

Roles and Effects of Media in the Middle East and the United States.

A Monograph

by

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Academic Year 04-05

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 074-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE 052605	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Monograph	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Roles and Effects of Media in the middle East and the United States			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) LTC. Ahmed Mahmoud Safei El Din Abd El Aziz Mady				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) US Army Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies 250 Gibbon Ave. Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 Words) This monograph examines the role of contemporary media, especially television, in the Middle East and the United States. The object is to highlight similarities and differences, with an eye to selective comparative analysis. To preclude voluminous and unwieldy comparisons, stress falls on the more salient roles played by media in Middle Eastern and U.S. perspective. These roles include the impact of media on military operations, politics, foreign policy, economics, society, and culture The treatment begins with a definition of the "Middle East" and continues with a definition of "media." There follows a tour of Middle East to survey the media establishment and its characteristics across the region. The focus then shifts to the U.S. where developments over the last decade are featured for the sake of drawing larger comparisons. Although media in the U.S. and the Middle East appear quite different, they share many attributes, including the necessity to deal with ownership, to adapt to rapidly changing technology and methods, to contend with the proliferation of mean, to operate in diverse environments, and to deal with the various challenges to forthright news reporting and commentary. From this analysis follow larger conclusions, among them the understanding that media, now more than ever, have the capacity not only to reflect and shape, but also to transform. How this capacity makes itself felt remains largely a function of context and culture. Still, there are underlying common denominators, including the growing intrusiveness of a burgeoning and specializing media establishment in both the Middle East and the U.S. This and related developments mean that, like Ben Franklin's adage about the poor and taxes, "the media will always be with us." The monograph concludes that this understanding has significant ramifications for the relationship between the media and the military in both the U.S. and the Middle East.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Joint Education			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 75	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT U	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE U	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT U	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT none	

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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Title of Monograph: Roles and Effects of Media in the Middle East and the United States.

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ABSTRACT

Roles and Effects of Media in the Middle East and the United States, by Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Mady, Egyptian Army, 75 pages.

This monograph examines the role of contemporary media, especially television, in the Middle East and the United States. The object is to highlight similarities and differences, with an eye to selective comparative analysis. To preclude voluminous and unwieldy comparisons, stress falls on the more salient roles played by media in Middle Eastern and U.S. perspective. These roles include the impact of media on military operations, politics, foreign policy, economics, society, and culture

The treatment begins with a definition of the “Middle East” and continues with a definition of “media.” There follows a tour of Middle East to survey the media establishment and its characteristics across the region. The focus then shifts to the U.S. where developments over the last decade are featured for the sake of drawing larger comparisons. Although media in the U.S. and the Middle East appear quite different, they share many attributes, including the necessity to deal with ownership, to adapt to rapidly changing technology and methods, to contend with the proliferation of mean, to operate in diverse environments, and to deal with the various challenges to forthright news reporting and commentary.

From this analysis follow larger conclusions, among them the understanding that media, now more than ever, have the capacity not only to reflect and shape, but also to transform. How this capacity makes itself felt remains largely a function of context and culture. Still, there are underlying common denominators, including the growing intrusiveness of a burgeoning and specializing media establishment in both the Middle East and the U.S. This and related developments mean that, like Ben Franklin’s adage about the poor and taxes, “the media will always be with us.” The monograph concludes that this understanding has significant ramifications for the relationship between the media and the military in both the U.S. and the Middle East.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Middle East remains one of the most culturally and politically intricate regions in the world. Three major religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, trace their origins to the Middle East. With a rich and diverse cultural history, the present-day Middle East struggles to balance the challenges of “western” culture and modernization with traditional and religious values. In part, because of this struggle and the region’s diversity, the media occupy a special place in Middle Eastern society and politics. The media permeate all walks of life and exercise a profound, yet usually incalculable influence. Coverage of such significant issues as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict occupies center stage in the media, and dissatisfaction fed by the media retains the capacity to spill out into the street. Media coverage of sensitive subjects can also affect relations between the United States and the Arab world. Because of the significance of the media, many Middle Eastern regimes heavily censor them. Only the news network al-Jazeera remains independent of direct state control. Yet, censorship is only part of the problem, because individual response to the media is more than a function of coverage and “spin.” Other significant variables include circumstance and education, social background, and political persuasion.

In contrast with many situations in the Middle East, the media in the United States are free of official censorship. Indeed, already during the twentieth century, the United States media had become sufficiently powerful to merit the appellation of the “fourth estate.” That is, the near equal media in the U.S. assume a near-equal footing with old-regime- style nobility, clergy, and commoners. In U.S. terms, this metaphor means that the media are often considered as influential as the three branches of the national government.

In light of the significance of the media in both Middle East and the United States, the purpose of this monograph is to describe and to examine the role of the media in both locales. The object is to determine similarities and differences in the role and effects of the media under seemingly very diverse circumstances. The working hypothesis holds that media the world over share many common characteristics. Among them are the necessities to deal with ownership, to adapt to rapidly-changing technology and methods, to contend with the proliferation of means, to operate in diverse environments, and to deal with various challenges to forthright news reporting and commentary. A major problem is the issue of bias. The important question is not whether bias exists, but to what degree? And, with what perceived effects? And, additionally, with what practical implications? Comparative perspective constitutes an important point of departure for an attempt to answer these and related questions.

Definitions of Middle East and Media.

The term Middle East is considered one of the most controversial expressions among specialists in international relations in general, and more particularly among people who live in the region. A major source of disagreement centers on the geographic definition for the Middle East. From the beginning of the twentieth century and until World War I, the west knew three terms for the large region located south and east of Europe and Russia.¹ First, the “Near East” described the geographical area occupied by the Ottoman Empire. Second, the “Far East” indicated the geographical area of China. Finally, the “Middle East” indicated the geographical area between the Near and Far East.

¹Dr. Ahmed Sidqi al Dgama, *The Historical Roots of Arabia and the Middle East*, The Research Institute and the Arab Studies, The Arab League, 1996, 32-33.

In 1902, Alfred Thayer Mahan, a U.S. Navy officer, became the first acknowledged user of the term Middle East. He did so while discussing American naval strategy to confront Russian activities in Iran. He used this term for the region centered on the Arab Gulf, which at the time was not clearly identified as either the Near or Far East. However, Mahan did not define the countries included in his newly identified region.²

In 1911, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, used the appellation Middle East to indicate Turkey, the Arab Gulf, Iran, and Asia, in the sense that they were “on the way” to India. By 1921, the use of the term Middle East had gradually expanded to include areas of the Far East. Winston Churchill, the British Minister of Colonies at the time, established the so-called Middle East Administration, which was responsible for supervising Palestinian, East Jordanian, and Iraqi affairs. In 1932, the Middle East Command for the Royal Air Force in Iraq was combined with the command of British forces in Egypt under the designation of The Middle East Command. With the beginning of World War II, during which the British reaffirmed this command arrangement, the term Middle East became more widespread. However, it lacked any real boundaries and was dependent on action during the war.³

Other definitions of the term Middle East include those subsequently applied by standard texts and institutional references. In 1974, one British publisher defined the Middle East as the region that includes Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, the Arab Gulf States, Yemen, Israel, Cyprus, Egypt, Sudan, Libia, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.⁴ In contrast, the Royal British Institute of International Relations defined the Middle East as the region which includes Turkey, Iran, The

²Mamdouh Mostafa Monsour, *The Soviet-American Conflict in the Middle East*, Matbouli Library, Cairo, 1955, 39.

³The Regional System: Gamil Matar and Aley El Din Helal, *The House of Arab Future*, Cairo, 1983, 26-27.

⁴*The Middle East and North Africa*, Europe Publication, London, 1974.

Arab Gulf States, Yemen, Cyprus, Egypt, and Sudan.⁵ Subsequently, some writers on the region used the term Middle East to define countries located south of the former Soviet Union, as well as West Pakistan and Egypt in Africa. Still other writers used the term Middle East for the region that includes Egypt, the Arab Gulf States in Asia, Israel, Iran, Cyprus, and sometimes Libya and Sudan.⁶

Three conclusions emerge from these various definitions and understandings. The first is that all writers and commentators agree more or less that the Middle is an extended area located at the joining of Africa, Asia, and Europe. The second is that the term Middle East indicates less a geographical region than a strategic and political expression.⁷ Another important conclusion is that the term Middle East is relative or relational. For inhabitants of the area, that which seems like the Far East may actually be the Near East. Because westerners, perhaps more than other inhabitants of the world, focus on the term Middle East, it is very possible that their preoccupation with “Middle East” bears strong political connotations.⁸

Common to various definitions of the Middle East are characteristics like multiplicity and diversity, but not unity and similarity. These commonly ascribed characteristics imply different nationalities, religions, and languages. Indeed, more cynically-minded commentators claim that the west (Europe) emphasizes differences as a subtle means of separation, as a kind of antidote against cooperation or unity. Names like the “Arab world” are often avoided.

From the above brief outline, it seems clear that there is no specific definition for the Middle East. The countries considered part of the region depend largely on the political and strategic interests of those doing the defining. At the same time, there is no specific definition for

⁵The Regional System, 27.

⁶Mansour, *The Soviet American Conflict in the Middle East*, 27.

⁷The Regional System, 29.

⁸*Ibid.*, 19.

the Middle East that derives from geographical features. Most of the definitions agree that Middle Eastern nations play an important but varying role in international politics and policy.

Accordingly, Middle Eastern countries fall into three categories: the heart, the uninvolved, and the periphery. The heart countries include those that comprise the axis of political interaction in the region. The uninvolved countries include those without any interaction with the member countries even for geographical or political considerations. Finally, the peripheral countries are those close to the region geographically, but not generally considered constituents of the region.

Within the aforementioned categories, this monograph focuses on the heart countries. They number twenty-two, including nineteen Arab countries and three non-Arab countries. The Arab countries are Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Palestine (West bank- Gaza Strip), Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, The United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen. The non-Arab countries are Turkey, Iran, and Israel.

Since this category is very large, it can be divided into three sub-regions: North Africa, the Levant, and the Arab Gulf. The North Africa sub-region includes seven Arab countries: Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania. The Levant includes seven Arab countries and two non-Arab countries: the Arab countries are Palestine (Gaza Strip and West Bank), Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq; the non-Arab countries are Turkey and Israel. Finally, the Arab Gulf includes eight Arab countries and one non-Arab country. The Arab countries are Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Yemen, while the non-Arab country is Iran.

Definition of the region goes hand in- hand with a description of its salient characteristics. Because this monograph concerns media, one major characteristic relates to literacy rates.

The Middle East Media Context

Table 1, below, indicates that the Middle East literacy rate is generally very low. Literacy rates range from a low of 40 percent in Mauritania and Iraq to 80 percent in most of the Gulf States, and into the 90s in Jordan. Meanwhile, the literacy rate is 97 percent in the United States. It can be concluded from these statistics that the most effective media asset in the Middle East is perhaps television, because it does not require any literacy skills. In the United States we might surmise that because the literacy rate is high, there is a correspondingly high rate of usage for the internet. Still, there are more than 1,500 television channels in the United States, and they include nearly 1,000 stations affiliated with the five major networks--NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, and PBS. In addition, there are about 9,000 cable TV systems.⁹

Table 1.¹⁰

	Country	Population	Literacy Rate%	Radio Stations	TV Stations	Internet Hosts	Internet Users
1	Algeria	32,129,324	70	AM 25, FM 1, shortwave 8	46+216 repeaters	821	500,000
2	Bahrain	677,886	89.1	AM 2, FM 2, shortwave 0	4	1,339	165,000
3	Egypt	76,117,421	57.7	AM 42 (+15 repeaters), FM 4, shortwave 3	98	3,061	1.9 million*
4	Gaza Strip	1,324,991	NA	AM 0, FM 0, shortwave 0	2	NA	60,000 (includes West bank)
5	Iran	69,018,924	79.4	AM 72, FM 5, shortwave 5	28+450 low-power repeaters	3,491	3.168 million
6	Iraq	25,374,691	40.4	AM 19, FM 51, shortwave 4	13	NA	25,000
7	Israel	6,199,008	95.4	AM 23, FM 15, shortwave 2	17 (+36 low-power repeaters)	146,791	2 million
8	Jordan	5,611,202	91.3	AM 6, FM 5,	20 (+ 96 repeaters)	4,116	307,500

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰www.cia.gov

* The International Telecommunication Union estimated that Egypt had around 2.7 million Internet users.

