liberate them?

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The next morning, Friday 4 February, a day the revolutionaries were calling a Day of Departure for President Hosni Mubarak, management recalled Dan Nolan, Jane Dutton, and several other journalists and producers to Doha.

Nolan sat on the plane feeling terrible, and says he arrived home to "no recognition" of what he had done and been through in Egypt. Back in Doha he had "three soul-destroying meetings with three separate managers who, instead of focusing on the amazing work we'd done under extreme conditions, wanted to rip into me for making what they deemed a 'bad call' on leaving the Hilton. They claimed they had alternative evacuation plans in place, though none of this was ever communicated to any AJE staff trapped in the Hilton, therefore rendering any such alternatives absolutely useless." Finding himself rostered on a few weeks of overnight shifts, Nolan was approached in the middle of one night by a member of management. The manager said, "You don't look happy. Your blunder in Cairo hasn't doomed your career. As journalists we fight." (personal communication, May 23, 2012)

Dutton was summonsed to the newsroom for what one observer says was a "probably quite unpleasant" hour of debrief before she flew back out of the country on a different, long-booked assignment. "The most important week in Al Jazeera's life, and for it to end like that," Dutton later said to a colleague.

A few months after Mubarak resigned the presidency of Egypt, Dan Nolan resigned from Al Jazeera English.

"This is why AJE can get the kind of coverage that others can't," he says (personal communication, May 23, 2012), "they take risks that others simply won't. But I didn't want my wife to visit my bloodied flak jacket in the Al Jazeera museum."

CHAPTER 8: REPORTING THE REVOLUTION

"... we should not forget that news stations based in Britain, Qatar, and the United States are active participants in events rather than mere bystanders recording events. In the first televised revolution, the medium is part of the message."

— Sheila Carapico (2011), professor of political science at the University of Richmond and the American University in Cairo, writing in Foreign Policy

On 4 February, one week after the Day of Rage, the revolution might have been over for Jane Dutton, Dan Nolan, and several others, but for hundreds of thousands of demonstrators across Egypt, Friday prayers represented an opportunity to regroup and re-energise.

Such a substantial change in staff numbers on the ground required AJE to do some reorganisation to ensure it maintained a spread of journalists and producers across the country. In the capital, Ayman Mohyeldin, Sherine Tadros and Hoda Abdel-Hamid would keep reporting from in and around Tahrir Square, while Jacky Rowland remained at the Ramses Hilton. Correspondent Andrew Simmons had arrived in Egypt the day before and other journalists were preparing to fly in from Doha. After the evacuation of the Hilton, AJE's Cairo team shifted its centre of operations to the Sheraton Hotel which offered an inferior, but passable, sightline to Tahrir.

Al Anstey says many of the staff movements were the result of managing exhaustion. "[Fatigue is] one of the real issues when you've got a story like that running ... An exhausted individual is not going to make the right decision. No-one can," he says (personal communication, May 13, 2013). "There were conversations at the time about giving people the downtime ... Some people put their hand up and said, 'I'd like to actually leave, please, I'm exhausted.' Other people said, 'I'd really like to stay.' And I think our duty of care extended to actually managing our people on the ground ... so we don't exhaust them."

However, some camera operators and producers were apparently asked to stay on in Egypt due to staff shortages despite having requested a return to Doha.

Rawya Rageh, still holed up in her Cairo apartment, was itching to get back in the field. She begged the newsdesk to let her resume reporting, but permission was denied. Jamal Elshayyal departed for Alexandria to fill the vacuum created by Rageh's evacuation two days prior.

Out on the streets of the capital it was eerily calm after the past few days of unrest, although a large crowd was already gathering in Tahrir ahead of prayers. Reports were trickling in of sporadic violence around the country, including the trashing and burning of Al Jazeera Arabic's offices.

Kamahl Santamaria started his shift late that morning and knew that the world was watching to see what might come after the revolutionary sermons.

"When your Fridays came along you knew something was going to happen," he remembers (personal communication, October 20, 2011). "They got there, hundreds of thousands of people into Tahrir Square, and prayers started, and I thought, just shut up, Kamahl, let this go. Because it was amazing."

As prayers began to echo around Tahrir Square from a loudspeaker, Kamahl lets the scene speak for itself.

"Let's pause, shall we, just a moment," he says on air. "This is as close as you'll get to a calm before the storm. Let's have a listen in."

The director mixes between a very clear street-level camera and the rooftop position. Viewers can see the lines of worshippers rise and fall in unison with the tempo of the prayer. In fact, the street-level camera is of such good quality that individual faces are clearly visible, the men's facial expressions telling the story better than any presenter's words could. It is incredibly quiet in the Square given how many people are gathered, just a low murmur of chatter audible in the

background. A single man stands among a sea of crouching worshippers, hands cupped in front of him.

After a minute or two of quiet observation, Santamaria crosses to Hoda Abdel-Hamid, unnamed for safety reasons, on the phone from the outskirts of Tahrir. She describes the scene as more and more protesters stream towards Tahrir, noting that the Qasr el-Nil Bridge is a "human carpet" of people trying to cross and clear the barricaded security checkpoints.

Prayers have also begun in Alexandria and Jamal Elshayyal reports that Christian citizens have formed a cordon around the site to protect Islamic worshippers from potential trouble. He apologises to viewers for not being able to bring them pictures because of the "huge challenges we're facing by authorities and by thugs in the country."

Santamaria is being fed a live translation of the sermon in Tahrir Square and he relays key sections for viewers.

"This revolution is not for any ideological or religious purposes," he reads. "We demand the change in regime, the release of prisoners, an amendment of the constitution. I call on you to be patient and steadfast."

Santamaria pauses while the ground-level camera zooms in and fills the frame with the solitary man, now standing with face and arms raised to the sky. An effigy of Mubarak hangs from a traffic light in the background.

"And then it finished," remembers Santamaria. "Everyone was prostrated and then they got up slowly. And there was this wave, this mighty roar, and it went from religious reflection to pissed-off in about ten seconds. And it was incredible."

The crowd erupts. One by one the men unfold their arms and start pumping fists into the air, joining in with the growing chant: "He's leaving! He's leaving!" The street-level camera shows their facial expressions changing from reflection to

anger. The orderly lines of prayer dissolve and once again the people mix into a singular mass. A large sign is held up featuring a picture of Mubarak's face and a red cross through it. Another of the chants in Arabic repeats simply, "Invalid!"

It is moving television — events communicated through the power of the pictures and the sounds alone; no overblown hyperbole from presenters and correspondents, no exaggerated commentary, just live cameras straight to air. After a minute of silence to let the pictures talk, Santamaria speaks.

"Extraordinary scenes from Tahrir Square, Liberation Square in Cairo. Friday prayers are very much over and the protest begins again."

*****

Two days later, on Sunday 6 February, presenter David Foster opens the 1500 GMT bulletin with an announcement.

"We're going to begin this Newshour with an appeal for the release of one of our correspondents who is working in Egypt."

The director cuts to a still shot of Ayman Mohyeldin.

"Ayman Mohyeldin has been detained by the Egyptian Army near Tahrir Square, that is Liberation Square in Cairo. And Al Jazeera is calling for his immediate release. We'll keep you updated on any developments regarding Ayman who has been covering all of the protests so far, now day 13."

Mohyeldin had been making his way into Tahrir Square that afternoon, just as he had been doing every day for the past week, when the military took an interest in him. He'd presented his ID as requested, and declared that he was a journalist, but a young officer seemed a little unsure about procedure so Mohyeldin was removed from the checkpoint.

“They took me aside and detained me for nine hours,” he recalls (personal communication, April 5, 2012). “They tied me up like anybody else, I wasn’t treated any differently.”

AJE ran multiple appeals for the rest of the day, until receiving news that the correspondent had been released and was safe. It was an experience that, in retrospect, Mohyeldin found embarrassing.

“It’s absurd for me to talk about it. Al Jazeera journalists have been killed, spent years at Guantanamo, been harassed, beaten and groped, and I spent nine hours in a holding cell,” he later told GQ magazine (Paterniti, 2011).

On air the next day, Mohyeldin recounts his experience for viewers.

“I was handcuffed with plastic wire,” he begins. “I was blindfolded, and I was made to sit on the pavement for about five hours or so with several other people including other journalists who were there, as well as people who were simply being taken by the military for various reasons. And over the course of the nine hours I was essentially in custody. I was interrogated a few times, I was asked by people who I worked for, what I did, and then they started asking me slightly more intimidating questions like what I thought of the protests, what do I think the military’s doing, who was I with. And they were ultimately saying was what I was doing in Egypt, why don’t I just go back to the United States where I came from and why was I trying to project a negative image of Egypt to the outside world.”

The large grounds of the Egyptian Museum held many other detainees that the army had rounded up for various reasons, including a Palestinian reporter from Reuters and an American from the New York Times. Most of the others were demonstrators who had been arrested in and around Tahrir Square. These men were being interrogated in open areas which meant Mohyeldin could hear their stories and witness their treatment.

“A lot of these people were beaten up. The military was dealing with them in a very aggressive manner — they were slapped, they were kicked. The military was trying to essentially subdue them … Many were crying, saying that they were simply caught up in the wrong moment, but the military showed no mercy and on a few occasions they really roughed them up pretty badly, they kicked them in the back of their heads. One of the soldiers who was there had with him a small taser gun, he was instigating that taser to try to scare the prisoners or the detainees really into submission and behaving.”

And the intimidation tactics seemed to be working. One man at least found his revolutionary fervour dissolving.

“One of the individuals … was saying that the military was detaining him because he was active inside Liberation Square organising the committees and stuff. But by the end of the evening he had completely broken down, he was essentially crying and saying that he wanted to leave, that he had a really good salary, he got caught up in this mistake, and he promised the military that if he were to leave he would never return again to Liberation Square and not participate in this.”

In the end, efforts by AJE and US consular officials did indeed hasten Mohyeldin’s release, although the release came with conditions that would affect his ability to report for the rest of the revolution, and effectively bring to an end his live crosses from the heart of Tahrir.

“I was going to be transferred over to military intelligence by the end of the evening — that didn’t happen because of the intervention that helped get me released … [I was] asked to sign papers saying that [I] would not return to Liberation Square unless [I] got some kind of permission from the military. They were helpful enough to tell [me] how to get that permission, but they made it very clear that [I] couldn’t just simply return to Liberation Square without letting them know in advance … or having some sort of proper authentication or verification.”

Hoda Abdel-Hamid was on the move constantly as she reported from in and around Tahrir Square, unlike some of the other correspondents who operated

from a single or central location. Throughout the 18 days she had multiple encounters with security forces, which would have been quite funny if they weren't so serious.

"Once [the secret police] came to the rooftop where we were and they asked, 'Are you Al Jazeera?'" Abdel-Hamid recalls (personal communication, January 24, 2012). "And I said, 'Are you crazy? Al Jazeera?' And he said, 'What do you mean?' ... I said, 'I have no idea where Al Jazeera is, I wouldn't even stand next to them,' and he said, 'why?' And I said, 'Because you'd kill me.' And he laughed and he laughed."

Another encounter took place when she was identified on the streets as a foreigner while doing an on-air phono. She ran away from those pursuing her and hid in a garage just outside of the Square. Often, she would try to get out of tricky situations by telling the truth about her employer in a way that confused the Arabic-speaking security forces, declaring that she worked for "ay-jay-ee" instead of "Al Jazeera English."

Many days later, after Mubarak's resignation, Abdel-Hamid was doing a live cross from the roof of a building at the edge of Tahrir Square when the military police walked onto the roof.

"They came up and said, came up very aggressively, 'Where are the weapons?' I said, 'What weapons?' I think they got shocked because the camerawoman was [a] blonde Russian girl and I was there and they came, like, three minutes before we [went] on air so I was putting lipstick on. And we said, 'What weapons?' And they said, 'You don't have any weapons?' They said that the camera from downstairs looked like a weapon, which could be true ... Anyway, he took us to the museum, the guy was very nice, the commander or whatever ... and he checked into the equipment and then he came up to me and opened the laptop and the logo showed. He said, 'Tell me the truth, are you from Al Jazeera?' I said, 'I told you, AJE, that's Al Jazeera English.' And then he let us go. They made sure we got into a cab out of the area."

In any normal news situation, a single incident like those experienced by Mohyeldin and Abdel-Hamid, or by any of the other staff in Egypt, would have sent shockwaves through the AJE newsroom and organisation, but over the past fortnight they had become normal. "We increased the channel's coverage in an emergency situation that then stayed on and became a permanent situation," said one staff member. "Our emergency coverage became our permanent working pattern."

Several of those working in Egypt had had enough. There was Rawya Rageh's close call in Alexandria, Dan Nolan and Sherine Tadros' frightening night in Tahrir, multiple stories of physical beatings, and repeated raids of offices and hotel rooms. Not to mention a growing feeling that things were just generally out of control. Some thought that the risks to safety were no longer acceptable and AJE's procedures needed to be tightened up.

In the wake of the Hilton evacuation controversy, Sherine Tadros had received praise from colleagues for having the courage to stay at the hotel while others fled, even though separating from the main team wasn't her choice.

"I was not some martyr who stayed behind because I was going to fight for Egypt," she remembers telling management in Doha (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "I stayed behind because you forgot me … it's just not on. The only people who know where I am [at any given time] time are my family. It can't be like this."

A round of security workshops were arranged for AJE crew on the ground, run by the company's contracted security consultants. But a number of the correspondents were unimpressed. Jamal Elshayyal "outright rejected" the consultants, believing that investing in local fixers would've made more sense than "pulling out the [security] rulebook" given that the channel was on "uncharted ground."

"I don't want any security with me," he said to management (personal communication, April 12, 2012), "because … if me as an Egyptian speaking on the

phone in English almost got me beat up, what's me walking with a seven-foot former SAS guy going to do?"

Tadros questions the value of the security consultants in this scenario.

"This guy came in and it was just absolutely ridiculous," she recalls (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "He took all our numbers, we met in a Ramses [Hilton] hotel room and he started talking to us about, what's the back up plan here? If somebody comes in through the window of the … and it was just ridiculous scenarios. And Jacky [Rowland said], 'Look, I'm sorry but this is a waste of our time.' And it was. They sent in somebody who had no idea about the kind of threat we were facing and he was not experienced enough … I remember having this briefing session with him and he was like, 'I'm confused, where is this threat coming from and what are you afraid of?' And I thought, 'The poor guy;' if you're not from the country I think it was very difficult to understand what was going on in terms of what are we meant to be afraid of. You had the regime that was actively looking for us in the form of the police and, you never know, the army too, and then you had the people who were Mubarak supporters. And then you just had a history and culture in the country of hating Al Jazeera."

"What you needed was a rethinking of the situation," Elshayyal believes, "because this was a new thing. It wasn't … a conventional war." (personal communication, April 12, 2012)

Doha

As the country-wide protests entered their third week, tens of thousands of anti-Mubarak demonstrators continued to gather each day in Tahrir Square. But as their momentum slowed, some observers were beginning to wonder if the revolution was headed for stalemate.

Behind the scenes, there were constant political manoeuvrings: Hosni Mubarak's son, Gamal, resigned from key party positions; the influential and state-

owned Al-Ahram newspaper threw its support behind the protesters; Vice President Omar Suleiman announced the formation of committees to examine constitutional and political reform; and the government announced a limited amnesty for prisoners.

The demonstrators expanded their Cairo operation and started organising protests at parliament and other government locations. Suez Canal workers went on strike. Smaller violent clashes continued in cities around the country.

As the tumultuous events of the revolution so far slowed to a more grinding campaign, AJE started to return to normal on-air programming patterns where appropriate. Rather than the ad-free 24/7 rolling coverage that had become the norm, news bulletins gave way in back half-hours to non-live content, drawing on its vast existing catalogue of documentaries and special programs on the topic of Egypt. A new series called Egypt Burning that was being produced on the fly and that first went to air on 5 February was built around interviews with correspondents on the ground. Egypt Burning ended up being a series of three half-hour programs that together told the story of the 18 days of revolution through AJE's eyes.

Broadcasting these documentaries served a greater purpose than just filling airtime.

"[The events in Tahrir Square are] set within history," says Al Anstey (personal communication, October 11, 2011). "There's context to that event which is fundamentally important to understand in order to be able to explain the event to our viewers so that they understand it. And it's also a multi-layered story: it's not just about protesters, it's not just about Mubarak. It includes regions of Egypt, it includes neighbouring countries, it includes the army, it includes, as it were, factions within society that are being brought to bear in Tahrir Square. The challenge on this [story], was actually taking a step back ... You have to say, let's take a breath, let's have a look, let's air a documentary that showcases the history of Mubarak, for example."

Kamahl Santamaria was on shift quite a lot during those quieter days and needed to alter his style of presentation to match the changing circumstances.

"It did get boring," he admits (personal communication, October 20, 2011). "That's when you have to be able to keep it moving because often during the daytime, it would just be, hey, here's a live shot of Tahrir Square, look, there are a lot of people here but not much else is happening. And you have to somehow keep that moving ... There's a difference between breaking news and rolling news — that's rolling news, there, when you've got to keep the viewer engaged. You're not coming off air but there's not necessarily police firing tear gas and bashing the crap out of people."

Sarah Worthington knew that her team was suffering.

"People were exhausted. It was hard," she says (personal communication, January 19, 2012). "And also, the story was starting to feel a bit ... the days just seemed to stay the same."

Despite the slower pace of the story, it was still frantic in the newsroom. So much of normal TV news production involves taking information gathered by others and turning it into television — lift an item from the wires, cut it to library pics, write a script putting others' words into your own. But during an event like Egypt where a much higher proportion of content than usual is generated in-house, normal routines don't apply.

Matthew Moore is a program editor who came to AJE from CNN and has had a long career in TV news. As a program editor at AJE, he takes charge of individual news bulletins from within the control room. Normally, AJE's program editors work in pairs, alternating their bulletins and collaborating with a team of producers in the newsroom who generate content as required. But during the Egyptian Revolution, Moore and the other program editors were working three-hour blocks to avoid disrupting the on-air flow with crew changes.

“It was very hard work. You’d be in the gallery for hours in a row, and you’d try and time your toilet breaks for two-and-a-half hours, anything less wasn’t very macho,” he jokes (personal communication, January 24, 2012). “And I did wear out holes in shirts at the elbows because I was just constantly craned over my desk looking at the monitors. It was quite stressful, it was quite hard work and it was quite intense. And we didn’t let up, we were constantly trying to do our best.”

Part of what made it so intense for Moore and others was the seat-of-the-pants nature of the TV they were making, and the fact that they were entering their third week of such intense, demanding programs.

“We tried to keep to some sort of structure whereby we would update the viewer every 15 minutes, certainly at the half hour we’d give them something, and we’d even try to give them a clean [top of the hour] opening … If you could tear yourself away from those very compelling pictures to give your program a structure.”

The control room — a tense and conflict-prone place at the best of times — was where the ever-changing and often contradictory newsroom decisions about how to cover the story often came to a head. For instance, Salah Negm had a habit of appearing at the back of the room and calling out for the director to alter their visual style, and nobody seemed to be able to keep up with the latest protocol on naming correspondents or showing their faces on screen. For the nine crew members who work in the gallery at any one time, their eight- or ten-hour shifts could be stressful and exhausting.

With so much broadcasting equipment having been stolen and confiscated in Egypt, but with the need to produce as much unique content as possible, Doha was packaging up whatever material the correspondents could manage to send back.

In Alexandria, for instance, Jamal Elshayyal had no TV gear for a time but that didn’t stop him from filing pictures by recording short video clips on his Blackberry phone and sending them back to Doha via the internet.

Heather Allan was impressed with the team's ingenuity and willingness to do whatever they could.

"They would shoot, like, they were just in a crowd, every day every night. And they would just shoot and they'd send it in and we'd get these little 30-second blurbs," she remembers (personal communication, January 23, 2012). "And we'd put them all together the next day, so we'd have two minutes, and [they'd] do a [voice] track for us on the phone ... it was remarkable how all of them found ways around it."

Several days after the night of the camel battle, when viewers had listened live to the sounds of automatic gunfire echoing around the centre of Cairo, Doha came into possession of video footage that seemed to show protesters being gunned down. It plays out on air after being packaged up by the newsroom.

"This is central Cairo on Wednesday night," begins the voiceover. "After a day of running battles between pro- and anti-Mubarak supporters, the two sides face off again on a bridge near Liberation Square."

The sound of loud automatic gunfire.

"Gunshots can be clearly heard. Rocks and petrol bombs are thrown. As the shots continue people seem unmoved, but as they get closer and more sustained, they begin to duck. The camera finds a man laid out on the ground, his friends trying to lift him. A hand goes up, almost pleading for time for the shooting to stop, but more shots ring out and two more people fall to the ground."

The small crowd of men run, clearly frightened.

"If we watch in slow motion at the bottom of the screen, there are bright flashes where it appears that the bullets hit the metal rail of the bridge."

A circle appears on the slow-mo shot to highlight the flashes.

"As those on the bridge run, trying to get a safe distance away, others drag those who fell from the scene."

The camera shows bodies sprawled on ground.

"The Egyptian authorities say 11 people have been killed in the unrest across the country, the United Nations says it's more than 300."

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Commentators often hold up AJE as an example of a media organisation that does excellent work in the online/social media space. That might be true, but it did not cross over very well into the television side of the operation during Egypt, and does not to this day.

For most staff in the TV section, Online is just a semi-ignored desk at the outer edge of the newsroom seating four shift producers who repurpose TV content, write up wire stories, publish features, and curate opinion on the website. For most TV viewers during the revolution, their only exposure to online content in news bulletins was the hourly web desk segment.

Contrary to the dynamism that is supposed to be the hallmark of online content, the web desks were fairly poor examples of both television and online journalism — static, over-scripted, out-of-date content that was highly constrained by the TV graphics department's ability to produce on-screen elements to fit the script. What resulted was a producer haltingly reading from autocue as a few random tweets and Flickr photos flashed on screen. Old TV work practices die hard, and the newsroom workflows and structures just weren't ready to properly incorporate online content. But this is changing. Slowly.

On the internet, however, AJE was doing some fantastic stuff that built on its legacy of social media innovation.

As far back as the 2008–2009 Gaza War, the online team was experimenting with new tools to better deliver news content to internet consumers (Marshall, 2013). Twitter may in 2013 be ubiquitous, but in 2008 it was still largely unknown. AJE set up a dedicated Twitter feed that delivered updates on the war to a growing audience of users. The website also featured a constantly updated map of incidents across the territory, generated by crisis-mapping software.

Current Head of Social Media Riyaad Minty has talked about the AJE team's approach to using social media sources during the 2009 Iranian election and subsequent uprising, and reveals a focus on verification and separating signal from noise.

"At one point there were around 250,000 tweets using the #iranelections [tag], but the vast majority of those were coming not out of Iran but from people in the rest of the world who were talking about Iran," he told Journalism.co.uk (Marshall, 2013). "During that time we were only able to verify six accounts from people who were in Tehran tweeting about it."

In 2010, AJE provided 17 Iraqis from across the country with basic video production equipment in an effort to give a voice to everyday citizens and counter the Green Zone-centric flavour of most news reporting from that country.

By the time of the Egyptian Revolution, the online section had expanded very quickly in size and scope. Section head at the time Mohamed Nanabhay had pushed network management to approve a large hiring program and he worked hard to expand the website's reach through social media. Among other innovations, Nanabhay lead the charge within the network to begin releasing footage under a Creative Commons licence.

"We shouldn't think of ourselves as having a single venue where our content should be viewed," Nanabhay has told Nieman Journalism Lab (Ellis, 2012). "We shouldn't force people to come to our website if they want to view our content — rather we should move onto the platforms where communities have already formed and there are already big audiences."

As protests began in Egypt, the online department stood ready to help put the network in front of as many news-consuming eyeballs as possible.

On Twitter, AJE purchased promoted tweets triggered by trending hashtags such as "#egypt" and "#jan25". Katie Stanton, head of international strategy at Twitter, is reported as saying that Al Jazeera used Twitter "aggressively" to promote its reports (npr, 2012). Similar strategies were employed on Facebook and other social networks.

The team would monitor and curate raw footage shot by protesters, citizens and AJE's own producers in Egypt, republishing it through various channels and giving AJE's online audience a perspective that even TV viewers weren't getting.

"We'd get stuff submitted from our guys in the field from their phone that was very raw, very shaky, not something that we would normally use," says Nanabhay (personal communication, January 18, 2012). "And that stuff would get just as much traffic, if not more traffic than highly produced package pieces that come out from the correspondent who is there with a producer and a cameraman ... If you saw [the video] on YouTube there would be no filename because it was so crazy at the time — it would be blahblahblah.mp4, no description, no anything else. And that thing would get 80,000, 100,000 views."

Most of this curated material would end up in the daily live blogs which became one of the most popular features on the AJE website during the revolution. Live blogs are hardly an innovation — they've been used by news organisations for years — but it's a method of news reporting that comes into its own during fast-moving stories like Egypt.

"We've done live blogs before just like the Guardian's done and the BBC's done for events and parliamentary debate and whatever ... But this was the first time we'd done it for an extended period of time: 18 days," says Nanabhay. "And we discovered that people were sitting on this live blog refreshing it every couple of minutes just to see what was the latest and greatest from Egypt ... at one point of

time there were ten times the number of people on the live blog for Egypt than there were on the top [website] story for Egypt. Which is a huge disparity if you think of the top story — somebody's invested time to write this thing, there's video embedded inside it, a correspondent was there. But the live blog was, 'Five people died, six people locked up,' and, you know, it was small bite-sized updates."

The live blogs were indeed excellent. They featured highlights from a broad range of social media sources, including interesting tweets, YouTube videos and photos, plus quotes from those interviewed on AJE, AJA and elsewhere, interesting analysis from non-Al Jazeera news sources, and highlights from the TV feed. The live blog was what the TV web desk should have been but wasn't.

And Nanabhay had the human resources to do all of this properly. Where other newsrooms might rely on a single producer to run multiple online elements, AJE could devote one person to one task.

"On every shift we had a person in charge of live blogging and pushing stuff out on social media. We had a Twitter account, @AJElive, somebody was just manning that, pushing out updates. So, we took it very seriously, we moved around our resources."

It was also a useful experience for those journalists and producers in the newsroom who until that point had been sceptical about online and social media.

"Many journalists who had been journalists for a long time look at these mediums and platforms and they're still not convinced exactly what they're there for and what use they are. And clearly they thought, 'Hey, this is now where our audience is, this is what they're interested in.'"

The website stats also revealed another demographic of live-blog readers — journalists from other news organisations.

For news consumers in countries like the US without access to AJE TV via cable or satellite services, the AJE website was a lifeline. As the Kansas City

Star reported on 2 February 2011, "More than 7 million US viewers have spent nearly 50 million minutes watching the AJE website since Jan. 27."

