



Parahyangan Catholic University
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Department of International Relations

Accredited A
SK BAN –PT NO: 3095/SK/BAN-PT/Akred/S/VIII/2019

**Al-Jazeera's Penetrative Role in Intensifying the 2011 Jasmine
Revolution**

Thesis

By

Jonathan Prasetyo

2017330208

Bandung

2021

Fakultas Ilmu Politik dan Ilmu Sosial Jurusan Ilmu Hubungan
Internasional Program Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional



Tanda Persetujuan Skripsi

Nama : Jonathan Prasetyo
Nomor Pokok : 2017330208
Judul : Peran Penetrasi Al-Jazeera dalam Revolusi Melati 2011

Menyetujui untuk diajukan pada
Ujian Sidang jenjang Sarjana
Bandung, 30 Juni 2021

Pembimbing,

Sapta Dwikardana, M.Si., Ph.D.

Mengetahui,

Ketua Program Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional

Dr. Sukawarsini Djelantik

Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Department of International Relations



Thesis Validation

Name : Jonathan Prasetyo
Student ID : 2017330180
Title : Al-Jazeera's Penetrative Role in Intensifying the 2011 Jasmine Revolution

Had been examined in Final Examination

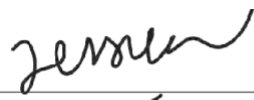
On Monday, July 26, 2021

And hereby declared **GRADUATED**

The board of Examiners

Chairperson and member of examiners

Jessica Martha, S.IP., M.I.Pol.

: 

Secretary

Sapta Dwikardana, M.Si., Ph.D.

: 

Member

Dr. Sukawarsini Djelantik

: 

With the acknowledgement of,
Dean of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences



Dr. Pius Sugeng Prasetyo, M. Si

Letter of Authenticity

I, the undersigned:

Name : Jonathan Prasetyo
Student ID : 2017330208
Department : International Relations
Thesis Title : Al-Jazeera's Penetrative Role in Intensifying the 2011
Jasmine Revolution

Hereby declare that this thesis and all its content is truly the work of my own and has not been previously submitted to any other university for a higher degree. I also declare that I do not do any plagiarism or in ways that are inconsistent with the prevailing ethics in the scientific community.

On this statement, I am ready to bear any risk or sanctions imposed to me in accordance with the applicable regulations if in the future it is found a breach of scientific ethics or claim against the authenticity of my work.

Jakarta, July 12, 2021



Jonathan Prasetyo

ABSTRACT

Name : Jonathan Prasetyo

Student ID 2017330208

Title: Al-Jazeera's Penetrative Role in the 2011 Jasmine Revolution

This thesis analyses the role of media in International Relations where there has been a shift of state to non-state actor. The case study that the author will use is the media coverage of Al-Jazeera in the 2011 Tunisian Uprising, also popularly known as the Jasmine Revolution. The 2011 Jasmine Revolution mark the end of Tunisian authoritarianism where Al-Jazeera managed to intensify the protests through their media coverages, despite rigid regulations on censorship. Because the uprising had taken place 10 years beforehand, the author decided to focus the research only from 17th December 2010 to 28th January 2011, because Al Jazeera took momentum of the mass movement that took place in Tunisia during that time with rapid massive coverage. The Research question is *"How did Al-Jazeera play a Penetrative Role in covering the 2011 Jasmine Revolution?"*. Using the Hypodermic Needle Theory perspective, the thesis analyses that the choice of words used by Al-Jazeera in its Media Coverages made the people of Tunisia feel represented and empowered compared to the words that have been used by the Western Media. This therefore exerted an immediate and direct response from the Tunisian people with an effect on the Jasmine Revolution's intensification. The Hypodermic Needle Theory believes that the media is able to completely own its audience and receive an immediate and strong response from its audience by two steps. The first step is to establish a 'strong' brand image through the use of a strong message that results in a strong identity. The second step is to insert content that is regarded as penetrating to the people's beliefs. This thesis uses a qualitative method of Content Analysis. The author utilizes the data from literature, reports, and Al-Jazeera's websites. This thesis shows that the media could penetrate any form of government body by using the right choice of words that make people feel empowered which leads to a greater cause. To conclude, Al-Jazeera played a penetrative role in the 2011 Jasmine Revolution in covering the 2011 Jasmine Revolution by using a different set of languages that reflected the people of Tunisia's needs and demands, different compared to the words that have been used by the Western Media in their news coverages. By utilizing the Hypodermic Needle theory, we can see that Al-Jazeera entered the scene with a strong identity and employed content that is capable of penetrating the Tunisian people and exerting an immediate and direct effect on the Jasmine Revolution's intensification.

Keywords: Al-Jazeera, 2011 Jasmine Revolution, Penetrative, Media, News Coverage.