				shortwave 1			
9	Kuwait	2,257,549	83.5	AM 6, FM 11, shortwave 1	13+ several satellite channels	3,261	250,000
10	Lebanon	3,777,218	87.4	AM 20, FM 22, shortwave 4	15 (+ 5 repeaters)	7,199	400,000
11	Libya	5,631,585	82.6	AM 16, FM 3, shortwave 3	12+1 low power repeater	83	125,000
12	Mauritania	2,998,563	41.7	AM 1, FM 14, shortwave 1	1	79	10,000
13	Morocco	32,209,101	51.7	AM 27, FM 25, shortwave 6	35 (+ 66 repeaters)	2,680	700,000
14	Oman	2,903,165	75.8	AM 3, FM 9, shortwave 2	13 (+ 25 low-power repeaters)	676	180,000
15	Qatar	840,290	82.5	AM 6, FM 5, shortwave 1	1 (+ three repeaters)	171	70,000
16	Saudi Arabia	25,795,938	78.8	AM 43, FM 31, shortwave 2	117	14,788	1,418,900
17	Yemen	20,024,867	50.2	AM 6, FM 1, shortwave 2	7	138	100,000
18	Sudan	39,148,162	61.1	AM 12, FM 1, shortwave 1	3	NA	84,000
19	Syria	18,016,874	76.9	AM 14, FM 2, shortwave 1	44 (+ 17 repeaters)	11	220,000
20	Tunisia	9,974,722	74.2	AM 7, FM 20, shortwave 2	26 (+ 76 repeaters)	341	505,500
21	Turkey	68,893,918	86.5	AM 16, FM 107, shortwave 6	635 (+ 2,934 repeaters)	154,585	4.9 million
22	Emirates	2,523,915	77.9	AM 13, FM 7, shortwave 2	15	52,332	1,175,600
23	West Bank	2,311,204	NA	AM 1, FM 0, shortwave 0	NA	NA	Mentioned in # 4
24	Total Arab countries	309,648,668	66.33	AM 266, FM 225, shortwave 44	485	91,096	8,196,500
25	Total Middle East	453,760,518	72.46	AM 377, FM 352, shortwave 57	1165	395,963	18,264,500
26	United States	293,027,571	97%	AM 4,762, FM 5,542, shortwave 18	More than 1,500	115,311,958	159 million

The Media

Any discussion of the media involves an understanding of them and related terms. There are many definitions for media; for example, they have been defined as objects on which data can be stored. As such, they may include hard disks, floppy disks, CD-ROMs, and tapes. In computer

networks, media refer to cables linking workstations together. There are many different types of transmission media, the most popular being twisted-pair wire (normal electrical wire), coaxial cable (the type of cable used for cable television), and fiber optic cable (cables made out of glass). The understanding of media may also extend to the forms and technologies used to communicate information. Multimedia presentations, for example, combine sound, pictures, and videos, all of which are different types of media.

The linguistically incorrect reference to singular “media” and its similarly incorrect plural “medias” seem to have originated in the field of advertising over 50 years ago; they are apparently still so used without stigma in that specialized field. In most other applications *media* is used as the Latin plural of *medium*. The great popularity of the word with reference to agencies of mass communication has led to the formation of a collective noun construed as a singular. Indeed, such usage has become unconscious. For example, Edwin Meese said, “The news *media* gets on to something.” Or, James Lewis wrote in the *Guardian Weekly*, “The *media* is less interested in the party's policies.” This usage is not as well established as the common use of *data*. In the end, any unspecified reference to media is likely to incur criticism, especially in formal writing.¹¹

This monograph relies on a definition of media that comes from the Ontario Ministry of Education. It defines media as a whole body of information reaching large numbers of the public via radio, television, movies, magazines, newspapers, and the World Wide Web.¹² This understanding of the term was coined in the 1920s, with the advent of nationwide radio networks, mass-circulation newspapers, and magazines. Because mass media reach a mass audience, such

¹¹<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/005/406istku.asp>

¹²<http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/~astro/nintrod.htm>, “White Paper.” This definition is clear, and on its basis, it is possible to include non-Arab countries, for example, Israel, without introducing value bias.

an audience has been viewed by some commentators as forming a mass society with special characteristics. The more notable of these, including atomization or lack of social connections, render society especially susceptible to the influence of modern mass media techniques including advertising and propaganda.

During the twentieth century, the advent of mass media was driven by technology that allowed the massive duplication of material at low cost. Physical duplication technologies such as printing, record pressing, and film replication allowed the duplication of books, newspapers, and movies at low prices to huge audiences. Television and radio introduced the electronic duplication of content. Mass media facilitated the economics of linear replication: a single work produced income proportional to the number of copies sold, and as volume went up, unit cost went down, further increasing profit margins. Vast fortunes were to be made in mass media.

Definition sharpens perception. When the initiated understand terms, they know what these terms mean. But other people often do not know anything about these terms. They are most likely afflicted with media illiteracy. The opposite, or media literacy, according to the Ministry of Education in Ontario, reflects concern with the process of understanding and using mass media. Media literacy also represents a concern with helping students and children to develop an informed understanding of the nature of mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how media work, how the media produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality. Media Literacy also aims to provide students with the abilities and skills to create media products.¹³

¹³<http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/~astro/nintrod.htm>

Delimitations

Despite the all-embracing nature of the above-mentioned definition for media, this monograph emphasizes on one medium. That medium is television. The reason for this delimitation derives from an understanding of literacy rates. The full implications are treated in subsequent chapters.

A further delimitation involves comparative categories. To preclude voluminous and unwieldy comparisons, stress in this monograph falls on the more salient roles that media play in Middle Eastern and U.S. perspective. These roles include the impact of media on military operations, politics, foreign policy, economics, society, and culture. This monograph devotes special attention to the relationship between the media and the military in both the U.S. and the Middle East.

CHAPTER TWO

Roles of Media in the Middle East and United States

To understand the role of media in the Middle East, it is necessary to discuss the Middle East by sub-regions. Each sub-region has special characteristics, and they substantially affect the role of media, especially television, in national development.

Media in the Middle East

NORTH AFRICA

1. Egypt

Egypt is a major regional media player. Its press is one of the most influential and widely read in the region, and its TV and film industry supply much of the Arab-speaking world with various productions. The heart of Egypt's film industry is Media Production City, an enterprise

launched with the intention of creating the “Hollywood of the East.” Media criticism of the government is commonplace. Still, press laws which prescribe prison sentences for libel and “insults” encourage self-censorship on sensitive issues. Egypt has two state-run national TV channels and six regional channels. It is a key player in satellite TV; the Egyptian Space Channels are widely watched across the Arab-speaking world. These channels enjoy the support of the country's huge media production industry and have access to a large archive of Egyptian films and TV programs.

Officially, censorship was banned in 1980. Nonetheless, it still governs the editorial policies of the state media. Journalists from the opposition press, who are suspected of sympathizing with fundamentalist Islamic groups, are frequently questioned by police. The authorities' aim is to abolish or at least weaken the fundamentalist press, which is hostile to the government.¹⁴

Egypt's publications fall roughly into four groups. State-owned publications including Al Ahram (<http://www.ahram.org.eg>), Al Akhbar, and Al Gomhuriya, are not censored. However, their editors are government appointees. Reporters and columnists are given a fair amount of latitude in what they write, as long as they avoid certain taboos. Publications owned by political parties like Al Shaab, Al Wafd or Al Watan Al Arabi are not censored. The party leadership exercises varying degrees of control over editorial policies, which range from hard-line ideology to total chaos. All media are vulnerable to various forms of government pressure if they step beyond certain limits. The Supreme Press Council rarely allows independent publications like Al Osboa and Al Naba to register inside Egypt. A license requires informal clearance by all of Egypt's major security and intelligence agencies. Most Egyptian publications are legally

¹⁴<http://www.minfo.gov.eg>.

registered abroad because of the difficulties associated with Egyptian registration. The country in which they are most commonly registered is Cyprus, because of its proximity to Egypt and the relative ease with which a Cypriot license can be obtained. Thus, independent Egyptian publications are often collectively referred to as the Cyprus Press. These publications are subject to censorship from the Foreign Publications Censor, who answers directly to the Minister of Information.

Egypt was the first Arab nation to have its own satellite, Nile sat 101.¹⁵ The country's first private TV stations - Dream 1, Dream 2 and Al-Mihwar TV--came on air in 2001, broadcasting via satellite. The state monopoly on radio broadcasting was broken with the arrival of private commercial music stations in 2003. By offering the use of its media infrastructure and economic support, Egypt aims to attract foreign media companies to its "Free Media Zone," launched in 2000. In 2003, the International Telecommunication Union estimated that Egypt had around 2.7m Internet users.

2. Sudan

Since independence in 1956, the mass media have served as channels for the dissemination of information supporting various political parties (during parliamentary periods) or official government views (during the years of military rule). Radio, an important medium of mass communication in the country's vast territory, has remained virtually a government monopoly. Television broadcasting has been a complete monopoly. The official Sudan News Agency (SUNA), first established in 1971, distributes news about the country in Arabic, English, and French, with foreign and domestic services¹⁶.

¹⁵<http://www.nilesat.com.eg>.

¹⁶<http://alanbaa.info>.

Before the 1989 coup, Sudan had a lively press, with most political parties publishing a variety of newspapers and periodicals. In Khartoum, twenty-two daily papers were published, nineteen in Arabic and three in English. Altogether, the country had fifty-five daily or weekly newspapers and magazines. More recently, the government has banned all these papers and dismissed more than 1,000 journalists. At least fifteen journalists, including the director of the Sudan News Agency and the editor of the monthly “Sudanow,” were arrested after the coup. Since coming to power, the current government has authorized the publication of only a few papers and periodicals, all of which are published by the military or government agencies and edited by official censors. The leading daily in 1991 was “Al Inqadh al Watani” (National Salvation).

The government also figures in radio and television broadcasting. In 1990 there were an estimated 250,000 television sets in the country and about six million radio receivers. Sudan Television operated three stations located in Omdurman, Al Jazeera, and Atbarah. The major radio station of the Sudan National Broadcasting Corporation was in Omdurman, with a regional station in Juba for the south. Following the 1989 coup, the new government dismissed several broadcasters from Sudan Television because their loyalty to the new government and its policies was considered suspect.

In opposition to the official broadcast network, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement operates its own clandestine radio station, Radio Sudan People's Liberation Army, from secret transmitters within the country and facilities in Ethiopia. Radio Sudan People's Liberation Army broadcasts are in Arabic, English, and various languages of the south. In 1990 the National Democratic Alliance began broadcasts on Radio Sudan People's Liberation Army frequencies.

3. Libya

In general, both the Libyan population and the large community of foreign workers and diplomats register a high degree of dissatisfaction with the nature and quality of Libyan television and radio programs. One of the main reasons is the hiring of technical and administrative personnel based on political criteria rather than on expertise or knowledge. This fact, in turn, has not only downgraded the quality of the programs, but has also reduced the ability to develop and produce a set of programs of interest to the general population. Another reason for dissatisfaction is the fact that broadcast signals do not yet effectively reach the southern part of the country with its sparsely populated and far-flung villages. Although discussions are being held in the pertinent governmental departments to address these and related issues, the outcome is as yet unknown.¹⁷

In December 1995, the government indicated what amount of money and what priorities were to be allocated to the various mass media. However, the government has issued neither statistical projections nor economic data of any reliability.¹⁸ The Libyan government claimed that the mass media, like many other institutions under the Libyan government's jurisdiction, have received low priorities for support because of the country's economic crisis. Only a softening of the economic crisis and the allocation of more money to mass media will revitalize these important institutions and permit development of new telecommunication technologies.

4. Tunisia

Although freedom of opinion and expression is guaranteed by the Tunisian constitution, the government tightly controls the press and broadcasting. The state-run Tunisian Radio and Television Establishment (ERTT) operates two national TV channels and several radio networks. The use of satellite dishes is widespread, and Egyptian and pan-Arab stations command large audiences. Two London-based opposition TV channels can be received in Tunisia: Al

¹⁷<http://www.free-libya.com>.

¹⁸ Economist Intelligence Unit, Tripoli, Libya, 1995-1996.

Mustaqillah TV and Zeitouna TV. Until November 2003, the state had a monopoly on radio broadcasting.

Press codes shape coverage and prescribe large fines and prison sentences for violators. Before publication, the authorities screen journals, and the government encourages a high degree of self-censorship. Discussion of corruption and human rights in the media is taboo. Editions of foreign newspapers, including French and pan-Arab publications, are regularly seized. There are several privately-run newspapers and magazines, including two opposition party journals. Media rights organizations report that intimidation of journalists is widespread. In 2002, the editor of a satirical website was jailed for “putting out false news.” He had placed opposition material on his site.¹⁹

5. Algeria

Educational media programs are non-existent in schools and colleges. Only the University of Algiers offers classes in information and communication sciences. There is only an audiovisual center in Algeria. The mass media have participated in the national development of the country through various educational and awareness campaigns. Of course, the media role is dictated by social and economic conditions, as well as by political demands.

The electronic media provide various programs aimed at reducing the high rate of illiteracy (30 percent) and broadcast competitive games between colleges. The media furnish a series of courses for students taking exams. The press publishes courses and exercises within different disciplines. The periodical *l'Ecole* specializes in education matters. In general, economic

¹⁹<http://www.tunisieinfo.com>.

and social development of Algeria has brought a similar level of development in the communication and information field.²⁰

According to the Minister of Communication and Culture, the media infrastructures and facilities have achieved an acceptable degree of development. However, mismanagement and political turmoil have led to a deadlock. Lack of human expertise, ongoing technical problems, and misuse of facilities have hindered mass media from reaching their full potential in playing a constructive role in the political, educational, economic, and social development of the country.