If you were sitting in front of AJE on the TV, refreshing the live blog on your laptop, and following the tweets of AJE correspondents and journalists on the ground, it's difficult to argue that anyone else would've been better informed about events as they happened.

Bias

Despite widespread praise for AJE's coverage of the Egyptian Revolution, a theme developed during and after the Revolution, alleging bias towards the anti-Mubarak protesters in the Al Jazeera Network's reporting.

For example, journalist Nir Rosen (2011) spoke of Al Jazeera going on a "war footing" during popular uprisings in the Middle East, and of playing a participant role in them. Ex-AJE anchor David Marash, speaking to TVNewser (Shister, 2011), thought "correspondents, particularly the younger ones, were 'openly cheering' for the protesters," even if he gave the channel's overall coverage of the Arab Spring "an A-minus, at worst." And rather predictably, Cliff Kincaid from the organisation Accuracy In Media, noted for its anti-Al Jazeera stance, is quoted as saying, "I think some are mistaking film footage of riots and demonstrations [in the Middle East] as evidence [AJE] is doing a good job. To me, it's comparable to an arsonist setting a house on fire then taking out a camera and filming the inferno. People need to take a closer look at their role in starting this bloody chaos" (Ricchiardi, 2011).

When asked for his reaction to assertions such as these, Al Anstey (personal communication, October 11, 2011) is clear. "Were we cheering the protesters in Tahrir Square?" he asks rhetorically. "No, absolutely not. Were we hearing the protesters in Tahrir Square? Yes, absolutely. And we had the ability to do that because we had our people on the ground and we had our cameras on the

ground." Anstey points out that pro-Mubarak protests, when they occurred, received similar treatment to the anti-Mubarak gatherings.

Accusations of bias have been a constant throughout the Al Jazeera Network's life, both pre- and post-AJE's launch. Fingers are pointed from not just outside the Middle East, but from within the region, too. And as long as the bulk of Al Jazeera's funding comes from the emir's purse, and as long as the network relies on an implicit license to operate that could be revoked at a moment's notice, questions about editorial independence will never go away. This is not to say that AJE should not face scrutiny, or that those questions are groundless.

Philip Seib, an academic with a long history of research into Al Jazeera, has written that the presence of certain bias at the network is a no-brainer.

"The Al Jazeera channels certainly reflect the interests of the emir of Qatar, who, by some accounts, sees his oil- and gas-rich country as 'the next Saudi Arabia' in terms of wielding global, wealth-based influence. You will not find stories about allegations of corruption in Qatar on Al Jazeera channels, nor will you find its leaders portrayed in unflattering ways" (Seib, 2012, pp. 2-3).

Former Managing Director of AJE Tony Burman (2013) is "certain" that the network's "performance is now closely monitored if not influenced by Qatar's government." However, Burman claims to have never sensed any involvement by the Qatari government while at the helm. "In fact," he wrote in the Toronto Star, "I found the Canadian government more meddlesome when I was head of CBC News."

Arab media expert Lawrence Pintak (2013), writing at Foreign Policy, notes that in the context of Middle Eastern politics, some consider Al Jazeera to be just as one-sided as news channels can be in the US.

"Just as Fox and MSNBC attract partisans in the United States, Arabs turn to Al Jazeera, its Saudi-owned rival Al Arabiya or various other channels, depending on their politics. Many claim Al Jazeera supports the Palestinian Islamist group

Hamas, a notion bolstered by its recent WikiLeaks-style release of secret documents from the Israeli–Palestinian negotiations, which has undermined the Palestinian Authority. And there has long been a perception that the Qatar-based channel is anti-Mubarak."

In response to these sorts of claims, there have been more emphatic denials of Qatari government control by a range of Al Jazeera employees through the years than can be effectively summarised. A leaked 2008 US diplomatic cable paraphrases Wadah Khanfar's assertions to the US embassy.

"[Qatar] does not support Al Jazeera out of charity [and it] understands that Al Jazeera has given Qatar great name recognition in the Arab world. But [Khanfar] is 'happy with the Emir because he does not interfere [in Al Jazeera's operations]'" (US Embassy, Doha, 2008).

When considering the question of perceived bias at Al Jazeera, it's worth keeping in mind that any media outlet's content and outlook is shaped by its audience, its staff and social and cultural factors.

Previous to AJE, Salah Negm worked for the BBC and notes that, similarly to Al Jazeera, the British broadcaster is funded by the state. Negm does not believe that the BBC is systematically biased or influenced by the UK government, but that its output is coloured by employees and audience members who see the world through a British lens.

"If you are a British organisation you will be objective within a British framework, which is understandable," he says. "You can detect that, for example, in [the BBC] covering Zimbabwe very heavily from a certain perspective — I'm not going to say they are really biased, but their objectivity is coloured by where they are from" (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

In the same vein, in covering Egypt, US news networks tended to report on events through the lens of the revolution's impact on US and Israeli interests, while

the Economist (Schumpeter, 2011) argued that the BBC was "more interested in what Egypt means for British holidaymakers, bless them, than for geopolitics".

AJE, due to its location, its audience, and the journalists working in its newsroom, looked at Tahrir Square from a Middle Eastern perspective where Israel, while important to the politics of the region, is not the sole consideration, and where the nation of Egypt is so much more than just pyramids and Nile cruises. This does not necessarily imply poor journalism on the part of AJE or its competitors, simply that each exists in a cultural context and serves its respective audience.

But audiences are not heterogeneous, and individuals often make judgements about bias based on their own world view. Stories that attract calls of bias tend to be about controversial and emotional topics that cause people to form strong, inflexible opinions. When news channels report on these issues from a certain perspective, it is inevitable that some viewers will disagree strongly with what they see. In this post-9/11 world where global opinion on matters Middle Eastern, especially in the US, has polarised dramatically, and where a distinct "with us or against us" mentality has taken hold, AJE may never be able to appeal to those Western news consumers who regularly consume coverage from an unashamedly (and arguably, unambiguously biased) flag-waving media.

If there is systemic outside interference with AJE's editorial process, then surely there would be evidence in the newsroom. All of those interviewed for this book — on and off the record — were asked about bias, censorship and editorial interference, and all emphatically denied ever having been personally asked to alter their reporting in suspicious circumstances.

"I haven't ever had a phone call, and I've never been told, 'No, we can't cover this story,'" says Sarah Worthington (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

"I have worked for Al Jazeera English since launch in 2006," says Rawya Rageh (personal communication, April 25, 2012). "I can guarantee you that at no point throughout these years — and I've worked in Doha, in the newsroom, so I have sat on daily morning meetings, I have sat at meetings that set the tone for the day,

I have sat on several planning meetings that plan major coverage — at no point have we ever gotten a directive from someone higher above that says, 'This is what we're going to do today.'"

Presenter Adrian Finighan (personal communication, November 11, 2011) suggested that his very presence in front of the camera is his answer.

"I can categorically state, in the year that I have been here, I have never been asked to temper any editorial line," he says. "I wouldn't be here [if I had] ... If anything, coming to Al Jazeera has convinced me, has made me aware that perhaps the other organisations that I've worked for in the past have a certain bias even if they don't realise it ... I had to come to Doha to experience this. To see, or to live, in a part of the world and a culture that is alien to me."

"I am comfortable with what we are doing ... We are obliged to follow our editorial guidelines, [they're] published online. If you find us in breach of them, complain and we will respond," says Salah Negm (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

However, a few staff alluded in interviews to isolated attempts by upper management to change a line or suppress a story, but nobody could offer hard evidence.

One person mentioned a case of a senior newsroom figure ordering the early termination of an interview with an Israeli figure who was calling for Libya's removal from the UN Human Rights Committee. This triggered immediate protests by producers and the director, and sparked confrontation with the senior producer on the floor of the studio. One producer is alleged to have said, "This is the kind of shit people quit over."

A senior employee tells a story from 2009 which suggests an order came down in the newsroom to stop playing particularly damning pictures of brutality against Iranian protesters. The order coincided with a visit to Qatar by senior Iranian figures.

A third offers an example of a story being smothered that looked bad for the Qatari government.

"Our lead story was allegations of corruption within the bid that secured the 2022 World Cup," this person says. "They'd come out in the Times, the Sunday Times. It was our lead story. We were interviewing people in the UK about it, and suddenly we were told, 'The next bulletin, your lead story is Yemen,' and the story out of Yemen was two days old."

There has been an ongoing years-long war within AJE to do more to cover the plight of migrant workers in Qatar, an issue about which the channel's expat workforce, being personally exposed to the issue daily in Doha, feels strongly. It's a battle that the newsroom appears to be winning, albeit slowly, despite suggestions in leaked diplomatic cables that there is a level of self-censorship at play when it comes to some domestic issues (backed up by interviews for this book). Cautiously-worded news stories about labour conditions in Qatar and the Gulf now air more regularly, and when a Qatari poet was jailed for life in 2012 for comments critical of the country's leadership, AJE reported on the story. Granted, the stories were short and far from prominent, which is probably indicative of editorial caution, but it is also just one legal case in one small country of the entire world and hardly the most newsworthy item in the rundown. The fact it was reported at all is a sign of positive progress.

Historically, one of the most obvious examples of the Al Jazeera Network modifying its editorial line is in its coverage of Saudi Arabia following a thaw in diplomatic relations between that country and Qatar in 2007. Robert F. Worth (2008) reported on the editorial shift in the New York Times:

"For the past three months Al Jazeera, which once infuriated the Saudi royal family with its freewheeling newscasts, has treated the kingdom with kid gloves, media analysts say ... 'Orders were given not to tackle any Saudi issue without referring to the higher management,' one Jazeera newsroom employee wrote in an e-mail message. 'All dissident voices disappeared from our screens.'"

And in something of an irony given later events, a leaked US diplomatic cable from 2010 alleges that the now former Qatari Prime Minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, told US Senator John Kerry he'd made an offer to Hosni Mubarak to "'stop Al Jazeera for a year' if [Mubarak] agreed in that span of time to deliver a lasting settlement for the Palestinians. Mubarak said nothing in response ..." (Booth, 2010).

Al Jazeera (2010) rejected the cable's account of that conversation, stating, "This is the US embassy's assessment, and it is very far from the truth. Despite all the pressure Al Jazeera has been subjected to by regional and international governments, it has never changed its bold editorial policies which remain guided by the principles of a free press."

Those leaked US diplomatic cables published in 2010 by WikiLeaks paint an interesting picture of the deep and ongoing relationship between Al Jazeera and the US embassy in Doha. They reveal frequent meetings between the two parties on a range of issues including content, guest selection, quality control and the airing of sensitive material such as hostage videos. While the overall tone of relations seems to be respectful and reasonably cooperative despite differing opinions, the US (understandably due to the nature of diplomatic cables) comes across as patronising and condescending. One cable (US Embassy, Doha, 2005, September 17) notes that Wadah Khanfar "is clearly committed to bringing Al Jazeera up to professional international standards of journalism and ... seems to be not only open to criticism but to welcome it." At other times the cables read like a school teacher scolding a wayward child.

Another 2005 cable (US Embassy, Doha, 2005, October 20) recounts an interesting meeting in which Khanfar agrees to modify broadcast and online content in response to US concerns, but pushes back against an attempt by the embassy to lock him into a formal agreement.

"Having had an opportunity to review the July and August reports [monthly feedback from the embassy to Khanfar on Al Jazeera's output], Khanfar said he

had several observations to make," reads the cable. "On a semantic level, he objected to the use of the word 'agreement' as used in the August report on the first page, under the heading 'Violence in Iraq', where a sentence reads: 'In violation of the station's agreement several months ago with US officials etc'. 'The agreement was that it was a non-paper,' said Khanfar. 'As a news organization, we cannot sign agreements of this nature, and to have it here like this in writing is of concern to us.'" Khanfar also takes issue with the embassy concern over inflammatory language used by non-Al Jazeera guests on the channel, saying, "How can I control what these people say? I can only control Al Jazeera staff. All we can do is try to balance what these people say in other parts of the program.

A 2010 cable (US Embassy, Doha, 2010) reveals high-level contact between the US government and the then-managing director of AJE, Tony Burman, over the channel's coverage of Haiti. It records that the US Under-Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Judith McHale, phoned Burman in the early hours of the morning to convey her "serious concerns", and that AJE's coverage "evolved markedly" over the next few days. Noteworthy is the cable's warning that "Ambassador has directed Embassy staff to continue monitoring AJE's reporting, and to communicate these observations immediately to Washington. If AJE, or any of Al Jazeera's channels, revert to inaccurate coverage, Ambassador will not hesitate to intervene at higher levels, starting with the Qatari Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Al Jazeera Network."

While hard evidence of Qatari editorial influence is scarce, there is plenty to suggest that Al Jazeera seems at least as responsive to the country from which most accusations of bias emanate as to the country which pays its bills.

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In all of the examples of possible editorial interference recounted in interviews for this book, the newsroom fought back. This is key.

AJE's 24-hour newsroom is staffed at all times by dozens of journalists drawn from a pool of employees representing over 50 nationalities. All are serious about

quality journalism. Internal editorial disputes are frequent and fierce; people stand up for what they think. Nobody moves to the cultural vacuum of Doha, far from their friends and families, for the nightlife and social opportunities. People are there because they are passionate about news. And it is this active streak of independence in the large, globalised studio, combined with the increased worldwide scrutiny of AJE's output in the wake of the Egyptian Revolution, that is the channel's best (although not flawless) defence against editorial interference by the network's benefactor.

"We are 50 nationalities, we have collective thinking," says Salah Negm (personal communication, January 24, 2012). "When we discuss something in an editorial meeting we have people from different regions and different continents with different backgrounds, and that raises awareness to sensitivities to different stories and angles that ... I wouldn't understand."

Heather Allan (personal communication, January 23, 2012) agrees that the diversity of views is one of AJE's main strengths.

"One thing I learned when I first got here was ... I thought I knew a thing or two, but you actually don't know anything until you get to a newsroom like this," she says. "You've got to be careful if you say something about Kashmir or Sri Lanka or Bangladesh because somebody out there [in the newsroom is] from there and they'll say, 'No, hang on a minute, that's not true,' or, 'Have you been there?' And there's always that pushback and it's good because it actually makes you think, 'You know what? I'm not that frickin' smart, I'm going to have to find out something.' And it's the same with the bureaus, the bureaus by and large are populated by local journalists in the first instance that are from Nigeria and are from Zimbabwe and from India."

Allan says that if she is pushed to identify an area of bias at AJE, it would be a pro-Palestinian bias. But having come straight from working in major US newsrooms, she had a unique perspective on that. "When I first got here ... I thought, well, you know, I came from a world that was very pro-Israeli to the extent that [a] Republican candidate in America can ... say that the Palestinians

are a made-up people, they don't exist. And you think to yourself, hang on, if a man like that, who you would like to think is educated, [who] is running for President of the United States, can actually make a statement like that, then being pro-Palestinian is just fine by me."

But she is at pains to stress that she and the newsroom work hard to compensate for that bias.

"[We] always give the Israelis right of refusal, right to speak. We have them on constantly, we have their spokespeople. So, I think we go the extra mile to make sure that we get the voices from both sides."

One example of this almost obsessive focus on Israel–Palestine balance was the channel's day-long rolling coverage of the October 2011 Israel–Palestine prisoner exchange, in which Israeli Gilad Shalit was swapped for over 1000 Palestinians. Producers in the AJE newsroom were practically counting the minutes of airtime devoted to each "side" of the story, and micro-managing which pictures the director should use in order to present the most balanced coverage possible.

Generally speaking, the channel works incredibly hard to present neutral and accurate news, in part because all staff know that every word of every script will be scrutinised by someone somewhere for hidden meaning. It's a level of caution likely exercised nowhere else in Western journalism.

The AJE newsroom style guide is a comprehensive document that outlines policies around the use of language and the presentation of certain concepts. It contains exacting rules for the use of words such as "fatwa", "fighters", "Islamist", "Jihad", "militants", "radical", "regime", and "terrorist"/"terrorism". Words like "extremist" and "martyr" are banned, while others are explicitly allowed, such as "suicide bomber". There are very clear guidelines regarding the reporting of issues related to Israel–Palestine, including a whole section on the West Bank concrete wall. The document sets out to ensure accuracy in reporting of emotional issues, and the avoidance of loaded words. Each year the style guide is updated

after a consultation process open to all employees and, often, passionate debate about new or existing entries.

With so much raw copy passing through the newsroom each day, a level of staff turnover commensurate with such a large and dynamic workplace, and with frequently sloppy induction processes, errors are possible and indeed likely. But they are quickly caught and dealt with, either by dedicated script editors, or other journalists and producers in the editorial chain. It is common to witness heated discussion on set between presenter and producer about the use and meaning of a single word.

The Al Jazeera Network is still a teenager, and AJE is not even six years old, meaning that the company has expanded at such a rate that its organisational structures haven't remotely had a hope of keeping pace and adapting to the ongoing change. (One of the main focuses of the company in 2013 is streamlining workflows and fixing the problems created by explosive growth.) There is a certain unorganised chaos about the way AJE and the Al Jazeera Network operate as a whole, which stands at odds with conspiracy theories of an unbroken and compliant chain of command direct from the emir's palace to the newsreader's auto cue.

CHAPTER 9: ENDGAME

"30 years of rule summed up in a 30-second statement."
— Rawya Rageh, AJE correspondent

Thursday 10 February 2011. Day 17 of the revolution.

And for some protesters, the third week of camping rough in Tahrir. One group in the centre of the Square is doing organised calisthenics in the early morning fog. Others are still wrapped in blankets, huddled against the mighty tracks of a stationary army tank covered with anti-Mubarak graffiti. A banner hanging above the tank reads, in Arabic and English, "Human Rights For All." Soldiers stand by, bored and idle, guns slung over their shoulders, watching incuriously.

After days of flagging demonstrator numbers, the crowds have once again started building. A second camp has sprung up outside the Egyptian Parliament, tarps and tents tied to the fence around the building. As the sun rises high in the sky, burning off the fog, the number of protesters in Tahrir continues to grow and grow.

Organisers are promising another massive demonstration tomorrow, but Vice President Omar Suleiman has dropped the first hints that ongoing protests may not be tolerated, suggesting the longer they go on, the greater the chance of an all-out military coup. Hoda Abdel-Hamid, still spending much of her time in Tahrir amongst the anti-Mubarak demonstrators, reports throughout the day on preparations for a massive protest on Friday. Organisers are distributing information around the city about staging points, march routes, and alternative gatherings for those who can't make it to Tahrir. Text messages are circulating, calling for new million-man demonstrations, not just in Cairo, but around the country.

Late in the afternoon, Cairo time, Doha has handed over to the UK broadcast centre for an update on non-Egyptian news for one of the first times in weeks.

London anchor Felicity Barr is interviewing a guest about European issues when she cuts across him.

“Apologies for that, we do have some breaking news coming in from Egypt,” she says. “Let’s go back to Folly in Doha.”

The bright orange breaking news graphic fills the screen and wipes to the Tahrir Square live shot. Folly Bah Thibault talks over it.

“Indeed, breaking news from Egypt as day 17 of these anti-government demonstrations continue,” she begins. “According to our sources, the Supreme Council of Egyptian Armed Forces is meeting to study its position towards this ongoing crisis and according to a senior army officer, all the protesters’ demands will be met. Now, one of the main demands of the protesters, of course, is for Hosni Mubarak to stand down, but no confirmation yet of this. According to Al Jazeera sources the army’s expected to make a statement [today] in which it will respond to the demands of the protesters, and it says the Higher Council of the Armed Forces has held a meeting, without giving any details so far. Of course, as we get those details we’ll bring them to you live on Al Jazeera … Let’s go to our correspondent in Alexandria, Jamal Elshayyal. Jamal, what’s the scene like there today?

“Folly, just as the crowd heard the news, these two lines you’ve just mentioned, particularly the one about the senior officer assuring the crowds in Tahrir that their demands will be met, the thousands gathered here, despite the rain, went up in huge cheers,” replies Elshayyal. “They certainly feel they are within touching distance … The chants of the crowd have been so loud that I’ve had to distance myself so I can speak to you, but the feeling here of euphoria already has gripped the thousands gathered here.”

A breaking news strap appears at the bottom of the screen: “REPORT: NDP CHIEF SAYS EGYPT’S ‘HOSNI MUBARAK WILL STEP DOWN TONIGHT’”. It goes unnoticed by Bah Thibault, who continues.

“Another line coming into us now, according to an Egyptian Army officer, they are awaiting orders that will make the people happy. Certainly very interesting to see what that announcement is.”

The strap changes: “EGYPT’S PRIME MINISTER AHMED SHAFIQ SAYS HOSNI MUBARAK MIGHT STEP DOWN”.

“What’s been the reaction in the crowd down there?” Bah Thibault asks Hoda Abdel-Hamid, crossing to Tahrir Square.

“Well, just a few minutes ago the whole Square broke out in a chant, ‘The army and the people stand together! The army and the people stand united!’” replies Abdel-Hamid. “So, I can only assume that they did hear the news. Now I have to tell you people were anticipating and were wondering what the army will do, more since Wednesday when they woke up to the news of the ambiguous statement by Omar Suleiman who was saying that he was facing two choices, either dialogue or a coup ...”

A massive cheer erupts in the Square behind her.

“And as you can hear now, a cheer. The chant is, ‘The army and the people are one hand!’ ... everyone’s converging to a giant [TV] screen which is on the left-hand side of the Square. Lots of flags waving in the air and certainly a lot more excitement than there was on the Square half an hour ago.”

Bah Thibault throws to Ayman Mohyeldin at the Sheraton hotel.

“Ayman, things are moving pretty fast.”

“Yes, they certainly are,” he says. “In fact, I was just speaking to a source at the airport, and I’ll tell you why it’s very important that everyone is kind of following the situation from multiple angles. People are looking at it from the perspective of the military, what statements are coming out of the military. Others are looking for perhaps any unusual activity at some of Egypt’s airports because as we know,

the presidential fleet of airplanes is at Cairo's international airport, people are looking to see if any unusual preparations have been made there and we're told none whatsoever. So again, not to jump the gun on any particular line of news but no irregular activity taking place in any of the areas around the Presidential Palace or perhaps even Cairo International Airport."

Information is now flowing quickly into Doha via correspondents on the ground and other sources. As new lines come into the newsdesk, senior producers analyse them and make decisions about whether or not to run with them. When approved for publication, news is immediately broadcast by the text producer as a breaking news strap so it can be reported as quickly as possible without having to wait for the presenter to catch up and work it into their delivery. Three straps now play out in quick succession:

> EGYPTIAN ARMY EARLIER PREVENTED MUBARAK FROM MAKING SPEECH TO HAND POWER TO VP
>
> CIA CHIEF SAYS "STRONG LIKELIHOOD" THAT MUBARAK WILL STEP DOWN THIS EVENING
>
> EGYPTIAN MILITARY ANNOUNCES THAT IT HAS STEPPED IN TO "SAFEGUARD THE COUNTRY"

Bah Thibault, who is at the end of her shift, hands over to presenter Nick Clark. He immediately throws to Mohyeldin.

"Ayman, you have some latest developments for us, what's up?"

"Al-Ahram newspaper, which is Egypt's official state-run newspaper here, is now quoting the Secretary-General of the ruling National Democratic Party," replies Mohyeldin. "He is saying that he asked President Hosni Mubarak to transition power or to transfer power to Vice President Oman Suleiman, and he says he expects that to happen this evening."

Every single person in Tahrir has now heard these reports, and the atmosphere is electrifying. The sea of people has turned into a sea of Egyptian flags flying back and forth. A group of people is dancing on a makeshift stage; one man balances precariously on top of a traffic light pole waving an enormous flag.

When Clark crosses to Abdel-Hamid she has to shout above the cacophony of cheers and shouting.

"The Square is packed!" she reports. "Probably the most packed I've seen for the past week. And that all happened over the last hour. There is a lot of euphoria, a lot of calls for the revolution to continue to the end."

Clark throws back to Mohyeldin.

"What we're getting right now is that confirmation from Egyptian State Television that indeed President Hosni Mubarak will make a statement this evening that will be played out from the Presidential Palace here in Cairo," Mohyeldin reports. "Every time he has addressed the nation [since the start of the revolution] he has made a substantial announcement that has effectively changed the course of this country to some extent. You know, the first time he came on television after those protests on January 28th he announced that he was sacking the government. He made an announcement that he'd appoint a vice president. Then on Tuesday following those attacks, those protests, he came out and addressed the nation again, and in those comments he said he was not going to seek a sixth term in office, that he was going to serve out his presidential term and then step down after ... so there's no doubt that if we look at the pattern that has happened so far you can expect another substantial and significant statement from President Hosni Mubarak tonight when he addresses the nation."

The breaking news strap changes once more. This time it simply reads, "THE REVOLUTION."

Sarah Worthington, who as Head of Output made decisions about specific terminology regarding high-profile stories, says it was Salah Negm's instinct to change from "uprising" to "revolution."

"I think because we thought … Mubarak had been forced to address the situation," she says. "For us that rose to the level of, this is the people against the government, the people against the president. Which to us is a revolution" (personal communication, January 19, 2012).

In fact, many AJE journalists and producers were beginning to receive tip-offs that reinforced the public statements. Sherine Tadros, for example, was in constant touch with her contacts.

"I got a phone call from a source who told me that [Mubarak was] going to resign, and that's before we even knew that he was going to make a speech," she remembers. "And I'd spoken to Salah about it and he said he'd heard the same thing. We were basically all gearing up for that moment" (personal communication, January 14, 2013).

As it happens, Negm (personal communication, January 24, 2012) claims to have been in possession of more than just a tip.

"We knew he was going to resign from very trusted sources within the military," he says. "And I will tell you something: I had a copy of the speech of resignation."

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As Egypt and the world buzzed with expectation, Adrian Finighan sat down to start a three-hour shift presenting AJE's coverage to the world. A relatively new recruit to the channel, Finighan had spent 18 years at the BBC (including 12 at BBC World), followed by four years with CNN before moving to Doha. He was headhunted by Salah Negm who flew to London to deliver the sales pitch in person.

"It took Salah three times to get me here," Finighan says (personal communication, November 11, 2011). "He asked me three times and I was reluctant. My reluctance was that I listened to people at other networks that I have worked for, people I respect, who all sort of shook their heads and said, 'Oh, you've got to worry about the bias.' But the more I watched Al Jazeera, I couldn't see it. I couldn't see the bias that other people said was there."

He settled into his new workplace quickly, and by early 2011 was a regular face on the flagship Newshour programs, in addition to being in charge of training the next generation of AJE presenters. And now it looked incredibly likely that Adrian Finighan was about to anchor the climactic moments of the Egyptian Revolution.

"It's 19 hours GMT, 9 o'clock in Cairo," announces Finighan on air, marking the top of the hour. "This is Al Jazeera with continuing coverage of events in Egypt, where after 17 days of protest excitement is growing as events appear to be coming to a head."