ABSTRAK

Nama : Jonathan Prasetyo

NPM 2017330208

Judul : Peran Penetrasi Al-Jazeera dalam Revolusi Melati 2011

Tesis ini menganalisis peran media dalam Hubungan Internasional dimana telah terjadi pergeseran aktor negara menjadi aktor non-negara. Studi kasus yang akan penulis gunakan adalah liputan media Al-Jazeera dalam Pemberontakan Tunisia 2011, juga dikenal sebagai Revolusi Melati. Revolusi Melati 2011 menandai berakhirnya otoritarianisme Tunisia di mana Al-Jazeera berhasil mengintensifkan protes melalui liputan media mereka, meskipun ada peraturan ketat tentang penyensoran. Karena pemberontakan telah terjadi 10 tahun sebelumnya, penulis memutuskan untuk memfokuskan penelitian hanya dari 17 Desember 2010 hingga 28 Januari 2011, karena Al Jazeera mengambil momentum dari gerakan massa yang terjadi di Tunisia pada waktu itu dengan liputan masif yang cepat. Pertanyaan Penelitian adalah “Bagaimana Al-Jazeera memainkan Peran Penetrasi dalam meliput Revolusi Melati 2011?”. Menggunakan perspektif Teori Jarum Hipodermik, tesis menganalisis bahwa pilihan kata yang digunakan oleh Al-Jazeera dalam Liputan Medianya membuat rakyat Tunisia merasa terwakili dan diberdayakan dibandingkan dengan kata-kata yang digunakan oleh Media Barat. Oleh karena itu, hal ini memberikan tanggapan langsung dan segera dari rakyat Tunisia yang berdampak pada intensifikasi Revolusi Melati. Teori Jarum Hipodermik percaya bahwa media mampu sepenuhnya memiliki audiensnya dan menerima respons langsung dan kuat dari audiensnya melalui dua langkah. Langkah pertama adalah membangun citra merek yang 'kuat' melalui penggunaan pesan yang kuat yang menghasilkan identitas yang kuat. Langkah kedua adalah menyisipkan konten yang dianggap menembus keyakinan masyarakat. Skripsi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif Content Analysis. Penulis menggunakan data dari literatur, laporan, dan website Al-Jazeera. Tesis ini menunjukkan bahwa media dapat menembus segala bentuk badan pemerintah dengan menggunakan pilihan kata yang tepat yang membuat orang merasa diberdayakan yang mengarah pada tujuan yang lebih besar. Sebagai kesimpulan, Al-Jazeera memainkan peran penetrasi dalam Revolusi Melati 2011 dalam meliput Revolusi Melati 2011 dengan menggunakan bahasa yang berbeda yang mencerminkan kebutuhan dan tuntutan rakyat Tunisia, berbeda dibandingkan dengan kata-kata yang telah digunakan oleh Barat. Media dalam liputan berita mereka. Dengan memanfaatkan teori Jarum Hipodermik, kita dapat melihat bahwa Al-Jazeera memasuki panggung dengan identitas yang kuat dan menggunakan konten yang mampu menembus masyarakat Tunisia dan memberikan efek langsung dan langsung pada intensifikasi Revolusi Melati.

Kata kunci: Al-Jazeera, Revolusi Melati 2011, Penetrasi, Media, Pemberitaan.

PREFACE

It is only by His Grace and Guidance, that the Author is only able to complete this research, titled "Al-Jazeera's penetrative role in intensifying the 2011 Jasmine Revolution," as one of the requirements for graduating from the Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Parahyangan Catholic University. The purpose of this research is to determine how Al-Jazeera contributed to the intensification of the 2011 Tunisian Revolution, popularly known as the Jasmine Revolution. Additionally, it is believed that this research would provide light on the study of non-state actors in international relations, such as the media. This thesis is far from perfect and may constantly be enhanced. Thus, the author welcomes all readers' feedback and constructive criticism. The author would appreciate it if this thesis was utilized as a reference or for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis marks the end of the author's journey of studying in Parahyangan Catholic University. Throughout the 4 years, obviously the author did not do it all alone. The author had friends who supported him throughout his journey, who not only gave constructive criticism when needed but also mental support throughout his 4 year journey of endless learning. The author would like to express gratitude to:

1. God almighty, Jesus Christ. Thank you for your guidance over the past 4 years i was in Bandung and for the endless learning experience you have brought me into. 4 memorable years in my life I will never forget. Without Him, the author would have never gone into UNPAR in the first place and would have never been able to finish his study.
2. To my beloved thesis supervisor, Sapta Dwikardana, M.Si., Ph.D. Thank you for your guidance this past 6 months. Your substantial guidance was key to the success of my thesis on and off paper. I wish you well for your present and your future endeavours. Stay safe and healthy ya Mas!
3. To my Family: Mom (Bella Hutagalung), Dad (Iman Prasetyo), Gaby & Michelle. Thank you for trusting me to go to Bandung and pursue my studies in UNPAR although it was a huge gamble, and thanks for always believing me, supporting me and trusting me with whatever decision I make. I hope you guys will trust me more as I'm about to enter a new chapter in life.
4. To Marchelle Adriani and JOEY: thanks for being a CONSTANT emotional yet also a substantial support when I needed you to be. Thanks for always giving the

right responses when I feel demotivated. You always know what to say and you always bring the best out of me. Oh, and thanks for giving me the Al-Jazeera topic at the start and letting me develop it into my thesis topic! I will never forget our late dinners at Mcdonald's Dago or Mcdonald's Setiabudi and our endless moments in Bandung together. Here's to many more adventures together!!

5. To JPCC Friends: Ronaldo Nugroho (Aldo), Gianni Assa, Josh Palandi, Andrew Nababan (or Bill), and countless others I won't mention because there's a lot. Thank you for the advice and harshness when I need them. Thank you for the honesty, and thank you for on top of that still accepting me for who I am and being that safe space when I always needed you guys.
6. To the friends I spent the most of my university time with, the Scout Regiment: Alex Wibisono, Ramandika Puji Prakoso (Rama), Joshua Djami (Dije), Iqmal Sunny Suria (Imay), Raphael Zephanya Purba, Dave Benaiah, William FS, Nino (Nino Mahit), Sulthan, Christoff (Ateng), Iqbal, Ghiffar, and Brian Timothy (BT). Thank you for the endless laughter in *PAV*, *Kuro Koffee*, *Kopi Eyang*, *MCD Dago* or wherever it is. You guys were there for me when I needed anything. Thank you Alex for continuously letting me and the boys play in PAV and making your Playstation overheat (lol). Thank you for letting me kick yall asses in FIFA and NBA 2k, I hope yall really step up your games in the long run ;). Thank you to Rama and Dave who became my first friends in University, although I was a bit weird sometimes. I seriously wouldn't have made it in university if it wasn't for knowing I had friends I could always ask to hang out with. I really hope we all stay friends in the long run and I wish you all great success!!