6. Morocco

Morocco's private press is free to investigate and debate many previously taboo issues, including social problems. But freedom of the press has its limits. In 2003, the Paris-based media rights organization "Reporters Sans Frontiers" condemned "regular interference" in the press by the intelligence services, as well as a press law which prescribes prison terms for offenses, including "any attack on Islam, the monarchy and territorial integrity." Low literacy levels limit newspaper readership, and competition among publications for advertising is intense. The Western Sahara, the monarchy and corruption are all sensitive issues. Perceived shortcomings in their coverage have led to the suspension of several newspapers in recent years. Self-censorship by journalists is commonplace.

The government owns, or has a stake in, Morocco's two television networks. The government plans to allow private investment in state-run broadcast media and the official news agency. Broadcasters are tamer in their coverage of sensitive topics than their press counterparts. Satellite dishes are widely used, giving access to a range of foreign TV stations.

²⁰Yahya R. Kamalipour-Hamid Mowlana, *Mass Media in the Middle East*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, London, 1994, 24-25.

All aspects of modern Moroccan life are represented among the media available in Morocco. In particular, the press represents a rich sector of the media. Arabic and French are the two prevailing languages, although English and Spanish are represented by their international press. In general, literate Moroccans appreciate their daily newspapers and weekly magazines. The opportunity to drink coffee on a terrace is enough to provide the outsider with evidence of the Moroccan attachment to newspapers. Most of them offer an on-line version.

Indeed, the internet constitutes an important new media player in Morocco. There are excellent Moroccan web sites, which serve fully as information providers. These sites have editorial staffs and impressive technical solutions offering daily updates on topics such as the economy, day-to-day life, and world news. Meanwhile, domestic TVs and radios remain an integral part of the Moroccan media constellation. The introduction of satellite dishes has substantially augmented this variety of media²¹.

7. Mauritania

Mauritania's TV and radio stations are state-owned. Their coverage strongly favors the government, and opposition access to radio is limited. An FM relay of Radio France International in the capital was shut down in 2000 after authorities accused the station of broadcasting only negative news about the country.

In Mauritania newspapers have been suspended for publishing articles on slavery, which is supposed to have disappeared. Under Mauritania's press law, newspapers may be banned for publishing material that “undermines” Islam or is perceived to threaten national security.

LEVANT

1. Syria

²¹ Kamalipour, Yahya R. and Hamid Mowlana. *Mass Media in the Middle East*. Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1994, 279-280

The Syrian government believes that the mass media can play an important role in both the education and training of its citizens and in national and regional development. Specially, the government believes the media can promote the political, social, and culture agenda of the Ba'ath Party. The intent is that the media create an appropriate climate for national development. In addition, the media provide non-formal education and training to Syrian citizens in the areas of health and hygiene, agriculture, and child development. Finally, the media are used for enhancing Arab pride and promoting "Pan-Arabism." It is fair to say that the Syrian media have been successful in meeting at least some of their stated goals, despite criticism that the media are a purely political propaganda apparatus.²²

2. Iraq

Under present conditions, it is still not clear what the media will look like under the new regime, so the current discussion surveys only the situation under the El Bath regime. El Bath used the mass media to communicate its social-economic development goals to the Iraqi population, and to provide instruction regarding the required labor and skills needed to realize these goals. In 1968, El Bath party decided to reshape the national culture in accordance with party ideology. The party stressed the importance of spreading new cultural concepts and scientific methods while preparing a comprehensive campaign to eradicate illiteracy. The mass media's role in the process was to document and spread awareness of the development process, to selectively challenge traditional values and practices in society, to spread the values and practices of the El Bath party, and to encourage the masses to participate in the development process.

In 1972, the Iraqi National Communication Bureau identified broadcasting as the most important instrument in the state for its ability, via television and radio, to directly inform and convince the masses of the state's achievements and goals in the development process. El Bath

²²Ibid., 270-271.

party used broadcasting to visually display successful development projects in order to convince the population of the benefits of its economic achievements. Broadcasting was also used to promote the idea of a nationalist culture by stressing Iraqi's Arab heritage and by spreading awareness of Iraqi's achievements in poetry, literature, theater, and cinema.

Television became Iraq's most highly valued communications medium for socio-economic development. The state used television to transmit educational programs to serve a wide range of students and to motivate illiterates to overcome language and mathematics difficulties. A massive literacy campaign, beginning in the 1970s via television, resulted in an increase in adult literacy from 42 percent to 93 percent.

Increases in oil revenue after the government nationalized the oil industry in 1972 enabled the state to spend additional resources on improving social-economic conditions. A primary objective for the Ba'ath party was to supply all citizens with electricity. Once this was achieved, the government provided television sets free of charge to popular organizations and societies. For example, television sets were initially provided to all coffeehouses in a large number of villages so that the general population might be informed of the state's development policies. According to statistics from the Central Statistical Organization for the Ministry of Planning in 1999, ninety-four percent of the population possessed television sets.

In conclusion, after 1968, when the Ba'ath party assumed power, the role of mass media in Iraq was primarily to serve as a tool of government. Ba'ath used the media to inform, educate, and indoctrinate the masses with its programs and ideologies. The presence of entertainment programming was limited. Furthermore, the fact that the Ba'ath party became the primary

producer of programming material for broadcasting and the owner of mass media entities further limited the degree of diversity, both in content and type of media available in Iraq.²³

3. Lebanon

Although Lebanon is a media rich country, the mass media institutions have played a less than positive role in areas pertaining to education, training, and national development. For instance, the Lebanese press acts more as “a purveyor of views” than a platform for discussion among various Lebanese groups or for opposing points of view.

The Lebanese broadcasting industry also has done little to advance national development. Both licensed and illegal broadcasting have failed to provide Lebanese citizens with information to satisfy their real societal needs. This fact has been especially evident in television broadcasting. Since its inception, Lebanese television has relied heavily on imported programs, most of which are alien to Lebanese culture. The small number of locally-produced programs are either superficial or have no educational value.

The major concern of television officials has been financial gain. The government, in contrast, has remained largely interested in asserting its control, particularly over news broadcasts, while paying little attention to the kind and quality of programs. Radio broadcasting, both licensed and illegal, differs little from television, except that radio programs are locally produced, mostly for entertainment purposes. The Lebanese mass media, in both print and broadcast, have failed to contribute to societal development.²⁴

In brief, the history of the media in Lebanon reveals an institution with great freedoms, great contributors, and great promise. Many commentators have argued, in fact, that Lebanon was originally the jewel of the Middle East for journalists and other media professionals. The

²³Kamalipour, and Mowlana. *Mass Media in the Middle East*, 106-107.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 171.

outbreak of the civil war, however, changed the Lebanese landscape in many ways, and the media shared the same fate. A careful analysis of the history of mass media in Lebanon reveals that its structure may have been shaped more by the civil war than by any other circumstances. The consequences have gone relatively unexamined, yet there is clearly a need to further understand the impact of the media's gradual reinstitutionalization on the country's populace.²⁵

4. Jordan

The role of mass media in Jordan's development has always been recognized. In response to calls from the United Nation Educational Scientific and Culture Organization (UNESCO) for harnessing mass media in the service of national development, Jordan was one of the few countries in the mid-1970s to establish a Development Communication Department at the Ministry of Information. This department produces television and radio documentaries, as well as short messages relating to the environment, public sanitation, agriculture, vocational training, and safety at home and at work.

Mass media in Jordan often carry programs and messages on health, the environment, child care, and birth spacing. Such materials are usually produced by the Ministry of Health or some non-governmental organization like the Noor Al Hussein Foundation to raise public awareness of certain issues. From 1980 to 1986 the Health Education Project carried out by the Ministry of Health with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sought to educate mothers and the public at large via television on basic child care and protection against dehydration. The Noor Al Hussein Foundation carried out another health communication project in the late 1980s with funding from USAID and in cooperation with the American Academy for Educational Development. The subjects included breast-feeding and birth spacing in Jordan. The project utilized television spots to educate mothers on both topics.

²⁵<http://www.lebanon.com>.

Jordanian television also cooperates with the Ministry of Education to produce and broadcast educational materials on subjects such as geography, English, physics, and chemistry. These educational programs are directed at morning and afternoon classes and are intended to supplement formal classroom lectures.

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC) at Yarmouk University carried out perhaps the most interesting experiment in the application of communication for education. Implemented from 1986 to 1992, and funded by both UNESCO and the United Nation Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the project sought to educate residents of a northern Jordanian rural community on population problems and family planning. The whole project was designed to serve as an educational experiment for the DJMC staff and students. Field research subsequently indicated that communication does play a role in educating the general public on the sensitive issue of family planning and in modifying related attitudes and practices.

In sum, Jordan is no exception to the rule that the social, political, and cultural environments play major roles in shaping the mass media. Newspapers constitute an additional case in point. Since the launching of the first newspaper in the early 1920s, Jordanian newspapers have evolved in tandem with the country's development, echoing national concerns and ambitions. In its 70-year history, Jordan has espoused a mixed system of governance in which private enterprise has worked along parallel lines with the public sector in an atmosphere of cooperation and reciprocity. As a result, mass media in Jordan have always reflected this mixed system outlook, with newspapers and other print media falling in the private sector domain, while broadcasting remains a government concern. Although the Jordanian press enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom in the 1950s, it was not until 1989 that the Jordanian media enjoyed genuine opportunities for free treatment of public affairs in a democratized environment. Three years

later, democracy in Jordan withstood a multitude of challenges, the most formidable of which was the Gulf crisis and war. By demonstrating a high degree of responsibility, both the media and the public have proven their maturity and demonstrated a concern for safeguarding democratic values in Jordan.

With the abolition of marital law and the legalization of political parties in Jordan, the media are expected to increase in number and exhibit even a greater degree of pluralism, reflecting a wider array of political orientation. But this development is also likely to put more pressure on already established nonpartisan publications to maintain their audiences in order to ensure the flow of advertising revenue²⁶.

5. Palestine

Because of varying degrees of Israeli occupation, the most important role for the media has been in consolidating Palestinian nationalism. The media contribute their part by helping to define the people, their land, and their leaders. From its perspective, the press transmits lessons from the Palestinian past and projects a vision of the Palestinian future. Therefore, the press is an instrument of Palestinian nationalism. Because of its adversarial role to the occupation, the press has often been reluctant to criticize national institutions or to carry investigative articles on how development aid has been used. Women's groups and health groups use video for both educational purposes and the discussion of political and social issues.

6. Turkey

In Turkey, the notion that mass media can make great contributions to national development has long been dominant. Radio programs during their early years of the Turkish Republic were used extensively for education, particularly in rural areas. Later, as television

²⁶ Kamalipour, and Mowlana. *Mass Media in the Middle East*, 171-172

became an established part of the media, their effects and educational results became subjects for study and evaluation. During the mid-1970s the Open University, based on education by television, was developed by Anadolu University and it now grants diplomas to hundreds of students every year. Textbooks are delivered to students by mail and the lectures are delivered via television. Students receive two centrally administered written exams each year. Besides higher education productions, television also contributes to the improvement of teachers through the facilities of Anadolu University. Those teachers who graduate from the equivalent of high schools are regarded as university graduates upon completion of two additional years' instruction with the Open University.²⁷

Mass media in Turkey demonstrate two distinctly different sides. While the urbanized population lives in an intensive communications atmosphere, the rural areas are engulfed by an extensive radio and television network. The lack of regulation in radio and television broadcasting has led to increased public exposure to free radio-television broadcasting.

Tough competition among the newspapers has made Turkey an encyclopedia-rich country. As a consequence of this encyclopedia race beginning in late 1922, more than three million houses have been furnished with twenty-volume encyclopedias. Meanwhile, as a natural consequence of media development the trend toward media monopoly in Turkey is accelerating. There is no legislative or legal restriction to counteract this trend either in the print or in the electronic media.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of its subsequent independent republics has presented new opportunities for Turkish media. Preparations for the adoption of the Latin alphabet by the five Central Asian republics, whose languages are similar to Turkish, will enable print and broadcast media and films produced in Turkey to reach a population of more than 200

²⁷Kamalipour, and Mowlana. *Mass Media in the Middle East*, 291-292.

million without encountering a language barrier. Overall, the future prospects for the Turkish mass media are promising.

7. Israel

The important role of Israel's mass media in national development is demonstrated by institutions formed for that purpose, as well as by the media's participation in ceremonial and traditional events. Instructional television started broadcasting in Israel in 1966, two years before the beginning of regular TV broadcasts. It still broadcasts daily on the Israel Broadcasting Authority's (the official broadcasting body in Israel) channel from 8:00 A.M. To 5:30 P.M., except Saturdays. The morning programs are geared for schools.