He crosses immediately to Ayman Mohyeldin.

"Are we seeing history unfold here?" Finighan asks.

"By every sense of the word, you are definitely seeing history unfold here," Mohyeldin replies. "Because at the end of the day no matter what happens here you have already seen history bring, in many people's eyes, one of the most authoritarian regimes, one of the most powerful autocratic states in the history of the Arab world, essentially to a complete transformation."

After her close call in Alexandria, Rawya Rageh has spent the past eight days lying low in her apartment as per Doha's wishes. But sitting there, frustrated, watching the revolution on her TV screen instead of reporting on it, she decides it is time for a change.

"I was like, 'You know what? I'm going to go to Tahrir whether they like it or not,'" she remembers (personal communication, April 25, 2012). "And I showed up to

Tahrir and I said [to the newsdesk], 'Look, I'm in Tahrir.' And they were, 'What? What? ... Okay, fine, since you're there we'll take you on the phone."

So the newsdesk passes Rageh through to the control room.

"Let's speak to someone who is there," announces Finighan. "Al Jazeera's Rawya Rageh who's on the line now from down amongst the crowd in Liberation Square ... tell us about what you're hearing from people down there in the Square."

"Adrian, there's a very strong sense of anticipation and excitement here in Tahrir Square," she begins. "It's been nine days since we've last heard from President Mubarak ... and the chant they were chanting just a few minutes ago was, 'Leave, go away, leave!' That is a very clear sentiment here amongst the protesters ..."

But even while she was doing that phono, Rageh was sure in her heart that Mubarak wasn't going to resign.

"I knew it wasn't going to happen," she remembers. "I'm Egyptian, I grew up under Mubarak for 30 years and I know him — at least I think I know him very well — and I just knew he was not going to do it. He was not going to do it. I really had this certainty. I mean, I was not standing there fidgeting or worrying. I knew he was going to give a speech, and I was going to wait and listen to the speech because obviously you have to wait and listen in a situation like that, but I had this certainty within me that he was not going to resign, he was not going to step down."

In Alexandria, Jamal Elshayyal is monitoring crowds of protesters who are similarly excited about the upcoming speech.

"Just a few minutes ago, maybe 15 minutes ago, when news was that Mubarak was expected to speak," he reports in vision, having managed to get his BGAN working, "a lot of the people around me left here and went to the surrounding coffee shops [to find TV sets]. As you can see as my camera pans, there are ... dozens, hundreds of people at the coffee shops ... as they wait and wait in

anticipation to see what many here are billing as the final speech of President Mubarak."

With Mubarak's address now overdue, all eyes are on the State broadcaster. Adrian Finighan tells viewers what is causing the hold-up.

"I just want to show our viewers what's happening on Egyptian State Television," he says. "Take a look at this."

The director cuts to State TV which is playing a slick, cinematic, highly produced tourism advert for the country. It shows children waving flags running through fields in slow-mo, lush farmlands, the pyramids, and other postcard scenes.

"This is, well it's been going on for about two minutes now. What you're looking at is a promo, an Egyptian State Television promo for Egypt, highlighting some of the positive aspects of life in Egypt, aspects of Egypt that people would want to celebrate. As I said, that's been going on for some two, three minutes or so now … we're waiting on Egyptian State Television to begin showing that address from President Hosni Mubarak."

Trying to fill more time, Finighan crosses back to Abdel-Hamid in Tahrir.

"Hoda, one of the best jobs in television tonight," he says. "That fantastic view over that Square with that amazing atmosphere that's there."

Abdel-Hamid puts her hand to her earpiece, clearly struggling with the incredible noise coming from the Square.

"I'm sorry, the sound is so loud," she says. "Can you repeat, please?"

"I said you've got one of the best jobs in television, Hoda, with that view tonight overlooking the Square!"

She shakes her head and looks off-camera.

“Hoda still can’t hear me. That’s a shame. That crowd really is very noisy there. I mean, I’ll shut up for a minute and let you listen to it.”

For a few moments viewers concentrate on the pulsating crowd in Tahrir Square, the sense of urgent anticipation almost visible. And then, with no pomp or ceremony, Hosni Mubarak appears on screen, dressed, as always, in dark suit and tie and standing against a plain blue backdrop.

> “In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful. My fellow countrymen, the citizens, the children of Egypt, men and women,” he begins. “I address you today, the youth of Egypt, stationed in Tahrir Square and nationwide. I address all with a speech from the heart, a speech from father to his children, to his sons and daughters. I tell you I take pride in you, the symbol of a new generation of Egypt. Calling for change for the better, adhering to the same. Dreaming of a bright future and shaping such a future.
>
> “I tell you before anything that all those who fell, martyrs and injured, their blood will not go down the drain. And I confirm that I will not relent to penalise all those responsible, fiercely … and I will hold a candle to those who committed crimes against our youth to the most severe sentences according to the law. And I address the families of those innocent victims that I felt deep pain, the same pain you felt. My heart went out and I felt the pain as you did. I tell you that my response to your voice and your message and your demands is a commitment that cannot be waived. I am totally determined and adamant to fulfil all the promises, genuinely, honestly and seriously.”

The director puts Mubarak and Tahrir Square side-by-side on the screen.

> “My fellow countrymen, the youth of Egypt, my fellow citizens. I announced in very plain, unequivocal words that I will not run [in] the coming presidential elections. Satisfied with what I have offered to the

> nation for over 60 years in the time of war and peace, I announced that I will adhere to this position and I also announced that I will similarly remain adamant to continue to shoulder my responsibilities ... This is the oath I've taken before God and the nation and I will continue to keep this oath until we, with the people, rest assured I have laid down a vision, a clear one, to exit the current crisis and to realise the demands voiced by the youth and citizens."

And with that, it seems apparent that Mubarak is not stepping down. There is no immediate reaction in the Square, probably a combination of most people relying on word of mouth to know what the President has said, and the fact that his declaration was not emphatic.

> "We have initiated a very constructive national dialogue encompassing the youth of the nation who called for change, together with all other political forces. And this dialogue has yielded preliminary agreement in stances and views. Therefore, we can lay our foot on the right path to exit the crisis and we should continue marching into this path to move from the guidelines of the agreement into a clear roadmap and a specific timetable."

The protesters are starting to get rowdy now, the president's intentions becoming clearer. For the next few minutes, Mubarak outlines in some detail the constitutional amendments he intends to push through, then makes another appeal to the demonstrators' patriotism and outlines his personal sacrifices for the country.

> "My fellow countrymen ... I have been a youth just like you when I learned the ethics of military: loyalty to the homeland and sacrifice for its sake. I have exhausted my life defending the homeland and its sovereignty. I went to war and won victories. I lived the days of occupation and I also lived through the days of victory and liberation of Sinai. It was the happiest day of my life when I lifted the flag of Egypt, hoisting over Sinai. I have faced death on many occasions, as a

> pilot and in Addis Ababa. I never reeled under foreign pressures or dictators' orders. I safeguarded peace. I worked for the peace, stability, independence and sovereignty of Egypt. Worked for the development for the generation of Egypt. I never sought false power or popularity. I am certain that the majority of the people are aware of who Hosni Mubarak is and I feel pain in my heart for what I hear from some of my countrymen."

Tahrir Square is now demonstrably angry. Silence has given way to boos and jeers. Mubarak begins to sum up.

> "I have seen that it is required to delegate the powers and authorities of the president to the vice president as per the constitution. I am fully aware that Egypt will accept this exit. The will of people cannot be dented. Egypt will be back on its feet by the genuineness and truth of its people. We will not allow others to gloat over us. We will prove, we the Egyptians, our ability to materialise the demands of people by civilised, conscious dialogue. We will prove that we are not a satellite state, followers to others, being dictated orders from others ... Egypt will remain until I hand over the trust and banner, it is the means and the end. It is the responsibility and the duty. The beginning of my life and the end of it. It is the homeland of birth and death. It will remain a beloved homeland. I will not separate from the soil until I'm buried underneath. You will remain honest, proud people, standing with your heads held high in dignity and pride.
>
> "May God save Egypt, a peaceful country, and may God safeguard its people and guide them to the rightful path, and may peace be upon you all."

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The speech was ambiguous. While it contained no clear resignation, Mubarak did state that he was delegating at least some of his powers to the vice

president, but implied he would stay on as president at least in name until elections in September. The pre-recorded video also appeared to contain at least one jump cut, leading some to later speculate about what might have been edited out.

"Well, that was President Hosni Mubarak there addressing the Egyptian people on State Television," summarises Finighan as the director takes the live Tahrir camera full frame again. "A hush came over Tahrir Square as the President began his speech. It became clear that the President wasn't going anywhere and then the mood turned to anger. People started to put their shoes in the air ... [a] carnival-like atmosphere has turned to one of anger and resentment."

He throws straight to Rawya Rageh, who is down amongst the crowd.

"I know it's noisy [but] tell us about the mood there."

"Well, Adrian, you can see how the mood just completely altered as the President progressed with his speech," she begins. "Halfway through the President's speech when he mentioned that he had spent years of his life in public service, people almost certainly knew what was the next line because that's what they've heard him repeat all throughout his speeches since the protests began on January 25th, and that's when they took off their shoes and started waving them in the air. An incredible expression of censure in this part of this world."

Finighan crosses next to Ayman Mohyeldin at the Sheraton for closer analysis of the speech.

"It started off with the tone he has been using as he has been in so many speeches over the past days and years, that of a father speaking to his children," begins Mohyeldin. "It is by many people's assessments very patronising ... In this speech we see a President who's still very much entrenched in the notion that he will hold onto power. Again, he made reference to the military service that he has had ... in essence, trying to draw again on the emotional sympathy that Egyptians have for the military and the wars and sacrifices that have been made by those in the

armed forces ... The tone of it on the one hand seemed to be of patronage, but at the same time seeing some very minor concessions in terms of these constitutional amendments the President was talking about."

The speech delivered by Mubarak is obviously different to that expected by Tadros and others, and to the copy which Salah Negm claims was supplied to him earlier in the day. Mohyeldin alludes to the disparity between the well-placed rumours and what has just happened.

"There was reason to believe that Egypt was on the cusp of something historic but the President's statement certainly did not live up to the billing that was being leaked by official news agencies as well as the Egyptian military itself. I can tell you one thing that this is definitely going to do: it is going to mobilise protesters tomorrow, that's for sure. Because you can hear the reaction in the background, the anger and the demands and the calls of those protesters."

On reflection, Mohyeldin was not surprised that Mubarak did not fully relinquish the presidency that night, but he well understood the Egyptian people's frustration.

"I think Mubarak had made every concession possible so it was really a question of what other concession could he have possibly made," he reflects (personal communication, April 5, 2012). "[Mubarak had appointed a] vice president, sacked the secretary of interior, appointed a PM, vowed not to run again. I think that's why there was a such a sense of anticipation. I think people were extremely disappointed that he didn't do it. But it was one of those things, like, the second immediately after he announced that he wouldn't step down everyone was extremely disappointed but then two seconds later everyone had been regalvanised and re-energised to keep on with their protests."

Mohyeldin's reporting and analysis of the speech that night was notable for its measured tone and refusal to buy into the heightened emotions displayed by others. He says that in such highly charged circumstances he tries extra hard to keep his reporting level and calm.

"You try not to get emotional, you just try to stay focused on everything that's happening around you and not be overdramatic. I think when reporters are overdramatic and they try to hype something up they tend to lose a lot of credibility. And I know from me that comes across as slightly exaggerated so I try to always turn it down an additional two notches to overcompensate for the fact that everything else around you is already heightened and the sense of anticipation and excitement."

It's not a journalistic approach that was shared by everyone that night, as Alessandra Stanley (2011) wrote the next day in the New York Times:

"Mr Mohyeldin remained poker-faced and soft-spoken as he covered the protesters' enraged reaction. He was far less indignant than Anderson Cooper of CNN, who told Wolf Blitzer: 'This is a slap in the face. This is stepping on the grave, on the blood of Egyptian people that has been spilled for more than two weeks in that square we're looking at, Wolf.'"

In Alexandria, Jamal Elshayyal is now positioned on a rooftop overlooking similar scenes of anger to those in Cairo. Finighan throws to him.

"The crowd here which was joyous just before the speech is now fuming to say the least," Elshayyal reports. "They didn't wait for President Mubarak to finish his speech, as soon as they heard that he intended to continue in office they went up roaring and shouting."

Elshayyal was now working with a producer for the first time since arriving in Egypt, and had been allocated a camera operator. "A six-foot-three New Zealander," he remembers (personal communication, April 12, 2012). "You know, blonde hair and just stands out like a sore thumb. Great shooter but at the time I was wary that people were still looking out for foreigners."

The team hears that the protesters are planning a march to the city's military headquarters to camp out until Mubarak resigns, so they dismantle the live

position and head down into the crowd. Elshayyal is keen to attract as little attention as possible, so they shoot for only a few minutes and then start moving towards their nearby car. But a few of the protesters call out for them to stop.

"I tell [the cameraman] and the producer, 'Carry on walking, don't turn back,'" he remembers. "I turn around to speak to the [protesters], and they're like, 'Who's that guy?' And I say, 'Who?' You know, buying time so [they] can leave. [The protesters] then start saying, 'You're foreigners, we're going to take you to the army.' I tell them I'm not. They're, like, 'Give me your ID.' Obviously I don't have my ID because I got robbed in Suez, so the only thing I have is my British passport which obviously isn't going to help in that situation. So, we start having a discussion about this and some people who already knew me because I've been covering it for a week, the organisers, they say, 'No, he's a good guy, he's Egyptian, we know him.' The other guys say, 'No, we're going to take him to the police, we know that they're spies.' I mean, the Egyptian media at the time was so poisonous that it literally put our lives at threat. What transpired was I was a rope in the tug-of-war. One side of people were literally pulling my arm towards the army, and the other side are pulling me, they're like, 'No, we're protecting him, you're not going to take him.' And this went on for a few minutes.

Eventually, with his clothes starting to rip, Elshayyal manages to escape the mobs.

"I legged it down back alleyways and back roads that I knew of. I got into a microbus but unfortunately didn't look where it was going and it [took] me back to the same place. I put my head down as we went past through it and I could still see the crowds arguing between each other. I managed to get away from there."

As Egyptians on the streets of cities across the country spend the evening planning a massive protest for the next day, Vice President Omar Suleiman appears on State Television and pleads with them to give up.

"I call on the youth of Egypt, the youth and the heroes of Egypt: go back home, go back to your work," he says.

“The country needs your hand … do not listen to the satellite television stations whose main purpose is to fuel sedition and drive a wedge among the people and to tarnish the image of people. Only listen to your own conscience, your common sense, and your awareness of the perils around us.”

The final Friday

In what has become a familiar ritual since the first protests on 25 January, protesters camped in Tahrir Square rise on Friday morning and stretch out the stiffness from sleeping on cold concrete. The centre of the Square is even more packed with tents and crude shelters than usual, and there seem to be more people already gathered than at the same time on any recent morning. The Supreme Council of Armed Forces is reported to be holding an “important meeting” but with little protest action expected until after midday prayers, AJE switches to other programming in back half-hours.

After last night finding herself on the receiving end of an inaccurate leak, Sherine Tadros calls her source to ask what went wrong.

“All he said was, ‘The army are very angry,’” she recalls (personal communication, January 14, 2013). “I was like, ‘What does that mean?’ He goes, ‘Listen, I can’t tell you more but what I can tell you is it was a surprise to many of us that [Mubarak] didn’t resign last night.’”

Tadros receives another call a few hours later claiming that Mubarak will definitely resign that night. Salah Negm receives similar information. The entire AJE operation is now preparing itself for a second night of suspense.

At 11:45am Cairo time, in a move reminiscent of the Day of Rage, the channel cuts into a panel chat program about Cambodia with breaking news. Presenter Teymoor Nabili speaks urgently over a feed from Egyptian State Television.

“You’re watching Al Jazeera and we’re breaking into our current programming to bring you this statement being broadcast on Egyptian television,” he says. “It’s being accredited to the Egyptian military. Let’s listen in to what they have to say.”

A uniformed military official appears on air, reading from a prepared statement. Mustafa Barakat translates live:

“Military statement number two from the Supreme Council of Armed Forces. In the light of the rapid developments where the fate of the country is being shaped, as we closely monitor the internal and external events; and in the light of the delegation by the president to his vice president; and based on our national commitment to safeguard the security of the homeland, the council has guaranteed the implementation of the following resolution.”

The official outlines several points of action, including the end of emergency law “once the current circumstances come to an end,” the commitment to free and fair elections, and immunity for “honest men that signal corruption.”

After the conclusion of the short statement, the director cuts to the Tahrir Square live camera and Nabili back-announces.

“You’re watching live pictures from Cairo’s Tahrir Square where we’re getting towards the start of Friday prayers on the third Friday of this uprising in Egypt, what they are calling the final Friday,” he says. “The demonstrators hoping this will be the end of President Mubarak. But what we have just heard from the military after a meeting of the Supreme Military Council may not be particularly welcomed by the people you are seeing in that Square. The military have been promising a statement and you’ve just heard it being read … the statement perhaps being as notable for what it didn’t say [as] what it did say. It did not mention the President, it did not mention any suggestion that the President will go any further than his own statement last night in which he announced he will not be standing down.”

Emboldened by her successful day of reporting yesterday, Rawya Rageh has ventured back out on the street today.

"I called [the Cairo team] and I said, 'You know what? I'm going to head to the palace,'" she recalls (personal communication, April 25, 2012). "I took a taxi and I remember the producer saying … 'Well I don't have a camera to send with you.' And I was like, 'I don't care, I'm just going to go.' So, I went to the palace, and again … Al Jazeera had this advantage of having people in Tahrir, outside the palace, in Alexandria, in these different places."

Nabili crosses to her on the phone.

"What are you seeing from where you are? What's going on?" he asks.

"There's a rather large crowd here but some of these people have been here from last night after the President's speech," begins Rageh. "There are hundreds of people here chanting against the President, asking the President to stand down. This moment is a particularly interesting moment because there is a senior army officer here trying to read out the military statement that was issued just a few minutes ago to the protesters, but every time he tries to read out any of the lines of that statement the protesters chant loudly and interrupt him and he's completely unable to read out any of the statement. The sentiment here is very tense, you can feel the frustration among the people, a completely different mood from what we have seen before President Mubarak had spoken … that anger after the speech has driven people to walk on foot from Tahrir Square to the Presidential Palace, we're talking miles away, people told us the journey took them on foot an hour and forty-five minutes, some people two hours. The military overnight apparently asked people to go back to Tahrir Square and offered buses …"

In Alexandria, Jamal Elshayyal has managed to set up a BGAN live position near the focus of protests in that city. He appears on camera in front of a large crowd.

"As you can see behind me, hundreds of thousands of Alexandrians have already gathered at el-Qaed Ibrahim Mosque which has already been a focal point of pro-democracy, anti-Mubarak protests over the past 17 days or so," he reports. "The Imam, or the person who'll be leading the prayers at this mosque, is a person who is a very well-known personality. [He] was actually forbidden from preaching at Egypt's mosques by this regime ... so, the sentiment that will be coming out of this Friday sermon will be one of anger and opposition to Mubarak. Some of the reaction we've had so far, speaking to the people after the military statement that we just heard in the past half hour or so, again more disappointment, anger and opposition. The people here feel that the army is not doing enough, and a lot of them are losing faith and losing it pretty quickly."

Being some minutes ahead of Alexandria, Friday prayers have already begun in Cairo. The Imam leading prayers in Tahrir has fainted mid-sermon, another man stepping in to take his place, and demonstrators are trying without much luck to make way for the evacuation of a worshipper who also seems to have fainted. Enormous flags and banners are being waved over protesters' heads, including one that reads, simply, "Thank you, Al Jazeera." One camera shot shows a large procession of demonstrators en route to the State TV building, and another new shot from the town of Mansoura is shown on screen for a short time but is of such terrible quality there is little value in keeping it on air.

Unconfirmed reports start arriving that Hosni Mubarak may have left Cairo for the Sinai resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh, and that the Supreme Council of Armed Forces is soon expected to release its third communiqué. And then at 4:30 pm local time, a breaking news strap plays out at the bottom of the screen: "STATEMENT IS EXPECTED FROM PRESIDENTIAL PALACE SHORTLY."

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In their attempts to secure good coverage of ongoing protests in Alexandria, Jamal Elshayyal and his team have attracted some dangerous and unwanted attention in circumstances similar to those of Rawya Rageh ten days earlier.

Elshayyal had found an apartment owner willing to let him set up a live position on the roof, even though an Al Jazeera Arabic crew had recently been forced off the same roof by angry mobs. Elshayyal emphasised the fact that as an English channel correspondent he is not widely recognised in Egypt, so the owner had allowed them inside. Unfortunately, Al Jazeera Arabic has decided to rebroadcast Elshayyal's camera footage, and men watching televisions in coffee shops below the apartment are now aware of the new Al Jazeera crew upstairs.

"The next thing we know, the door gets kicked in to this apartment and each one of us has a knife to the neck," Elshayyal recalls (personal communication, April 12, 2012). "Some of the guys who kick in the door start robbing our stuff, taking it to the elevator. So, our producer runs in to try and get the stuff. Justin [the cameraman] is standing there and he's got two angry people shouting at him, 'Israeli! Israeli!'"

Elshayyal tries to calm the aggressors and assure them that nobody is Israeli, but can't help a smile at the sight of confused teenage boys holding machetes to their necks. One of the boys gets distracted and asks why he's laughing. "I don't understand what you want me to do," Elshayyal replies.

The attackers ask for Justin's passport to prove that he's not Israeli.

"Justin's not sure whether to pull out his passport or not because he doesn't know if he's going to take it. I was, like, 'Just pull out the passport. Worse thing is they rob your passport, best thing is they give it back.' So, he pulls out the passport, they have a look at it — funnily enough, they look at it upside down — and say, 'Okay, fine, he's not [Israeli].'"

Before leaving, the mob steals all of the team's television equipment, once again leaving Elshayyal with nothing more than a mobile phone with which to report.

"What pissed me off is, they robbed our stuff, our camera and our BGAN," he says. "So, again, I'm without a camera and a BGAN. Literally an hour and a half later, Mubarak steps down."

The sun is now low in the sky, casting an orange glow on the Tahrir Square protesters and their banners, including the now-ubiquitous "PEOPLE DEMAND REMOVAL OF THE REGIME." Sunset prayers begin, multiple loudspeakers around central Cairo audible over the cameras' microphones. Protesters in Tahrir are making futile attempts to organise themselves into lines for prayer but it is simply too crowded for many to do so. Egyptian State Television is playing footage of military figures in uniforms and suits chatting to protesters at the front of a crowd somewhere in Cairo, ruffling hair and smiling in symbolic displays of camaraderie. One newsreader interviews a pro-democracy activist — the first such interview in 18 days.

Helicopters have been spotted flying in and out of the Presidential Palace complex, and soldiers within the grounds are throwing food and water through the fence to protesters. Ayman Mohyeldin has been making calls and his sources confirm that Mubarak is indeed in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Presenter Ghida Fakhry reports that senior military figures have entered the State TV building, perhaps indicating that a statement may be imminent. She then throws to Rawya Rageh at the Presidential Palace.

"There's at least 10,000 people or more here outside the Presidential Palace," Rageh reports. "Just in the last hour the tanks that are behind the barbed wire … moved their barrels sideways, initially the barrels were pointing at the protesters. And once the barrels were moved sideways the crowd erupted, cheering and clapping. Another interesting development as well, the military perhaps trying to come closer to the people, started posting the pictures of those who have lost their lives since the January 25th protests on the tanks. These people, of course, are being hailed as martyrs … very interesting developments that have increased the excitement of the crowd."

Worshippers in the Square have managed to form themselves into rough lines and are praying. Close-up shots show the Imam standing at the front of the crowd with other arms-crossed worshippers, microphone held up to his mouth. An

incredible wide shot pans across Tahrir Square showing beautifully fractured geometric lines of people bowed on knees with foreheads pushed to the ground, like uneven rows of corn kernels.

A strap appears on screen: "GENERAL SECRETARY OF EGYPT'S RULING NDP SAYS HE IS RESIGNING FROM POST AND PARTY." Followed by: "REUTERS: SENIOR MILITARY SPOKESMAN ARRIVES AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE IN CAIRO."

It is the top of the hour and the end of Fakhry's three-hour stretch on air. While viewers continue to watch the Tahrir Square camera, she hands over to the next presenter:

"I'm Ghida Fakhry, this is Al Jazeera, and I leave you with Adrian Finighan for this live, continuous coverage of unfolding events in Egypt on day 18 of the mass demonstrations across the country."

Waiving the office

Adrian Finighan wasn't even meant to be at work that day. But thanks to a shift swap with presenter Nick Clark, who had a sporting commitment, he was about to front one of the biggest moments in the Al Jazeera Network's history.

As Fakhry wrapped up the previous hour, slowly walking off set and speaking into her radio mic, Finighan sat down at the desk and waited for his cue to speak.

"[Ghida] was talking over live pictures," he remembers (personal communication, November 11, 2011), "and she hands to me. She says, 'More coverage now with Adrian Finighan.' Slight pause. Let the pictures breathe. And then [I] started."

There is something different about Finighan's normally measured voice when he does start talking — an almost imperceptible change in tone that hints at adrenaline, anticipation and nerves.

"It is 1600 hours GMT, 6 o'clock in Egypt," he begins. "A country in the midst of a revolution. Hello, I'm Adrian Finighan, live in Doha."

Director Richard Filby and program editor Matthew Moore had just completed similarly rushed changeovers with their counterparts in the control room. Filby briefly puts Finighan to line so viewers can match a face to the new voice. It is the first and last time they'll see him in three hours.

"Our continuing coverage, as Ghida says, of what's going on in Egypt. We have correspondents right across the country."

Filby cuts up a split screen of the two on-camera correspondents in Cairo.

"Ayman Mohyeldin in the capital, Hoda Abdul-Hamid overlooking Liberation Square," continues Finighan. "And from the port city of Alexandria, Jamal Elshayyal."

Filby goes back to shots of Tahrir which show much of the crowd still lined up for prayers.

"We'll also have reports from all of our team right across the country over the course of the next hour or so ... Let's go straight now to Al Jazeera's Ayman Mohyeldin who's live in Cairo. A lot of developments to discuss here, Ayman. Let's start with the fact that we're expecting that statement from Egyptian State Television ..."

Moore and Filby are both watching State Television, determined not to miss a single frame of the statement when it happens. Finighan can hear them both talking in his earpiece while he is beginning his interview with Mohyeldin, and

picks up someone shouting, "Egyptian TV now!" He looks down at the State broadcaster on one of his desk monitors.

"In fact, we think it's going to happen right now, Ayman, before I throw a question at you," he says on air. "We're watching State television here now, who are running their titles, their preamble, we're seeing a newsreader on the screen right now ..."