7. To both Litbang HMPSIHI I worked with: Aretta Ananda, Shella Lodra, Halimah, Fransiska Andita, Bella Aprilia, Leonardo Ganal Prakoso, Serafine Pauline, Renaldi Stevanus (Aldi), Bernadeth Franchika (Chika), Reiva, Alexa, & Hanif. I couldn't have asked for a better team to work with in building the organisation. I was put in a team where almost everyone's a high achiever thus everyone having a great work ethic. On top of that, you guys managed to differentiate work with bonding, so that's nice! I know all of you guys will be successful people ahead, so cheers to that!
8. To the IFGF Bandung community: Philemon Kharis Sulaeman (Phile), Andre Tjhin (Ko Atjhin), Marcell Kevin, Pashyw Sebastian (Pesi), Nathan (Nate), Jostein Adams, Renaldi, Matthew (Matt), Llano Feliciano (*Bang Llano*), Clara Christy Tavis (Lala), Sean Tavis, Andro, Gerry, Jane, Devin, Josh P James, Leslie, Kevin, Evan, Stefan, Karen, and etc the rest you know who you are! Thanks for being a healthy community every Friday night and thanks for letting me serve on keys once in a while. I'll never forget all the crazy moments like that one time when we played futsal and somebody broke Leslie's glasses. Thanks to Pesi for the long and productive chit chat whenever we meet. I will miss that bro. Lastly, thanks Phile for hosting me when I first came to the church and I felt like an impostor. You welcomed me with open arms, and made me feel like I had a 2nd home in another city! To everyone else, I hope we catch up soon! May our paths cross again, college community!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Literature Review	10
1.3 Problem Identification	14
1.4 Research Limitations	17
1.5 Problem Formulation	17
1.6 Research Aims & Purposes	17
1.7 Theoretical Framework	18
1.8 Method of Research and Data Collection Technique	21
1.9 Systematic Framework	22
CHAPTER II	24
A. Al-Jazeera’s Historical Background	26
B. Al-Jazeera’s Regional Expansion Strategy in the Arab World	29
C. Al-Jazeera’s Mission to Balance News Flow from the ‘South’ and the ‘North’	40
CHAPTER III	48
Table 3.1: Number of Articles Published During the Jasmine Revolution	49
Table 3.2: 5C Method Content Analysis	64
CHAPTER IV	68
Bibliography	71

CHAPTER I

1.1 Introduction

A Canadian scholar named McLuhan stated in several of his books that the media is a type of extension of humans, just as vehicles, clothing, watches, and various other artifacts are an integral part of human life.¹ On a daily basis, the media fulfills an important function especially in a modern era when we use media, we are in contact with everyone. With this inextricable relationship, it is not surprising that the media becomes one of the supporting resources for meeting one of the human needs, notably the need for information.² Newspapers and magazines, which are used in printed media, were developed and have continued to evolve over time until the advent of electronic media such as radio, television, and now the internet. With the evolution of Television and now the Internet, information about things that happened around the world as well as domestically was published on the news quickly and easily. Because of this, the media has become a central piece of not only people but also the Government in terms of news access. With this, Media now has more power that gives them the ability to criticise and influence people including implicitly encouraging people to accept or even oppose a certain ideology and highlighting or focusing the people on a trend from a specific issue.

Robert Harris, American Journalism Scholar, explains that the media in the 21st century has a rising to greater role for the stability of the state, which is holding

¹ McLuhan, Marshall. "The playboy interview." *Essential McLuhan* (1995): 233-234.

² *Ibid*, 234.

governments to greater account and cutting down on malfeasance and corruption by standing in the wings and keeping watch.³ Media also has a more fundamental function of making facts freely accessible for discussion, which is to make claims more knowledgeable. A well-functioning democracy is focused on the public having sufficient knowledge.⁴ For a long time, the media has served as a primary source of information. It has become too large for everybody to have a direct say in government, and because of this, democracy is no longer feasible. This created the concept of representation where delegates speak and behave for the constituents. In this context, the media was the representative of the general public. This is mainly the reason why Media has always been strongly related to democracy.

Doris Graber is a scholar that mentioned that the media cannot thrive and serve its purpose in a non-democratic country.⁵ However, Al Jazeera, a satellite television channel launched in 2001 that is based out of Qatar, defies that premise. As far back as its early years, Al Jazeera has been described as one of the first all news channels broadcasting in a language that was spoken in the Middle East (Arabic).⁶ Al Jazeera has been provided with the kind of editorial independence not seen before in the Arab world. As a result, Al Jazeera is known for being an effective news agency, and it is also known for conducting highly-informed, on-air discussions on topics that were previously seen as prohibited or unmentionable. For instance, Al Jazeera became well known because it managed to obtain and

³ Harris, Robert. *Political Corruption: In Beyond the Nation State*. Routledge, 2003.

⁴ Farrell, Henry, and Bruce Schneier. "Common-knowledge attacks on democracy." Berkman Klein Center Research Publication 2018-7 (2018).

⁵ Graber, Doris. 2003. "THE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: Beyond Myths and Stereotypes." *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 (1): 139–60. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085707>.

⁶ "Our Story." n.d. Al Jazeera Media Network. <https://network.aljazeera.net/about-us/timeline>.

broadcast video transmissions of Osama bin Laden's and other Al-Qaeda leaders'. As a result, right now Al Jazeera is also one of the most known and most followed media outlets in the Arabic countries. Al Jazeera managed to bring controversial and uncensored content in a region heavily linked with authoritarianism, where regulations over freedom of speech and freedom of the press are heavily restricted. One relevant case scenario can be seen in the rebellion in Tunisia's 2011 Jasmine Revolution, which Al Jazeera took a role in covering its events.