During the 1980s the service changed its larger program format to become more family oriented, especially in the afternoon hours. New programs include entertainment and news. Now known as the Israel Educational Television (IETV), the service is allotted one-seventh of the Israel Broadcasting Authority's broadcast time and one channel in the cable TV system. So far, both options have not been exploited. Indeed, the restructuring of Israel's broadcast system promises to cause a rethinking of the role of educational television.²⁸

ARAB GULF

1. Saudi Arabia

Mass media are used for both curricular instruction and national development in Saudi Arabia, although the former category is limited to closed circuit television. Because males and females are segregated in Saudi universities, closed circuit television imparts lessons to female students setting in a separate classroom from the one where the teacher lectures to male students. Female students can put questions to the teacher by using a microphone. The use of closed circuit

²⁸Ibid., 123-124.

television for such instruction is also attributed to a shortage of qualified people to teach at the university level.

For example, the Saudis do not employ any distance education program of the type provided by the United Kingdom's Open University. Both of Saudi Arabia's television channels are used, however, to teach Arabic to the expatriate population. Two to three times a week, interested persons can tune in to such lessons of thirty-minute duration. Formal homework requirements and exams are usually not integral to formal distance education programs. Saudi broadcasting, especially television, is used considerably more for national development. Various campaigns appear in the broadcast media on a daily basis. These programs include subjects like keeping the environment clean, disposing of garbage properly, keeping stereo volumes down, respecting traffic laws, wearing seat belts, donating blood, and reducing electricity consumption. Such campaigns, conducted in the afternoon and during prime time, are subjects of short public service announcements and longer discussion programs. The appropriate government ministries fashion public relations campaigns both to initiate development campaigns and to produce the message professionally.

2. Kuwait

According to Kuwait's 1991 constitution, "freedom of opinion is guaranteed to everyone . . . within the limits of the law." The 1961 Press and Publishing Law established fines and prison terms for the publication of banned material, including reports critical of the government. In practice, this provision has been invoked only rarely, and Kuwait is known for its press freedom. In 1986, however, the government took a number of measures to repress political dissent. New censorship regulations formed a part of these measures. The Ministry of Information requires all publications to submit advance copy to the Ministry for approval. Moreover, the

Ministry forbids criticism of the ruler and his family, other Arab leaders, or Islam, as well as the acceptance of foreign funding.

In 1990, as a result of the Iraqi invasion, Iraqi forces took over all media. A few Kuwaiti newspapers and Radio Kuwait managed to operate outside the country. After the war, in April 1991, the six opposition groups joined in calling for a free press. In January 1992, the government lifted censorship, but journalists continued to experience various restrictions. After 1993, the press, radio, and television spent considerable time and resources while recovering and rebuilding facilities the Iraqis had destroyed.²⁹

The Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) is theoretically independent but in practice is an arm of the Ministry of Information. Newspapers are generally privately owned and consist of seven dailies, five in Arabic and two in English (the *Arab Times* and *Kuwait Times*), as well as a number of weeklies. The largest daily is *Al Qabas* (Firebrand), which is independent and had a circulation of about 120,000 before the war of 1990-1991. Two smaller dailies, *Al Anba* (News) and *Ar Ray al Amm* (Public Opinion), each with a prewar circulation of 80,000, are more conservative and support the government. With regard to other information media, the Ministry of Information operates the three stations of Radio Kuwait and Kuwait Television station.³⁰

3. Qatar

The initial role of mass media in Qatar was to facilitate the process of building a modern nation. The planned development of electronic media in particular has reflected this fact. The policies and plans of the Ministry of Information are geared toward using media to bridge the gap between the oil boom in the 1970s and early 1980s and lagging internal development.

Programmers and editing policymakers have requested priority for education and cultural content

²⁹ <http://www.moe.edu.kw>

³⁰ Ibid.

over entertainment content. Increased government financial support sometimes serves as a form of positive reinforcement for private newspapers publishing educational supplements or new sections on health or computers.

For a small country, Qatar's rapid press development has been a function of strong government support and the recruitment of relatively well trained journalists from other less affluent Arab countries. Whether Qatari newspapers and magazines will hold their ground in the future is problematic because dwindling government financial support imperils career prospects for Qatari citizens. The media also confronts a growing pull for the "Qatarization" of media staff.³¹

In March 1993, the introduction of cable television facilitated both clear reception of satellite television networks and more liberal philosophies. The latter trend also put pressure on the government to ease censorship and other regulations imposed on local print and electronic media. Meanwhile, tough competition among media outlets helped improve the quality of local electronic media productions. This environment produced al-Jazeera, which is considered one of the most watch-able media in the Middle East. Al-Jazeera is not controlled by any government or regime, so the people tend to look on it as a neutral.³²

4. Bahrain

Although in Bahrain newspapers and periodicals may have some application in the classroom, particularly in the study of English, their actual use and extent of effect are unknown. Aside from informational programs on radio and television, telecommunication does not play a

³¹<https://www.e.gov.qa>.

³²Ibid.

significant role in classroom instruction. Media are more likely to have an educational influence on both the young and adult population through individual access to available media.

The role of Bahrain's mass media in national development is primarily played out through announcement and coverage of ceremonial and traditional events. According to Rugh (1987), the private press in Bahrain, not unlike other loyalist press in the Gulf region, is not inclined toward social advocacy that runs contrary to national interests. Activities to develop national awareness are mainly the domain of the government. Part of that task is accomplished through informational publications that document the state's historical, culture, and religious history. Another part occurs through updates on state activities such as defense, industrial, financial, and commercial development. Whatever the subject, media consumers in Bahrain generally have faith in the accuracy and substance of both the private and state media, especially because choice of media and the opportunity for measurement against external media remain unrestricted.³³

5. United Arab Emirates

After witnessing a period of steady growth, the mass media industries have entrenched themselves in the political, economic, and culture landscape of the United Arab Emirates. The UAE's mass media are currently undergoing consolidation and continue to fulfill the communication needs not only of the indigenous population but also of the expatriate community. Regional cooperation and sharing of information with Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) countries are also common.

With reference to employment, the mass media industries have relied inordinately on a foreign work force because of the lack of local training opportunities. For the Arabic press, news people come from countries with older press traditions, such as Egypt and Lebanon. News

³³<http://www.bahrain.gov.bh>.

workers for the English-language press come from Europe, India, and Pakistan. However, this excessive reliance on a foreign work force is changing slowly as local talent becomes available. Given the political stability that the UAE has enjoyed since its inception, it is safe to predict a continued prosperity for the UAE's mass media industries, nurtured and sustained by a pragmatic and benign leadership. The emergence of Al-Arabia reflects these tendencies.³⁴

6. Oman

Oman has made great strides over the last quarter century toward using the media for informational, educational, and entertainment purposes. This growth is reflected in the variety of broadcast media programs. About 74 percent of radio programs are devoted to entertainment, religion, and news, while the same categories represent about 54 percent of all television programs. The remaining 26 percent pertain largely to “information and guidance in such matters as health, education, agriculture, industry, family affairs, and child care in close cooperation with the relevant ministries.” Interestingly, English language radio programming furnishes approximately 47 percent of its output in the form of light and popular music, 33 percent in classic music, and 20 percent in non-musical programs.

The Omani print media demonstrate proclivities similar to the broadcast media inasmuch as they inform, educate, and entertain. This similarity becomes apparent with special reference to magazines. Omani magazines deal with various broad subjects including society, politics, and economics.

Besides its international significance and wealth as an oil producer, the Sultanate of Oman is rich historically, geographically, and culturally. Although the history of Oman goes back to 1200 B.C., the history of the mass media in this land is less than thirty years old.

³⁴Kamalipour, and Mowlana. *Mass Media in the Middle East*, 308.

Omani trends in mass communications suggest a desire to expand current services and to adopt the latest technologies. In 1989, a new comprehensive complex that contains a radio station and studios was opened at Al-Qurm. In 1990, Oman signed an agreement with a French group for the future expansion of television and radio facilities. The project involved the construction of sixteen main stations. It cost Oman about 26 million Omani reals, and reached completion in 1993. If the ongoing progress in the realm of mass media indicates anything, it is that the Omanis have learned adroitly to steer a course that accepts change while maintaining a firm grasp on heritage.³⁵

7. Yemen

Broadcasting in Yemen began in 1940, when the British established a small radio station at Ra's Bradly in the Tawahi district of Aden. Transmissions were short and mainly concentrated on military news about World War II, together with information about precautions against air raids. The first known speaker from this station was Shaikh Abdullah Mohammed Hatem. It closed in 1945.

Sana'a Radio was established in January 1946, but fell silent after two years, resuming broadcasts in 1955. Aden Radio was established on 7 August 1954. Between 1976 and 1990, broadcasting in northern Yemen was the responsibility of the Yemeni Public Corporation for Radio and Television. A similar organization, the Radio and Television Authority, was established in the south in 1988. With the unification of Yemen, these were merged in 1990 to form the Public Corporation for Radio and Television (PCRT), which operates under the Ministry of Information. There are local radio stations in Ta'izz (established 1963), al-Mukalla (1967), al-Hodeida (1969), and Sayyun (1973).

³⁵<http://www.scienceclub.gov.om>.

In addition to radio, there are two national television channels. Channel 1 (originally the northern television service) began broadcasting on 26 September 1975. The former television service in the south, which is now known as Channel 2, was established on 11 September 1964. Color transmission started in the north on 26 September 1979 and in the south on 8 March 1981. Yemen Radio has English language broadcasts on FM, MW and SW in English from 21.00 to 22.00 local time, repeated the next day at 09.00-10.00 local time. Channel 1 TV has news in English at 2300 and on Channel 2 at 2100.³⁶

The media role in Yemen is likely the same as in most of the Gulf States. That is, the media stress education, with an emphasis on the national development of Yemen, especially in the fields of health care, child care, and the environment.

8. Iran

The Iranian Constitution provides for freedom of the press as long as published material accords with Islamic principles. The publisher of every newspaper and periodical is required by law to have a valid publishing license. Any publication perceived as being anti-Islamic is not granted a publication license. In practice, the criteria for being anti-Islamic have been broadly interpreted to encompass all materials that include anti-government sentiment. In 1987, all papers and magazines in circulation supported the basic political institutions of the Islamic Republic.

The major daily newspapers for the country are printed in Tehran. The leading newspapers include *Jumhuri-yi Islami*, *Resalat*, *Kayhan*, *Abrar*, and *Ettelaat*. The *Tehran Times* and *Kayhan International* are two English-language dailies in Tehran. While all these newspapers are considered appropriately Islamic, they do not endorse every program of the central government. For example, *Jumhuri-yi Islami*, the official organ of the IRP before its dissolution in 1987, features the official government line of Prime Minister Musavi. In contrast, *Resalat* is

³⁶<http://www.al-bab.com/yemen/media/med.htm>.

consistently critical of government policies, especially those related to the economy. The other newspapers criticize various aspects of governmental policies, but do not adhere to a consistent position.

No prior censorship of nonfiction exists, but any published book that is considered un-Islamic can be confiscated, and both the author and the publisher can be held liable for attempting to offend public morals or Islam. Private publishing companies thus understandably tend to restrict their titles to subjects that will not arouse official ire. However, numerous new books in history, science, geography, and classical poetry, and literature have been published since 1987, including many manuscripts that had been banned under the shah. Virtually no new works of contemporary fiction have appeared in print.

All radio and television broadcasting is controlled by the government. Television and radio stations exist in Tehran and the major provincial cities. Stations in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan are permitted to broadcast some programs in Azeri Turkish and Kurdish. Several of the banned opposition groups broadcast into Iran from stations in Iraq or the Caucasus republics of the former Soviet Union. Both the British Broadcasting Company and the Voice of America broadcast Persian-language news and feature programs over FM radio frequencies in Iran.³⁷

Roles of Media in the United States

A Purdue University specialist asserts there is cause for concern about U.S. media coverage the Middle East. Yahya Kamalipour, professor and head of the Department of Communication and Creative Arts at Purdue University's Calumet, Indiana Campus, is one of a handful of researchers which study mass media in the Middle East. "One of the problems with the

³⁷Kamalipour, and Mowlana. *Mass Media in the Middle East*, 92-93.

U.S. media coverage regarding the Middle East is the media's tendency to follow the Bush administration's agenda," said Kamalipour. He goes on to note, "Therefore, the media is often one-sided. Also, in mainstream media you see the media often consults experts who are members of the administration or retired politicians. This represents a limited diversity of opinion and expertise."³⁸ Since the United States is a democratic country, the public must be informed in order to participate in the democratic process. Kamalipour's comments, while not without their own bias, point to the necessity for learning more about mass media in the United States. Familiarity with the United States media is crucial to understanding the differences and the similarities between the media in the Middle East and the United States.