Filby cuts from Ayman to Egyptian State TV. A newsreader is talking.

"Let's ... have we got a translator across it? Let's listen in."

Locked inside his airless little sound booth, Mustafa Barakat was ready to translate.

"I was asked many times, 'How do you feel being an Egyptian when Mubarak speaks?' he remembers (personal communication, January 19, 2012). "I said, 'When I'm doing my job I forget everything around me. If a cannon is fired next to me I cannot even feel that.'"

When Omar Suleiman appeared on screen, Barakat was perhaps the only person left talking in the whole AJE building.

"In the name of Allah the most gracious, most merciful," he translates. "My fellow citizens, at these hard circumstances our country is experiencing, President Muhammed Hosni Mubarak has decided to waive the office of the President of the Republic, and instructed the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to run the affairs of the country. May God guide our steps."

"I was being fed the translation in my ear which viewers were hearing," recalls Finighan (personal communication, November 11, 2011). "It was so very brief, and my understanding was that he was gone, and so what do you say?"

With only the slightest shake of emotion in his voice, and the State TV jingle providing a strange movie-like backing track to his words, Finighan sums up Suleiman's announcement for millions of viewers around the world.

"There you go: short but sweet. Hosni Mubarak has gone."

Filby cuts from State TV to the Tahrir Square camera where word of Suleiman's statement is yet to make its way through most of the crowd. It was such a short speech with such momentous ramifications that it threw everyone in the control room. "We thought, okay, he's gone, now what's the next step?" remembers Matthew Moore. But Moore's instinct was the same as any other TV producer's would have been: cross to the most experienced and knowledgeable correspondent for analysis of the statement.

"Let's go live to Cairo," says Finighan. "Ayman Mohyeldin is there. What do you make of that, Ayman?"

Mohyeldin can't hear Finighan properly due to some sort of technical problem and viewers hear him in the background repeatedly asking, "Guys? Guys?"

"It was partly good luck that we had a bit of bad luck," says Moore. "We were trying to go to Ayman and we couldn't really go to him right away and that meant that we had to pause for a bit … and Salah [Negm] came rushing in [to the control room] and said, 'Just listen to that.'"

Negm's recollection of his instruction to the crew is a bit blunter.

"I told everyone to shut up," he says (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

Regardless, Finighan got the message.

"Listen to that crowd," he says. "That's what they've been waiting for. Hosni Mubarak has gone."

Filby cuts Finighan's mic and the revolutionaries take over AJE's airwaves for the next seven minutes and twenty seconds.

In Tahrir, those who had been praying before the announcement seem determined to finish, but the rest of the Square has gone crazy. The cacophony of screams and cheers combine to form a wall of highly compressed sound, transmitted via satellite to Doha. Occasionally, individual sounds, like a woman screaming at the very edge of her lungs' capacity, emerge from the wall of noise. Hundreds of flags are waving in the air, messing with the extreme compression of the BGAN's video signal. Small groups of people surge from side to side as they hug. The camera shakes, as though it is recording an earthquake.

The strap at the bottom of the screen reads simply: "MUBARAK STEPS DOWN."

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AJE's seven minutes of presenter silence has been widely praised by commentators around the world. Letting the scenes play out raw seems so counter-intuitive for TV news where the urge is to fill every second of airtime with commentary, but Salah Negm can't understand why AJE would have done it any differently.

"In telling a story like a big revolution somewhere, it's not what the presenter says, it's what's down there with the demonstrators, about their slogans, their chanting, it's about the reaction to news they hear. That's part of the story," he argues (personal communication, January 24, 2012). "And with television, you're able to convey that almost as if you are there to the audience. Now, in a lot of other stations you will find the presenters speaking flat over that and they don't give you the real atmosphere, but we took a deliberate decision that moments and minutes of silence conveying what's happening on the ground is much more stronger and will give you more information about what is happening … We are silent, the people were talking."

Negm has form in this area, having once made a similar call while working at another network.

"When they removed the statue of Saddam Hussein [in 2003] ... I went to the gallery, told everybody to keep silent, no talks, get what's happening on the ground because this is a historic moment, you shouldn't pollute it."

Matthew Moore knew that giving the pictures space was the right decision.

"We could tell once we were into it, very quickly, that that was the climax of the story — for now anyway — and it was worth just letting it breathe," he says (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

"It just felt right to leave it," agrees Finighan (personal communication, November 11, 2011), "because the pictures said everything. How many news stories do you get where you don't need commentary? And don't forget we've got captions at the bottom of the screen, so I don't need to intrude because the screen clutter is telling people what's happened. I don't need to say anything."

During those seven minutes, sitting at the presenter's desk and soaking up the scenes in Tahrir, Finighan also had a good view of the newsroom full of celebrating journalists and producers — celebrating not so much Mubarak's fall, but the climax of a story that had consumed their lives for weeks.

"There are a lot of Egyptians working here, but remember that we had been doing this for weeks and weeks and weeks, this story, rolling with this coverage," Finighan says. "And after a while, from my point of view — I can't speak for anyone else in the newsroom, but from my point of view — it gets hard to remain fresh, to keep it going. Everybody was working long hours, really hard, but it's the same thing day in and day out, more or less. You're live in Tahrir Square, more demonstrations, what more is there to say? And that's very draining, it's very hard when you're trying to keep the coverage fresh and relevant. And so I think that the eruption of emotion in the newsroom when ... people stood up and there were people hugging each other, I don't necessarily think that was a reaction to

Mubarak [being] gone, it was a sense of relief and we did it. It was a sense of team spirit, as in, we got it live, on air, we took the announcement and after weeks and weeks of coverage, it's happened. We were right to go with it as heavy as we had. Our editorial instincts had paid off, if you like, that we knew this wasn't going to fizzle out. And that was it, we'd built up to that moment ... people were just relieved that after being on the news treadmill for weeks that it was finally over."

Ben Bawden was the director who had handed over to Richard Filby barely 10 minutes earlier. He'd left the studio and was driving out of the Al Jazeera carpark when he tuned in to the Doha radio station that streams AJE's audio around the clock.

"All I could hear was cheering [and] crowds chanting," he remembers (personal communication, January 23, 2012). "And after about two or three minutes it dawned on me that, hang on a minute, something big has just gone on. And the penny dropped — hang on, Mubarak's gone ... I thought, I've gotta be a part of this, I've gotta be at work. So, I turned the car around."

Bawden went back inside the studio and stood at the back of the cramped control room with a dozen other people to watch the news unfold. Understandably, he felt a little disappointed that he was not in charge when it happened.

"I was so close for this historic moment to happen on my shift, to have been in the control room, in the director's chair when Mubarak stood down. It would've been one of the stories you could've passed down to your grandchildren, that you were actually directing the output of Al Jazeera when this momentous occasion happened."

During those seven long minutes, Finighan was in constant discussion with Filby and Moore about when to cut back in and recommence commentary. He also kept an eye on Negm, who he knew would give a signal if needed.

"I had the benefit of being able to see our boss, who is possibly the best boss I've had in this business," Finighan says (personal communication, November 11,

2011). “He’s a true news man … I mean, sure, he has his eccentricities, and I love him for that, but he knows his stuff and he knows television and he also knows what he’s doing in terms of news. I’ve worked for other bosses who know what they want in terms of television but are not necessarily as editorially strong, and I respect their view of the way they craft the way that TV looks, but Salah is a true news man. And so, a couple of times I looked across at him and we didn’t catch each other’s eye but he was watching, I could tell.”

After the original failed attempt, Moore and Filby want to cross to Ayman Mohyeldin as soon as they bring Finighan back on air. They are watching Mohyeldin on their monitors and can see that, even removed from the focus of celebration in Tahrir Square, he is feeling the weight of the moment.

“I was very emotional. Extremely emotional,” Mohyeldin remembers (personal communication, April 5, 2012). “I mean, I got very teary-eyed and I was very moved by everything that was happening.”

So, after giving Mohyeldin time to compose himself, Richard Filby brings in Adrian Finighan’s microphone and gives him a cue.

“The roar of the crowd says it all,” begins Finighan, his voice calm and level. “After 18 days, President Hosni Mubarak has resigned. It was left in the end to Vice President Omar Suleiman to make that brief statement on Egyptian State Television. He said that President Mubarak has given up his post as president and has asked the armed forces to be in charge of the country’s affairs. It’s 12 minutes past 16 hours GMT, this is Al Jazeera on quite an historic day. The protesters there chanting now in Tahrir Square, ‘The people have brought down the regime.’ History in the making. Let’s get a view now from Ayman Mohyeldin, our correspondent who’s been there throughout the protests in central Cairo.”

Mohyeldin appears on screen. His eyes are red and he is repeatedly swallowing, as if to choke down tears. Behind him on the streets is a symphony of car horns.

“Ayman, President Mubarak has gone,” states Finighan simply.

Mohyeldin shakes his head, slowly composing a response in his head.

"Adrian, after nearly 30 years in office, nearly 11,000 days. On January 25th, thousands of Egyptians, frustrated by what they've described as tyrannical rule, oppressed for so many years, with nothing more than strong determination and their willpower, really took to the streets all across the country in unprecedented protests to speak and to be heard. And tonight, after all of these weeks of frustration, of violence and intimidation, many of them giving up their lives, their sacrifice to be heard. Today the people of Egypt undoubtedly have been heard, not only by the President but by people all around the world. And you can hear it for yourself in Liberation Square. It is truly a historic moment, not only for every Egyptian, not only for Tunisians who inspired what happened here, but indeed for Arabs all around the region, for people all around the world that have been seeking their freedom for so many years."

Finighan then asks a question that stops not just Mohyeldin in his tracks, but everyone watching.

"Ayman, you're the first Egyptian I've spoken to since this happened. A personal question for you a moment: you've been there throughout this, all of the 18 days. I want you to stop being impartial for a moment because your reporting has been exemplary all the way through. Give me your personal feeling as to what you're seeing there, now, in Cairo tonight."

Mohyeldin's face is not visible on screen, but an awkward pause (made even more awkward by the satellite delay) says it all. There is a small sound that could be either a scoff or a nervous laugh, and then a halting response.

"Well ..."

Another long pause.

“I’m not sure if [the question] was right or wrong,” says Matthew Moore, even after a year to think about it.

“It was a surprise question,” concedes Salah Negm (personal communication, January 24, 2012).

“Ayman and I haven’t actually met [but] there are certain people with whom you are able to develop a rapport,” says Finighan (personal communication, November 11, 2011). “I wanted to bring the viewer a sense of what it feels like to be an Egyptian [but] he was very reluctant to take off [his balanced reporter’s hat, so] I almost had to give him permission to do it.”

In the newsroom and in front of televisions all around the world, everyone was waiting to hear how Mohyeldin was going to respond.

“Well, you know, Adrian, as somebody who has spent a lot of time growing up here in Egypt,” he begins in the first person before drifting off again into generalisations, “and you’ve seen the sacrifices that have been made by so many people over the years, ordinary Egyptians who had been complaining for a better quality of life for those who, for decades, indeed tried to make that dream a reality … I can assure you that every Egyptian, whether they’re stepping in Egyptian soil right now or if they’re abroad, they’re feeling a great sense of pride because for the first time in a long time, perhaps even in the modern history of this country, Egyptians’ voice has been heard by their government.”

On reflection, Moore sees the value in Finighan’s question.

“What Adrian was soliciting was a personal reaction that other networks perhaps didn’t have access to at that time,” he says (personal communication, January 24, 2012). “It was relevant but of course [Mohyeldin] wanted to say it’s not about me, it’s about hundreds of thousands of Egyptians … It wasn’t a gross transgression of journalistic integrity to ask them what they were feeling as human beings at that point because we’d been getting a very professional service from them for weeks and I don’t think that was compromised.”

“The reaction was spontaneous,” says Negm (personal communication, January 24, 2012) about the exchange, “and it appeared [as] journalists being human, that they feel and they have a kind of relation to the story. [Ayman] doesn’t need to be from the same nationality — if you’ve covered the Egyptian revolution for [18 days] you should have a kind of feeling towards it, or attitude. At least if it is an attitude of relief because the 24 hours you’ve been working for the past [weeks] at least resulted in a huge story that you tell people … It was clever from Adrian to do that.”

Mohyeldin himself wasn’t worried about the question.

“I think in that particular situation impartiality isn’t something that was dangerous, something that was controversial,” he says (personal communication, April 5, 2012). “I don’t think [I was] weighing in. I think even with the impartiality I was trying to raise the question of what the moment of emotion felt like, the joy and the excitement about it.”

On air, Mohyeldin manages to end his answer on a personal note.

“I can tell you that as an Egyptian who [was] born here, there is no doubt that I never thought I would actually live to see a day like this. Because you hear about the Egypt of the past from your parents and your grandparents, the sacrifices that so many Egyptians have made to live abroad and emigrate … and realising the people here in this country have [tonight] gotten one step closer to making that future better,” he concludes.

“Bless him, he had a crack at it but he still didn’t do it properly,” laughs Finighan now (personal communication, November 11, 2011).

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It wasn’t until very late in the afternoon that Rawya Rageh believed Hosni Mubarak might actually step down. The moment of confirmation for her was

overhearing an army general telling a protester, “Believe me, he will leave. Believe me when I tell you” (personal communication, April 25, 2012). Now, 15 minutes after the resignation, she speaks with Adrian Finighan on the phone from the Presidential Palace where celebrations are in full swing.

“Adrian, Adrian, the sense of euphoria here is simply indescribable!” she begins with jubilation in her voice.

“I am trying to gather the words, the sentences to describe to you the sentiment here, but it is simply indescribable. The moment the announcement was made people were crying, they fell to their knees, praying immediately on the floor. The tears are everywhere, the smiles, the dancing. You would think that people were actually getting drunk! But they were simply slumping … home-made fireworks immediately fired from the balconies, people setting on fire aerosol cans … it’s just simply indescribable.”

Without any prompting from Finighan, Rageh gives some personal context.

“I’m 30 years old, Adrian, and I was born the week President Mubarak assumed power. All my years of life I have known one president and I can tell you I’ve never seen this sentiment on the streets of Egypt. Not even when Egypt won for the third time in a row the African Cup of Nations! Nothing like that sentiment, it’s simply indescribable.”

She was so excited that she’d made a small but amusing error.

“I was born, essentially, the year that Mubarak came to power, but what I said was the week or the month — I mixed up my own birthday,” she chuckles now (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

There is a slight pause on air before Finighan thanks her, his voice heavy with emotion.

“Rawya, many, many thanks indeed. Al Jazeera’s Rawya Rageh there. Another of our correspondents, Egyptian-born … exemplary reporting all the way through this crisis in Egypt until this moment. I think we can forgive her telling us how she really feels there about what’s happened in Egypt today. She’s known no other President … that’s compelling stuff.”

Rageh fondly remembers an email she received later that night from one of AJE’s US correspondents.

“John Terrett [wrote] me an email saying, ‘I laughed and I cried. I cried because what [you] had to say was very emotional,’ but he laughed because he couldn’t believe that in the middle of this I was referring to the African Cup. It was ridiculous but in Egypt those were the kind of big moments that we saw those kind of big celebrations, it was always associated with soccer.”

Finighan next tries to cross to Sherine Tadros in Tahrir Square, but initially there is no response down the phone line.

“It’s obviously so noisy that Sherine can’t hear me …”

“I’m here, I’m here, I can hear you!” she announces suddenly.

“Sherine, tell us what it’s like.”

“It’s absolutely insane! I’ve never seen anything like this,” she begins. “People are fainting, they’re carrying them up through the crowds. They’re spraying water on people just trying to keep people up because of the complete excitement. It’s really [difficult] to describe what’s going on here. The news came through just as the evening prayers were coming to an end so we had these hundreds of people on the floor praying and suddenly they all rose up at the same time and put their hands in the air and said, ‘God is great!’ And now they’re shouting and screaming, saying, ‘The people have brought the regime down!’ … And it all happened here at the epicentre of these protests, Liberation Square. It started here. Three weeks

of this uprising to bring down the 30-year regime and people here are absolutely ecstatic."

Tadros has strong memories of her interactions with protesters in Tahrir throughout that afternoon and evening, but one stands out especially.

"I [spoke] with this woman and I'll always remember her ... she has four kids and they were all under ten. And she's very poor," she recalls. "She was washing her kid in this disgusting, disgusting water that they had got from somewhere. And I said, 'How long have you been here?' And she said, 'Two weeks.' And I said to her, 'Do you have a home?' And she said, 'Yes, in the province of wherever outside of Cairo.' And I said, 'It's very difficult, you've come here, you're living on the floor for two weeks, why do all of this, you don't know if it's going to lead anywhere, why are you so desperate? It's a very desperate act that you're doing, especially to put your kids though this.' And she said to me, 'Every morning I wake up at five o'clock in the morning so I can go and stand in the bread line to buy subsidised bread and more often than not I get to the front of the queue and I can see that the guy has loaves and loaves of bread but he won't give me any because he says it's finished. And then someone else with more money or a truck comes and takes that bread. And I've had enough. I've had enough of living like this, of this unjust system.' And that was the sort of theme of the revolution and I heard it from Yemen to Libya to Egypt" (personal communication, January 14, 2013).

The first chant that went up after Mubarak's resignation sticks particularly in Tadros' mind: "Raise your head up high, you're Egyptian!"

Jamal Elshayyal had been driving through the streets of Alexandria when Suleiman spoke, and he had listened to the speech on the radio. His team had abandoned the vehicle and were now on the long street that runs around the city's bay.

"Adrian, no words can explain what I'm looking at right now," he reports on air. "The Corniche, the main road which runs along the sea here in Alexandria. Hundreds and thousands of Egyptians, young and old, smiles like Cheshire cats,

if you will, everyone laughing, everyone laughing, everyone smiling, people singing. The cars, their horns are honking. It's really undescribable [sic]. I mean, I've never been more disappointed to not have a camera to show you the sentiments that are being expressed by these people. This is really as though 30 years of feeling and emotions have erupted in 30 seconds. The moment I was driving in the car when we heard the announcement, the roads just stopped. People just got out of their cars, stood on top of the cars, screaming, singing the national anthem, shouting. Some got on their hands and knees and prayed to God almost in gratitude. It's really … I mean, I don't know where to look. Wherever I look there's a different scene of euphoria, there's a different image of undescribable happiness. There's nothing that equates to the amount of happiness. I've seen people give birth, I've seen people get married, I've seen people graduate. None of them look anywhere near as happy as the people I'm looking at now. It really is undescribable. Adrian."

Elahayyal says it was difficult to not get caught up in the joy of the moment.

"From a personal perspective, I was obviously very joyous because I was someone … I've seen first-hand the nasty side of the man and his government and his regime. So, from that perspective I was happy," he remembers (personal communication, April 12, 2012). "Obviously, it was difficult for anyone who was there not to be happy as well because the feelings were contagious, the people were out on the streets. There was obviously a sense of, like, I wouldn't say relief but something like when a burden's taken off your shoulder. I took a long breath and kind of exhaled a lot."

Adrian Finighan takes a few moments to let viewers digest what they've just heard from correspondents, and enjoy the pictures of continuing celebrations in Tahrir Square. He then does a quick phone interview with Dina Magdi, one of the revolutionaries in Tahrir Square.

"I just can't describe [my feelings]," cries Magdi, her voice wavering and breaking. "I've waited, I've worked, all my adult life to see the power of the people come to the fore …"

She breaks down for a few moments.

"I'm speechless, I'm literally speechless. For the first time I'm seeing history being made. I'd never thought that I'd be alive to witness that moment. That moment is not only about Mubarak stepping down, it's a process that brought about the people's power to bring about a change that no-one, no-one anywhere in the world thought was possible."

Finighan thanks her and relays an interesting observation to viewers.

"I've just seen a newsreader on Egyptian State Television — you can't see them, they're showing pictures of the celebrations across the country — and the newsreader, rather unusually, is smiling and looks as happy as many of the people down there on the Square."

AJE's camera above Tahrir Square is zoomed in and panning across the crowd. It stops on a man holding a large, hand-painted sign bearing the Al Jazeera calligraphic logo in yellow. He is jumping and waving his free arm, face splitting with a grin.

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Even in the city of Doha there were celebrations. Director General Wadah Khanfar, watching the celebrations in Egypt from the Al Jazeera television studios, received a phone call notifying him of a crowd assembled at the main entrance to the network compound. He instructed the guards to permit entry to a delegation, and then accepted their expressions of gratitude. Later, as Khanfar drove home from the studios he got caught in a traffic jam caused by Qataris and Arab expats celebrating the end of Mubarak's rule. Some of them recognised him, pulled him out of the car, and showered him with hugs and congratulations.

For the next couple of hours, inside the squat blue Al Jazeera English building, Adrian Finighan continues to cycle through his correspondents around Egypt.

There is absolutely no sign of the revolutionaries' joy and celebration letting up anytime soon. In Tahrir, an ambulance attempts to push through the crowd to respond to a medical situation, making slow progress despite the best efforts of the protesters. A uniformed soldier is being carried on the shoulders of men in the crowd; he takes a flag from a protester and begins to wave it.

"Let's go back to the capital, Cairo," announces Finighan. "That party continuing in Tahrir Square, Liberation Square. Al Jazeera's Hoda Abdul-Hamid is there. The noise doesn't seem to have subsided at all, Hoda."

"It hasn't and I don't think it will for a very long time," she replies. "I think this is going to be a long, long, long party ... Now, I have to tell you, for the past two weeks I have been, let's say, embedded with the youth, those who actually ignited the wave of protests that lead to the resignation of the President. These people have been going up and down, they were euphoric at moments, they were completely demoralised at moments, they were scared at moments. They really went through a roller coaster of emotion but still they did not lose track of their aims. And they kept going day after day, trying to counter the propaganda of the government, trying to counter the brutality of the government, all the time trying to gather support from the outside world outside of Liberation Square. And I think more than anyone, today is really their moment, those young people between the ages of maybe 18 and 30 who had no political agenda, who don't belong to any party, and who actually went for it. Something that no-one has been able to do for 30 years."

Abdel-Hamid was reporting from the balcony of an apartment that housed a crowd of euphoric revolutionaries who were screaming and shouting to compete with the noise of the Square. It made for a difficult working environment.

"I mean, I've been in situations where it was challenging because there were bombs or there were bullets, but this was challenging because I couldn't hear a word," she remembers (personal communication, January 24, 2012). "And the poor camerawoman fell off the table [she was standing on] as well. It was also very bizarre because behind the camera all my friends were celebrating ... I'd been

doing work and long hours and I hadn't been in a five-star hotel, I've been sleeping on the floor in Tahrir. Next morning, I think, is when it had the effect. I went, 'Oh my God, what happened?'"

Sherine Tadros had left Tahrir Square soon after Suleiman's announcement and returned to the Sheraton to file a story. All of a sudden, removed from the jubilant crowds, she was overcome with physical and emotional fatigue. She found fellow Egyptian Ayman Mohyeldin on top of the hotel and spoke to him between his ongoing live crosses.

"We both just sat there are cried because of the relief," she says (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "And we both didn't feel like working. He was saying, 'oh, I need to go back and do more live shots,' and I was saying I had to do this package, and we both didn't feel like working. It was such a huge moment, we wanted to enjoy it."

With the initial excitement of that climactic moment fading, Mohyeldin does one more live cross with Finighan before the end of his shift, this one much more reflective.

"You know, we try not to talk so much as reporters about personal experiences," he begins, "but having got off the phone with my dad who's been out of Egypt for 30 years, he emigrated with the hope that perhaps his children's future would be better outside of Egypt, it truly is emotional to be here thinking that for the first time. Not just for me as an individual, but for an entire generation of Egyptians who are from the same age group ... that tomorrow is going to be a better day for all of the people of Egypt."

Just as he finishes that thought, fireworks begin to explode over Tahrir Square.

"You know, I've really struggled to hold back so many of my emotions over the past several weeks of reporting," Mohyeldin continues, "but there's no doubt tonight it's probably come through a little bit. And I think everyone — journalists, activists, ordinary Egyptians — they can't help but feel a sense of community, a

sense of belonging. Not because they're witnessing history, but because as human beings they really are now a part of a struggle for the most basic and fundamental human rights. And I think, as somebody who grew up here, and I've seen so many of the struggles, and I've embodied so many of the struggles that people have tried to overcome, within your own families, within your own communities and neighbourhoods, it truly is something to be proud of. And I think I speak on behalf of so many Egyptians from our team, from our staff, when they say they are very, very proud tonight to be Egyptians."

A short pause before Finighan wraps it up.

"Ayman, we really appreciate it. Many thanks, indeed," he says. "The personal thoughts there of Al Jazeera's Ayman Mohyeldin in Cairo. Next time we speak, Ayman, back to being impartial again (laughs). Back to being a journalist. Many thanks, indeed."

Ayman permits himself a small chuckle in vision.

"I was really fortunate that the anchor at the time was Adrian Finighan, who is someone who brought a great deal of gravitas and a great deal of experience," reflects Mohyeldin (personal communication, April 5, 2012). "He was very good at anchoring the show at that moment."

Matthew Moore agrees.

"I think as a network we were lucky to have Adrian on on that evening," he says (personal communication, January 24, 2012). "He had the right gravitas, he had the right delivery, he was calm, and he was authoritative. And that's important, he handled it well at a very important time."

Asked to reflect on the enormity of the night and his role in bringing it to so many people around the world, Adrian Finighan is guarded.

"It was just another breaking news story, as in, you know, there are hundreds of breaking news stories I've done," he says (personal communication, November 11, 2011). "Some turn out to be world-changing events and others are forgotten the day after tomorrow. But in television terms, I just did what I usually do in that situation, which happens to be what I think I'm best at. I can't say that I enjoyed it, there is a sort of a sense when you come off air that you're completely mentally exhausted … People talk about it being an historical moment and one of those television moments you remember as well, but if you look back at it now, it was probably not very good television apart from that seven-minute moment because it was so rough and ready … when you look at it in the cold light of day it probably looks a little clumsy."

Will he ever watch that footage back?

"Nope."

Three hours after taking over on-air duties, Finighan signs off by throwing to a four-minute political obituary package.

"This is the scene, live in Tahrir Square," he begins. "That party looks set to go on right through the night after the news that President Hosni Mubarak is stepping down. He's listened to the people, he's done what they wanted him to do. Al Jazeera's Alan Fisher takes a look now at how the former military man rose to power and how it all began to slip away."

The package takes viewers on a journey through Mubarak's life and career. Archival footage shows his military service, rise to vice president, promotion to president after Anwar Sadat's assassination, attempts on his own life, and reaction to terrorist violence in Luxor. Fisher analyses Mubarak's political record which, over three decades, resulted in Egyptians living lives of poverty; his alliances with successive US administrations in exchange for aid; involvement in Israel–Palestine negotiations, including the controversial peace treaty with Israel; and his mixed relationship with the rest of the Arab world.