The Jasmine Revolution was a revolution to overthrow the autocratic regime of Ben Ali in 2011. However, The Jasmine Revolution had a bigger impact than overthrowing the Ben Ali regime, as it sparked the beginning of the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring represents the collapse of oppressive leaders of the Arab world, starting from the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia, to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, to the end of the 40 years of Moammar Gaddafi dictatorship in Libya, which was later followed by Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, which continues to this day. Worldwide observers recognized the importance of events not only in the region but on a larger geopolitical scale, as the Arab Spring began to re-emerge the hope of a better and more democratic existence in the Middle East, particularly in the Arab world.⁷ Responding to the revolution, the authoritarian leader used disproportionate force in reaction to the demonstration, killing hundreds of protesters and rising unrest each day. Following the horrific protest against the Ben Ali regime's, the Tunisian Rebellion and the Jasmine Revolution began.⁸ Several

⁷ Ryan Rifai, "Timeline: Tunisia's Uprising," France News | Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, January 23, 2011), <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/tunisia/2011/01/201114142223827361.html>

⁸ Ibid.

attempts have been made to stop the uprising, including the President's concessions to express his sorrow about the demonstrators' death on national television and his promise to stop the violent acts. The citizens, however, were dissatisfied with the President's compromises. At the end, the President was forced to sign his resignation and fled to Saudi Arabia on 14 January 2011.⁹ The intensification of Tunisia's protests has been influenced by various factors, including the media presence, where Bouazizi's self-immolation campaign immediately received great attention through coverage of international media, followed by demonstrations in Arab countries and not just in Tunisia. Due to the dramatic events, it is very clear that there was an external actor; in this case the media, specifically Al-Jazeera, that played an important role in exposing this issue to the wider Arab region. There, Al-Jazeera preserved the momentum, the focus of the world media, and foreign public opinion to the voices of young disengaged Tunisians. Ever Since, according to Arab world Researcher Viona Sarnelli, Al Jazeera had been widely known as the Voice of the Voiceless.¹⁰ This title further solidifies their position amongst other media in Tunisia. However, this title did not come into ease as the Qatar based media faced challenges along the way.

Before its emergence in Tunisia, Al-Jazeera was not permitted to join Tunisia for years. Al-Jazeera managed to maintain its existence under a rigid regulation on media and speech in Tunisia. Under the Ben-Ali Regime; Freedom to access information, Freedom of the press, and Freedom of speech was not always

⁹ "Timeline: Tunisia's Uprising." www.aljazeera.com, n.d.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/tunisia/2011/01/201114142223827361.html>.

¹⁰ Viola Sarnelli, "Tunisia, Egypt, and the voices of the revolution in Al Jazeera English" *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 6 no. 2+3 (2013): 157

the case. Article 1 of the Tunisian Press Code grants the Tunisian press the liberty of printing, publishing, printing, selling or distributing books and materials 'to be guaranteed and exercised under the terms of the statute, expressed, pressed, released and published'. In 1956, the Tunisian government took over the press and then broadcasted it under President Habib Bourguiba from the birth of the first republic.¹¹ Almost every media outlet remained propaganda instruments in the hands of the Bourguiba government and the ruling Party. The media-government relationship was intensified under Ben Ali, who took power in 1987 by a coup. A few independent journals appeared for a brief time, but they did not last very long. The government controlled and primarily served television and radio through Tunisia 7 (Satellite Channel) and 21 (Earth Channel).¹² While we saw in 2005 that the first private TV station (Hannibal TV) in Tunisia was established where they produced a variety of programs, the establishment of Hannibal TV did not improve public choices nor the current restriction of information in Tunisia. This is due to the fact that the freedom of speech is still supervised by the same non-written system where there is no place to contradict opinions.¹³ We can see how most of the so-called 'independent' TV and radio stations were owned by government bureaucrats. For example, three radio stations, which is purposely broadcasting the life of the Moslem Prophet Mohammad and Taraweeh prayer, launched on 13 September 2011, were broadcast during the Ramadan; most of which were owned by Mohamed Sakhr El Matri (Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's Lawyers, who served as

¹¹ Ibid, 158.

¹² Nouredine Miladi, "Tunisia: A media-led revolution?", Media Development (February 2011): 9.

¹³ Ibid, 9.

President of Tunisia up to 2011).¹⁴ We can see that the fundamental role of State TV is to cultivate the picture of the President as an authoritative, effective and steady leader. Nearly half of the main evening news program of TV7 or Channel 21 focuses on the president's regular meetings, policies and commitments.¹⁵ Besides this, the government monitors the servers directly and the dictatorship has become almost obsessed with news and news monitors. Reporters Without Borders, an international non-profit and non-governmental organization that safeguards the right to freedom of information, claims that journalists and human rights activists have been repeatedly abused by bureaucrats and police.¹⁶ Civil society organizations, particularly when discussing hot topics, seldom have space for the "independent" press. Since its report on limitations on ex-pressure and media regulation, the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) has been continually persecuted and limited.¹⁷

However, the advent of satellite technology and expanding free air television channels have marked a major turning point when we look at the spread of knowledge and ties among Arab State broadcasters and audiences. In result, more than half of Tunisia's television viewers will move to satellite TV every night in order to tune in uncensored contents of what is happening in Tunisia. Hence, Satellite TV stations such as BBC Arabic, CNN, El Hiwar, and Al Arabiya decided to capitalise on this opportunity where they played a role in reporting news and

¹⁴ Ibid, 10.

¹⁵ Ibid, 11.

¹⁶ "World Press Freedom Index 2010." RSF, April 20, 2016. <https://rsf.org/en/world-press-freedom-index-2010>.

¹⁷ Ibid, 11-12.

updating uprisings during the Jasmine revolution of 2011 and has now become a haven for uncensored contents.¹⁸

One media outlet in particular, Al Jazeera, had in comparison with other media outlets, covered a number of more heavy events. Al-Jazeera, one of the leading media in the Middle East, participated in covering the Jasmine Revolution as a means of expressing opposition to Ben Ali. During the Jasmine Revolution, Al-Jazeera has been the most prominent broadcaster to hit vital news coverage in different parts of the world, ahead of other foreign news broadcasters, in satellite TV viewing habits. One of the supporting factors is the fact that Al-Jazeera had the full support of Tunisians, as Al-Jazeera was loudly banned throughout the revolution. Al Jazeera was ahead of other international news agencies to break the critical news in Tunisia during the demonstrations. Since other news broadcasters in Tunisia were not to be trusted by the public, Al-Jazeera had facilitated Tunisians by becoming a virtual space for discussions about the much-needed changes given that the Ben Ali regime had restrictions on local media. As the Tunisian demonstrations and demands of Al-Jazeera got up quickly, the station declined its schedule and chose an open news cycle that broadcasts pictures and news from Tunisia online.¹⁹ Al-Jazeera was already popular in Tunisia prior to the revolution, due to the lack of reliability of the local media.