During the 1990s, the print and electronic media of the United States offered perhaps the widest variety of news and entertainment options anywhere in the world. The media were and are a pervasive element in American society: the average American worker, according to a study by Veronis, Suhler & Associates, devotes about nine hours a day to the media. This figure includes four hours and nine minutes for television and three hours listening to radio, mainly in vehicles. Recorded music accounts for 36 minutes, and reading a daily newspaper consumes an average of 28 minutes. In 1991, the adult consumers of all this material for amusement and information spent some \$108.8 billion--about \$353 a person. Advertisers spent an additional \$80 billion to bring their products to the attention of the American public through the media. This is big business, America's ninth largest, ranking just below aerospace and just above electronic equipment and its components.

Americans' lives and economy are affected in many ways. The media constitute a great engine for the consumer society. They provide jobs for hundreds of thousands of technicians,

³⁸Yahya R. Kamalipour, *The U.S. Media and the Middle East-Image and Perception*, Praeger, Westport, CT, London, 1995,12.

writers, artists, performers, and intellectuals. They shape attitudes and beliefs and put pictures of the world into the popular mind. The press, or “Fourth Estate,” also plays a vital role as guardian of U.S. democracy. That role is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, adopted in 1789, stipulating that Congress will not enact any laws abridging freedom of the press.

U.S. media have traveled a long road since readers in Boston glimpsed the first American newspaper in 1690. Within 50 years, magazines also began appearing in several major American cities. The advent of commercial radio at the beginning of the twentieth century ended print's monopoly of the media in America, giving nationwide and, later, global audiences unprecedented access to live audio programs. An even more powerful medium, television, entered the scene shortly after World War II, quickly conquering the American public. Defying predictions of their decline, other media have diversified themselves and their methods and content to confront television's dominant appeal.

The launching of *USA Today* in 1982, for instance, aided by satellite technology, represented a bold experiment by the Gannett chain to produce a newspaper for the television generation. Although the number of independent U.S. newspapers has declined substantially in the last two decades, with increasing concentration of ownership by large chains, overall newspaper circulation has remained remarkably constant over the last two decades. American mass magazines have fared poorly over the same period, but publications targeted for distinct segments of the population have proliferated.

By the late 1980s, FM radio stations had supplanted AM stations in music formats, with AM turning more to “talk radio” and news formats. The birth of Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN), an all-news TV network, began a trend that has seen cable TV rise to become a major competitor to the formerly dominant “Big Three” commercial networks--the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), and the National

Broadcasting Company (NBC). A fourth broadcast network, Fox, also started challenging the “Big Three” in 1986, and 1995 saw the entry of two more national broadcast networks: Warner Brothers (WB) and Paramount (UPN).

Investigative journalism, a trend at its heyday during the “Watergate Scandal” during the early 1970s, gave way a few years later to increased attention to “journalism ethics.” Faced with polls showing decreasing credibility for the media, newspapers and other media throughout the 1980s placed renewed emphasis on improved ethics, including enforcement vehicles such as codes, news councils and ombudsmen. As media choices increased during the 1980s, the Federal Communications Commission, the main government “watchdog,” began to relax regulations on U.S. broadcast media, expanding the number of outlets one owner could possess and announcing it would no longer enforce the “Fairness Doctrine” (the assuring of equal air time to contending political views). To further increase competition and access to the burgeoning “Information Superhighway,” the Clinton administration in January 1994 proposed eliminating restrictions that precluded cable TV and telephone companies from entering each other's markets. In the 1990s, the media continued to play an important role in the U.S. politics and elections, with cable networks exerting a possibly greater, but still incalculable influence.

Satellite technology has allowed U.S. TV networks, especially cable networks, to reach overseas audiences anywhere on the globe. Newspapers have also used satellite technology to print international editions, and in 1992, *The New York Times* even began printing a special edition in Russian. Foreign participation in U.S. media has increased over the last decade, and ethnic publications, especially in Spanish, and Spanish-language television and radio grew rapidly throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Interactive media, fueled by the advance of digital technology and the growing convergence of the computer, telephone and cable television, represented an important trend from the early 1990s. Exemplifying this trend is the fiber-optic

cable system being installed throughout the U.S. by TCI, the largest American cable TV operator, which plans to offer 500 channels and a variety of interactive services to its customers. The \$11 billion 1994 merger between the Viacom Cable Company and Paramount represents the kind of new alliance between formerly separate media companies that will increasingly shape the emerging multi-media market of the early twenty-first century. MCI's May 1995 announcement that it was investing \$2 billion in Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation typifies recent efforts by U.S. telephone companies to enter the lucrative multi-media sphere. This growing market offers promising job opportunities to journalists, and, consequently, journalism education has continued to attract large numbers of American and foreign students in the United States.

U.S. government media efforts overseas, carried out since the 1950s mainly through the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the Board for Foreign Broadcasting, have placed renewed emphasis on democracy building in the wake of the Cold War's demise. The fall of the Soviet Union and budgetary constraints prompted the Clinton administration in mid-1993 to propose a consolidation of all U.S. Government international broadcasting programs under a single board of governors within the USIA. On April 30 1994, President Clinton signed a law which put those provisions into effect and called for the creation of a new Radio Free Asia.³⁹

Differences and Similarities between the Middle East and the United States.

Despite differences between media in the Middle East and in the United States, there are many significant similarities. One such major similarity is the substantial role that media in the Middle East and in the United States play in educating people in general subjects like health care, child care, mother care, environmental issues, and domestic problems. The media often offer

³⁹Robert W. McChesney, *The Problem of the Media, US Communication Politics in the 21st Century*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004.

suitable solutions to overcome such problems. For example, people who have lost their jobs learn of training opportunities for new jobs and careers.

But we have to understand that each media asset has an agenda and interests which find reflection in the pursuit of specific goals. Much depends on who is in control. Media organizations follow orders; hence, the media in both Middle East and in the United States are controlled either by regimes or by owners, or perhaps a combination of both. So in the Middle East some media assets fall under regime control as a function of domestic security concerns. The regimes decide what the news will be reported and when. The same sort of *apriori* censorship occurred in the United States with reference to the Abu Ghareeb scandal, when the administration in Washington asked NBC News to withhold this story for about twenty days. But the difference between the Middle East and the United States is that media organizations in the Middle East do not have the right to accept or to refuse governmental interference. They have to follow the orders, while in the United States media organizations have the right to accept or to refuse according to the United States Constitution.

The media in the Middle East most likely are reactive media, while media in the United States are most likely proactive. In the United States, media organizations have plans to attain and a time line for these plans, while in the Middle East media have objectives to achieve, but most of the time without clear plans or timelines. Even in the realm of entertainment, United States media organizations have definitive plans to achieve the results they want. This set of considerations constitutes a significant difference between media in the United States and in the Middle East.

Most media organizations in the Middle East do not have private owners, and the media are therefore financially dependent upon governments. By contrast, in the United States there are many private owners of television stations and radio stations, and each of these organizations has

to seek financial support through advertisements and other resources. This fact constitutes a third major difference between media in the United States and the Middle East.

Another major difference lies in breadth of subject matter coverage. Media in the United States is international, and their message is sent worldwide, usually in English, but often in the language of the region to which it is sent. In contrast, media in the Middle East are considered local, even the satellite channels. Because regional media target the Arab world more than a worldwide audience, the most likely language is Arabic.

The necessity to deal with cultural and religious pluralism is still another difference between media in the U.S. and the Middle East. Although the Middle East displays great diversity in its ethnic and political composition, except in Israel, the predominant religious influence is Islam and the predominant cultural influence is Arabic. The U.S. displays no such religious uniformity. This major difference finds reflection in media content, in implied and explicit constraints on the media, and, in many respects, on the very latitude with which media may treat potentially sensitive subjects.

However, despite the existence of dissimilarities, the media in the both the U.S. and the Middle East confront many similar challenges, including changing technologies, roles, and accessibility. How these and other challenges shape the contemporary media is the subject of the next section.

CHAPTER THREE

Effects of Media

Media constitutes a window for learning and a window on the world. Media have evolved from simple text in papers, to voices in radios, to voices with pictures in television and movies, to the very broad and information-packed Internet. In a word, media have changed in consonance

with the changing world. Now, media have the capacity to render far-flung populations the inhabitants of a “global village,” while touching virtually all aspects of daily life.

The Changing Media Context

The mass media in the Arab world and the Middle East have undergone profound changes since the beginning of the 1990s. The introduction and spread of new technologies, including satellite television and the Internet, have extended media space beyond the local, national, and regional realms. The trans-border flow of communications has provided many consumers with access to new technologies and the capacity to interact with a global discourse while bypassing the limits of authoritarian information control. Since the Gulf war in 1990-1991, when the people in the Middle East tuned into CNN to receive fresh news from the Gulf, both indigenous and external factors have determined media development in the area. Egypt sent into orbit two satellites, Nile Sat 1 and 2, while Al Jazeera was born in 1996. The latter is now considered one of the Middle East’s most effective media, and it enjoys substantial capabilities and popular credibility.⁴⁰

Media from outside the Middle East do not find the same kind of direct popular and commercial appeal. Rather, the influence of external media tends to be indirect. Still, new globalized media spaces have begun to change the fabric of the mass media in the Middle East, whether state or privately-owned. Evidence from Europe and elsewhere indicates that satellite services originating outside national borders do not usually attract sufficient audiences to threaten traditional national viewing patterns. In contrast, the existence of satellite services has encouraged

⁴⁰Al Jazeera, Mohammed el Nawawy- Adel Iskandar, Westview, August 2003, 28-29.

otherwise reluctant governments in the Middle East to allow greater internal commercialization and competition.

These and other effects of external media on the Middle East are summarized in the following table:⁴¹

Table 2.

Effects of external mass media on Middle East consumers	Effects of external mass media on Middle East media
Opening up of censored national media spaces.	Competition between external and indigenous media.
Differentiation between national and international oriented consumption styles.	Increased number of indigenous media.
Changes within indigenous media sector.	Increased professionalism of indigenous media
	Deregulation of state monopolies and privatization of indigenous media.

Besides increased commercialization and competition, one of the most significant changes has been an increase in the number of media in the Middle East. This increase has been largely due to the influx of external media and the establishment of indigenous satellite TV and radio networks, like the Saudi-owned private Middle East Broadcasting Company (MBC), with a large audience throughout the Arabic-speaking world. These networks are the indirect result of external media penetration with the Middle Eastern states feeling the competition of external programs. The Middle Eastern states have also slowly started to deregulate their media monopolies by inviting private investors to establish national alternatives to foreign satellite TV

⁴¹ Kai Hefez, *Mass Media, Politics & Society in the Middle East*, Hampton Press, Inc. NJ, 2001, 4.

and radio. Most new channels are much more professional than their often monotonous and dull state-owned competitors.⁴²

Effects Of Media On Military Operations.

Media influence on military operations is a complex issue. The ways in which the media cover subjects and the “spin” they project in their coverage often change the way the public views certain issues. Many nuances, from the adjectives the media use, to the pictures they show, to the tone of voice they employ, evoke differing emotions in viewers and readers. The same observation holds true for imagery and sound in the movies. For instance, in the movie “Top Gun,” the same image appears with slow scary music and again with upbeat heroic music. The images depict the same plane, but one scares the viewer, the other excites. This example illustrates the way that media coverage has affected public opinion over the years.

A few years ago, real time information was being relayed over satellites to show live pictures of bombs hitting Belgrade. In earlier contrast, coverage began with information released through reporters typing on manual typewriters, then extended to radio shows broadcasting to families gathered around the one radio in the house that was listened to nightly for the news. During World War II, Movie Tone News was broadcast at movie theaters, where audiences gathered for motion pictures. At the time, the sound track was limited and more likely than not the audience read captions at the bottom of the screen. During the 1960s and 70s, when the large networks came into their own, the big decision each night was which of the big three (ABC, NBC, CBS) to watch. There was no cable audience, no satellite television. During the 1980s, the

⁴²The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, *The Information Revolution and the Arab World, Its Impact on State and Society*, United Arab of Emirates: Abu Dhabi, 2003, 46

cable shows emerged, along with entire news networks such as CNN. There were more options from which news might come.

During the Gulf War, in the early 1990s, there was real time television. Viewers could watch a missile hit Baghdad on television and read about it in papers the next day. After the turn of the twenty-first century, there was coverage of “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” MSNBC, CNBC, CNN and Al Jazeera all had broadcasts to discuss different options and different views on Iraq. Or, a computer-oriented majority in the United States and minority in the Middle East might go online for a vast global-oriented exposure to a variety of views and situations. People might communicate via computer all over the world, even as bombs exploded outside their homes, as in Iraq. This represented the evolution of media coverage and its influence on the world-wide broadcast of images and ideas. The main question remains how this coverage affects public opinion, especially in wartime. It is assumed that the information that people receive affects their beliefs and perhaps their behavior.

To understand these and related issues, it is necessary to understand the evolving relationship among war, media, and public opinion since the era of World War II. That war portrayed in the U.S. as a struggle between good and evil. Everyone knew or was related to someone in the war. Many households hung stars of different colors in their windows to show that their men were either at war, coming home soon, or not coming home at all. The war encouraged many women to work in factories because of manpower shortages. People had victory gardens, saved metal for military uses. Society as a whole was relatively united, and everyone did his part to “support the war effort.”