After recapping the events of the past 18 days, Fisher concludes: “Mubarak often seemed untouchable: the unshakeable, immovable Arab leader. In the end, forced from office by the voices of the ordinary people he said he represented. Removed by those tired, frustrated and forgotten by his autocratic rule. Alan Fisher, Al Jazeera.”

CHAPTER 10: EGYPT'S LEGACY

> "AJE's coverage, like that of any news organization, is far from perfect. It sometimes slips into cheerleading and self-congratulation, and it sometimes makes mistakes. Journalism is an imperfect craft, and AJE's work is evidence of that. Nevertheless, the world of news is richer for having AJE as part of it."
>
> **— Philip Seib (2012, p. 2), Al Jazeera English: Global News in a Changing World**

Egyptians celebrated into the early hours of Saturday morning and AJE stayed focused on the people on the streets, just as it had around the clock for the past 18 days. The mood in Tahrir Square was of joy and celebration, but as the first days and weeks of the new Egypt dawned, the harder and more sober work of the revolution began.

The Supreme Council of Armed Forces, which was now in charge of the country's affairs, suspended the constitution and promised to hand over power to an elected civilian government. It also demanded that existing workers' strikes come to an end (backed by the threat of military intervention) and banned protests and industrial action for the foreseeable future. Tahrir Square was cleared of the small pockets of remaining demonstrators and teams of volunteers set about cleaning the Square and surrounding streets, which were filthy with weeks of waste. In May, Hosni Mubarak was charged with the premeditated murder of Egyptians.

AJE's team on the ground was spent after weeks of constant reporting and the emotional roller coaster of the revolution. Rawya Rageh, however, felt a little fresher than her colleagues thanks to the forced hiatus after Alexandria. She continued to report on the country's political and social upheaval in the wake of Mubarak's resignation, and noticed a polarisation of opinion about Al Jazeera on the streets.

"We were being thanked and greeted … 'Thank you, Al Jazeera! The revolution has been televised!' But there were still quarters that were hostile to us," she says

(personal communication, April 25, 2012). "I remember the very week after Mubarak stepped down I wanted to go do a story about this hospital that had been doing free eye surgeries for the people … And even though the doctor and NGO and everything were totally cooperative and they wanted the story to be done because they wanted the publicity, the hospital management wouldn't even let us anywhere on hospital grounds and asked us to leave because the manager was like, 'I don't like Al Jazeera, I don't like you guys.' So, even though people weren't necessarily angry about Mubarak being toppled down, they always had in mind that Al Jazeera had interests and Qatar had interests … [They were saying] go back to your Sheikha Moza and your Sheikh Hamad [the then-emir of Qatar's wife and the then-emir]."

The enormity of events didn't properly hit Rageh until weeks later when Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik resigned and was replaced by Essam Sharaf.

"When I saw the new prime minister being carried on people's shoulders, coming into Tahrir Square in the middle of hundreds of thousands of people without any security, [then it] hit me. Oh wow. This is the new Egypt."

Sherine Tadros was scheduled to head to Libya to cover developing events in that country, but a couple of days after Mubarak's resignation she lost her voice completely. Doha let her stay in Egypt to recuperate, physically and mentally.

"To be honest, I was exhausted," she says (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "And I didn't really want to cover the story anymore. As an Egyptian I felt like I'd covered this huge event and I just wanted to enjoy it and walk around Egypt and speak to people. And I did a few pieces and a few live shots and there were some people being arrested and put on trial and there was already some of that, [which] had begun very quickly after [Mubarak] was ousted."

Ayman Mohyeldin similarly appreciated the relief provided by Doha.

“I was just so exhausted — all of us were,” he remembers (personal communication, April 5, 2012). “They sent in new people and those of us who’d reported every day for the revolution sort of took a back seat for a little bit.”

It wasn’t just human resources that AJE needed to pump into its continuing Egypt coverage. Over the course of those 18 days, the channel had lost tens of thousands of dollars’ worth of television equipment, from cameras to computers to satellite uplinks. Now that the security situation had stabilised, Doha started sending in replacements.

“It became very clear that Al Jazeera was willing to open a lifeline of endless support at that point,” says Rageh (personal communication, April 25, 2012). “They couldn’t care less about the money, they couldn’t care less about the equipment, they were just flying in things. They were flying in cameramen with equipment.”

In addition to the new gear, much of the equipment that had been confiscated by various authorities throughout the revolution was eventually returned to Al Jazeera. Jamal Elshayyal used his contacts in the military to recover the equipment stolen by thugs in Alexandria.

“I distinctly remember in March when [our camera woman] managed to finally get back her confiscated equipment, it was hilarious,” laughs Rageh. “There was this scene in the office where you literally had seven Mac editing laptops sitting stacked there on top of each other, and boxes and boxes of equipment that had been brought from the military’s temporary detention facility. Seven or eight or it might have been a dozen laptops, and we had three cameramen functioning.”

In the days after Mubarak’s resignation, Salah Negm flew to Cairo to debrief with the team and to thank staff personally for their work. Elshayyal was especially grateful for the opportunity he’d been given to prove himself as a correspondent in a major story.

"I remember [Negm] took us all out to dinner," says Elshayyal (personal communication, April 12, 2012), "and he sat across the table from me and he said my name. He said, 'Gamal,' [the Egyptian pronunciation of Jamal] because he wanted to speak to me, so I leaned over to listen, and I guess he must've said something to me and I didn't hear it. So, he just looked at me and I was like, 'I don't understand, what do you want?' And he said, 'I was telling you you did a good job.' And I remember thinking at the time the guy must think I'm really arrogant because he must've complemented me and I just sat there. So, I told him, 'Thank you very much.' ... Throughout the coverage he was very supportive. For example, when I was in Alexandria and I was sending in the footage, he sent me an email saying, 'You're a one-man team because you are shooting your own footage on your phone and doing your reports.' So, it was good to get that support and appreciation from the management."

But just as the main chapter in Egypt's revolution was closing, two other major plots in the broader "Arab Spring" story were developing: Libya and Bahrain. Negm was determined to avoid complacency in covering these new flare-ups after the channel's work in Egypt.

"[Negm] was saying to us one evening, he's used to in his life one huge story happening but he's not used to five huge stories happening at the same time," Tadros remembers (personal communication, January 14, 2013). "That was the sort of pressure that was on our management, that we'd done something really well and we needed to continue the wave of success, if you like. We were trying to own the Arab Awakening, not the Egyptian Revolution."

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Al Jazeera English's work throughout that awakening — in Egypt and Tunisia, and later Yemen, Libya and Syria — attracted praise from around the world.

In May 2011, AJE won the Columbia Journalism Award for "singular journalism in the public interest." The faculty of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, responsible for selecting awardees, said, "Al Jazeera English has

performed a great service in bringing the English-speaking world in-depth coverage of the turmoil in the Middle East ... We salute its determination to get to the heart of a complicated story unfolding in countries where news has historically been difficult to cover" (Columbia Journalism School, 2011).

In February 2012, it was named News Channel of the Year at the Royal Television Society Awards.

In April 2012, AJE won a prestigious Peabody Award for its coverage of events in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. The Peabody judges called AJE "a network of record" and said its reporting was "thorough, enterprising and brave" (Al Jazeera English, 2012).

Many employees, while proud of these achievements, say the awards are simply recognition for what they had been doing for half a decade anyway, similar to the original Al Jazeera being "discovered" by the rest of the world in the early 2000s. But despite the public humility, internal self-congratulatory emails on the night of Mubarak's resignation pulled no punches.

"Our historic coverage of the Egyptian revolution marks another great achievement for Al Jazeera where we have demonstrated our unwavering commitment in bringing our independent and honest news to audiences across the world: this is a landmark accomplishment that has been reached through your hard work over the last eighteen days," wrote Wadah Khanfar in an all-staff email. "I salute all of you. You have ennobled Al Jazeera and it has ennobled us. Feel proud that the Al Jazeera logo is now being flown across Egypt, and communities across the world, as an emblem of the voice of the voiceless and of a free and responsible media. We have set a new standard for global journalism."

"We have won plaudits — and new viewers — around the world, and deservedly so," wrote Salah Negm in an email. "But this would not have happened had it not been for the energy, flexibility and dedication of the entire AJE team: Editorial (both TV and online), Operations, Satellite coordinators, the Deployment team,

the Travel team. Everybody went over and above the call of duty ... Our task in Egypt is far from over — in some ways it is only just beginning."

Negm's use of the word "task" is interesting, reflecting the impression that at least some within AJE feel their role in Egypt involved more than just reporting. Many commentators saw similar themes in Al Jazeera's coverage.

"The station's part in this year's rebellions in the Arab states has made a huge statement about the nature of engaged reporting," argued John Lloyd (2011) in FT Magazine. "Its reporting has provided a potent example of television's political power. It has thrown down a challenge to those global networks — such as the BBC and CNN — that claim to report neutrally, and has provided a template for those networks, such as Russia Today, whose mandate is as much polemical as journalistic."

"Too often, Americans scorn Al Jazeera," wrote Nicholas D. Kristof (2011) in the New York Times, "but it played a greater role in promoting democracy in the Arab world than anything the United States did."

While it seems obvious that Al Jazeera, either intentionally or inadvertently, helped shape the Egyptian Revolution, the revolution in turn helped shape Al Jazeera English. Especially in the way that it covered subsequent conflicts.

Four days after Mubarak's resignation, protesters in the Libyan city of Benghazi triggered what would soon become civil war in that country. Taking its cue from Tunisia and Egypt, AJE was determined to build on its work in Egypt and hold fast its reputation as the channel of record for the Arab Spring.

"We felt like we had licence to rule the story," says one producer, suggesting that hubris affected the quality and objectivity of the channel's coverage. Some commentators argue that AJE's reporting in Libya was blatantly pro-rebels and anti-Gaddhafi, and aligned perfectly with Qatar's foreign policy aims.

From an operational perspective, though, and perhaps learning a lesson from Egypt, AJE had in place a much better security plan for staff in Libya. It included, reportedly, security teams waiting on boats anchored off the coast to provide assistance if necessary.

At around the same time as the Libyan conflict began, anti-government protests flared up in Bahrain — a close political ally of Qatar. The difference in the coverage of events in Bahrain between AJE and AJA was stark, as noted by Robert Fisk (2011, November 2) in the Independent:

"While the English channel was broadcasting live from the Bahrain revolution-that-wasn't, its Arabic twin was staying mum; studiously avoiding any coverage of the King of Bahrain's suppression of majority Shia protests in the streets of Manama."

AJE had quickly sent correspondents to Manama but they — along with journalists from other networks — were soon deported. In the months that followed, AJE was criticised by some who felt that it was ignoring the uprising, despite occasional programs devoted to the subject. And then in June, the channel broadcast a documentary, Shouting in the Dark, filmed in Bahrain by undercover journalists and highly damaging to the image of the Bahraini government. The documentary went on to win multiple awards around the world.

"I was very proud of us for that," says Sarah Worthington (personal communication, January 19, 2012), "because I'm sure there was some [internal] pressure on [us over the documentary]."

Brian Stelter (2011, August 9) wrote in the New York Times about possible evidence of that pressure:

"Al Jazeera's Web site had listed times for rebroadcasts [of Shouting in the Dark] on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday this week, but last weekend the listings were deleted without explanation.

"'Our scheduling is always subject to change,' a spokesman for Al Jazeera said, noting that the documentary was broadcast last week in prime time. The future repeats 'will coincide with an episode of Inside Story' — a regularly scheduled interview program — 'which will discuss the key issues arising from the film with the main players in Bahrain'."

Al Anstey says AJE's reporting on the Arab uprisings "raised the bar, internally," and that staff placed new expectations on themselves.

"I think when you deal with something as massive and sequential as the Arab Spring ... you know, each one of those stories in their own right would've marked out a decade of news coverage ... I think the sense of maturity and confidence was felt because we handled those stories with, I think, great maturity. We carried through with the integrity of the journalism right the way through" (personal communication, October 11, 2011).

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In September 2011, in a move that shocked employees and commentators alike, the Al Jazeera Network's Director General, Wadah Khanfar, resigned. Khanfar had been central to the growth and success of the network and AJE over many years, and his departure was widely mourned.

The reasons behind his decision to resign remain unclear. Khanfar himself is adamant that the departure was on his own terms, that it was simply time to move on, that with the network's success in covering the Arab Spring he had achieved everything he'd set out to achieve at Al Jazeera. Some analysts have suggested he was pushed by the Qatari government, noting that Khanfar's replacement, Ahmed bin Jassim Al Thani, is related to the royal family. Frequently proffered as evidence of this theory are the (at the time) recently leaked US diplomatic cables which allege Khanfar directed Al Jazeera to alter editorial content in response to US government pressure.

When asked in early 2012 about the change in leadership, Salah Negm emphasised that AJE's editorial line would not alter, even if themes and focuses do.

"There could be things which will change, which will be more in the management, administration, work processes," he said (personal communication, January 24, 2012). "But our editorial guidelines, this is the editorial reference, it doesn't change. Of course, the character of the D-G [director general] will affect the network … he'll have his interests. He's interested in business so he is pushing for … economic news. And that will happen, for sure, and it's a good addition."

The network was still adapting to its new boss when the much-loved emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, peacefully handed power to his son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The resulting ministerial reshuffle saw the director general recalled from his Al Jazeera posting, but there is no indication that the June 2013 handover will have any other effect on the network.

In mid-2013, mass protests on the one-year anniversary of President Morsi's inauguration led to the Egyptian military removing him from office. AJE covered events just as it had in 2011, although this time its competitive advantage over other broadcasters was much less distinct. The channel's offices in Cairo were by now staffed by a skeleton crew only and its journalists encountered specific security threats in addition to the underlying safety issues faced by staff of all organisations. The AP news agency reportedly asked Al Jazeera, in response to a military directive, to refrain from using its live camera shot of Tahrir Square.

AJE's efforts were also tainted by a growing sense over the past couple of years that the network, but particularly Al Jazeera Arabic and Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr (the network's dedicated Egypt channel), were exhibiting more blatant pro-Muslim Brotherhood bias. Despite AJE's strict policy of neutrality, some employees have expressed concern over what they see as others' political leanings; engaged Twitter users pounced after the official AJE Twitter account retweeted correspondent Jamal Elshayyal using the phrase "pro-democracy protesters" instead of "pro-Morsi protesters" in July 2013.

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Ever since AJE's launch, the channel has worked aggressively to expand its global footprint, but no market has been harder to crack than the US. By 2011, after five years of trying, the channel had only managed to build small pockets of coverage in Washington DC, New York City, Ohio and Vermont. Academics such as the University of Michigan's William Youmans have conducted research into the reluctance of US cable networks to carry AJE. He notes that debates over carriage are politicised and heated, and the barriers for AJE's entry into the market are high. Youmans (and Brown, 2011) has found "substantial" prejudice against AJE across sections of the US population, "highly correlated with conservative political ideology and anti-Arab sentiments".

In the wake of the Egyptian Revolution and other Arab uprisings, Georgetown University's Kimberly Meltzer (2013, p.666) wrote that AJE's coverage might come to be considered a "critical incident on AJE's road to acceptance" in the US. Al Jazeera English itself certainly hoped so.

After Egypt, the channel started drawing up plans to massively boost output from the Washington DC broadcast centre to capitalise on the buzz around its coverage and make a major push into the States. But events in Libya, Bahrain and then Syria drew attention away from the US and forced a revision of those plans. In mid-2011 a new American anchor was hired to work from Doha and tended to be rostered for shifts that lined up with US timezones. Although it's hard to make a definitive call, it felt as though AJE's coverage of the US presidential primaries and elections was more enthusiastic than it might otherwise have been.

Throughout 2011 and 2012, the Al Jazeera Network, long a major player in Middle Eastern sports, started getting very serious about bidding on sports broadcasting rights in non-Middle Eastern markets such as the US and Europe. These business moves are likely just as much about making money as they are about broadening the Al Jazeera broadcast footprint across the world.

On 2 January 2013, Al Jazeera dropped a bombshell, announcing the acquisition of Al Gore's Current TV channel for a rumoured $500 million. This purchase instantly gave Al Jazeera access to around 60 million television sets across the US (although some cable providers quickly dropped Current from their line-up or made threatening noises in reaction to the news.) In one fell swoop, Al Jazeera had simply purchased the access it had spent years trying to gain through lobbying and politicking.

The new Al Jazeera America channel was slated for launch in mid-2013 as a mix of bespoke US-centric news generated in domestic bureaus and content drawn from AJE and the whole Al Jazeera network. When the first tranche of 160 Al Jazeera America jobs was advertised in early 2013, over 8000 applications were received in just three days. AJE was very heavily involved in the American channel's planning and setup — Doha sent journalists, TV operations staff and graphic designers (among others) in the months leading up to launch.

"We're contributing a wealth of journalistic expertise, first and foremost," said Al Anstey (personal communication, May 13, 2013) a couple of months pre-launch. "They're helping to instil the DNA of the journalism, and then working alongside people who have come on board in recent weeks and who are coming on board in the weeks to come, to work together in partnership to make sure that DNA of journalism is applied in that [US] context ... Some will hand over to a fundamentally diverse American staff who will run the channel, and some who've got the first-hand experience, who are very good American staff, may stay."

Asked then if viewers of the new channel would know that they're watching Al Jazeera, Anstey answered: "They will know instantly that it's an Al Jazeera America channel."

Anstey's answer hinted at the stirrings of internal tension about what kind of channel AJAM should be. An explosive email from star AJE personality Marwan Bishara to senior network figures in mid-2013 expressed concern that a "firewall" was being erected between the new channel and the existing Al Jazeera network as part of an effort to head off accusations of anti-Americanism.

"Aljzeera [sic] enjoys the three ingredients that any network can only dream of," wrote Bishara (Greenwald, 2013). "Thanks to Doha, we've received billions of dollars over the last few years; we've been granted basically free and independent editorial decision-making; and we have a dedicated and talented body of journalists ... It's truly insulting to the greater majority of the Americans who I suspect want to watch us and support us that AJAM communicates with them through empty gimmicks and poor marketing theatrics."

The email echoed concerns expressed by some other employees that Al Jazeera's "DNA" was being compromised in the design of its American franchise, and that the channel's core business was being handballed to business and marketing operators instead of journalists. In June 2013, ex-Managing Director of AJE Tony Burman (2013) wrote in the Toronto Star that Al Jazeera America has "the odour of potential disaster", citing conversations with those inside the operation. "In order to win over America's media and political elites, Al Jazeera's senior management in Doha is placing its 'brand' of fearless, provocative international journalism at considerable risk."

When the channel launched on 20 August 2013, slightly later than expected and to margin-of-error ratings numbers, it was indeed a different channel to that originally envisioned. Rather than something closer to AJE with an American face, AJAM is more of a standalone channel with a much greater reliance on unique content than had previously been mooted. Mary McNamara (2013), writing in the Los Angeles Times, interpreted its first hours on air as a mission to "out-America" its competitors to counter the deep-seated suspicion and even hostility in the US towards the Al Jazeera brand.

This hostility was apparent on social media in the days before launch as thousands of Americans satirised AJAM programming with the hashtag #AlJazeeraAmericaTVShows; examples included "Sharia Law & Order", "I Dream of Jihad", "How I Met Your Camel", "Mad About Jew", and "Arresting Development". At the same time on Twitter, many thousands of other Americans expressed frustration at the blocking of the AJE web stream inside the United

States (a condition of carriage for AJAM set by cable providers) and the perceived inferiority of its replacement.

It's risky to make a call on the long-term prospects of Al Jazeera America in its first few months of operation. What is clear, however, is that there is a very high level of interest in Al Jazeera across the United States, and that American news consumers expect a very different news product from those in other parts of the world. This means that if Al Jazeera America can manage to repackage and rebrand what Anstey calls the Al Jazeera "DNA" for American viewers, with a greater domestic focus and a reimagined presentation style but without dumbing down its journalism, it seems likely that Al Jazeera America will experience a level of success.

For AJE, Anstey is keen to play down the fragmentation of English-speaking Al Jazeera viewers as the US and UK franchises eat into its current viewership. Instead, he focuses on the advantages of an expanded portfolio of bureaus around the world feeding content to AJE, AJA and every other Al Jazeera channel in the network.

"If we have a bureau in Manila who's covering an important story in Manila, obviously that story will be available to Al Jazeera America and therefore there will be a global component to the coverage which is coming from the Al Jazeera resource," he says (personal communication, May 13, 2013). "And then there will be, as it were, bespoke coverage from the United States for the United States, and some of that content we'll certainly be able to leverage on AJE as well."

18 days

Much of Al Jazeera English's success in covering the Egyptian Revolution could be attributed to luck — the position of its bureau on the Day of Rage and the fact that events fit neatly into a short 18 day story arc; if the revolution didn't have such an explosive and made-for-TV beginning, or if it took place outside AJE's backyard and area of expertise, then maybe this book would never have been

written. But circumstance is only part of the story, and AJE's Egyptian Revolution coverage required a massive human effort. While watching television news it's easy to forget that behind the slick two-dimensional presentation are many people who work to put it all together, and the dozen or so AJE staff in this book are just a representative sample of hundreds.

In this "clash of civilisations" era of global news, AJE's day-to-day coverage is far less conflict- and sensation-driven than its competitors, and the Egyptian Revolution was no different. AJE did not rely on video-game-like graphics, dramatic musical flourishes or sound effects to grab viewers' attention; presenters and correspondents tended to steer clear of exaggeration and hyperbole; and events were largely narrated and given context rather than overtly framed. But mostly, AJE's success in Egypt was due to it being a remarkable, if imperfect, news and television operation in a dusty building in the middle of the desert, home to an intriguing blend of Middle Eastern state-owned vanity media and journalistic passion from all around the world, and staffed by journalists, producers and TV operators who share a pioneering spirit and a passion for news.

Hosni Mubarak's fall marked the beginning of a new chapter in the life of Al Jazeera English, just four years and three months after it first went to air. It came at a time of enormous flux in both global power structures and the world of journalism, and triggered many conversations about Al Jazeera's place and role in both. It seems that any mention of Al Jazeera comes with an attached qualifier about its relationship to the Qatari state; unfortunately this aspect of the complicated and nuanced story behind the network often becomes the singular focus of analysis rather than just one of many.

Al Jazeera English is a biased news organisation with blind spots and a tendency to give undue attention to certain issues, but it is no worse — and in fact, much better — than many other TV news channels around the world. Just as a critical news consumer should never take any single news organisation's reporting at face value, neither should they AJE's. But with a newsgathering operation that dwarfs that of most other broadcast news networks, a unique perspective born of one foot in the Middle East and one in the West, a growing reputation for

intellectually robust reporting, and a newsgathering ethos that eschews brainless chat and empty opinion, the measure of its journalistic contribution is more complicated than just its ownership.

AJE is public broadcasting on a massive scale, ever-challenged by its enormously diverse global audience. Due to the increased scrutiny that Al Jazeera has attracted since the Arab Spring, the organisation's continuing breakneck-speed expansion, the Qatari government's deepening involvement in world affairs, and the approach of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, AJE's actions from now on will be judged by more people in more places. This will put ever-increasing pressure on the channel to do good work and on the Qatari government to keep its nose out of it. This is a good thing.

When Al Jazeera first revolutionised Arabic-language media in the Middle East it was often referred to as "the CNN of the Arab World," not only because of its success but due to the Western journalism and television techniques it incorporated. Nearly two decades and 18 days later, Al Jazeera English has joined its sister channel as a fascinating and unique hybrid of West and Middle East, and has experienced its own "CNN moment". But whether AJE's moment was a high-water mark or just another milestone, we will have to wait and see.

MOMENTS: A HEURISTIC FOR UNDERSTANDING NEWS MEDIA TURNING POINTS

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Abstract

In early 2011, Al Jazeera English captured the world's attention through its coverage of the 18 days of street protests that led to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's resignation. This is often referred to as Al Jazeera English's "moment" — a media event-led turning point in a news organisation's fortunes, in the model of the "CNN moment" experienced by that broadcaster as a result of its leading coverage of the first Gulf War. The idea of a news media moment is well understood anecdotally but the concept lacks a rigorous academic discussion. This article aims to remedy this omission by developing a heuristic focusing on three dimensions of a moment: character; cause; and consequence. The heuristic suggests a series of crucial questions in relation to each of these dimensions, which are then used to analyse Al Jazeera English's Egyptian Revolution moment, before comparing it to CNN's Gulf War moment.

Introduction

On 25 January, 2011, thousands of protesters took to the streets of Egyptian cities, inspired, in part, by the recent Tunisian Revolution; on 11 February, 2011, Hosni Mubarak resigned as Egyptian President. The historic events of the 18 days in between made headlines globally as the world tuned into wall-to-wall, real-time news coverage of the Revolution. In the eyes of news consumers and commentators alike, the Qatar-based Al Jazeera English channel (AJE) stood out from the field of English-language 24-hour television news broadcasters. During those 18 days, AJE offered: rolling, round-the-clock coverage of violent clashes and interminable sit-ins in Cairo's Tahrir Square; reports from correspondents in Cairo and around the country; and analysis from the newsroom in Doha.

From the so-called "Day of Rage" on 28 January, until the climactic evening when Mubarak's resignation was announced, AJE impressed new and old viewers alike with reporting that many saw as superior to that offered by its more established rivals. The *New York Times* (Worth, 2011) said that AJE "provided more exhaustive coverage than anyone else," while the *Chicago Sun-Times* (Washington, 2011) asserted that AJE delivered "first-rate, incisive content". Indeed, White House television sets are reported to have been tuned to AJE during the 18 days (MacNicol, 2011). AJE's coverage of the Egyptian protests and other conflicts of the so-called "Arab Spring" earned it a number of prestigious television and journalism awards, including a Peabody and a Columbia Journalism Award. In early 2012, AJE was named the News Channel of the Year at the UK Royal Television Society Awards. In an attempt to capitalise on this surge of interest, Al Jazeera renewed its push for expansion around the world, and particularly into the USA, where it had waged a long and largely fruitless battle for access to the cable television market.

The dust had barely settled in Tahrir Square when the phrase "Al Jazeera's moment" entered common usage by commentators, although it's worth pointing out that, almost always, the phrase referred to Al Jazeera *English*, not the Arabic-language channel, nor the network as a whole. Those using the phrase sought to compare AJE's broadcast of the Egyptian Revolution with the so-called "CNN

moment" experienced by that news broadcaster during its coverage of the first Gulf War in 1991. For example, the *New York Times* (Stanley, 2011) said, "Al Jazeera English seemed intent on using the upheaval in Egypt to assume the kind of authoritative role that CNN had during the 1991 Persian Gulf war," while National Public Radio's Andy Carvin wrote that AJE's coverage of Egypt was "very reminiscent of CNN and the start of the first Gulf War" (Bergman, 2011). Similarly, the *Huffington Post* (Jarvis, 2011) said, "What the Gulf War was to CNN, the people's revolutions of the Middle East are to Al Jazeera English," while Fornaciari (2011) asserted that "the [Egyptian] crisis has done for AJE what the first Gulf War did for CNN, pushing it to the vanguard of the public's consciousness." (For more examples of AJE/CNN moment comparisons, see Harnden, 2011; Cooper and Momani, 2011; Abusharif, 2014; Bauder, 2011).