¹⁸ Ismail, Muhammad Marwan, Farah Nadia Harun, and Anissa Daoudi. "NAMING STRATEGIES IN MODERN STANDARD ARABIC ONLINE NEWS DISCOURSE: THE CASE OF AL-JAZEERA AND BBC COVERAGE ON THE 2011 TUNISIAN JASMINE REVOLUTION." *Journal of Global Business and Social Entrepreneurship (GBSE)* 4, no. 11 (2018): 162.

¹⁹ "Tunisia: A Media Led Revolution?" www.aljazeera.com, n.d.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2011/1/17/tunisia-a-media-led-revolution/>.

During the Jasmine Revolution, Al-Jazeera's demands quickly increased as the numbers of Tunisian protesters also kept increasing.²⁰ While local TV stations have refused to broadcast photographs and news from Tunisia online, Al-Jazeera went the other way around. Al Jazeera was the first Media that reported on the spot on what happened in Tunisian streets. Al-Jazeera covered every single raw footage of every Governmental action. For example, in a morning Talk Show named 'Hadith As-Sabah', which features everyday life segments in various Arab countries, several producers have frequently suggested TV features about life in Tunisia.²¹ As a symbol of revolution, Al-Jazeera declined to exhibit Tunisian characteristics and thought that their brilliant portrayal of a country that forbade political coverage was not acceptable to them. Seeing this, it raised credibility for Al-Jazeera news network as Tunisian protesters marched to the streets to raise banners to honor Al-Jazeera. The fact that Al Jazeera also analyzes Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and even learns more from Tunisia itself has also created the market for news and current affairs by Arab viewers. Al Jazeera was selected for this research not only because Al-Jazeera was one of the major broadcasters for various contentious issues. However, it is also because the Al-Jazeera network managed to build a link with the Arab audience because they give voices to the Arab people. Al-Jazeera is also selected for this analysis because the vast majority of stories and sources shared with Al Jazeera are not only in Arabic but also in English language.

²⁰ Dina Zayed, "Al Jazeera TV Makes Waves with Tunisia Coverage," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, January 21, 2011), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-jazeera/al-jazeera-tv-makes-waves-with-tunisia-coverage-idUSTRE70K4K220110121>)

²¹ Ibid, 13.

Al Jazeera also has regional domination and credibility as one of the Mideast North Africa's most watched networks, with an unprecedented public sphere.²² It also has a cultural and linguistic advantage over other global networks, which facilitates regional access to news. It has also been reported that the Tunisian uprising's media coverage played a significant role in spreading the revolution to many cities and their role in changing policy orders. Social media clearly played an important role in the political revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt, but the role should not be overridden. Conventional media played a critical role, in particular Al-Jazeera as they obtained information used as sources by organised Facebook groups that spread over the Internet and then transmitted free news on mobile phones. Al-Jazeera journalists, many Tunisians, were all seen in Tunisia as fugitives and targets because they deem the Ben Ali regime oppressive and heavily against real growth in the country. Therefore, Al-Jazeera managed to grow its influence despite heavy authoritarianism which is why Al-Jazeera has been selected as a media to be analysed in this thesis. The role itself that the author will be analysing will be a penetrative role based on the theory that is used in the thesis, Hypodermic Needle Theory. The author will be analysing Al-Jazeera's role in intensifying the Jamsine Revolution, which means constantly popularising and driving the peoples enthusiasm in protesting and rallying in the streets. Hence, with such obstacles such as rigid regulations and continuation of pressure by the Government along the way, this thesis intends to analyse how Al Jazeera, managed to stand out compared to other media outlets, to further intensify the Jasmine Revolution in 2011.

²² Telhami, Shibley. "Al Jazeera: The Most-Feared News Network." Brookings. Accessed November 25, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/al-jazeera-the-most-feared-news-network/>.

1.2 Literature Review

The first article is titled “Tunisia, Egypt, and the voices of the revolution in Al Jazeera English”, written by Viola Sarnelli and published by the Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research 6 no. 2+3 in 2013. The article argues that Al Jazeera reported raw footage and gave voice to the protesters as they spoke of as "the people" during the Tunisian demonstrations. Sarnelli claimed that Al Jazeera English had voiced under-represented communities, as it was associated with one of the first slogans of Al Jazeera, "Voice to voicelessness." The article explained how Al Jazeera seems to have replaced the effort to provide a more detailed image of events with increasing involvement and a more emotional narration during the events of the Jasmine Revolution. As part of the demonstration's own media structure and eventually a winner, the channel thus became a target of the government in a fight for the end of the governing government, the 'right to freedom' and for international visibility. All in all, this article stressed that Al Jazeera had become a two-way communicator between demonstrators and the diverse foreign public, stressing Al Jazeera had become the media framework for protestors and providing international visibility.²³

The second article is titled “Tunisia: A media-led revolution?”, written by Noureddine Miladi and was published by Media Development Journal in 2011. Miladi had a similar argument with Sarnelli’s. His article said that Al Jazeera was ahead of other international news outlets to break the news of critical information in Tunisia during the demonstrations due to the fact that Al Jazeera had become the

²³ Viola Sarnelli, “Tunisia, Egypt, and the voices of the revolution in Al Jazeera English” Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research 6 no. 2+3 (2013): 157-177, 10.1386/jammr.6.2-3.157_1.