In 1941, the U.S. government's informational, promotional, and publicity activities engaged the equivalent of 8,433 full time workers, with their numbers subsequently swelling. Move Tone News was the wave of the day and large news networks remained at an early stage of

development. Information came from newspapers, which often got their information from government sources, information that went through three separate censors on the way home. The movie industry included Disney Studios and other major movie producers. At the time, the level and intensity of substantive saturation were different from today. No information was seen real time via satellites, phone lines, or fiber optic cable. Public opinion was not subject to television. There were no television cameramen running through cross fires. Military photographs and newsreels went through every agency's censor before public exposure. There was an Office of Censorship and an Office of War Information. There was also the War Activities Committee to encourage the motion picture industry to produce visuals, "that publicized war needs and goods." Virtually everything on the war was censored and reviewed on war before exposure to the American public.

Coverage of the war was censored for the media, in large part because censorship was comparatively easy to enforce. The media was relatively easily manipulated so that public opinion was supportive of the government policy. In wartime the various outlets of popular culture behaved almost entirely as if they were the creatures of government. Thus, it was hardly surprising that the media spoke with one voice. This was the way at least one historian described the American media of World War II. The technology of the time was not sufficiently advanced to show people first-hand the horrible face of war without the government's help, and it did not generally help. At least superficially, the American public seemed more unified and morally secure then it does today.

The media lacked the power and the influence to cause drastic shifts in public opinion. The media was not all-pervasive, and the public was generally not in the mood for anti-war sentiment. The media did what it could to strengthen public resolve. It played a positive role in World War II. Through movies such as "Thirty Seconds over Tokyo" and "Bombardier" the

media conveyed a positive outlook on the war to a people who were citizens of a nation waging total war. It would be difficult to underestimate the importance that American officials attached to the media as a conduit for shaping public opinion on wartime affairs.

During World War II, as with many wars in American history, the people come together as a nation in support of their troops going to war. It was the obligation of the government to ensure that the war was fought successfully and/or quickly to satisfy public opinion in a democracy. However, in World War II, as in most protracted wars, the role of the media appeared to grow stronger as public resolve grew weary. This trend became more apparent later, during the Korean War.⁴³

Five years after the conclusion of World War II, the attack by North Korea south of the 38th parallel brought the U.S. into another war. The war was against a new enemy, communist-inspired aggression. Initial American military involvement received at least tentative public support. However, American casualties increased, and as the Communist Chinese openly entered the conflict, public support began to flag. General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of UN Forces, made statements to various media outlets that nuclear weapons might be employed against North Korea and China. These statements triggered negative media coverage. Americans already knew of the destructive capabilities of the A-bomb from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Americans tended to agree with the previous use of weapons because they saved needless American casualties. However, to use nuclear weapons again would mean many innocent civilian casualties. General MacArthur continued to make statements to the media even after President Truman ordered him not to. The dispute between these two high profile leaders received negative media coverage, adding controversy to a war already subject to marginal public support.

⁴³Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Information Machines, Their Impact on Men and the Media*, New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971, 67-68.

Eventually, President Truman dismissed MacArthur, detracting still more from positive press coverage of the war. Although the media did not dwell on negative news about the war, the sheer controversy between Truman and MacArthur gave the war a bad image. Support for the Korean War began to fade even before negative media coverage, but the media contributed to that flagging public support.⁴⁴

The Korean War, or “the forgotten war,” may be unfamiliar today, but it is often compared with a subsequent war that many still remember. The Vietnam War, also known as the South East Asian conflict, was similar in many ways to the Korean War. Similarities included the fact that both wars were fought to aid the non-communist side in a small Asian country split between non-communist and communist factions, with the latter receiving aid from the Soviet Union and Red China. Both wars were also limited to a fairly specific area, and by the fact that the United States refrained in both cases from using the most powerful weapons in its arsenal. However, there were many differences, including varying degrees of support on the home front. American society during the Vietnam era was also different, perhaps less willing to sacrifice blood and treasure in a conflict that appeared marginal to the larger ideological struggle of the Cold War. Media coverage, thanks to technological and organizational adversaries, was also different during Vietnam than in previous conflicts. Moreover, the U.S. government did not apply the same strict censorship rules that had governed in World War II. As a result, the war reflected the kinds of friction on the U.S. home front that had been rare since the American Civil War.⁴⁵.

Media technology was gaining an increasingly important role. Television sets were in almost every home. The major decision every night was no longer about listening to the radio or

⁴⁴www.CBSnews.com

⁴⁵McChesney, *The Problem of the Media*, 9.

not, but about which network to watch. The big three (ABC, NBC, CBS) were now in full force, with much power behind them. Millions tuned in nightly; Walter Cronkite, Chet Huntley and David Brinkley competed for ratings. Every night people watched the news and learned the number of servicemen who had given their lives that day. The sense of support generated by the Tonkin Gulf Resolution soon evaporated. The public watched Dan Rather and his cameraman run through the jungle dodging bullets and broadcasting the horrible face of war. For the first time, millions of viewers at home watched the nightly news and saw first-hand the horrors of combat.

The media no longer needed the government's assistance to demonstrate that war often elicits atrocities. The media had grown in size and strength. As early as October 1954, the United States had been supporting, supplying, and training the South Vietnamese military. In February 1965, the U.S. stepped up its role in the war, first with air attacks, then with ground troop commitments. Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara's promise to remove all U.S. troops in 1965 was now a dead issue. Public support at the outset of a widened war reflected a strong sense of rally to the flag. Even though North Vietnam and the Viet Cong did not directly threaten the United States, worries about communist aggression and the so called "domino effect" were sufficient justification to help an ally. Few thought that the United States was entering one of the longest and costliest wars in its history. However, as the war dragged on, media coverage gradually fed a growing disenchantment with the war. Unlike the situation with previous wars, uncensored television and other media coverage strongly influenced the image of the war for broad segments of the American public. There were almost no positive movies about the war, and official pronouncements received perhaps unparalleled scrutiny in the media.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Elie Abel and Robert L. Bartley, *What's News, The Media in American Society*, San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1983, 77.

Following the Viet Cong's Tet Offensive of 1968, disenchantment with the war assumed a more strident note. This also happened to be the United States' worse strategic loss. The Viet Cong had brought the war to the streets, where U.S. television and newspaper reporters reported on the horror of the terrorist-like attacks and brutal retributions for real and suspected enemies. Images of the war fed growing public disenchantment, and support of the war faded quickly.

Thus, the war remained both highly visible and increasing unpopular with important political consequences. Just as during the Korean War, the Democratic Party lost the presidency to a Republican who promised a quicker end to the war. Richard Nixon reduced direct American involvement and sought various combinations of incentives and disincentives to settle the war. Finally, at the end of 1972, North Vietnam agreed at the Paris peace talks to deescalate the conflict in return for the withdrawal of American troops. One of the residual effects of the war was a pronounced hesitancy to commit American troops in situations that did not clearly and directly threaten American security and interests. "Casualty aversion" became an unspoken watch word that entered the calculus behind various kinds of U.S. military commitment short of "total war."

Throughout the 1980s, the combination of media scrutiny and risk aversion continued to shape U.S. approaches to the use of force on the margins of the Cold War balance. In 1980-81, President Jimmy Carter lost the presidency primarily because of a botched military plan to rescue U.S. hostages in Tehran. Media scrutiny contributed to Carter's diminishing public support. During the administration of President Ronald Reagan, Operations ELDORADO CANYON and URGENT FURY received very limited direct media coverage. The same held true for Operation JUST CAUSE during the administration of the senior George Bush. Media coverage, though present, did not constitute a significant factor. The attainment of rapid decision and closure

averted the necessity for drawn out—and possibly negative—reviews in the media. Therefore, there was little Vietnam-style hand wringing.⁴⁷

The “first” Gulf War stood in stark contrast. The onset of major ground operations occurred only after a build-up. This time lag permitted a now more technologically advanced media to flex its muscles. CNN, along with real time communications, meant that a camera could view an image and convey it to millions of television sets around the world. While planning for ground force commitment was underway, Operation DESERT SHIELD began with the dispatch of U.S. fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia. Thus, after invading Kuwait, Saddam Hussein called off the attack on Saudi Arabia. As U.S. and coalition forces continued their build-up, they received positive news coverage from media in the U.S. and throughout much of the Middle East. Subsequently, operation DESERT STORM allowed the media to show the military’s new “smart bombs.” These weapons allowed coalition forces to destroy targets with minimal exposure and great effectiveness, when similar targets would previously have required many sorties and many bombs. The media highlighted these weapons not only as a new capability, but as a way to save civilian casualties. In sixty days, coalition airpower virtually decimated Iraq’s military force while suffering extremely low casualties. This type of war was acceptable to a casualty-averse American public. General Norman Schwarzkopf’s 100-hour ground operation was simply frosting on the cake.

The U.S. media and the American public largely supported this war because the objectives were clear and because of the way it was fought and portrayed. Media images depicted “smart bombs” entering windows and airshafts with precise success. Media coverage seemed to stand in awe of technology. Ground coverage did not rely on young television reporters dodging

⁴⁷Bagdikian, *The Information Machines, Their Impact on Men and the Media*, 121.

bullets during actual battle. The lessons of Vietnam evidently prevailed. Reporters in the Gulf War were assigned to media convoys. Reporters needed the government's cooperation to view the battlefield; in this respect, the Gulf War was similar to World War II. The elder President Bush also understood that to wage an effective war he needed to have reasonably full support from his constituency. He also understood the requirement for a quick decisive victory because the U.S. public preferred to avoid protracted conflict. Essentially, the public got the war it wanted. President Bush stated his goal and the military set about accomplishing that goal quickly and precisely. The military then planned for and conducted the war they knew best. In a sense, the lessons from Vietnam had been well-understood. When U.S. soldiers returned home they were greeted with hugs and handshakes from a grateful population.⁴⁸

If the face of war appeared to change during the 1990s, so did the media. They were no longer just CNN and the networks. The media assumed a global face, thanks to the internet, where information changed hands daily and even by the minute. Meanwhile, MSNBC, CNBC, CNN, CSPAN and other networks expanded their efforts to produce twenty-four hour coverage of the news. It was through this greatly enlarged lens that the U.S. public saw their country enter another potentially Vietnam-style conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo. That is, the administration of Bill Clinton opted for the commitment of U.S. troops to a civil war, this time in the Balkans. Once again, the media showed images of combat and refugees from the very edge of battle. Every night the public watched thousands of people struggling to stay alive in "tent cities." As during the Vietnam era, the people also had a president fond of reading polls and perceiving trends. The public and the media at first largely supported U.S. military actions. However, as involvement dragged on, with no clear end state and no clear way to define victory, the media and the public gradually began to show signs of disenchantment. However, in both Bosnia and Kosovo, the U.S.

⁴⁸McChesney, *The Problem of the Media*, 79

was able to share its commitment with regional security and political organizations before American will displayed serious signs of decay. In these instances, shared security concerns meant shared burdens and shared risks. Thus, media-inspired fears of “another Vietnam” gradually evaporated.⁴⁹

Interestingly, the power to evoke memories from Vietnam also may have spent much of its force. By the late 1990s, as Vietnam receded further into the American consciousness, memories of the war seem to have loosened their grip. Meanwhile, the media continued to expand and change in chameleon-like ways. Still, great potential would reside in media’s ever more intrusive presence in American life. More than 70 percent of homes are now equipped with cable or satellite television. More than 90 percent of today’s public interacts with the Internet in one form or another. The media expands in different ways to strengthen its potential influence on the public. Meanwhile, public opinion remains its amorphous and capricious self.

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) appeared to reflect many of the promises and uncertainties inherent in contemporary media coverage of military operations. In a kind of compromise between World War II era and Vietnam-style coverage, U.S. military forces permitted the presence of “embedded reporters” with selected operational units. Using new communications technologies, these reporters transmitted reasonably accurate and timely accounts of actions that transpired on far-flung battlefields. Thus, the American public might be kept informed of military actions as they unfolded. However, there were at least two disadvantages to this arrangement: first, reporting amounted to mere fragments of larger military realities; and second, as reporters naturally bonded with their host units, the objectivity of coverage might be called into question. In addition, reporters who were not embedded in units

⁴⁹ Kamalipour, *The U.S. Media and the Middle East-Image and Perception*, 137

were subject to the same herd-like treatment and canned official press briefings that had become the norm during the First Gulf War.

As the initial combat phase of OIF evolved to more protracted stability and support operations, new media technologies presented still more anomalies and challenges. When digital photographs of abuses at Abu Ghareeb prison found their way to the internet, both the U.S. administration and its military confronted a fire storm of controversy. Thanks to new technology, no document or image, short of those held in utmost confidence, can be considered either private or sacrosanct.

