News Consumption in Libya

News Consumption in Libya:
A Study of University Students

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P U B L I S H I N G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Arab TV Satellite Services
   Television History in the Arab World. The Era of Arab Satellite
   Channels. Al Jazeera Satellite Channel. Al Arabiya Satellite
   Channel. Conclusion.

The Development of Libyan Media
   Background and General Characteristics of Libya. Political
   Framework. Media Development in Libya. The Libyan Press. The
   Press Laws. Newspapers Published by the General Press
   Corporation (GPC). The New Newspapers in Libya. The Libyan
   Magazines. Libyan Radio. Libyan Television Broadcasting. The
   First Libyan Television Broadcasting. The Libyan TV Satellite
   Channels. The Main Libyan Television News Providers. Libyan
   News Agency. The Financial Situation of Libyan Media. The
   Problems of Libyan Media. Online Media. Conclusion.

News Media Consumption among University Students
   News Interests. Importance of News Topics. Interest in News
   Topics. Reasons for Keeping up with News. Importance of
   Audience Reasons for Using News Information. News Media Use
   among Students. Importance of Studying Students' Reasons. News
   Sources. TV News Consumption and the Libyan Audience. News
   Sources Consumed by University Students. Conclusion.

LIST OF TABLES

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Anno Domini (years of the Christian era)
ANN	Arabic News Network
ART	Arab Radio and Television
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BC	Before Christ
CNN	Cable News Network
ESC	Egyptian Satellite Channel
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPC	General Press Corporation
JANA	Jamahiriya News Agency
LBC	Lebanon Broadcasting Corporation
LD	Libyan Dinar
LJBC	Libyan Jamahiriya Broadcasting Corporation
MBC	Middle East Broadcasting Centre
RTM	Radio Television Morocco
SD	Standard Deviation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
£	British Pound Sterling
$	American Dollar

INTRODUCTION

The past decade has witnessed significant changes in the provision of news around the world. News flow has increased dramatically during this period, while technological developments have changed the media landscape (Gunter, 2010). The emergence of the Internet has provided a new news platform for established news suppliers, and opened up new access paths to audiences for new news providers, including private citizens (Allan, 2006; Gunter, Campbell, Touri and Gibson, 2009; Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2000). The digitisation of mainstream media, such as television, has also increased the overall volume of news. Increased channel capacity has spawned many new TV news channels (Ghareeb, 2000; Gunter, 2010). These changes have created a significantly more competitive news marketplace and many established news operators have experienced difficulties in maintaining their customer bases, which has had knock-on financial effects. Many print newspapers have had to cut their staff numbers (Kinsley, 2006), while radio and television newsrooms have also curtailed their operations to cut costs. Many news providers in the print and broadcast media have established new services on the Internet (Kinsley, 2006). They compete with each other on the same news platform. They also face competition from new news providers that operate only online (Vyas, Singh and Bhabhra, 2007).

These changes have begun to affect the news landscape in Libya. The most significant development in this context is the emergence of new satellite TV news services (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2). Also, more than 18 national and local radio stations have recently been launched (IREX, 2006). These services have proved to be very popular, so much so that their presence has given rise to anxieties among older, more established news providers in Libya, for example, Al Jamahiriya TV fears losing its audience to Al Libiya TV. There is, however, a dearth of data on how the changing news media landscape in Libya is affecting the public, and about public opinion concerning these developments. This book is an attempt to shed new light on these matters. It explores the use of news media in Libya and the nature of public perceptions about different news sources, both new and old. It also investigates which sources – old or new – have the greatest influence on public news awareness.

Much of the focus of this book is placed on the use and impact of new satellite TV news services. These services represent a range of dramatically different news formats from those adopted traditionally by indigenous national news operators. Further, the way information and entertainment are being received in the Middle East has changed since satellite TV services began broadcasting (Ghareeb, 2000). News providers utilising these new media types can provide valued services by updating their users the moment an event occurs. However, it is important that these news services are relevant and credible sources rather than just news (Sopher, 2010). The book tracks news media developments in Libya over time and surveys news consumers for reactions to and opinions about different news suppliers. The book, therefore, targets news audiences with questionnaire surveys. Furthermore, this book focuses on viewers' opinions towards named satellite TV news services more than focusing on the news products themselves; therefore, much of this book measures reasons and news habits by investigating the consumption of news by university students.[1] This is because audience perception regarding TV news content has long been of interest to mass media scholars (Ayish, 2004b; Bracken, 2006; Flanagin and Metzger, 2001; Gunter, 2005; Johnson and Kaye, 1998).