haven of citizens seeking information that is not censored. He also stated in his article that since the public should not trust other news broadcasters in Tunisia, given that the Ben Ali regime had restrictions on local media, Al Jazeera had made Tunisian speakers easier by becoming its virtual room to talk about the much-needed change. The article then explained that while silence has been systematically and coordinated in state media by the protests, public resistance and common wrath are backed by new media outlets such as Al-Jazeera. Bloggers and Facebook pages have become networking sites and places to share and spread news about the demonstrations. The article provided an example where there are notices like the 'Riot at 4 pm, meet in the city center' that have been used on Facebook pages for social activism in order to gather mass protests. As a result, tens of thousands of demonstrators who have been unable to use other forms of communication to reach the public massively have proved to be successful and rapid in the dissemination of information. Other than that, this article discussed the events in which Al Jazeera had also broadcast opposition opinions from the Ben Ali regime. Hence, Nouredine Miladi explained through this article how Al-Jazeera became a safe-house for discussions and platform for information regarding protests against Ben-Ali's regime.²⁴

The third article is titled "The Arab Spring: Membaca Kronologi dan Faktor Penyebabnya", written by Ahmad Sahide, Syamsul Hadi, Siti Muti'ah Setiawati, and Bambang Cipto and was published by *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional* vol. 4 no. 2 in 2015. This article also adds to the previous arguments, claiming that Al-

²⁴ Nouredine Miladi, "Tunisia: A media-led revolution?", *Media Development* (February 2011).

Jazeera played a crucial role in raising awareness and fostering protests by continually reporting events in the eyes of the Tunisian public. This article highlighted the important role of the media in these demonstrations. This article explained how it is an era of the emergence of civil movement (a.k.a people's power) to combat state control, and has never before since the independence of Tunisia in 1956. The article then later explained how because of Al-Jazeera, the mass movement across the country was strengthening, unto the point in which the Tunisian state establishment can not regulate anymore. The protesters, who initially took to the streets with the death of Bouazizi, then demanded the dismissal in Kef of the local Chief of Police, Khaled Ghazouani. Of course, Ben Ali is conscious that this increased strength of the masses against his government would lead to demands that he resign from the presidency. Hence. It was at that point Ben Ali realised he was to be brought to justice on account of the deaths of many protesters. The article explained how the collapse of Ben Ali's strong government in Tunisia by the people's power movement, the focal point of the world's media, has a dominant impact on other Arab countries. The article also explained there was a domino effect that took place attributing to the downgrading causes of Ben Ali and other Arab countries that had worse social, economic and political conditions than Tunisia. All in all, according to this article, apart from the intellectual groups, the mass media delivered the protests of the Tunisian public effectively and massively to the Ben Ali regime.²⁵

²⁵ Ahmad Sahide, Syamsul Hadi, Siti Muti'ah Setiawati, Bambang Cipto, "The Arab Spring: Membaca Kronologi dan Faktor Penyebabnya" *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional* vol. 4 no. 2 (October 2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.18196/hi.2015.0072.118-129>.

The fourth article is titled "The role of Al-Jazeera (Arabic) in the Arab revolts of 2011" by Aref Hijjawi published in 2011. This article argues that the role of Al Jazeera in the Tunisian revolution is quite exaggerated, stated to be superficial to the impact of Al Jazeera on this special issue. Al Jazeera was considered the closest media to the hearts and minds of the people, because its coverage clearly represents the emotions and thoughts of its audiences (in this case, the Tunisian people). Hijjawi argued that instead of creating a strong political consciousness or a strong culture that encouraged revolutionary spirit, Al-Jazeera's role here is just to validate the Tunisian viewers' thoughts and further inspiring them to hold on with their current belief. Therefore, we can see how Hijjawi argues that Al-Jazeera does not play a significant role in intensifying the Jasmine Revolution, but it only tells its viewers what they had already believed in and validating their thoughts.²⁶

The first three articles claim that Ben Ali's resignation, The Jasmine Revolution, has been seriously affected by Al Jazeera, which has given voice to the Tunisian public, who condemn the oppressive and corrupt regime of Ben Ali. Hence, the first three articles believed that Al Jazeera played a crucial role in supporting the protests. On the contrary, the fourth article believed that Al-Jazeera had no significant impact on the Jasmine Revolution as Al-Jazeera had only covered what the people had already believed in. This thesis agrees with the claims of the first three articles. Given the fact that other determinants had triggered popular indignation before the Jasmin Revolt, the large size of manifestations would not have existed without Al Jazeera's raw media coverage. Furthermore, this research

²⁶ Aref Hijjawi. "The role of Al-Jazeera (Arabic) in the Arab revolts of 2011." *People's Power: The Arab World in Revolt: Political Analysis and Commentary from the Middle East 2* (2011): 68-72.

thesis aims to further argue that Al Jazeera's contribution to public opinion has increased and stepped up the Tunisian uprising in liberating the minds of many Tunisians, which ultimately led to the fall of the Ben Ali regime.

1.3 Problem Identification

Al-Jazeera thrived and gained the support of the Tunisian people despite constant Government oppression, rigid regulations on free journalism, and the absence of democracy. Throughout the Revolution, Al-Jazeera only had their media coverage. Not only that, but Al-Jazeera reported over 30 Journalists were missing over the course of the month of December 2010.²⁷ So not only that only they had their media coverage, but Al-Jazeera also lost human resources in the process where their full-time employed field-journalists were captured and detained by the Tunisian Government in the process of reporting.²⁸ Nonetheless, Al-Jazeera only thrived from there on out, as they made the most of their media coverage that they had during that time and in result had impacted the people to actually make them fight for Al-Jazeera by protesting in the streets.

Al Jazeera's sympathetic and rapid coverage of the demonstrations received millions of watchers across Arab. Its rapid coverage was made possible because during the wave of demonstrations, Al Jazeera had dropped its regular airing schedule and instead reported these events as soon as they came online—thus becoming the fastest media outlet to broadcast the Jasmine Revolution. Al Jazeera's quick and sympathetic coverage was most certainly appreciated by the Tunisian

²⁷ "Tunisian Journalists Detained," www.aljazeera.com, 2010, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/11/7/tunisian-blogger-detained>.