Still, the experiment with embedded reporters merits some comment, since this initiative appears to hold much future promise as an important aspect of media-military relations. This monograph supports the concept of embedded reporters as perhaps the best method of providing timely and accurate reporting to the public. However, the logic of on-going military operations strongly supports the contention that such coverage must be subjected to some kind of review, if only to safeguard operational security. At the same time, however, an element of judgment must enter the picture, especially when review is less about security than about the possible negative impact of reporting. As Colonel Kevin Benson, the Director of SAMS, has noted, “Having embedded reporters with the units is a risk the United States accepted . . . However, this acceptance also creates new responsibilities for unit leaders.” As Benson emphasized, “because media reporters now are embedded in units, they now become members of the unit; even though they are independent, we still have to take care of them, so there are practical considerations we have to consider such as restrictions (types of equipment, what is the physical background during interviews) while they are reporting back to their organizations.”⁵⁰

⁵⁰COL Kevin Benson, Director, SAMS, interviewed by author, 22 November 2004.

While these and related issues remain germane to U.S. media coverage of combat operations, the issues related to Middle Eastern coverage remain quite different. In contrast with the limited pluralism inherent in the U.S. government-private media interface, the paramount concern for governments in the Middle East remains a very restrictive version of what they want the public to know. Reporters from various Middle East media agencies were not embedded. After jumping around with scant protection under fire, they discovered they had to face still another figurative “trial by fire”—that is, an overarching system that ultimately controlled what appeared before the public.

This kind of direct censorship is not without precedent. For example, in Egypt during the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, the Egyptian army suffered huge losses, but all the while the media attempted to show that the war was going well. The Egyptian government at the time was hoping that the situation would somehow improve, while desperately trying to maintain the stability of the rear and the support of the people. As a result, after the war, when people learned the truth, it came as a shock. The same kind of situation occurred during Operation Iraqi Freedom when the Iraqi minister of information, “El Sakhaf,” maintained complete denial, even as U.S. forces were already occupying Baghdad.⁵¹

Whatever the role that media assumes in contemporary military operations, it is safe to assert that it has become more omnipresent and that it plays a major role in shaping public opinion both in the U.S. and in the Middle East. The “spin” that the media puts on issues can leverage support towards or away from government policies. It seems incontestable but the media industry has grown in strength over the years; but, whether strength and reach can make themselves consistently felt is another question. More and more people are exposed to the media

⁵¹<http://www.aawsat.com/.asp>.

for information. However, it remains questionable whether the public's ability to rationalize and form independent opinions has kept up with media's growing strength and span of coverage. The implications are large in mature democratic societies, in which education has always played an important role in the development of informed critical thinking. In the Middle East, where education tends to lag, the problem assumes even greater importance.

Political Effects of Media

The mass media play various roles. Media are often the only form of education, and as such, they are a very powerful influence on beliefs and opinions. This influence is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the relationship between the media and politics. Politics can justifiably be described as an important determining factor in daily life, and a major influence over many facets of day to day existence, including finances, healthcare, and employment. The media are often the major source of information about political affairs, and as such the media shape what we actually know about the political system and what we may never find out. As a result, the media retain a certain "hold" over the political arena.

The media can judge, approve, and criticize. They can make or break political careers, even parties. The information which the media provides helps the public to form attitudes, responses, and opinions about political events and actors. Thus, political parties understand the importance of keeping media "on-side." Obviously, the media have some impact on politics, but the main question is to what extent? Other questions include how do the media manifest themselves, why should we care anyway? The latter implies that the media are there simply to communicate and to act as transmitters of information between the political world and the

consumer. However, since the appearance of the modern press, media have often demonstrated a hidden agenda when reporting politics⁵².

Outside the Middle East, one of the most contentious issues related to agendas over the last few years has been the debate over media ownership. This debate has been particularly evident in the press, with perhaps the most notable case being the Rupert Murdoch “empire,” News International. The appearance of such empires catering to the masses has created a concern about press reporting of politics with an apparent “dumbing down” of coverage, especially among the broadsheets, and the effect this development may have on politics.

In addition, the emphasis on personality and color has inevitably led to a change in the political landscape, aided and abetted by the mass media. Several key features have assumed special salience in politics at the turn of the twenty-first century. Political marketing that emphasizes negative campaigning has injected a significant element into the sound bite. Finally, the media have opened up a larger, more accessible audience for politician and many avail themselves of the new opportunity.

However, the situation stands in marked contrast in the Middle East. Thee authoritarian regimes exercise a great control on TV because it ranks among the most effective media assets. Meanwhile, newspapers are generally left to opposition parties as a kind of token gesture. Governments understand that newspapers can have only a very limited effect on populations with low literacy rates.

Foreign Policy Effects of Media

Assessment of media roles in foreign policy implies propaganda. How and when is propaganda used in foreign policy? Propaganda is an instrument of policy that governments use

⁵² Doris A. Graber, *Media Power In Politics*, University of Illinois, Chicago, 1993, 21.

to influence a particular group, making the group think what governments want them to think and do what they want them to do. Although the advent of mass media during the twentieth century greatly increased the scale and scope of propaganda, it is far from a new phenomena.

Propaganda's earliest use probably came in connection with religious missionary activities (indeed "propagation" shares linguistic roots with the word propaganda.) Among the earliest purveyors of propaganda was Saint Paul, who established the first Christian churches in Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1622, hoping that it would help direct the proselytizing activities of the Roman Catholic Church throughout Europe. Before the nineteenth century, propaganda was not usually aimed at the population, but at ruling elites. Elites and government media policy and government usually did not have to worry about foreign public response. Elites had to impress their foreign counterparts, not foreign populations. However, since the nineteenth century, common people have increasingly (at least in external appearance) participated in politics, and states have become increasingly democratized. Therefore, governments find it increasingly necessary to justify their actions to their populations.

Within this context, propaganda has become an increasingly useful tool in foreign policy. For example, if Government X directs propaganda at the population of Government Y, then that population may support Government X, and therefore Government Y may pursue a more supportive foreign policy towards Government X. One of the unique aspects of modern international political relations is the deliberate attempt by governments to influence the attitudes and behavior of foreign populations. However, it should be noted that public opinion has greater influence on foreign policy in democracies than in authoritarian regimes.⁵³

⁵³Bagdikian, *The Information Machines, Their Impact on Men and the Media*, 94-95.

Governments sometimes use propaganda on their own populations to create or sustain public support for high defense expenditures. Both defense policy and foreign policy are organically linked, and both demand public support. For example, between World War I and World War II, when Britain's worldwide interests were threatened and she did not have the military resources to defend them, Britain pursued a policy of appeasement until rearmament was sufficient to act. The problem was how to convince a pacifist Britain ravaged by World War I and the economic depression that the government needed to raise military expenditures. This task had to be accomplished without worrying the public or alerting foreign governments to Britain's real plight.⁵⁴ The British government therefore persuaded its people that rearmament was necessary, because "Britain Must Be Strong" to avoid war.

Because defense involves a high degree of security, even in free societies legislation must to a certain extent curtail the press in selected areas. However, there are many merits in a democratic society to openness and transparency. Whatever the case, it is considerably easier for authoritarian regimes to control their press. For example, in the Soviet bloc the media was state controlled and therefore would always toe the official government line. However, for this policy to be effective, the Soviets had to spend resources to prevent Western transmissions from seeping into the Soviet bloc. Methods ranged from complex signal jammers against radio and television broadcasts to bans on certain books and the use of photocopiers. Interestingly, the invention of satellite television meant that many people in the Soviet Union learned about the Chernobyl nuclear accident of 1986 before Moscow publicly acknowledged the fact to its own population (though Moscow had already admitted the accident to the rest of the world).

Propaganda also displays an unofficial face through pressure groups or movements. Examples of this include the large Cuban anti-Castro group that has kept pressure on the US to

⁵⁴ <http://www.bbc.com>

maintain sanctions on Cuba and the large Jewish lobby that influences US foreign policy favorably towards Israel. Another clear example involved various black people from South Africa touring other countries hoping to raise outside awareness of apartheid. The hope of these emissaries was that these audiences would influence their governments to formulate a foreign policy to put pressure on the South African government. Although not the sole cause for change, their actions encouraged many governments around the world to impose economic sanctions on South Africa.⁵⁵

However, propaganda is effective only when the particular entity using it can successfully influence the target group.⁵⁶ Propaganda is more successful if the target group already shares at least the very basic belief on which the purveyor wishes to capitalize. For example, “Negro-lynching crowds exist because anti-Negro feelings exist.” In like manner, the Nazis knew that people were more susceptible to propaganda in crowds, so party functionaries organized big rallies at Nuremburg, where party doctrine and ideology were preached--thus appealing to the crowd mentality. In addition, Kal Holsti writes that after choosing which group(s) would be most susceptible to propaganda, the purveyors must get their targets’ attention. They do this by attempting to rouse emotions in the target audience. One of the easiest emotions to exploit is hatred, and this is an emotion particularly exploited by propaganda during wartime, when “hatred of a national enemy becomes a virtue.” Indeed, this fact was evident in both German and British propaganda during World War I, when each belligerent attempted to convince their populations that the other was evil, thereby justifying continuation of the war.⁵⁷

⁵⁵<http://www.bbc.arabic.com>.

⁵⁶ <http://www.politics.ube.ca/select/depart/profiles/holsti.htm>.

⁵⁷ Bagdikian, *The Information Machines, Their Impact on Men and Media*, 143-144.

From these more generalized remarks it is possible to conclude that propaganda has many uses, including applicability to foreign policy. However, the ways in which governments spread their propaganda varies. Most use newspapers, but these have limitations, since foreign governments can easily restrict, censor or ban imports. In addition, such propaganda would be useless for large illiterate populations. However, radio suffers from few of these limitations, while jamming equipment is expensive and not completely reliable. Meanwhile, almost every person now has access to a radio. Therefore, there are many state-run radio stations that transmit only to foreign countries.

Economic Effects of Media

A change with tremendous economic implications is even now taking place. We are witnessing the emergence of the digital economy. Computers, the software that runs on them, and the networks that connect them are key enabling technologies for the new economy. This economy is based on the digitization of information. Information has become easier to produce and harder to control. It is easy not just to duplicate, but also to replicate. Successful firms have to keep innovating to keep ahead of the copycats nipping at their heels.⁵⁸

The media as a constituent element of the digital economy has given rise to a world in which innovation is more important than industrial-style mass production. A world in which investment buys new concepts or the means to create them, rather than new machines, is a world in which rapid change is a constant. This phenomenon has resulted in new rules of competition, new sorts of organizations, and new challenges for management. The media is an environment characterized by immediacy, globalization, digitization, virtualization, internetworking,

⁵⁸Donald N. Wood and A. Arvo Leps, *Mass Media and the Individual*, West Publish Co., Saint Paul, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, 1989.

innovation and convergence. The way in which economic values are altered and created is likely to affect media in a dramatic manner, thereby transferring impulse to the general structure of economies and societies.

New technology has helped investment relations managers disseminate financial information more widely. Web casts of briefings and conferences have become commonplace, while there has been a huge increase in demand for online reports. There could come a time when a company's annual general meeting might be held solely online, making it easier for people to have their say and ask questions. Governments, too, will be using the web to engage citizens to help discuss and shape economic policies.

Mass media as digital economy is also characterized by channel-efficiency. With the advent of the digital economy, the producer and consumer are directly connected through the internet. The internet and networking technology have provided new capabilities for widening access to customers. Ford has set up a joint venture with Microsoft Corporation to use Microsoft's CarPoint Web site to help consumers find the specific car they want either from inventory or by special order. Buyers are also able to track their purchases on-line and receive periodic status updates via e-mail. In years to come, many companies will use information technology to become "real-time enterprises"--organizations that are able to react instantaneously to changes in business. Real time technology might even prove as important at speeding up information as the telegraph became after 1837. Slowly but surely firms will create not so much a "new" economy but a "now" economy.

The traditional global economy and the digital economy (in both its business-to-consumer and business-to-business iterations) are significantly out of synch and may remain so for a good while. What is unquestionable, however, is the fact that the new digital economy offers unprecedented opportunities. Meanwhile, plastic, supple, flexible, empowered organization is

needed to leverage these opportunities into emerging realities. In the United States these attributes have enhanced media's effects on the economy.

In contrast, the media in the Middle East play a limited role in the stock market, but they do broadly affect public economic activities. Media make advertising and trade more effective, especially within high tech organizations. In Egypt and Tunisia, for example, government-sponsored advertising is important since these two countries depend on tourism as a source of national income. Media from both countries inform the world about interesting places to visit. For Egypt, which possesses about one-third of the world's monuments and temples from antiquity, media-driven advertising supports tourism-based income.

Social Effects of Media

The media are among the most significant institutions within modern society. Most people are exposed to some form of media on a daily or regular basis. Thus, media can be described as an institution offering a range of different texts for consumption within a socially and culturally formed world. Like all other "communicative events" these texts are constructed and delivered within a specific social and cultural context. Consumers of these texts are influenced by social and cultural values. In other words, communication, including communication relating to media texts, involves an exchange of meaning between senders and receivers enmeshed in a cultural web.