Credibility can also be seen as the most important element that relates to news consumption, which plays an important part in many human interactions (Gunter, 2005; Uslaner, 2002). Therefore, state media which operate over a country have to be seen as a credible source. Establishing the credibility of state media can lead to public consumption of them; this overcomes the main problem with state media, in that they are usually watched less than independent media (American Public Media, 2011; Johnson and Fahmy, 2010). In recent years, questions have been raised about television news in the lives of modern media consumers who are presented with an increasing choice of news supplies, which could result in television news losing its attraction (Gunter, 2005). This book attempts to understand the relationship between perceived credibility and the levels of consumption of different news sources and news satisfaction. Before proceeding, it is essential to acknowledge that this research was carried out when the Gadhafi regime still governed Libya and before the mid-February 2011 uprising occurred in Libya. This research began in September 2008 and the main elements of the research were undertaken at Tripoli University (formerly Al-Fateh) during December 2009 and January 2010.[2]

Further, this is a comprehensive research of news consumption and news credibility in broad terms, surrounding both local and non-local news media. This should be helpful to understanding of the news consumption patterns, news interests and credibility of news media in Libya, especially in this age of convergence. In this respect, it has been pointed out that the boundaries between different media (TV versus radio versus print versus the Internet) have been blurred with global media developments (Gunter, 2010; Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold, 1998; Ofcom, 2007a; 2007b). This book is important as it aims to answer also crucial questions about the patterns of news consumption in Libya. This means discovering which news sources are the most consumed and trusted, with particular examples being Al Jazeera TV, Al Arabiya TV, and two local channels, Al Jamahiriya TV and Al Libiya TV. This topic is of value because evidence that has emerged indicates that the change in pan-Arab TV being broadcast by satellite rather than terrestrially has important consequences in terms of media development and public society (Al-Asfar, 2002; Al-Shaqsi, 2000). Consequently, these changes could have influenced audience consumption (Lynch, 2006), preferences and perceptions (Ayish, 2001; Karam, 2007b; Rugh, 2004; Wessler and Adolphsen, 2008; Zayani, 2005). Whereas, as the number of newly established satellite television channels has increased that impact, the number of programmes demanded by new consumers has also grown (Sakr, 2007a). For example, it has been found that the viewing figures for local television channels, such as Al Jamahiriya TV, have dwindled during the last two decades (Al-Asfar, 2002). In contrast, the number of people who watch international television channels has rapidly grown, especially with the exponential rise of Al Jazeera TV and Al Arabiya TV (Karam, 2007b); this might lead viewers to watch more non-local TV channels.[3] Therefore, the book aims to investigate whether those who obtain news primarily through one news channel or news source are as likely to obtain more news from other sources.

Regarding the development of news media in Libya, it is worth investigating the variety in Libyan students' reasons for viewing TV throughout this transitional period for Libyan media. Of further importance is examining the level of credibility with which students see these four TV channels, and to ascertain how those who watch the channels also judge the qualities of their news provision. It should be noted that the development in Libyan media could be described as very gradual. Moreover, this might not have fulfilled the aspirations of Libya's media, spectators or audiences.

The purpose of this book is also to focus on how two major pan-Arab TV services, Al Jazeera TV and Al Arabiya TV, and the indigenous Libyan Al Jamahiriya TV and Al Libiya TV are consumed and perceived by their student viewers. It ascertains whether there is any correlation between the claimed use of local and non-local news media use. It examines news consumption patterns to establish just how popular and, therefore, potentially influential the new TV news channels really are, as well as examining which news sources are regarded as the most credible. The main objective of this book is to ascertain the surveyed students' awareness of news consumption of pan-Arab TV services, in particular their opinions and concerns regarding news broadcast by Al Jazeera TV and Al Arabiya TV on one side, and Al Jamahiriya TV and Al Libiya TV on the other, as news sources. The book will also investigate news consumption habits, ascertain the surveyed students' reasons for watching TV channels to comprehend the world around them, find out whether the surveyed students who reported consuming one source on a regular basis also consumed other specific sources frequently as well, explore the argument that the viewing of local TV is displaced by the viewing of satellite TV (this will be explored by looking at whether the introduction of new satellite TV channels in Libya is taking students away from local TV channels), assess the media consumption habits, attitudes and interests of the surveyed students, and finally the book will analyse which TV news channels are more likely to be trusted, new versus old.