²⁸ Ibid.

people as they had lifted banners with praises to Al Jazeera during this revolution. In a study on media coverage of the Jasmine Revolution, it has been found that Al Jazeera had published 37 online articles with a total of 19.559 words during the six major events of this revolution, ranging from Bouazizi's protest to the downfall of Ben Ali's regime.²⁹ The study has also revealed that Al Jazeera's coverage on this wave of Tunisian demonstrations had been higher by 10% in comparison to another well established and prominent Arabic news outlet, BBC Arabic.³⁰ This helps show that Al Jazeera hadn't only been influential by being ahead of other international news outlets in broadcasting critical information regarding the revolution, but by also reporting the events on a heavier scale.³¹

Apart from Al-Jazeera's coverage of Bouazizi's act of burning himself, the coverage of the revolution also acted as a response to condemn the authoritarian government for its corruption, high unemployment rates and food inflation and political instability that led to protests all over Tunisia. Hunger is an acute problem in Tunisia that leads to many people's poor living conditions. Many Tunisians find their food too costly to afford or physically and geographically inaccessible in seasons when food is inadequate. There are a great deal of malnutrition issues, including constraints on economic growth and higher health costs for many. According to an estimate in 2010, almost 15.5% of Tunisians were under the

²⁹ Aref Hijjawi, "The role of Al-Jazeera (Arabic) in the Arab revolts of 2011." *People's Power: The Arab World in Revolt: Political Analysis and Commentary from the Middle East 2* (2011): 68-72.

³⁰ Muhammad Marwan Ismail, Farah Nadia Harun, Anissa Daoudi, "Naming Strategies in Modern Standard Arabic Online News Discourse: The Case of Al-Jazeera and BBC Coverage on The 2011 Tunisian Jasmine Revolution", *Journal of Global Business and Social Entrepreneurship*, vol. 4 no. 11 (May 2018): 158-171

³¹ Petter Karlsson Söderstrand, "A coercive conundrum: Analysis on the role of the Tunisian coercive apparatus in the Tunisian Revolution of 2011", *Lunds Universitet* (2012)

poverty line, compared to 24.7% in 2014. In comparison, income inequality in Tunisia is dramatic, with the top 20% receiving 46.3% of Tunisians' income, and the top 20% obtaining just 5.9%.³² Al-Jazeera also managed to expose the famine and poverty in Tunisia that people have been suffering from from the story coverage of the Bouzazizi act where the unemployment rate in Tunisia is also remarkably high, affecting in particular university graduates and women. Sizeable workers in Tunisia have been tightening up national resources, and many young Tunisians have responded violently, contributing to the civil unrest that resulted in the uprising against the Ben Ali regime in 2011.

However, the authoritarian leader responded to the protest with disproportionate force, killing hundreds of demonstrators and becoming increasingly violent with every day. Several tentative measures were made to stop the riot including the President's national television compromises to express his sorrow at the death of the protesters and his commitments, including his promises, to stop the violent acts. However, the President and its government did not manage to contain the power of Al-Jazeera and its media coverage. Al-Jazeera exposed the government's force within the country and what it did to its people and it only further unified the people. The large number of visitors to Al-Jazeera has also played a part in spreading the news articles of Al-Jazeera widely and rapidly. The elephant in the room now remains, what is with Al-Jazeera's media coverage? How did it become so widely popular during the time? How and why did it empower the Tunisian people? As for the key component of this issue, this thesis will further

³² "3 Shocking Causes of Poverty in Tunisia." The Borgen Project, September 23, 2017. <https://borgenproject.org/causes-of-poverty-in-tunisia/#:~:text=According%20to%20a%202010%20estimate.>

analyse Al Jazeera's media coverage that has increased and exacerbated the Jasmine Revolution which ultimately led to the collapse of the rule of Ben Ali.

1.4 Research Limitations

The author decided to limit this problem only from 17th December 2010 to 28th February 2011, because Al Jazeera took momentum of the mass movement that took place in Tunisia during that time with rapid massive coverage. The author selects 17th December 2010 because it was the date that Mohammad Bouazizi burned himself and sparked the start of the Jasmine Revolution. The author selects 28th February 2011 because it was the day that the protests on the street stopped ever since Ben-Ali fled from Tunisia to Saudi Arabia. Al-Jazeera meant by the author and would be further analysed in this thesis would include both Al-Jazeera Arabic Website and Al-Jazeera English Website.

1.5 Problem Formulation

Research Question: How did Al-Jazeera play a Penetrative Role in covering the 2011 Jasmine Revolution?

1.6 Research Aims & Purposes

This study is intended to invite readers to examine the role of Al-Jazeera's coverage during the Jasmine Revolution and understand it better through news broadcasting by Al-Jazeera at the time of the Jasmine Revolution. This research will provide readers with new perspectives and further implications on Al-Jazeera's media coverage in the Jasmine Revolution, provide new insights on the importance and role of media, also to invite readers to gain a deeper understanding of the

importance of individual liberty, which extends to other elements of freedom (such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc) in a State.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This thesis will aim to analyse Al-Jazeera's role as a non-state actor through the scope of International Relations. In view of the world of international relations the emergence of global problems that occurred especially at the end of the 20th century resulted in a big transition from traditional actors broadening up to non-traditional actors. This relates to whereas in the late 1980s, the emergence of postmodernism in IR promoted a strengthening of non-state-focused discourse, while civil society organisations and individual people have been recognized as new foreign actors who, through using the power of new communication technologies and mass media, have increased reach across borders to international level. A newly rising literature has thus emerged in the approach to Foreign Relations where the role of the media is taken into account in international relations.³³