Many inside the Al Jazeera organisation had also seen in their developing Egyptian Revolution coverage the potential for a moment as it was developing, although not all used that label for it (Bridges, 2013). Indeed, later, none inside the Doha newsroom were unaware of what the Egyptian Revolution had meant for their channel. Hasan Patel, Senior Executive in the AJE Communications Department (personal communication, July 1, 2015), speaking four years after Mubarak's resignation, said, "What we did put us on the map. You just couldn't ignore or deny what Al Jazeera did ... Due to Egypt, we saw an increase in journalists contacting us throughout the world wanting to know about Al Jazeera, wanting to know about this place that is a matchbox in the desert."

Launched in 1996 by the State of Qatar as an important plank in the then-new Emir's soft power and state branding strategy (Gray, 2013; Kamrava, 2013), the Al Jazeera Media Network (AJMN) has, in just two decades, grown from a small terrestrial news service to a media giant which broadcasts news, sport and entertainment around the globe. Along the way, there have been several news stories that have represented turning points for the network and which have helped it along its expansion path. The first significant story was the second Palestinian intifada (beginning 2000), the coverage of which brought Al Jazeera (the name of the Al Jazeera Media Network's Arabic-language channel — "Al Jazeera Arabic" or "AJA" for clarity) to the attention of mass Arab audiences, as

explained by Miles (2005, p. 69): "Al-Jazeera became a forum for those involved in the uprising and a window for those outside … As the Arab public followed the events of the intifada hour by hour, Al-Jazeera became a household name across the Arab world."

The Iraq and Afghanistan wars of the early-2000s brought AJA to the attention of a critical mass of non-Arab audiences in the West. More importantly, however, these stories brought AJA to the attention of Western journalists who noticed a foreign and unknown media organisation repeatedly scooping them in the latest region of global interest. Television networks throughout the West, but especially in the United Kingdom and USA, sought partnerships with Al Jazeera during this time as it featured access and coverage unparalleled by its competitors (Miles, 2005; El-Nawawy and Iskander, 2002). At this time, Al Jazeera is reported to have seen an "exponential increase" in US cable subscriptions (El-Nawawy and Iskander, 2002).

Al Jazeera English, launched in 2006, had no such turning points until the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, although its coverage of the Gaza War of 2008/09 was a strong practice run. Indeed, Figenschou (2014, p, 130) argues that this coverage was "the first demonstration of the potential of AJE's editorial strategies and comparative advantages, forcefully employed two years later in the channel's coverage of the 'Arab Spring'." In that particular conflict, AJE's two correspondents were the only foreign journalists operating in Gaza, giving them exclusivity. Davis (2013) argues that AJE in particular used online distribution to meet demand for information out of that conflict — a preview of a growing trend we would see later during the Egyptian Revolution.

The question of how we can determine whether or not these turning points represent "moments" highlights a critical gap in the literature. The concept of a news media moment is regularly used in both academic and popular discourse but it remains under-conceptualised, despite some general agreement about its meaning. In this article I seek to remedy this omission. I begin by mapping the use of the term in the literature and looking at some examples of claimed media moments. I then propose a heuristic for analysing "moments", to provide a

starting point for future research in this area. Finally, I apply the proposed heuristic to Al Jazeera English's Egyptian Revolution moment, before comparing that moment with the original CNN Gulf War moment.

Methodology

This article draws primarily on research I conducted while writing the book *18 Days: Al Jazeera English and the Egyptian Revolution* (Bridges, 2013). *18 Days* analyses in detail Al Jazeera English's reporting on the protests that led to the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, giving insight into the newsgathering and production processes taking place behind the scenes of the television broadcast. The book is built around 23 research interviews with AJE journalists, producers and managers; content analysis of the entire 18 days of broadcast output; and a review of academic and general literature around Al Jazeera's history and its coverage of the Revolution.

This article also draws on research I conducted for two journal articles (Bridges, 2016a; Bridges, 2016b), which examine AJE's moment in the context of the AJMN's expansion around the world, and specifically in Australia. These two articles track the AJMN's historical presence in Australia and examine in detail AJE's reciprocal broadcast agreements with the Australian public broadcasters. The articles rely heavily on research interviews with senior staff at the Australian public broadcasters, the ABC and SBS; and with two representatives of AJE — one in the public relations section and one in the Online section.

As the basis for this article, I have also conducted an exhaustive survey of the literature to determine how the concept of a news media moment is currently understood and represented in the academy.

Defining a news media moment

In its most common usage, a news media moment refers to media events generated by live and global television broadcasts which allow people around the world to stand witness to historic events, such as wars and conflicts, natural disasters or sporting contests (Thussu, 2006). The label dates back to CNN's groundbreaking live coverage of the first Gulf War which transfixed viewers around the world and propelled the then-fledgling cable/satellite news channel to global fame and undisputed leadership in the field: the so-called "CNN moment". Since CNN's breakthrough in 1991, whenever media channels experience similar surges in attention due to their news coverage they are popularly said to be experiencing a "CNN moment".

Despite the concept of a moment appearing regularly in the academic literature, there is little clarity about its meaning. Indeed, the phrase "CNN Moment" has been used in many ways, including:

- To refer to a company's shortcomings being exposed by circumstance and being reported by CNN and other news channels (Williams, 2001);
- To refer to an issue being covered by CNN and other news channels and therefore receiving additional attention (Zoellick, 2008);
- To refer to an actor involved in a conflict needing a "CNN moment" to position themselves "in the international spotlight" (Antonenko, 2008);
- To refer to the so-called "Twitter moment" identified by some after news of bin Laden's killing spread first via the social network (Rossoff, 2011);
- Vukasovic and Boyd-Barrett (2012) retrospectively talk of a CNN moment for broadcaster Tanjug because, due partly to luck, and partly to professional instinct, it was uniquely positioned to cover the unrest in the Congo in 1960;
- Cushion (2010, p.19) even argues that the CNN moment was itself a moment for the satellite news industry: "with many hungry to exercise power at a time when a post-national broadcasting ecology was beginning to take shape."; and

- Youmans and Brown (2011, p. 4), however, offer a simple definition for a news media CNN-style moment which is closest to the popular understanding of the concept: a "turning point in a news network's standing and popularity due to leading coverage of an important event."

As an example of such a turning point, Young (2009) nominates Sky News Australia's subscription television coverage of the 2007 Federal Election as the then-ten-year-old channel's "CNN moment", just as its British sister channel's coverage of the 1997 British elections has been labeled that channel's moment. According to Young, what brought about the turning point in Sky News Australia's fortunes was its devotion of resources to exhaustively reporting the story live from the moment the election was called until the announcement of the result. Sky News Australia explicitly and purposefully set out to dominate the media coverage of the election campaign "as a means of building credibility and cementing itself as the nation's political channel" (Young, 2008, p. 58). It went about this task by broadcasting multiple live and on-demand channels, ultimately producing "more comprehensive coverage of an election than … ever seen before in Australia" (Young, 2008, p. 59). To top all this off, Sky News Australia predicted early and correctly the election result on the evening of the vote based on exclusive exit polls.

A heuristic for analysing a moment

As I've demonstrated, the concept of a moment as currently understood is unclear and confused. In my view, the news media moment is an important idea but it needs to be more thoroughly conceptualised. As such, my aim here is to develop a heuristic which can serve as a way of understanding such moments and provide a means for organising future research. This heuristic will require further testing and development, and the measure of its value will be whether other researchers find it useful, either in its current form or in a developed form.

This heuristic has three dimensions, focusing on different aspects of a moment: character; cause; and consequence. The heuristic seeks to determine what a

moment looks like, what drives it, and what it means for the media organisation. It is important to note that this heuristic recognises that we are not dealing with a binary, suggesting that there is either a moment or "not a moment". Rather, we should see it as a continuum. Many of the factors that drive each of the dimensions are easy to identify, but other factors play behind the scenes, requiring deeper analysis. As a way forward, I suggest a series of crucial questions in relation to each of the dimensions.

i) Character

At present, the identification of a moment seems to result from a gut-feeling: "you know it when you see it". However, a moment's obviousness to an outside observer is only one part of assessing its character. In fact, three perspectives seem important to consider when analysing a moment's character:

- What does a moment look like to the news organisation's audience?
- What does it look like to news and media professionals and commentators?
- What does it look like to the news organisation's journalists/staff?

The third question, in particular, is an often-overlooked perspective, which is strongly connected in many ways to the next two dimensions.

ii) Cause

There are many possible causes of a moment, but one will usually stand out: news coverage that is subjectively judged by a critical mass of people to be of better quality than that offered by the organisation's competitors. However, the underlying drivers of that superior coverage are often hidden from view and have to do with actions and decisions taken in the field, in the newsroom, and in boardrooms. These critical questions assist in identifying the cause of a moment:

- What active steps did the news organisation take to create the moment?

- What did the news organisation do differently to its competitors?
- What internal and external conditions helped the organisation create the moment?
- What active steps did the organisation take to capitalise on the moment?

iii) Consequence

In my view, this is the most crucial of the three dimensions, given that without a consequence there is no moment. News organisations scoop and outperform their competitors all the time, but, self-evidently, not every such instance is a moment; moments require news reporting to lead to a turning point in an organisation's fortunes. Young (2009) also reminds us that moments involve effects not directly related to an increase in audience numbers. For instance, perhaps the most important outcome of Sky News Australia's moment was its establishment as an essential news source for other elites in the political sphere (i.e. journalists, politicians). Similarly, for CNN, its moment not only set up the channel as an essential source of news, but it also proved the platform of satellite television and the genre of rolling news. Al Jazeera's moments, as we've seen, have not always been related to audience growth.

In assessing a moment's consequence, we should ask what effect the moment had on the fortunes of the media organisation in terms of the following:

- Audience (e.g. growth, demographic make-up);
- Credibility (e.g. with audience, industry);
- Industry (e.g. competition with other organisations, impact on work practices); and
- Any other significant positive consequences

Finally, it's important to note that moments should not be assessed against other moments. For example, Sky News Australia's election moment was hardly of the scale of CNN's Gulf War moment, yet both moments represented significant turning points in the fortunes of each news organisation. Rather, these

consequences should be assessed on their own merits and relative to the unique standing of the news organisation in question.

Al Jazeera English's moment

Having outlined my proposed heuristic for analysing a news media moment, I will now apply it to Al Jazeera English's coverage of the early-2011 protests in Egypt that led to the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak.

i) Character

The frequency with which Al Jazeera English's coverage of the Egyptian Revolution was declared to be the channel's moment suggests that it was not difficult to identify. My research indicates that the moment was equally visible to news consumers, critics and employees of the channel.

As the attention of people around the world turned to Egypt in early 2011 (or, more specifically, news reporting of those events), AJE immediately stood out from the English-speaking television pack. From a news consumer's point of view, AJE's moment looked as simple and obvious as reporting that people judged to be better quality than that on offer from competitor outlets. On the so-called "Day of Rage" (actually day four of the protests, but for many people the beginning of their awareness of the unrest), AJE offered much exclusive footage and reportage, along with rolling coverage uninterrupted by ad breaks — a pattern that would continue for several days during the most intense of the 18 principal days of protest.

News consumers around the world tuned into AJE, many for the first time, driven to the channel by a "buzz" around its coverage. Youmans (2012, p. 126) contends that the Egyptian Revolution on AJE was "phenomenal television" in that it "[rose] above the rest, grabbing the attention of many, and becoming the next day's water cooler fodder." Over the first few days of protest, Al Jazeera English

claims it experienced a 2,500% increase in overall web traffic. In the space of 24 hours on the "Day of Rage", the AJE website registered 10,000 concurrent users for the first time ever, and by the end of the day it had hit 150,000 (Bridges, 2013). In the USA where AJE was essentially unavailable via broadcast television, "an estimated 7 million Americans [watched] 50 million minutes of AJE coverage [online]" over the course of the 18 days (Burman, 2011). As demonstrated in the introduction to this article, industry commentators were also talking about AJE in a positive way.

Inside the AJE newsroom, a dramatic increase in consumer engagement alerted staff to the potential moment. Speaking of the first day of protests, AJE's Head of Online recalls: "our traffic started picking up and picking up. It started reaching levels [we'd not seen before] ... So, even though we hadn't had a huge focus on Egypt yet because clearly it hadn't become a big thing yet, we were already becoming the reference point for what was going on in Egypt ..." (Bridges, 2013, p.41). Staff at the channel quickly felt a sense of the world's eyes turned to them and a duty to keep up the momentum. A director in the Doha newsroom said, "Everybody knew that it was a big, big deal, you know, and we were also excited because news was trickling in to us about how important our coverage was" (Bridges, 2013). Head of Output, Sarah Worthington, spoke of a "special responsibility" she and the newsroom felt to "know more about the story than any other outlet out there" (Bridges, 2013, p.143).

ii) Cause

My own conclusion after researching AJE's coverage of the protests is that there were three key factors which made the channel's reporting unique: the depth and breadth of its newsgathering; the expertise of the journalists and staff covering the event; and the quantity of airtime devoted to broadcasting the story. The nature of the event itself was also important, given there was a clear and simple narrative about the "good" and "bad" actors, and a clear and chronological sequence of events producing fantastic made-for-television pictures (Alterman, 2011). The strong "social media revolution" narrative that developed in some

Western reporting and which caught the public's imagination also served to increase general interest in the events.

As *18 Days* (Bridges, 2013) demonstrates, AJE was initially taken by surprise in Egypt. With its attention still on Tunisia after the recent revolution there, the channel (along with essentially every other media organisation operating in the region) missed warning signs in Egypt that significant unrest was on the horizon. Due to a long-term commitment to a strong Cairo bureau, AJE would normally have had a fuller complement of journalists working in Egypt, but most had been sent to Tunisia in the weeks leading up to the start of the unrest. Only a skeleton crew of one journalist was working in Cairo when small-scale protests began on 25 January, 2011. However, once it became clear that momentum was building behind the protests, AJE began flying in staff and resources to cover the growing story. By the time of the Day of Rage, AJE was uniquely placed among English-speaking international television media to cover the events, and it was, for many, the only channel offering live pictures of the protests as they happened.

It is also noteworthy to mention that AJE's bureau position, with direct line-of-sight to several key clashes between protesters and security forces, was instrumental in setting the channel's coverage apart from competitors'. AJE was lucky that much of the action of the protests, and certainly some of the most telegenic, occurred within line of sight of the bureau window. Cameras could simply stream the action live to air, while a correspondent in the bureau narrated. Other journalists roamed the streets and reported back to the bureau. Overall, Figenschou (2014) notes that, while fortuitous positioning has been important to AJA and AJE's big news stories, this reflects, not luck, but rather, Al Jazeera's strong belief in a network of permanent correspondents instead of a reliance on journalists who "parachute" into breaking news. The simple fact is that Al Jazeera's longstanding planning strategies, editorial approaches, and available resources have allowed it to produce the news coverage behind these moments.

While commercial organisations are driven by ratings, AJE is primarily driven by its remit as a soft power tool of the Qatari Government, where success is related to audience growth. The channel is also driven by the passion of journalists and

staff within the newsroom who inherently want their journalistic output to be influential in the market. The AJE channel as a whole worked hard to capitalise on the moment for both of these reasons.

Within the newsroom, management was determined to make the most of the initial surge of interest. AJE's Head of News, Salah Negm, said: "Once you have a big news story, you focus on it, you own it, concentrate on it; make yourself the point of reference." (Bridges, 2013, p. 115). He continued: "... when you own the story and you become the reference point, people will come to you. Let's say, 100 people come to you, five will make you their favourite and then the audience will grow." (Bridges, 2013, p. 121). Negm then outlined the strategy he used to "own" the story: "You deploy proper resources ... I'm talking about correspondents, cameras, field producers. And then [it's] how you treat it on your screen, how much airtime you give to it. If you do that, your audience might go to other channels to see different stories but they'll come back to you always because they know that the latest developments [are on] your screen because you're doing focused, comprehensive coverage. That's what makes us different."

AJE's business model allowed the channel to devote resources to the story in the way described by Negm, and in a manner unavailable to most other broadcasters with more limited budgets. With virtually zero reliance on advertising or other program-based revenue, AJE could drop ad breaks and scheduled programming for hours and even days on end with no consequences for the business in terms of revenue. A well-staffed newsroom and studio in Doha was certainly stretched by the suddenly extended broadcast hours, but had enough spare capacity to rise to the task. Other organisations' newsrooms, running on a leaner staffing profile, may not have been able to do so.

At the end of the 18 days, AJE was keenly aware of the opportunity it had been presented. One journalist spoke of the pressure felt by AJE management: "We needed to continue the wave of success, if you like. We were trying to own the Arab Awakening, not the Egyptian Revolution" (Bridges, 2013, p.343).

iii) Consequence

AJE's moment in Egypt has resulted in increased awareness and credibility for the channel and the network throughout the English-speaking world. This could be observed most starkly in the USA, where negative sentiment towards Al Jazeera has long been prevalent, despite a small, but vocal, campaign to have AJE added to local cable services. AJE's moment also led to commentators and political elites changing their opinions about the network: for example, senior US Government figures, including then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and ex-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, did a sudden turnaround in 2011.

The moment represented AJE's best opportunity yet to leverage positive sentiment among existing and new viewers, and further expand its presence around the world. Hasan Patel (personal communication, July 1, 2015) spoke of the need to capitalise on the moment: "Because of that [AJE's moment] we had to look at our markets and see where can we expand? Where are people interested in us?" And while Australia was certainly designated as one of the focus regions for these expansion efforts (Bridges, 2017), the USA was identified as the most fertile ground for expansion. AJE had long been engaged in a frustrating battle to crack the American media market, and there was unlikely to be a better opportunity than the Egyptian Revolution to finally secure coveted cable carriage.

Youmans (2012) describes AJE's post-Revolution strategy in the USA at length. As one of its first actions post-Revolution, the channel revived its stalled "I Want AJE" campaign which had for some time attempted to organise frustrated AJE viewers in the USA to lobby telecommunications providers. The rebooted campaign was called "Demand Al Jazeera" and it encouraged AJE's fans, old and new, to join local meetings and show their support for AJE on social media. Indeed, 80,000 Americans wrote letters to cable companies demanding they carry AJE on their services, and AJE used these letters in their own meetings with those providers to support its case. While none of these tactics were successful in getting AJE onto American TV screens, the campaign succeeded in helping Al Jazeera maintain the momentum it carried out from the Egyptian Revolution. AJE's moment certainly opened the door for Al Jazeera's full-scale entry into the

USA a few years later in the form of Al Jazeera America, but, ironically, its decision to embrace cable distribution along with that platform's walled garden carriage conditions meant that it was denying itself exactly the same post-broadcast opportunities it was, at the same time, finding so successful elsewhere (Youmans, 2016).

The Egyptian Revolution was a turning point for Al Jazeera in Australia, just as it was in other regions of the world. Although AJE's reciprocal broadcast deals with the ABC and SBS were either signed or in-negotiation at the time of the Revolution, the events in Egypt influenced not only how audiences viewed Al Jazeera, but also the views of journalists at ABC and SBS who make editorial decisions about using its content (Bridges, 2017).

CNN's moment as compared to Al Jazeera English's moment

CNN's Gulf War coverage of the early 1990s is widely considered to be the original moment, or at least the yardstick for subsequent moments. While there are certainly many similarities between CNN and AJE's moments, there are also many differences. I will briefly compare the two using the dimensions of the proposed heuristic.

i) Character

Both CNN and AJE's moments involved a critical mass of viewer "buzz" and critical acclaim. In addition, world leaders, including those involved in the Gulf conflict, openly conceded that they followed the war on CNN (McPhail, 2010), just as AJE was reported to be a go-to source for political elites, including US President Barack Obama, during the Egyptian protests.

The primary difference between the two moments centres around the nature of technology and media flows at their respective times. CNN's moment took place

in a world of linear, broadcast communication — domestic internet was the domain of hobbyists and the World Wide Web was virtually unknown outside of academic computer labs. The bulk of television news was delivered terrestrially or via cable, and the networks dominated the field. CNN, although a decade old, was known derisively as "Chicken Noodle News" as it strove for credibility and market share. International news was largely delivered to consumers via their domestic news organisations. In this context, an upstart 24-hour satellite news broadcaster dominating a major global story was incredible.

AJE's moment, on the other hand, took place in a 24-hour news field that had been shaped in large part by CNN's moment 20 years earlier. In the post-broadcast world of 2011, changing communications technologies had transformed the way people accessed news content. No longer were domestic media organisations the sole or even primary gatekeepers of news content — people could pick and choose from a smorgasbord of news delivered via cable and the internet to their television sets, their computers, and their phones. AJE was competing with a handful of global TV news giants, such as CNN and BBC World, and what made AJE stand out from the pack was a qualitative difference between the content offered by each.

ii) Cause

Both CNN and AJE's moments were driven by the exclusivity of some of their content, although the nature of the exclusivity is different. CNN was allowed to broadcast during the war by the Iraqi Government which saw value in allowing CNN to transmit its message to the US Government and the world (Formanek, 2016). In the lead up to the conflict, CNN had negotiated the installation of a communications infrastructure that bypassed the telephone system which was literally one of the first targets of American bombs. After the phone system was knocked out, CNN was the only global broadcaster with correspondents able to continue reporting. There is some similarity here to AJE's moment, where, on the Day of Rage, AJE's long-standing presence in Cairo and broadcast model allowed it to cover the day and night of violent protest in ways its competitors could not.

Both CNN in Iraq and AJE in Egypt demonstrated the power of live, continuous broadcasting during a major news event, feeding the public's seemingly insatiable thirst for information and pictures. The difference is that CNN was writing the rulebook in 1990 and AJE was ignoring it in 2011. Much of Al Jazeera's coverage bypassed the then-well established conventions of 24-hour television news. For example, AJE for hours at a time would broadcast only long, fuzzy camera shot of Tahrir Square with sober narration or analysis from and anchor or correspondent. Indeed, when, on the eighteenth day, the announcement came that President Hosni Mubarak had resigned, AJE's talking heads stopped talking for over seven minutes, letting the live shot from Cairo fill the airwaves.

iii) Consequence

It is in this dimension that AJE and CNN's moments most seriously diverge. While both moments generated popularity and credibility for their respective channels, they took place at fundamentally different points in the channels' lives. At the time of AJE's moment, the Al Jazeera Network had been successfully broadcasting into a mature satellite news field for 15 years, and AJE boasted a reach of hundreds of millions of households around the world. As mentioned above, CNN in the early 1990s was a minnow struggling to attract viewers and respect as a broadcast news outsider.

CNN's moment established CNN as a credible, "go to" news source — indeed, the gold standard for breaking global news (McPhail, 2010). The moment also established satellite/cable news as a platform and genre in itself, breaking the stranglehold of what in the US is called "network" news (i.e. terrestrial/free-to-air). CNN's moment spurred governments around the world to set up their own 24-hour news broadcasters to compete with CNN or provide an alternative (McPhail, 2010). In contrast, AJE was already established as a broadcaster before its moment, as was Al Jazeera as a network. While AJE's moment brought the channel to the attention of many new viewers around the world, it also assisted in challenging the negative preconceptions held by some people in the West

(especially in the USA) who associated Al Jazeera with terrorism and other Arab/Islamic stereotypes. AJE's moment helped to confer legitimacy on and address lingering doubts about an established broadcaster.

Discussion

As I've demonstrated, talk of an AJE Egyptian Revolution moment was widespread. It is worth noting, though, that most of it came out of the United States, where, in 2011, Al Jazeera occupied a unique place in the public consciousness compared to the rest of the English-speaking world. In the US, Al Jazeera has been viewed with suspicion since the 9/11 terror attacks and subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. After a decade in which Al Jazeera has been used as a political and ideological football, its sudden prominence during the Egyptian protests was particularly stark. In many other parts of the world, however, Al Jazeera had already cemented itself somewhat in the public mind. It is entirely possible that AJE's moment was largely a USA one — and to a lesser degree, other countries in which AJE had until then a weak presence, such as Australia.

Moments do not take place in a vacuum, and the relationship between the three dimensions of the heuristic recognises this fact. The heuristic, for example, invites analysis of how a potential moment is identified from within a news organisation and, subsequently, leveraged for a positive consequence. This was reflected at AJE during the Egyptian protests when they talked of "owning" the event. Indeed, the consequence dimension is the most crucial aspect of the heuristic as a positive consequence is what transforms successful reporting into a moment.

The consequence for AJE must be viewed through the lens of the State of Qatar's motivation in launching and continuing to support Al Jazeera as a soft power project. To be successful in its mission, the state of Qatar relies on Al Jazeera being viewed by as many people around the world as possible, with each audience member being put to work for the state, just as the viewer of a commercial

television network is put to work for the advertisers. The result of the Egyptian Revolution for Al Jazeera English, in terms of both audience growth and the positive perception of the channel and network by news consumers and critics, has been the furtherance of the state of Qatar's soft power mission.

This article has touched on only a small handful of news media moments — all of them drawn from the field of television since CNN's Gulf War moment in 1991 — and ignored many others that have taken place during that time. There are surely also many significant examples of media event-led news organisation's turning points before 1991, but in this article I have not attempted to identify any. A much fuller understanding of the concept of a moment will develop as future research considers a more diverse range of moments.

The heuristic I've outlined in this paper is a starting point only. Most importantly, it needs to be tested against additional media moments and improved by iteration. Some of the most interesting lines of inquiry into the concept of a moment will be: a) are there additional dimensions to a moment?; b) is there a way to measure and quantify degrees of a moment?; and c) can a news organisation experience only one moment (a "coming of age") or can it, as I have argued, experience numerous moments with each one representing a breakthrough in a different strategic direction ("milestones" or "turning points")?

Conclusion

The concept of a moment as a turning point for a news media organisation is well understood anecdotally and is used in the academic literature. However, despite the importance of the concept, and the frequency of its use, it is under-conceptualised. In this article I have critiqued the existing literature and problematised the concept of a news media moment, before developing a heuristic with three dimensions — character, cause and consequence — for use in understanding such moments.

Building on earlier research into Al Jazeera English's Egyptian Revolution moment, I have applied the proposed heuristic to that highly regarded news coverage to determine what AJE's moment looked like, what drove it, and what its repercussions were for the broadcaster. Drawing comparisons between AJE's moment and the original CNN Gulf War moment, I found that there were indeed certain similarities but also fundamental differences related to the maturity of each news outlet at the time of their moments

As with all heuristics, the one proposed in this article offers a foundation for further research, rather than a finished model. If other researchers find it to be of use, it will be improved with repeated application to a range of news media moments and an ongoing process of refinement and iteration.