This book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter discusses Arab satellite-television services. It introduces historical accounts of Arab satellite-television channels. The development of pan-Arab TV since the mid-1950s is outlined, with further focuses on the satellite channels in the era of Al Jazeera TV and Al Arabiya TV services.

Chapter 2 introduces the structure of Libya and Libyan media development. It starts with the background and general characteristics of Libya, which includes a country profile. The development of Libyan media since it began is briefly discussed with further details about newspapers, radio and television services. Some of the media reported here no longer exist because of the change of Libya's political system after February 2011. However, it is important to recognise that between 2005 and early 2011 there was a sharp increase in the number of radio stations, satellite television channels and newspapers. So here, this book sheds light on these news services. The main Libyan television news providers, financial features, problems of Libyan media and electronic news media are also discussed.

Chapter 3 presents the main results of the research. It examines data on news interests and importance, and reasons for keeping up with the news. Given its concern with news consumption, the book explores news consumption habits and perceptions of the news provided by international and local satellite TV news services. This chapter elaborates and discusses the results in the context of the literature review regarding news consumption, including displacement theory and niche theory. These theories are mentioned because, first, the book examines whether new news channels on TV have displaced old ones, and second, it reviews research concerning audience reasons for watching news.

Chapter 4 examines news consumption patterns and the relationships between the consumption of different news sources. It looks at the relationships between self-reported consumption of news from specified channels or platforms, programmes and perceptions of the qualities of different news suppliers. It also reports whether new satellite TV news services in Libya that operate across the Arab world have drawn students away from the longer-established local news services in print and broadcast media. In addition to this, the book discusses TV news consumption in the context of the Libyan audience, and news media use among the student audience, with attention paid to the importance of studying young adults' reasons. Therefore, this book is the first in its field to use displacement theory and niche theory in the Arab world to measure young adults' news consumption.

Chapter 5 presents the findings concerning the quality and credibility of news sources. It examines the perceptions of surveyed students towards specific TV news services regarding quality and credibility on these news sources. It reports whether students see news coverage on these named TV services as a credible source of news, and which news sources are regarded as the most credible. The later part of this chapter examines whether students would like to see more, less or about the same amount of news topics on local TV channels. It explores how much they are satisfied with the type of news reported and provided by the named TV news services. That is, to indicate their opinions about the news coverage of geographic area regional TV news programmes.

Finally, Chapter 6 discusses what the future holds for news consumption in Libya based on the research findings. This chapter also suggests several recommendations for improving the service of local news TV channels and the lessons which can be taken from this research.

CHAPTER ONE

ARAB TV SATELLITE SERVICES

> Since television's beginning in the Arab world in the mid-1950s, there have been rising expectations about exploiting the medium to promote changes in different aspects, and mainly to promote the basic tenets of Islamic culture and political policies. (Ayish, 2002)

The Arab world, as it is known, extends from the Arabian Gulf through North Africa to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, and is estimated to cover approximately 13,738,000 square kilometres. It consists of twenty-two individual countries with a total population of 367.4 million, which accounts for five per cent of the world population (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2001). At current growth rates, the population of the Arab world will reach 395 million in 2015 (Al-Jaber, 2012). The populations of these countries range from 0.6 to 82 million, with four countries having over 20 million inhabitants and one country, Egypt, with more than 80 million. The Arab countries have many historical, political and cultural similarities. One of these is the Arabic language, which is the official language in all these countries and is thought to be the sixth most spoken language in the world (Lagasse, 2008).

Economically, however, the Arab world has the highest level of dire poverty in the world (US$1 per day), together with high levels of variation; one out of every five Arabs lives on less than US$2 per day, as in Yemen and Mauritania. Poverty of capability is more obvious as a result of the high rates of illiteracy and inadequate access to quality education and learning (UNDP, 2002; 2009). Average per capita incomes range from less than US$ 300 a year, in Yemen for example, to US$ 18,000 a year in the UAE (World Bank, 2006; 2010). Politically, according to the Freedom House annual survey of democratic governance, despite the differences in political policies in the Arab regions, none of these countries is free from government censorship. Arab countries have a poor record in media independence, civic engagement, effective and accountable government and independent judiciaries (Freedom House Report, 2007). UN Human Development Reports (2005; 2009; 2011) have mentioned that there are several regions in the world that are progressing more towards democracy

and political participation than most Arab nations. Furthermore, the reports argue that this lack of freedom undermines human development and is considered to be one of the most painful manifestations of political development.