The role of media in International Relations can be measured in a wide range of ways. First and foremost, we have to take into account the fact that mainstream media also developed ways to shift the way people interpret a phenomenon. This is because the media simultaneously offers a lot of information that tells people about what is happening all around the world. We can see how because of that, the media has a broad impact on shaping the people's perspective and how they see the world. In this sense, the media are important instruments for defining "in-group" identity

³³ Coban, Filiz. "The role of the media in international relations: from the CNN effect to the Al-Jazeera effect." *Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policy* 4, no. 2 (2016): 46-47.

against “out-group” identity on the basis of a set of comparisons and objections. Other than that, the political significance of the media can be defined by the changes in the configuration of state power. Media pluralize powers that function toward the capacity of authority to dominate and regulate. Local, national and international news agencies essentially distribute information and images among countries and create ties between people from the local and global scale. So we can see how the media's influence is significant in international relations in particular with regard to its impact on domestic politics, decision-making on foreign policy and the dissemination of imagery among political actors and the creation of a global civil society. Therefore, this research shows that there has been an important shift from state to non-state actor where it includes the media. Media has a power to manipulate or to spread information and convince the people to think a certain way through their media coverages. That includes manipulating public opinion and state policies. The writer has included other branches of theories and concepts in order to analyse this thesis. The following concepts and theory include Critical Theory, the Hypodermic Needle Theory, and the Public Sphere Theory.

The first theory used by the writer is the Critical Theory. Although individuals may be powerful actors in their own countries, they do not hold much sway in international affairs because of international actors including large corporations and organizations. The underlying philosophy of critical theory was to attempt to understand social shifts in a modern state and economic environment with an eye toward preserving the individual's rights. Contemporary IR theorists from the Frankfurt School, most particularly German philosopher Jürgen Habermas,

concentrated on the social revolution as a way to put forth a critique of the global political system. Andrew Habermas, went through the subsequent Habermasian ideas and assumed that critical theory can be used for the weaker group members in society. There is an intention to modernize people by teaching people to understand themselves that modernity is an unfinished project. Modern society and technology loopholes could be a way of achieving human freedom. In a global media-supported, social, democratic system, individuals could play a positive role in making themselves heard.³⁴

The second theory the writer is going to use for this thesis is the Hypodermic Needle Theory. The Hypodermic Needle theory suggests that the mass media has complete power over its audiences with two steps. Step one is by creating a ‘powerful’ brand image by exerting a strong message that creates a strong identity. Step two is by injecting a content that is considered penetrative to the people. Since the general public is perceived to be more narrow and unsophisticated than the media, the media has a major impact on what news is disseminated. We would argue that the media plays a vital role in shaping or altering human thought, actions, and overall behavior. This theory is often referred to as the word 'Hypodermic Needle Theory' because of how we think the media operates. This theory believes the media acts like a syringe that injects the messages and news it brings directly into the audience. It is often referred to as the “bullet theory” because what is communicated

³⁴ Ferreira, Marcos Farias. "Critical Theory." In *International Relations Theory*, 49-55. Bristol, England: E-International Relations Publishing, 2017. Accessed March 17, 2021. <https://www.e-ir.info/publication/international-relations-theory/>.

by the media can enter the audience immediately, without them consciously doing anything to receive it.³⁵

The third theory the writer will use to analyse this thesis is the public sphere theory by Jürgen Habermas. This theory speaks of the public sphere as a government-independent area where it is composed of private citizens who are brought together to express society's needs with the state. The Public Sphere does not talk about the interests of certain groups that are then manipulated. Rather, The Public Sphere is an arena in which people are open to talk about a specific subject. Usually, when we talk about the public sphere, freedom of opinion is supported. People will have space to express their opinion. Because of the fact that the public sphere generates opinions and positions through acts of assembly and debate, they serve to affirm or challenge the affairs of the state.³⁶

1.8 Method of Research and Data Collection Technique

The author used a method with a qualitative model and a type of content analysis to conduct this research. A qualitative approach to a problem is using the words and points of view of those you refer to as social and political activists to assist in discovering how they view a situation or event. In qualitative research, qualitative researchers commonly engage in open-ended questions so that they can share their perspectives and views on qualitative research is predominantly inductive. Content analysis is a research method that looks at the behavior of something that is currently occurring. This technique has been known to be

³⁵ Nurudin, Nurudin. *Pengantar Komunikasi Massa*. RajaGrafindo Persada, 2007.

³⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. MIT press, 1991.

effective in solving problems in the past. The writer intends to use this research method to provide a systematic description of the phenomena being studied as well as to investigate related cases. Using the internet will also be a part of the methods. The Internet is employed to locate and provide fact-based information on specific subjects.³⁷

1.9 Systematic Framework

Chapter I offers an introduction to the important role of a Media in our daily life and how Media is used to being associated with democracy. Chapter 1 explained how Al-Jazeera defied that and offered some insights using the case study of the Jasmine Revolution. Chapter I also discusses the limitations of the problem in which it is from 17th December 2010 to 28th January 2011. There are also several literary reviews including previous studies on external articles describing Al-Jazeera 's role in reporting on mass movements in Tunisia.

Chapter II will analyse the validity of Al-Jazeera's identity and its brand, as this chapter will analyse Al-Jazeera's "Voice of the Voiceless" message in 3 separate layers of analysis: National, Regional, and International. This chapter will offer some insights into Al-Jazeera's vision and mission, Al-Jazeera's management, as to how Al-Jazeera grew its influence in Qatar, expanding to the Arab Region, and into the International Stage.

Chapter III analyzes how the news material of Al-Jazeera brought together Tunisians during the Jasmine Revolution and how it led to the huge demonstrations

³⁷ Creswell, John W. Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002.

that overthrew the Ben-Ali regime. It will also include a brief description of the events at the Arab Spring, links to social media, the chronology and the role of Al-Jazeera 's coverage in Jasmine Revolution.

Chapter IV will be the conclusion of the thesis, what are the implications we can learn from Al-Jazeera's news content.