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AL JAZEERA IN AUSTRALIA

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Chapter 5

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Abstract

The Qatar-based Al Jazeera has expanded at great pace since its inception in 1996, growing from a single Arabic-language news channel serving the Middle East, to a multilingual network of dozens of channels broadcasting around the globe. Al Jazeera's growth in many parts of the world depended on securing satellite and cable/pay television carriage, but neither of those broadcast channels offered the network significant access to the Australian market. While Al Jazeera has for most of its time in Australia struggled to attract a large television audience, it has experienced success via partnerships with the Australian public broadcasters and through online engagement. Drawing on interviews with key managerial and editorial staff at Al Jazeera and the Australian public broadcasters, this article tracks Al Jazeera's presence in the Australian media landscape from the network's launch until the present day and analyses the network's strategy with respect to Australian expansion.

AL JAZEERA AND THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTERS

Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research

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Chapter 6

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Abstract

The Al Jazeera Media Network had a relatively low profile in the Australian media landscape until its English-language news channel signed reciprocal broadcast agreements with the two Australian public broadcasters in 2010 and 2011. As a result of those agreements, Al Jazeera English programs are now rebroadcast on the ABC and SBS's terrestrial TV channels, and its content has become an important component of the public broadcasters' in-house television and radio news bulletins. The agreements are mutually beneficial: through them Al Jazeera has achieved its greatest ever Australian broadcast reach, increased its brand awareness among Australians, and gained credibility through association with the respected ABC and SBS; while the public broadcasters have added breadth and depth to their international news at little-to-no cost in an age of shrinking news budgets. Drawing on content analysis and interviews with key managerial and editorial staff at the ABC and SBS, this article examines exactly what Al Jazeera English material the public broadcasters use, and how, finding that Al Jazeera offers the ABC and SBS's viewers and listeners an additional perspective on news from around the globe. The article also summarises public and commentator reaction to Al Jazeera's partnerships with the public broadcasters, demonstrating that the Qatari broadcaster does not face in Australia the kind of opposition it does in countries such as the USA.

7. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have considered the Al Jazeera Media Network's global expansion efforts, focusing specifically on Al Jazeera English's growth strategy in Australia. I have argued that, in Australia, AJE seized upon the opportunity presented by its Egyptian Revolution moment of 2011, and used secondary and online distribution strategies, rather than a conventional reliance on re-broadcast, to drive a renewed push into this country's media market. I outlined this argument in four published works — one book and three journal articles — and an introductory chapter which provided contextual information and additional theoretical grounding for the published works.

All elements of this thesis addressed the six research questions I outlined in the introduction:

1) What is a news media moment?

2) How did Al Jazeera English produce the news reporting that lead to its Egyptian Revolution moment?

3) What has been Al Jazeera's presence in the Australian media market over time, and how has it expanded?

4) What have been the drivers of, and impediments to, Al Jazeera's presence in Australia?

5) What role has Al Jazeera played in the Australian news landscape over time?

6) What is the nature of the partnerships between Al Jazeera English (AJE) and the Australia public broadcasters, and how do the partnerships work in practice?

Firstly, by analysing in detail Al Jazeera English's Egyptian Revolution coverage as per research question 2, this thesis unpacked one prominent example of how a news media organisation experiences a turning point in its fortunes through leading news reporting, and what the consequences are of such a turning point. In response to research question 1, I have developed a heuristic for better understanding of the concept of a news media moment.

Secondly, in response to research questions 3, 4, and 5, this thesis has presented the results of original empirical research into a hitherto unexamined aspect of the AJMN's global expansion: its presence in Australia, pre- and post-Egyptian Revolution. This research also addressed research question 6 by focusing specifically on Al Jazeera's apparent expansion-through-content sharing strategy in Australia.

Finally, throughout the thesis I have considered Al Jazeera's expansion through the lens of the broadcaster's role as a tool of the state of Qatar, and analysed how this expansion serves the state.

In this conclusion section I isolate the four key themes that run through all published elements and highlight the contribution my research has made to those areas of inquiry. I then suggest six possible lines of future study that could build on my results before summarising the core argument of this thesis.

Discussion

Al Jazeera is a much-studied broadcaster. For twenty years, it has been subjected to intense research and analysis, both within and outside the academy. Published research has addressed a vast range of topics, from the network's genesis and role as a tool of the state of Qatar, to its impact on the region's politics and dynamics. This thesis, while drawing heavily on existing research as a foundation, has offered a unique and diverse empirical study of several aspects of Al Jazeera's operation that have so far been largely unaddressed. The four key themes of my research have been: Al Jazeera English's Egyptian Revolution moment; the

problematisation of news media moments; Al Jazeera's expansion in Australia; and Al Jazeera's role as a tool of the Qatari state.

i) Al Jazeera English's moment

In the book *18 Days: Al Jazeera English and the Egyptian Revolution*, I analysed in detail Al Jazeera English's popular and award-winning coverage of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, showing how and why the channel, in the eyes of viewers and commentators, stood apart from its global English-language television news competitors. I started by reviewing academic and popular literature around the genesis of Al Jazeera, and tracing the milestones, achievements and controversies of the network. I showed how AJE was initially intended by the Qatari Government to serve as a foil to the perceived excesses of AJA, but for various reasons launched as a much closer sister to the original Arabic-language channel.

After conducting research interviews with many of AJE's journalists and editorial staff, and analysing all 18 days of the channel's broadcast output during the key period of the Revolution, I provided insight into the workplace culture and production strategies behind the reporting considered by many to be Al Jazeera English's "moment". The book demonstrates that, while slow off the mark, AJE recognised that the fledgling revolution in Egypt presented an opportunity and then strove to ensure it seized that moment by deploying additional and better-experienced journalists, editorial resources and airtime. AJE's response to the moment was made possible in large part by the network's business model and the prevailing attitude of its staff. However, the same culture that allowed AJE to work in ways unthinkable to its opposition seems responsible for a number of episodes of risk-taking that were unacceptable to many inside the network (and that raised eyebrows outside it). The book also gives readers insight into how, after the resignation of President Mubarak and the conclusion of the first phase of the Revolution, AJE staff keenly felt the burden of expectation generated by its moment.

ii) News media moments

The concept of a critical turning point for a news organisation refers to the widely-recognised CNN Gulf War moment of the early 1990s, in which that broadcaster used its unique coverage of the conflict not just to differentiate itself from its competitors, but also to demonstrate the effectiveness of the concept of rolling news and satellite/cable distribution. Since then, broadcasters that significantly outperform their competitors in the coverage of a news event are frequently said to be experiencing a "CNN moment". This was certainly the case in the wake of Al Jazeera English's coverage of the early stages of the Egyptian Revolution in 2011, when audiences, commentators and critics declared it to be "Al Jazeera's moment" or "Al Jazeera's CNN moment".

The idea of a moment appears regularly in popular discourse and even academic literature, and is held by many to be self-evidently a useful descriptor of a media phenomena. However, as I've demonstrated, there is no robust model for the concept in the academic literature and there is significant confusion and dissent about the exact meaning of the term. In the article *Moments: A Heuristic for Understanding News Media Turning Points* I offered a starting point for the development of a formal model of a news media moment in the form of a heuristic for analysis of moments. My proposed heuristic invites analysis of a moment in three dimensions — character, cause and consequence — to determine what a moment looks like, what drives it, and its effect on the news organisation. I argue that, most crucially, to separate it from simply being leading coverage, a moment requires a positive consequence for the news organisation.

As a means of testing the heuristic, I drew on my research into AJE's Egyptian Revolution coverage to analyse that moment. I demonstrated that AJE's Egyptian Revolution moment lead to a critical turning point in the channel and network's standing in the eyes of audiences and commentators, especially in the United States. I found that AJE's moment looked like subjectively better reporting to viewers and commentators, while, inside the channel, it was marked by a remarkable increase in audience engagement and positive sentiment. The moment was caused by unique reporting, the journalists' expertise, and the

quantity of airtime devoted to telling the story; all made possible by Al Jazeera's longstanding editorial strategy, combined with the resources available to the newsroom thanks to the network's business model. AJE's moment drove several effects for the channel, including increased credibility and awareness among news consumers, commentators and political elites worldwide. The momentum generated by the moment helped create the conditions for Al Jazeera's full-blown entrance to the US media market a few years later, and was an important factor in Al Jazeera's positive reception in Australia. The channel actively sought to capitalise on its moment in an effort to bolster its expansion push around the world, including into Australia.

The concept of a news media moment has been central to my analysis of Al Jazeera's expansion in Australia and around the world, and I believe it is an extremely useful tool for understanding media. However, the concept will be of maximum utility only after a robust model has been formulated. In this thesis I offered what I hope is a valuable starting point for the development of a more formal understanding of the concept of a news media moment, and I hope it starts an ongoing conversation among researchers.

iii) Al Jazeera's expansion in Australia

In this thesis I have also provided the first academic analysis of Al Jazeera's presence in Australia, drawing primarily on original empirical research into the network's relationship with the two Australian public broadcasters.

Al Jazeera in Australia traces the history of the AJMN's presence in Australia from the Arabic-language channel's entry via satellite in 2001, through to AJE's signing of reciprocal broadcast agreements with the Australian public broadcasters. The article highlights the unique structure of the Australian broadcast media market which makes the entry of new media players very difficult compared to other Western countries. This thesis showed that, pre-Egyptian Revolution, Al Jazeera did not attract a significant audience due to the structural reality of the Australian media market.

My research provides insight into the reciprocal broadcast agreements between AJE and the Australian public broadcasters, the ABC and SBS. I argue that AJE plays the role of a de facto news agency for the public broadcasters and that the reciprocal broadcast deals are mutually beneficial: the ABC and SBS get free access to high quality foreign news content while AJE gets brand exposure and an association with the well-regarded public broadcasters. Their use of Al Jazeera content in the manner of a news agency, although with AJ's branding intact, coincided with a higher baseline of consumer awareness of the Qatari broadcaster in Australia.

Although Al Jazeera's most prominent expansion post-2011 has been in the USA, the Egyptian Revolution moment was important for Al Jazeera's expansion efforts in Australia as well. In Australia, it is useful to consider the Egyptian Revolution moment combined with other major news events over the next few years, in particular the arrest, trial and release of Australian journalist Peter Greste in Egypt.

Al Jazeera in Australia demonstrates that, until those reciprocal broadcast deals, Al Jazeera's non-internet viewership in Australia was very low. However, while it appears that up to 4 million Australians might be regularly exposed to AJE content via the public broadcasters, the actual viewership figures for Al Jazeera in Australia are still likely to be relative insignificant. Consequently, I argue that the real story is AJE's success in building a large Australian audience online, and that AJE's partnership with the public broadcasters helps drive online engagement.

In *Al Jazeera and the Australian Public Broadcasters*, I delved deeper into the reciprocal broadcast agreements between AJE and the Australian public broadcasters, providing details of exactly how the ABC and SBS use AJE content in their own branded news bulletins. The article drew on content analysis and research interviews, exploring the amount of AJE content in those bulletins, what kinds of stories are used, and how they are used.

My research shows clearly that AJE has become a very important plank in the broadcasters' foreign news portfolios. I found that in one sample week, the ABC and SBS used between them nearly three hours of AJE content in their own branded news bulletins, and the two networks also rebroadcast nearly 20 hours of AJE's own bulletins. Content chosen by the ABC and SBS for re-use was not just from the Middle East, which is Al Jazeera's presumed "back yard", but also from many regions around the world, including those already well served by other partners of the public broadcasters. As several senior figures at the ABC note, AJE provides another perspective which the network finds useful to diversify its foreign offerings.

Al Jazeera and the Australian Public Broadcasters also reviewed the response to AJE's presence on the public broadcasters and showed that, apart from a small group of critical media commentators, there has been little pushback against the network in Australia. Indeed, the strong growth figures mentioned in *Al Jazeera in Australia* suggest that Al Jazeera does not struggle in Australia with widespread negative sentiment. Indeed, much of the pushback against Al Jazeera in Australia is driven by a concern about the public broadcasters legitimising the Arab network by partnering with it.

In both of these articles I also consider Al Jazeera's growth online which is a space in which any news organisation in this digital and post-broadcast world ignores or neglects at its peril. In *18 Days*, I explain AJE's efforts during the Egyptian Revolution to distribute its content and engage consumers through digital channels — a theme I develop further in two of the journal articles with the argument that Al Jazeera, with the notable exception of Al Jazeera America, is generally doing very good work online.

I refer in those two journal articles to Al Jazeera's expansion-through-content sharing strategy as 'secondary expansion', and I believe we will see this strategy employed in Australia more frequently in the future as the media market further fragments and foreign broadcasters seek to enter the country. Indeed, as I finalised this thesis, Australian news organisations including Fairfax Media and Sky News Australia signed memoranda of understanding with a range of Chinese

state media organisations to share content (Robin and Sainsbury, 2016). Secondary expansion, I believe, is the inevitable result of the reality of modern media business models and the benefits for foreign media organisations in leveraging existing relationships between news consumers and domestic media organisations.

Al Jazeera as a tool of the state of Qatar

Throughout this thesis — starting in *18 Days*, then with more depth in *Al Jazeera in Australia*, and then in much more depth in the introduction to this thesis — I have reviewed the literature around Al Jazeera and the role it plays in the foreign policy strategy of the state of Qatar. As a small country, surrounded by larger states which exercise much stronger traditional forms of power, Qatar relies on strategies of hedging and branding to secure and assert itself, and, in this context, Al Jazeera was conceived by the state as a form of soft power. It is important, I believe, to take a step back and view all of the threads of this thesis through this lens.

It is very easy when analysing a media organisation's quest for growth to consider growth as a goal for its own sake. The desire to maximise audience reach is inherent among the staff in any newsroom — journalists and media workers naturally want the content they produce to be consumed by as many people as possible. But journalists work for organisations that exist to achieve outcomes for their owners: usually the generation of profit and/or some form of non-commercial gain for their owners. Maximising the reach of the organisation's content is central to both missions, as commercial profit is generated when an audience is put to work for the advertisers or sponsors of a commercial outlet, or the benefactors of a non-commercial outlet.

Put simply, Al Jazeera is a tool of the state, no matter how independently it may operate on a day-to-day basis, or how much editorial control it may retain. Al Jazeera relies on the government of Qatar for the bulk of its operating budget and its continued blessing to operate — Al Jazeera could be shut down at a moment's

notice with the stroke of a pen. The AJMN's operation each day is contingent upon the state of Qatar determining that the network continues to deliver it a net benefit. Audience is central to that equation due to Al Jazeera's original and ongoing mission as a soft power influencer and a state brand enhancer, whereby each of these roles require it to demand the broadest possible reach around the region and the world. Every new viewer attracted by Al Jazeera is one extra person who is put to work on behalf of the Qatari state in the pursuit of its goals.

My research revealed that staff at the ABC and SBS trust AJE content highly and see value in using it. Senior staff are surely aware of the fundamental role Al Jazeera plays in the Qatari state's foreign policy strategy, and certainly by helping to expand Al Jazeera's audience and legitimise its brand, they are, like Al Jazeera viewers, "working" for the state of Qatar. As such, Al Jazeera is both a useful news source *and* a soft diplomacy tool of the state of Qatar's.

Further research

This thesis has touched on a number of themes regarding Al Jazeera's expansion and the concept of news media moments that are ripe for further study. Six lines of possible future inquiry seem particularly important:

i) *18 Days* and the journal articles traced some of the consequences of AJE's moment in Egypt, but it would be very interesting to compare the effect of the Revolution and the broader "Arab Spring" on AJA and AJE. How did that event impact upon each of the channels? Did the Egyptian Revolution represent a moment for AJA? Did the channels embrace their moments in different ways? Indeed, did the Egyptian Revolution produce an overall *negative* effect for AJA?

ii) Building on the results of my research presented in *Al Jazeera in Australia* and *Al Jazeera and the Australian Public Broadcasters*, a qualitative study of Al Jazeera's audience in Australia to determine how and why they tune into Al Jazeera would be a very useful contribution to the literature.

iii) As I suggested in *Al Jazeera and the Australian Public Broadcasters*, further research into the Australian audience's reaction to AJE on the ABC and SBS would also be valuable.

iv) Given the future post-broadcast consumption habits of news consumers, and Al Jazeera's seeming embrace of digital distribution, it would be very interesting to see a deeper analysis of the exact relationship between AJE's television and online arms. How closely do they cooperate? What are the editorial differences? How will the relationship between the two change and develop into the future?

v) The heuristic for analysing a news media moment I've outlined in this thesis is a starting point only. Most importantly, it needs to be tested against additional media moments. How could the heuristic be improved and eventually developed into a formal model? Are there additional dimensions to a moment? Is there a way to measure and quantify degrees of a moment?

vi) Finally, as I finalise this thesis in mid-2016, Qatar (along with the other hydrocarbon economies of the Middle East) is facing serious budgetary challenges related to the global drop in oil prices. The recent closure of AJAM is the most obvious impact for Al Jazeera, but mass layoffs in Doha is another. It would be very interesting, in this context, to continue evaluating Al Jazeera as tool of state over the coming years as circumstances change so drastically in Qatar.

Conclusion

The Al Jazeera Media Network has grown and expanded aggressively since its genesis as a small local broadcaster in 1996. In the space of just 20 years, Al Jazeera has transformed itself into a global media giant, serving news, sport and entertainment to viewers around the world in multiple languages. In addition to the original Arabic-language news service, AJMN now offers a global English-language news channel, along with regional offerings in Turkish and Bosnian. Sports, entertainment and factual channels round out the rest of the network's

services. In addition, while satellite continues to be the principle mode of distribution for most of Al Jazeera's content worldwide, audiences also tune in via cable, terrestrial and the internet.

The network's thirst for expansion primarily reflects the foreign policy strategy of the modern state of Qatar, whereby hydrocarbon rents are used to fund soft power, sovereign projects. Al Jazeera is a central plank in the state's efforts to present a liberal face to the world and carve out for itself a significant role in regional geopolitics. As a non-commercial broadcaster, Al Jazeera exists to puts its audience to work for its benefactors, rather than for advertisers and sponsors. As such, maximising the number of people who consume Al Jazeera content through expansion is the key metric of the network's success in the eyes of the state. On a micro level, as with any news media organisation, Al Jazeera's journalists instinctively want to maximise the reach of the content they produce. They therefore work symbiotically with the state of Qatar, whether or not they agree with its agenda, to increase ratings and influence.

Al Jazeera's expansion over two decades has been helped along by a number of media event-led "moments" which have each brought the network to the attention of new viewers and helped it build credibility with audiences. The explosive 2011 protests in Egypt that ultimately led to the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak represented a critical turning point for Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera English's coverage of that event attracted popular and critical acclaim and boosted the channel in its efforts to continue its expansion into parts of the world where it had not previously experienced significant success. Using this example as a guide, I have proposed a heuristic for the analysis of moment to begin a process of formalising a model for a widely-used and yet underdeveloped concept.

Original research presented in this thesis traces the AJMN's history in Australia, finding that Al Jazeera has for many years struggled to build a significant broadcast audience in this country. The unique nature of Australia's media market means that Al Jazeera has been unable to secure a significant foothold via conventional broadcast means. My research focused particularly on Al Jazeera's reciprocal broadcast agreements with the Australian public broadcasters, the

ABC and SBS, which are responsible for the most significant increase in the network's audience reach in Australia since first broadcasting there in 2001 — because of those deals, up to 4 million Australians are exposed to Al Jazeera English content each week. As the only major non-Western content partner of the ABC and SBS newsrooms, Al Jazeera is acting as a de facto news agency providing content that offers a different perspective on world events.

These reciprocal broadcast deals allow the ABC and SBS to add breadth and depth to their foreign news coverage for no extra cost, while giving Al Jazeera an opportunity to associate itself with the highly respected brands of the public broadcasters in the minds of Australian news consumers. There has been little pushback against the presence of Al Jazeera on the public broadcasters' airwaves. Rather, when combined with Al Jazeera's Egyptian Revolution moment and the Peter Greste case, the deals mean that Al Jazeera is enjoying a very high level of brand exposure in Australia.

Despite these reciprocal broadcast deals, my research shows that Al Jazeera's most significant growth in Australia is taking place online, rather than via television broadcast. With a conventional broadcast approach to expansion seemingly shut off to Al Jazeera in Australia, and with a broader trend away from linear distribution of news content around the world, Al Jazeera seems to be strategically pursuing a joint TV/digital approach to expansion (AJAM is a notable exception). However, if it were not for AJE's Egyptian Revolution moment serendipitously occurring just as AJE was preparing its secondary expansion push into Australia, it's unlikely Al Jazeera would be in the position it is today in this country.

As we pass the five-year anniversary of AJE's Egyptian Revolution moment, it will be interesting to watch how the Al Jazeera Media Network continues to adapt to a post-broadcast media market. Along with a collapsing global hydrocarbon economy, imposing hitherto unknown limits on how much the Qatari government can spend on Al Jazeera, the network will need to continue to innovate to ensure it is putting as many people around the world as possible to work in advancing the foreign policy objectives of Doha.

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September 27, 2016

Dear Madam/Sir,

I'm writing to confirm that Canberra-based digital first book publishing company Editia published Scott Bridges' non-fiction book *18 days: Al Jazeera English and the Egyptian Revolution* in 2013 (ebook) and 2014 (print edition).

Two members of staff reviewed the manuscript in full before deciding we would publish it. Editia is a traditional book publisher, meaning that we bear the financial risk of publication rather than taking payment from an author to publish the work.

I founded the business as an outlet for longform journalism and narrative non-fiction in 2012. I am a Walkley Award-winning journalist and editor who has worked on the print and online editions of The Sydney Morning Herald, The Canberra Times and The South China Morning Post.

Once the contract was signed, I worked closely with Scott on a structural edit of the book before commissioning award-winning book editor Sarah J. Fletcher to further review the manuscript and complete a rigorous copy edit including extensive fact-checking.

During the quality assurance and proof-reading stage, three members of our team checked over the manuscript, discussing final text changes with Scott before the files were distributed to our ebook retail partners and to our printer.

The print edition is available through bricks and mortar booksellers nationally here and in New Zealand, and online internationally via the Editia website. The ebook edition is on sale in Amazon's Kindle store, Apple's iBookstore and via the Kobo and Google Play online stores. We made the book available in key bookstores in Berlin when the author appeared at the Berlin Documentary Forum, too.

Sales data is commercial in confidence, but we did require follow-up print runs.

Yours faithfully,

CHARLOTTE HARPER

Founder and Publisher, Editia

APPENDIX B

How Al Jazeera took on the (English speaking) world

Published 19 October, 2012, by Inside Story.

The ABC's decision to use reports from the controversial Doha-based network makes sense from up close, writes Scott Bridges

IT WAS an ordinary Monday morning in Australia when the White House announced that Barack Obama was about to give a special televised address. The internet buzzed with speculation about what could be important enough to warrant a presidential speech, at short notice, very late on a Sunday evening Washington time. And then Keith Urbahn, chief of staff to former defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, tweeted the bombshell: "So I'm told by a reputable person they have killed Osama Bin Laden. Hot damn."

Broadcasters across the world scrambled to prepare for the president's announcement and cover what looked like being the biggest news story of 2011. In Australia, ABC television decided not to break into regular ABC1 programming, instead running rolling coverage on its twenty-four-hour news channel from lunchtime on. As the scale of the story outgrew the network's limited resources, ABC24 handed over to one of its international partners. Aunty's choice on this particular day – Al Jazeera English, or AJE – surprised some people. As the Australian's Caroline Overington wrote, the ABC "normally uses BBC coverage of world events." At one point, she added, "bin Laden was being described as a 'hero' to some in the Arab world."

A few commentators were incredulous. "When the ABC switched to live coverage of the death of Osama bin Laden on Monday, it didn't take the BBC or CNN. It took the Middle East network, Al Jazeera," reported the Australian's media diarist. "The ABC says that wasn't because no other feed was available. It actually took Al Jazeera by choice." "What on earth is the ABC's agenda?" asked News Limited's Andrew Bolt. Implicit in these criticisms was the view that AJE couldn't

possibly deliver rigorous and balanced reporting on bin Laden's death because it is based in the Middle East.

In my experience, criticisms like these often come from people who haven't seen much of AJE's news output, which has been extremely difficult to view on broadcast TV in Australia. (AJE has only recently been added to Foxtel's basic package, and since the end of 2011 it has been broadcast for a few mostly overnight hours each day on ABC24 and SBS1.) Add the fact that AJE sports a calligraphic Arabic logo and its name starts with "al," and the misreading of its character is even easier to understand.

So why did the ABC decide that a relatively new Middle Eastern satellite channel was a more appropriate source for its coverage of bin Laden's death than the BBC or an established American network? What propelled AJE from little-known foreign satellite channel to key news partner for Australia's national broadcaster?

IN JANUARY 2011, I was in Sri Lanka cursing the fact that I'd flown out of Qatar just six days earlier. My first freelance contract as a director for AJE had concluded but, despite having a very pleasant holiday, I would have preferred to have been back in the control room. Instead, here I was, sitting in a guesthouse watching AJE on my laptop as Cairo descended into urban warfare. It was the Day of Rage – day four of what we now call the Egyptian Revolution. Despite an uncertain internet connection and faltering, pixelated images, the scale and significance of the events were clear. Through the window of its bureau, AJE cameras were capturing unprecedented scenes in the Egyptian capital: dramatic parabolas of white smoke trailing behind canisters of tear gas fired by riot police on one bridge towards protesters on another; protesters stumbling through the streets, tears streaming from their eyes and handkerchiefs held over their mouths and noses; crowds of men running away from armoured vehicles, blood streaming from their heads, while others ran towards the vehicles armed only with rocks. It was incredible news and incredible television, and Al Jazeera was about the only place you could watch it.

That night, AJE's live internet streaming figures rose by an almost unbelievable 2500 per cent as people around the world, desperate for coverage and finding nothing on other twenty-four-hour news channels, turned to the internet. Partly by luck and partly by design, Al Jazeera found itself best equipped and most capable of covering the revolution, and it felt the eyes of the world on it.

By 11 February, when Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak stepped down after eighteen days of protest, AJE had simply outplayed and outclassed its competitors. According to Robert F. Worth of the New York Times, the network "provided more exhaustive coverage than anyone else"; Laura Washington in the Chicago Sun-Times wrote that the channel was delivering "first-rate, incisive content"; it has been reported that White House television sets were tuned to AJE during the revolution.

As I watched during those weeks, I couldn't help but wonder how the workplace I'd come to know over the past three months was dealing with such a massive and all-consuming event. Former colleagues told me that they were working double shifts and seven-day weeks, and my experience directing the channel's output gave me some insight into what was going on behind the scenes. Having worked hand-in-hand with journalists and producers, I also understood the size and complexity of the organisation.