Therefore, texts are not merely marks on a page or images on a screen. They are also what the readers do with them to make sense of them. Readers of media texts participate in the communication process. At the same time, the media prioritize coverage, while selecting and expressing particular points of view. This is most obvious when during the construction of news stories, certain people, events and stories are included while others are omitted.

Social experience conditions the public's reading of the multitude of textual forms encountered everyday. The interaction of people with texts is a negotiated one, which is regulated by various codes and conventions. These include the language of headlines, the signified "trustworthiness" of the news presenter or the "ordinariness" of the talk-show host, the pleasures experienced by people in advertisements, and the realism of TV drama. Like all other social institutions, the media reflect and are informed by particular ideological content and contexts. It is evident that media texts are constructed within the context of, for example, dominant perceptions about the role of women and men, definitions of success and prosperity, and the importance of the family. Thus, media texts are not created in isolation from the society in which they operate. At the same time, the media reflect certain common sense views or dominant ideologies within society. For example, when media treat the family, it is generally the traditional nuclear family that is accorded the status of normal. Thus, programs such as "The Nanny" and "Seinfeld" highlight dysfunctional relationships in a humorous way. The main characters often refer to their desire for a "stable" and traditional happy family, but nothing of the sort will ever happen; this is the situation of the sitcom. Representations of women provide a further example of how the media affirm social structures and values within particular ideological frameworks. Although increasingly there are alternative representations of women, the governing ideology is that mothers cook and look after the children, young women must be glamorous and thin, and career women's aspirations for happiness can only be achieved through relationships with men. In many ways, television (albeit supported by radio and the press) is the "glue" that holds together much of people's sense of themselves as a society. Almost by default, television often constitutes whatever passes as public debate and collective sense-making in today's society.

Although media texts may highlight particular cultural values, it is simplistic to suggest that media audiences read these texts in predictable ways. Audiences participate in the

construction of meaning within the context of their own experiences and the relationships between different and similar media texts. In other words, the media do not dictate behavior that should be valued in society, but like many social institutions, media actively contribute to a popular understanding of the world.

Media in the Middle East differ somewhat from this pattern. Still, they play a huge role in educating people about environmental issues, health care, child care, and other health-related concerns. The media encourage people to work hard, and they emphasize the importance of creating a productive society to overcome social problems like unemployment, which is considered among the main reasons for terrorist activities. However, the media demonstrate little concern about the roles and relationships of men and women in society. These aspects of contemporary life are defined by religion and culture.⁵⁹

Cultural Effects of Media

The relationship between mass media and popular culture has always been controversial in the social sciences. While political economists highlight the role of the media industry in the creation of popular culture in the twentieth century, some scholars argue that popular culture is actually the creation of the populous itself. These scholars hold that popular culture is independent of the capitalist production process inherent in the communications sector. This argument is based on the immense interpretive power of the people, which holds that audiences are able to break through the implicit texts within media messages. By giving new meanings to specific messages, the people oppose the power bloc that tries to impose its ideology on the public.

⁵⁹Hafez, *Mass Media, Politics & Society in the Middle East*, 177.

This audience-based anarchy gives rise to popular culture as a defense mechanism. Even if this understanding is valid, observers cannot disregard the manipulative power of the media and their effect on cultural and social life. The public is exposed daily to millions of different visual messages, telling them what to eat, what to wear, what to listen to, and what to watch. No matter how hard people try to avoid the influence of these directives, the public can protect itself only up to a point, after which interpretive powers lose their strength. Media leads the public to the same department store to purchase the same pair of socks or CDs, and the public might never recall the same TV commercial that began the entire process.

The United States represents the greatest economic power in the world today, and consequently possesses the strongest and largest media industry. Therefore, to understand the crucial relationship between the media and the popular culture within a larger social context, the United States serves as an important point of departure. For a simplified approach to the subject, the U.S. media industry can be divided into three main branches: entertainment, news and commercials (these latter constitute the essential device for the survival of the industry, and they are considered in tandem with entertainment). Research has shown that the most common reasons for TV viewing in the U.S. are relaxation and emptying the mind. Therefore, entertainment programs, as vehicles for relaxation, are the most effective tools for influence. During these programs, viewers are less preoccupied with conscious mental activities.

An interesting example of influence combined with entertainment is MTV. MTV is a U.S. TV channel that was established for the purpose of entertainment. However, in 1992, MTV assumed an unexpected mission. It started two campaigns, “Choose or Loose” and “Rock to Vote,” to increase the voting rate among young people. The result appeared highly positive; polls taken in late October 1992 showed that 75 percent of the 18 to 29 age group said they would vote, compared to the 40 percent in 1988. In addition the votes heavily favored Bill Clinton, who—

unlike George Bush—appeared on MTV. Other factors may have played a role in the upsurge for Clinton, but the implications appeared dramatic. An effective way of appealing to the young generation seemed to be through a music channel, which is based on the creation and consumption of popular culture. Young people appeared to develop an interest in politics when their idols told them to do so. The free thinking capacity of the younger generation seemingly bends to the mediated message that appeals to it. Young people may appear to act mechanically according to these messages, contradicting the “free your mind” slogan of MTV. The success of TV political campaigns suggests a very complex process in which outcomes are not necessarily predictable. Therefore, the entire situation must be viewed critically.⁶⁰

The MTV experience gives rise to several important questions. First, to what degree is the public influenced by TV? And second, what is the course of TV’s inherent power? To understand the possibly persuasive influence of television, several considerations must be taken into account. First, television is the synthesis of video and audio, which means that it combines action and sound in realistic forms. These attributes alone make television the most popular electronic device ever produced. Research seems to indicate that people are more likely to accept what television conveys as the truth than any other medium.⁶¹ It is all pervasive, and it is a member of every family with near-magical ties to the outer world. In some respects television supplants traditional influences, telling people the right way to behave, the right goods to consume, the right people to elect. It survives criticisms, and it socializes lives. It seems visually to integrate an apparently disintegrated society through promotion of acceptable consumption and activities. It has become a favored means of communication, and it cannot be answered or queried while it is speaking. In many ways, television constitutes a mighty presence in public.

⁶⁰ <http://www.saudiimage.org>.

⁶¹ Al Jazeera, Mohammed el Nawawy- Adel Iskandar, Westview, August 2003, 147.

The second consideration lies with television's inherent power to sway attitudes and convictions. For all the reasons noted above, television retains the capacity seemingly to validate beliefs that cannot be proven physically. Depending upon popular intelligence and levels of education, television can become the ultimate source from which people derive important evidence about objective reality. Television in this perspective becomes a purveyor of reality that influences how people act. Various uncertainties increase popular dependency on television, and in the face of ignorance and uncertainty, television can assume the role of a magical machine that imparts the feeling of being part of a well functioning and united system.

The importance of media, and especially TV, often derives not from the exposure to visual images and commercials that tend to create a popular consumer culture, but from what people are not exposed to. The gate keepers of the news industry control all the information, and decide what to publish or broadcast, based on a complex set of circumstances, including the ideology and the structure of the institution. The gatekeepers are not censors in the classical sense, but they constitute an auto-control mechanism that functions for the survival of the system by controlling subject matter deemed subjectively appropriate for public consumption. Whatever is presented in the news would prefer compatibility with popular culture (created by the entertainment industry) or would rather serve it, since popular culture itself is a constituent element of the economy and society, both of which are essential elements for a stable system

Cultures in the Middle East differ from one country to another, but they all share the same base, which affects the media and shapes the societies. This base is religion, which attempts to establish the framework for all activities. However, there are some signs of change in some countries. For example, Israel and Turkey admit to western influences more than other Middle Eastern countries. In Israel, the non-Arab population finds its ethnic base in non-Middle Eastern countries. In Turkey, since the time of Ataturk, the government has generally adhered to a secular

course, and this course finds reflection in the media. In addition, Turkey is a candidate for membership in the European Union, and this fact reinforces secular trends in government and the media.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflections and Recommendations

This survey of modern mass media development in the Middle East and the United States has indicated a number of differences and similarities. Large variables, including cultural context, the role of governmental regulation, literacy rates, and differing levels of economic development, appear to emphasize disparities rather than similarities. However, a number of underlying factors, including the way that media can influence public opinion, the growing pervasiveness of new media technologies, and the increasingly sophisticated ways in which these technologies are applied, point to important similarities. These similarities are the point of departure for the following reflections and recommendations.

The first deals with perceptions of control. Both in the United States and in the Middle East, the perception that the media are controlled either publicly or privately for specific purposes leads to an erosion of public credibility. In the Middle East, many people ignore their own countries' media because of perceived regime controls. Consequently, large segments of the public seek foreign media outlets. This development explains why Al-Jazeera enjoys great popularity and credibility in the region. In the U.S., the problem manifests itself differently, in large part because of the multiplicity of media outlets. In the U.S. there is a tendency for CNN to be perceived as somewhat liberal, while Fox is perceived as more conservative. Rather than shifting to foreign media sources, the U.S. public tends to fragment its viewing preferences. Each of these developments has important political, social, cultural, and economic implications.

The multiplication of media outlets underscores the importance of credibility. Varying perspectives do not exempt the media from the pursuit of honesty, especially in news coverage. The first responsibility is to convey fact. How news organizations might prefer to editorialize on the basis of fact is another matter. In this respect, the multiplication of media outlets offers at least a partial solution. Amidst many choices the public will gradually express preferences—right or wrong—and over a longer period of time those media perceived as being more credible will likely attract the larger audiences.

However, the expression of viewer or listener preferences is not without its own pitfalls. As this study has indicated, there are many factors that condition audience preferences and reactions. With these factors in mind, education remains perhaps the surest antidote against outright media bias and prejudice. The educated person tends to understand that media organizations are purveyors of their own agendas. For example, through the internet anyone can fashion a web page and enter whatever content is desired. Similarly, authors of books can write whatever they want. In these and other cases, credibility becomes difficult to judge. Only an educated public has the intellectual tools to contend with the issue of credibility. Reference early on in this study to literacy statistics indicates that the Middle East as a region confronts a significant challenge in the area of public education. Yet, as reference to the U.S. public's varying reactions to media coverage indicates, education is not the only answer. In many respects, higher levels of literacy and education only complicate the credibility challenge.

However, both the U.S. and Middle Eastern experience with modern media suggest that the challenge is not hopeless. One viable response to the credibility issue is to inform the public of the importance of knowing the background and agendas of media reporters and communicators. Readers and viewers must know whose works they are reading and to whom they are listening. A second response is for the public in both the U.S. and the Middle East to avail

itself of the luxury of multiple media outlets. Exposure to multiple sources involves exposure to multiple perspectives, a process that encourages the development of critical thought. In fact, one might argue that an important way to break monolithic approaches to media coverage in the Middle East would be to encourage not just *an* alternative, but *many* alternatives.

In military perspective, there is great danger in viewing the media as enemies. The media will always bring its own concerns and priorities—hidden agendas, the latest “hot” coverage, what will sell—to the table. Normality is boring and does not sell headlines, so reporters and commentators will automatically default to the abnormal, to what is going wrong. These facts are a given in the interplay between the military and the media, and the military must understand how to deal with them. In the words of our senior commander, “as military commanders or planners we have to understand the media, know their agenda, who are the owners, evaluate their position, are they foe or friendly media, and most important, not fight them in both cases.”

There are other considerations related to the media-military interface. Military planners must prepare for various aspects of embedded media, including their support, safety, and also the security of operations. In the words of Colonel Kevin Benson, “even the embedded media persons are independent, but we have to take care of them, feed them, because they are members of the units they are embedded with. Also we have to consider the restrictions that may be required for operational security, like what is the background for the reporter while he sends his message, because from the background the enemy could locate our positions.”⁶² In Colonel Benson’s words, “having embedded media with units is a risk that the United States Army accepts to take, so as planners . . . we have to consider when good things happen, and when bad things happen how we are going to handle it.”⁶³

⁶²Benson, interview, 22 November 2004.

⁶³Ibid.

Ordinarily, the U.S. does not consider embedding foreign media with combat units. However, the U.S. has set a precedent that may have important implications for Middle Eastern media and militaries. In addition, whether reporters are embedded or not, both the U.S. and Middle Eastern countries must learn better how to contend with the problem of potential opposition media. Opposition media are likely to pursue and purvey their version of events as they see fit. Rather than letting the opposition run loose as “free agents,” one potentially viable course might be to incorporate them into some kind of modified version of embedding. As Colonel Benson has noted, “Personally, I think it was a mistake to close the Al Jazerra office in Baghdad.” In other words, “it is better for military commanders and personnel to face the media, rather than to escape from it.”⁶⁴

In the end, the very pervasiveness of the modern media means that everyone in a responsible position has to be aware of the importance of dealing with them.⁶⁵ If recent history in both the U.S. and the Middle East is any indicator of future trends, these trends strongly suggest that there will be more media and that they are likely to become even more intrusive and challenging to deal with. Media multiplicity and rising literacy and education rates are important solutions to issues of balance and credibility, but these developments are likely only to change the nature of the problems inherent in dealing with a burgeoning media presence.

⁶⁴Ibid.

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