Never has any Arab-owned media venture attracted so much Western attention as Al Jazeera Satellite Channel, broadcaster of 24-hour news and current affairs programmes from the desert of Qatar.

Al Jazeera was just five years old when it soared to international prominence in late 2001 through its presence in side Afghanistan and access to the videotape of Usama bin Laden. Yet media coverage of Al-Jazeera itself, as a newsworthy institution in its own right, long predated the September atrocities and subsequent US air strikes on Afghanistan, since those in power already have ample access to the production side of media outlets under their control. They do not have to control over the reception side, since they cannot guarantee to command the attention of those who decline to appear on Al-Jazeera.

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