After Mubarak's fall, AJE's attention turned from Egypt to a more prolonged and complicated crisis in Libya, and I continued to watch its coverage on the internet in Australia. Then, two weeks after the announcement of bin Laden's death, I flew from Sydney to Doha and began my second freelance contract, back in a newsroom that had changed in subtle but significant ways since the Egyptian Revolution.

WHEN we talk about Al Jazeera, it's important not to conflate its constituent parts. Al Jazeera Arabic, or AJA, and AJE are related but separate entities with largely independent newsrooms and operations. They share content, some bureau resources, and a commitment to the same editorial charter, but not much else. Recently, however, there have been efforts at upper management levels to

integrate the two channels more closely, with cost-cutting being one of the most frequently mentioned motivations.

The sprawling Al Jazeera Network features no fewer than sixteen sports channels, a children's channel, a documentary channel and a live events channel. In news coverage, AJE and AJA are complemented by the newly launched Al Jazeera Balkans, and plans are well advanced for Turkish and Urdu channels. And anyone who has been following the recent battles over TV sporting rights in the United States will know that Al Jazeera's non-news reach is expanding at a similar pace to its news operation. Yet this media giant emerged from the sands of the tiny Gulf state of Qatar just seventeen years ago.

Its genesis is found in the story of one man, the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. After he seized power from his father in a peaceful coup in 1995, Sheikh Hamad set about liberalising the country's media by abolishing the Ministry of Information and launching a major new broadcast network. Al Jazeera ("The Peninsula") was launched on 1 November 1996 with an initial grant of 500 million Qatari rials (approximately US$137 million) and a recurring annual grant of about US$100 million.

Most analysts agree that Al Jazeera was, and is, a diplomatic exercise by the rich and savvy ruler of a small and geopolitically vulnerable nation. But from the moment it was launched, this news network was a radical departure from the kind of state-owned television that is standard across the Middle East. Al Jazeera expert Philip Seib argues that it "reshaped the Arab public sphere by discussing government corruption, the role of women in Arab society, and other matters long ignored by the staid government-run news organisations in the region." Nor was the fledgling channel afraid of making enemies in the region – by 2002, most Arab League countries had protested at Al Jazeera's coverage of their affairs, and six (Saudi Arabia, Libya, Morocco, Kuwait, Jordan and Tunisia) had at some stage withdrawn their ambassadors from Doha. By 2005, over 450 official complaints had been made to the Qatari government by other states.

Even on that most fraught of Middle Eastern issues, Israel–Palestine, Al Jazeera was breaking new ground, even if it didn't always get the balance right. As the New Statesman's Mehdi Hassan writes, AJA was "the first Arab broadcaster to offer a voice to Israeli officials." Hassan refers to British journalist Hugh Miles's observation that "the interviews with Israeli army officers and military spokesmen were 'truly shocking for the Arab public,' especially because 'many Arabs had never seen an Israeli speak before.'"

As far as the rest of the world was concerned, there was nothing much to worry about. Al Jazeera, broadcasting in Arabic and to a fairly limited audience from a global perspective, was not perceived as a threat to Western interests. If anything, in its early years, it was seen as something of a democratic force in a region light on democracy. But then everything changed on 11 September 2001.

With the Middle East suddenly central to US foreign policy, Al Jazeera's coverage of events in the region now came under intense global scrutiny. The channel's reporting on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, coming from a very different perspective than that of Western media organisations, attracted severe criticism from governments and commentators. Al Jazeera was called "Jihad TV," "killers with cameras," and "the most powerful ally of terror in the world." It earned a reputation for airing terrorist videos and bin Laden statements (even though these statements were newsworthy enough to be played by other networks including CNN) and for broadcasting beheading videos (which it never did). For many in the West, Al Jazeera became synonymous with al Qaeda.

AL JAZEERA English went to air for the first time on 15 November 2006 after months, if not years, of delay. It was launched to eighty million homes around the world, costing the Qatari government around US$1 billion on top of existing funding for Al Jazeera.

Conceived as early as 2002 as a translated, subtitled and dubbed repackaging of the Arabic broadcast, the AJE model transformed a number of times before it eventually went to air. An English-language website, run somewhat separately

from the Arabic operation and as a precursor to a future television operation, had come online in 2003 but was immediately brought down by repeated cyberattack.

At around the time planning began for AJE, the Qatari government was attempting to moderate the excesses of the original Arabic-language operation in reaction to foreign pressure. In late 2003, the Bush administration downgraded the status of planned visits by the Qatari foreign minister and the emir's wife, and Qatar cancelled the trips because of this perceived insult. "According to AJE architect Steve Clark," writes Shawn Powers, a media specialist at Georgia State University, "it was this cancelled trip that solidified [the emir's] decision to invest substantially to create a news network that would once and for all clear Al Jazeera's name in the West."

Al Jazeera International (AJE's pre-launch moniker) was designed not only to fill a perceived market niche, but also to be another cog in Qatar's foreign policy machine. As William Stebbins, AJE's Washington bureau chief until 2010, recalls, "There was an expectation that the English channel would be a more sober and sophisticated Al Jazeera, less parochial and operating with higher journalistic standards. While this perception may have played to the English service's favour, it reflected poorly on the broad Al Jazeera brand, and that implication was never strenuously enough denied."

Originally slated for launch in late 2004, there was still no sign of an on-air date by early 2006. At the original Al Jazeera operation, animosity was growing as staff watched their English-language counterparts working in a larger building with superior technology on better pay and conditions. "We felt used, unappreciated, and even 'colonised' a bit," one AJA presenter told Powers. "Over the short period of two years, we had gone from Kings and Queens of the Arab world to peons when compared to a 'British Boys Network' that is trading on our names, our blood, and our reputations. Many of us are heartbroken."

In an effort to ease the tension, Wadah Khanfar was promoted from managing director of the original Al Jazeera operation to director-general of the entire Al Jazeera Network. In May 2006, Ibrahim Helal, one of the launch recruits of Al

Jazeera, was appointed deputy managing director at Al Jazeera International, and he set about integrating the new channel with the old. Helal was successful in having the launch put back to the end of 2006 and used the time to recruit from around the world in order to spice up the relatively monocultural flavour of the channel.

A mere three weeks before the channel's launch – scheduled to coincide with the ten-year anniversary of the launch of Al Jazeera – its name was changed from Al Jazeera International to Al Jazeera English at the urging of Helal. He argued that the new name signposted that AJE and AJA would be sister channels of equal status rather than one being a superior worldwide version of the parochial other. And so, by the time AJE launched, it was a very different machine to that envisaged by the Qatari government. "The initial Qatari design to launch a news network independent from the Arabic channel's origins had failed due to core opposition from the network's journalists and managerial core," writes Powers. "As a result, at the time of its launch in 2006, AJE's operations and mission were very much tied to the overall management and reputation of the Al Jazeera Network."

To this day, AJA and AJE are defined by their different audiences – AJA's in the MENA countries (Middle East and North Africa) and the Arabic-speaking diaspora, and AJE's in the entire English-speaking world. Naturally, this means that each channel has its own set of news values and reporting methods and its own on-air tone. The distinction also allows AJE to cover events taking place in Qatar's immediate neighbourhood more freely than AJA might for fear of causing domestic political concern.

The official line at AJE is that there is a high level of cooperation between the two sister channels. But AJE's head of news-gathering, Heather Allan, told me that the two work "totally separately" and that AJA services a more "conspiratorial" audience. Head of output, Sarah Worthington, said AJA's news planning is more "ad hoc" and its approach to reporting more "aggressive" than AJE's. While both channels excelled in covering the Egyptian Revolution, each did so in its own way.

BY THE time Hosni Mubarak resigned as president of Egypt two weeks after the Day of Rage, AJE had cemented itself in many viewers' minds as the channel of record not just for the Egyptian Revolution and the Arab Spring but also for news more generally.

Even after the incredible spike in viewer numbers during the Egyptian protests, more and more people continued to tune into AJE throughout 2011. Because it is distributed by global satellite, viewership is very hard to gauge with accuracy, so traffic to the internet live-stream is a better measure. After the record highs of Egypt, the Japanese earthquake and tsunami set a new benchmark, and AJE claims that four weeks after Tripoli fell to anti-Gaddafi forces in August 2011 it had retained around 28 per cent of the surge in new traffic generated by that event. Around 40 per cent of AJE's total web traffic comes from the United States, where the reluctance of major cable providers to carry the network means that it is available to only a few tiny pockets of viewers.

There's no denying that AJE's capacity to provide broad, in-depth and responsive reporting is due largely to its generous budget and freedom from commercial pressures. AJE maintains twenty-eight bureaus around the world and shares another few dozen with AJA – a news-gathering footprint simply unrivalled by competitors. The newsroom and television operations are robustly staffed, and little expense is spared on technology and the day-to-day activities of journalists and producers. This financial advantage was obvious throughout its Egypt coverage.

During the eighteen core days of the revolution, AJE had more reporters in more places across the country than any other network, including no fewer than five correspondents who were either Egyptian-born or who had Egyptian heritage. Other reporters boasted long experience covering Egypt and were supported by producers with similar backgrounds. On the Day of Rage, AJE had at least five reporters plus their teams in three cities across the country, coordinated from the channel's bureau in Cairo. And unlike other networks that largely relied on journalists "parachuted" into the story, AJE's journalists were equipped with local knowledge and often spoke the language.

As most viewers during the revolution would have noticed, AJE broadcast the developing crisis in Egypt to the exclusion of very nearly everything else. For over two weeks, the schedule was cleared and the regular day-to-day pattern of news bulletins and recorded programming was suspended. AJE dedicated itself to reporting events in Egypt and airing special in-depth current affairs programs, which meant that viewers knew they could tune into the channel at any time for information on events in Egypt.

Crucially, AJE could afford to move people and equipment around the world at a moment's notice and drop (already scarce) commercial breaks for days at a time without fear of diminished revenue streams. Once the decision was made to roll with the Egypt story, the prevailing attitude at AJE was "whatever it takes," and it had the resources required to do whatever it took.

WHEN I arrived back in Doha in May 2011, the AJE team was still on a high from the success of its Egypt coverage. Everyone was conscious of the need to continue their efforts in reporting news from around the world, but coverage of the latest countries playing host to the Arab Spring, Libya and Syria, was obviously going to be a priority. There was a definite sense in the newsroom that the world was watching – a tangible burden of expectation.

For the next few months, the Libyan rebels' conflict with Gaddafi dragged on with no signs of significant progress for either side. But AJE continued to feature fresh, on-the-ground, daily reporting while other networks lost interest or bumped the story down their running orders. And as with other news organisations, AJE's coverage of the uprising against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad was hobbled by an inability to operate journalists within the country, but it did its best despite a necessary over-reliance on Syrian activists' YouTube material. In the cases of Libya and Syria – and earlier, Bahrain – legitimate questions were asked about how the Qatari government's involvement in the Libyan and Syrian conflicts may have affected AJE's editorial lines.

And then, in September 2011, to the surprise of employees and commentators alike, director-general Wadah Khanfar resigned. The reasons behind his decision still remain unclear, but Khanfar is adamant that he departed on his own terms, that it was simply time to move on. Some have suggested the Qatari government forced him out, noting that Khanfar's replacement is a member of the royal family and has a background in natural gas. Frequently highlighted are allegations in leaked US diplomatic cables that Al Jazeera, at Khanfar's direction, altered editorial content in response to pressure from Washington.

The cables, published in 2010 by WikiLeaks, paint an interesting picture of the relationship between Al Jazeera and the US embassy in Doha. They reveal frequent meetings between the two parties on a range of issues including content, guest selection, quality control and the airing of sensitive material such as hostage videos. Taken together, it is easy for readers to form the impression that Khanfar and other Al Jazeera employees were responsive to the US embassy's concerns about the network's output. On at least one occasion, according to the cables, Khanfar allegedly agreed to alter specific content.

Speculation about Khanfar's departure led the New York Review of Books to wonder if "the Qatari government may now be more concerned about the appearance of foreign influence than of its own." It's an interesting point given that when analysts and commentators have searched for editorial weakness at the network, they have usually gone straight to the emir's diwan.

In the newsroom, however, there is certainly no evidence of systematic interference in editorial matters from inside or outside the building. I've interviewed around two dozen AJE managers, journalists and operations staff, and most of them argue fiercely that the newsroom is independent of the Qatari state. A few alluded to isolated incidents involving possible attempts by upper management to change a line or suppress a story – and these incidents should not be discounted or dismissed – but in most cases the newsroom fought back. This is key.

AJE's twenty-four-hour newsroom is staffed at all times by dozens of journalists drawn from a pool of employees representing over fifty nationalities. Internal editorial disputes are frequent and fierce; people stand up for what they think. This active streak of independence in the newsroom, combined with the increased global scrutiny of AJE's output in the wake of the Egyptian Revolution, are the channel's best (although not flawless) defence against editorial interference by the network's benefactor.

The Al Jazeera network is still a teenager and AJE is not even six years old. The company has expanded at such a rate that its organisational structures haven't had even a remote hope of keeping pace and adapting to the ongoing change. There is a certain controlled chaos about the way AJE and the Al Jazeera network operate, quite at odds with conspiracy theories of an unbroken and compliant chain of command direct from the emir's palace to the newsreader's autocue. As an employee and journalist this chaos can be extremely frustrating – from constant and soul-sapping battles with the human resources bureaucracy to amorphous newsroom workflows – but it can also be inspiring. Everyone feels like they're part of something a little bit pioneering.

Like any news organisation, AJE has its editorial quirks; and a critical news consumer should never blindly accept the reporting of only one news network, whether it's Al Jazeera or another. But with a news-gathering operation that dwarfs that of most other broadcast news networks, a unique perspective born of having one foot in the Middle East and one in the West, a growing reputation for intellectually robust reporting, and a broadcasting ethos that eschews brainless chat and empty opinion, AJE's place within the ABC's portfolio of broadcast partners back here in Australia makes an awful lot of sense.

Bridges, S. (2012). How Al Jazeera Took On the (English Speaking) World. *Inside Story*. Retrieved November 20, 2012, from http://insidestory.org.au/how-al-jazeera-took-on-the-english-speaking-world/

APPENDIX C

America could be Al Jazeera's final frontier

Published 29 October, 2013, by The Conversation.

From its humble beginnings in the tiny middle eastern state of Qatar, Al Jazeera has been a genuine trailblazer, and can be partially credited with kickstarting a news and media revolution in the Arab world.

But the network's attempts to expand to the US market have not been without difficulties. Opposition to Al Jazeera during wars in Iraq and Afghanistan came from the highest levels of government, and now Al Jazeera America must contend with a reputation that formed in the minds of many during those heated post-9/11 years.

Launched in 1996 from a ramshackle compound in the sleepy capital of Doha with then-Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani as a wealthy benefactor, the channel rapidly expanded its satellite footprint to most of the Middle East and established itself as a major voice in the Arab world.

The launch of Al Jazeera English (AJE) in 2006 marked its first non-Arabic news venture, and AJE was joined in 2011 by the lesser-known Al Jazeera Balkans. This year, Al Jazeera announced plans for UK and French channels (in addition to Al Jazeera Turk). (There has also been some media speculation that Al Jazeera is considering an Australian sports channel.)

But its most anticipated franchise has been Al Jazeera America (AJAM).

Al Jazeera had previously worked hard to crack the US market, but with little success. After years of private and public lobbying (including a prominent "Demand Al Jazeera" campaign in the wake of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011), and in the face of strident ideological and political opposition, AJE managed only a few small pockets of cable carriage across the USA.

Then in January this year, Al Jazeera dropped a bombshell: it had purchased Al Gore's Current TV channel for a reported $US500 million, instantly gaining access to an estimated 50-60 million homes.

Within hours of the announcement of the Al Jazeera deal, Time Warner Cable (reaching around 10 million homes) removed Current from its line-up, denying the charge that its decision was politically motivated.

(After evaluating "whether it makes sense" to carry AJAM, Time Warner last week decided to re-add the channel.)

Americans were quick to parody their latest news channel on Twitter with the hashtag #AlJazeeraAmericaTVShows eliciting suggestions like "Sharia Law & Order", "I Dream of Jihad", "How I Met Your Camel", and "Arresting Development".

Al Jazeera America took shape with amazing speed – the Current TV deal was announced in January and AJAM went to air only seven months later.

In that time, dozens of AJE staff flown in from Doha, along with local executives, built a newsroom/studio in New York City, opened multiple new bureaus around the country, recruited hundreds of staff (from many thousands of applications), and fleshed out a 24-hour broadcast schedule of news bulletins and special programs.

Throughout this process there was public discussion and fierce internal debate over many editorial issues, but one in particular: how American should the American arm of Al Jazeera be?

Marwan Bishara, host of AJE's Empire and the channel's senior political analyst, emailed network leadership in July, expressing concern about attempts to build a "firewall" between the new channel and its sisters in Doha. This email along with other reporting at the time suggested that AJAM was engaged in a delicate

balancing act between embracing the Al Jazeera legacy and distancing itself to counter lingering sentiments about the network's "anti-Americanism".

After several delays to the ambitious launch date, AJAM went to air on August 20. In reviewing the new channel's first hours, Mary McNamara in the Los Angeles Times declared that AJAM had "chutzpah" for opening with a swipe at US news culture before setting out its mission as an attempt to "out-America everyone".

At a stylistic level, she also mentioned AJAM's "muted color scheme, unexciting camera work and sophomoric graphics" in contrast to established US cable news outlets with their audiovisual gimmicks and outsize production. In some ways these design elements which seek to foreground content over production, borrowed as they are from AJE, may be more central to the channel's success or failure than editorial considerations.

Only two months after launch it's impossible to draw any conclusions about AJAM's prospects.

Launch ratings were so low that in some cases they failed to meet the metrics' "accuracy threshold" – but any new channel, even one without AJAM's Islamic-sounding moniker, is going to struggle to gain viewers. Especially so in an increasingly fragmented media market and when new cable channels are assigned numbers at the wrong end of the dial where chance discovery is unlikely.

The original Al Jazeera channel has been phenomenally successful in the Middle East, and AJE has built on that success around the world. Al Jazeera America is the network's attempt to crack the last major withholding Western market, and it may turn out to be the toughest challenge it has taken on.

Bridges, S. (2013). America could be Al Jazeera's final frontier. *The Conversation*. Retrieved October 30, 2013, from https://theconversation.com/america-could-be-al-jazeeras-final-frontier-19276

APPENDIX D

Al Jazeera's troubled history in Egypt

Published 3 March, 2014, by The Conversation.

In 1999, then-Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak visited the small, dusty Al Jazeera compound in a suburb of the Qatari capital of Doha. "This matchbox! All this noise is coming out of this matchbox?" Mubarak reportedly exclaimed.

Ever since its launch in 1996, the trailblazing satellite news channel has been generating lots of unwelcome noise for governments and regimes throughout the Middle East and North Africa. It was the first pan-Arab broadcaster to facilitate open discussion about previously taboo topics. Al Jazeera engaged a citizenry raised on a diet of stale, impotent state media, and invited it to publicly question the status quo on a range of issues from governance to religion.

In its first decade, Al Jazeera triggered over 450 diplomatic complaints to the Qatari government, which funds the network, and the recall of at least six ambassadors from Doha.

But its relationship with Egypt – the Arab world's most populous and arguably most influential state – has been one of the most complicated. The recent arrest of three Al Jazeera English employees, including Australian journalist Peter Greste, on outrageous charges of broadcasting news that endangers "domestic security" is just the latest move in a long game of chess between the two players that stretches back for nearly two decades.

Early years

As early as the 1990s, economic disputes at the state level affected Al Jazeera's operations in Egypt. The Mubarak administration viewed the channel as a direct proxy for the Qatari emir.

In specific instances, Egyptian guests who had been invited to appear on Al Jazeera programs were prevented from departing Cairo airport for Doha.

The Second Palestinian Intifada from 2000, and Al Jazeera's coverage of it (which included footage of Palestinians burning Egyptian flags), generated much anger in Egypt. The Egyptian government accused Al Jazeera of undermining the regime and the country's stability.

Despite these skirmishes, Al Jazeera had by mid-2000 signed an expensive deal to move its Egyptian operations to Cairo's new Media City. Commentators suggested a deal to tone down the channel's coverage of Egyptian affairs, although any change to its editorial approach was denied by then-managing director Mohammed Jasim Al-Ali.

Recent times and the Egyptian revolution

By 2011, Al Jazeera was operating inside Egypt with relative freedom, and the original Arabic channel had been joined by its English-language sister.

As the mass protests of that year's revolution gathered pace, Al Jazeera's staff from both channels was repeatedly raided, arrested and detained. The dying Mubarak regime lashed out at the journalists it held partly responsible for its demise.

After Mubarak's fall, the immediate threat to media outlets subsided, but an undertone of suspicion remained. Al Jazeera continued to report from Egypt as Mohamed Morsi became the country's first democratically elected president, and then as he was deposed by the military 12 months later. This coup would mark a major deterioration in relations between Al Jazeera and Egypt.

After Morsi's ouster, the Muslim Brotherhood was marginalised before finally being declared a terrorist organisation. Any person deemed to be co-operating with it was targeted by the provisional government. Unfortunately for Al Jazeera as a network, it was by now widely considered to be sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood, even though each news franchise maintains editorial independence from the others.

Al Jazeera Arabic and English had recently been joined by a dedicated Egyptian channel called Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr (Egypt Live). Many viewers and commentators believed it to be explicitly biased in favour of the Muslim Brotherhood. Several employees quit in mid-2013 over editorial matters, and the channel abandoned its newly completed offices after other residents in the building made it clear they were not welcome.

Throughout late 2013 and into 2014, all foreign journalists in Egypt found themselves facing growing threats to their safety. And although Al Jazeera English's coverage differs significantly from that of its Arabic counterparts, its staff faced specific threats.

Anti-Muslim Brotherhood protesters on the streets of Cairo have used laser pointers to identify the channel's hotel rooms. Under pressure from Egyptian authorities, the Associated Press asked Al Jazeera to refrain from rebroadcasting its live video feed from Tahrir Square.

The antagonism between Egypt and Al Jazeera came to a head on December 29 last year. Al Jazeera English's Greste, bureau chief Mohamed Fadel Fahmy and producer Baher Mohamed were arrested. The timing was unfortunate for Greste in particular: he is the channel's East Africa correspondent and was working in Egypt for only a short stint to cover holidays.

The three men joined two Al Jazeera Arabic employees in prison – Abdullah al-Shami and Mohamed Badr – although Badr has since been released.

The trials continue and the fate of Greste and his colleagues is uncertain. But with big news stories certain to be coming out of Egypt for years to come, the relationship between Al Jazeera and the biggest nation in its backyard will only be tested further.

Bridges, S. (2014). Al Jazeera's Troubled History in Egypt. *The Conversation*. Retrieved March 4, 2014, from https://theconversation.com/al-jazeeras-troubled-history-in-egypt-23504

APPENDIX E

Al Jazeera to close in America: the future will not be broadcast

Published 15 January, 2016, by The Conversation.

Yesterday came the surprising announcement that Al Jazeera America (AJAM), the not even three-year-old US news franchise of the Arab media giant, was shutting down. Come April this year, up to 800 journalists may be looking for work and more than US$2 billion of Qatari government money will have been spent on what many consider a failed venture.

While several factors were likely at play in Al Jazeera's decision to close AJAM, it ultimately comes down to money. The collapse in global oil prices is having a particularly severe impact on the economies of the Persian Gulf, forcing the government of Qatar to do the same across-the-board belt tightening as its neighbouring states. Al Jazeera's Doha-based operations were last year hit by budget cuts and just today, Qatari petrol prices which are set and subsidised by the government were raised by 30-35% in a shock decision that was surely not taken lightly.

As explanation for its closure, AJAM cited a "simply [un]sustainable" business model "in light of the economic challenges in the U.S. media marketplace". But it's worth remembering that AJAM, like most of its 24-hour news competitors, was not launched to generate profit. The rolling television news business is largely about prestige and influence, and Qatar has demonstrated over 20 years that it is prepared to pay handsomely for those things. But with pitiful ratings and no real prospect of improvement, Al Jazeera and its benefactors seem to have decided that the cost of AJAM was not worth the tiny returns it generated.

Part of the reason AJAM failed in the US was its decision to pursue traditional broadcast distribution via cable. As Al Jazeera researcher William Youmans noted, restrictions placed on AJAM by cable providers were onerous and

succeeded in preventing any significant leakage of content from the cable networks' walled gardens to other platforms.

These restrictions forced potential AJAM viewers to be sitting in front of a TV set subscribed to the correct cable package and watching in real time. In 2016, when consumers expect to be able to dial up whatever content they want, on whatever device or platform they want, at whatever time they want, broadcasting exclusively at the wrong end of the cable dial is a sure path to failure.

Al Jazeera was also forced by its AJAM cable contracts to restrict American access to the enormously popular Al Jazeera English (AJE) livestream and its other online video content. AJAM's failure is a testament to how ineffective this measure was in transitioning existing American Al Jazeera viewers to the new franchise.

In contrast, AJE, based in Qatar and broadcasting around the world via a multitude of platforms, is free to create and distribute content however it wishes. Television is still very much AJE's primary focus, but its online arm is increasingly central to the channel's operation.

While only one TV signal is beamed across the world to all viewers no matter where they are, AJE's online arm targets specific content at different users based on a whole range of factors such as geographical location, social media preferences and the like. A large contingent of online journalists works alongside the main newsroom to augment the television output and create unique digital-only material. As a result, many AJE consumers never or rarely tune into the channel's main TV signal.

Similarly, Al Jazeera's digital-first startup, AJ+, is going from strength to strength delivering short, sharp, engaging and shareable news content over social media networks and mobile apps. Barely a year old, the channel attracted over 2 billion views on Facebook alone in 2015.

Al Jazeera's story in Australia is similar. The network certainly has a broadcast presence in Australia — primarily via AJE's content-sharing partnerships with the ABC and SBS — but it is online that Al Jazeera is having the most impact. Despite its relatively low population, my own research (forthcoming) shows that Australia is the third-largest global source of traffic for AJE content online and that this Australian online audience continues to grow fast.

AJAM's closure is a reminder that any of Al Jazeera's operations could be wound up at a moment's notice with the stroke of a pen. Having said that, it is difficult to foresee the same fate for AJE or the Arabic-language Al Jazeera channel any time soon. Unlike AJAM, those channels (despite recent challenges) remain enormously influential and probably continue to represent a valuable return on the government's investment.

There is, however, one important lesson in AJAM's closure for all media organisations in 2016, whether they exist for profit or for influence: the future of media is definitely not broadcast.

Bridges, S. (2016). Al Jazeera to Close in America: The Future Will Not Be Broadcast. *The Conversation*. Retrieved January 16, 2016, from https://theconversation.com/al-jazeera-to-close-in-america-the-future-will-not-be-broadcast-53214