With regard to media, technological developments have changed the media landscape in the Arab world. The emergence of new satellite TV channels has provided a new platform for news provision for established news suppliers and opened up new paths of access to audiences for new news providers, including private citizens. This chapter concisely describes the geographical, economic, and political situation, as well as the media scene, of the Arab region. It lays out the history of television in the Arab world, with specific reference to the development of TV satellite channels and how Arab television has been controlled by regional governments. These governments and political bodies have controlled this medium predominantly to support their policies and interests. It then looks at the new era of television and studies the most prominent Arabic news channels, Al Jazeera TV and Al Arabiya TV.

Television History in the Arab World

For many years, the media, including television, radio or newspapers, have played an important role in people's lives in the Arab world. This started in the mid-1950s when several Arab TV services were launched. These channels were operated from Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (Ayish, 2001). Cultural revival and heritage survival were often the underlying principles of national and regional uses of television and other media (Ayish, 2002). In the 1960s, several other Arabic countries continued to operate their own television programmes when television services became an important medium in political mobilisation and national development. This led to several new Arabic independent nations introducing television which was dominated by their governments (Boyd, 1999).

These governments considered television, in particular news programmes, to be the main source of news for their citizens. Therefore, television services were mostly controlled by ministries of information, similar government bodies or powerful circles within the regimes (Rugh, 2004). Political regimes of dictatorship or authoritarianism cannot tolerate a free and strong media, and the same can apply to those systems that do not adhere to multiparty politics and freedom of opinion and expression, such

as Libya before the fall of Gadhafi's regime; the press in such systems always acts only to serve the interest of its supervisors and financiers (Alterman, 2000; Rugh, 2004). Between the 1970s and 1980s, even though several Arab countries had by then launched TV services, they lacked programmes and materials as they faced challenges to produce their own materials and products which could cover transmission time on a daily basis (Ayish, 2002; Rugh, 2004). These countries, including Libya, relied upon imported programmes, which were mainly entertainment programmes, from the US, the UK and France (Boyd, 1999; Elfotaysi, 1996). However, Egyptian productions including drama and films were the major source of television serials on Arab television.

Further, the development of Arab world television since the 1980s has been marked by increasing awareness among government information officials. News programmes were controlled by governmental officers to support their propaganda machines and focus on official business, which completely closed them to political opposition (Lynch, 2006), rather than being used as independent sources of information (Rugh, 2004). These governments put pressure on TV news gatekeepers to select certain topics which were mainly based on existing political, social and cultural arrangements such as Islamic culture.

It used to be that a single-channel environment provided Arab viewers with limited exposure to regional and international TV from neighbouring nations and around the world (Rugh, 2004). For example, the Libyan terrestrial TV station Al Jamahiriya TV was the only channel providing Libyan viewers with local, regional and international news in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in the winter season or cold weather when most people were unable to receive signals from neighbouring countries (Boyd, 1982; Rugh, 2004). In those days, news information was unattractive to Libyan audiences because of Al Jamahiriya TV and its sycophantic leadership. Like other Arab television stations, the channel not only lacked excitement and new technology, but also carried one-sided coverage making it repetitive and predictable (Al-Asfar, 2002). However, Libyans, like many Arabs, were able to watch other countries' television programmes (Omar, 2009). Libyans along the northern coastline of the country would alternatively watch Italian, Egyptian, and Tunisian television transmissions during the long warm summer months (Boyd, 1982). Since the development of Arab television news in the 1970s a number of problems became apparent to viewers, such as financial matters, insufficient local products, shortages of trained personnel and governmental surveillance. These problems faced Arab TV systems until

satellite channels expanded, when several Western programme styles were imported and allowed (Ayish, 2001).

The Era of Arab Satellite Channels

The development of satellite communication technology in the Arab world goes back to the mid-1980s with the launch of ARABSAT in 1985. However, the entry of commercial broadcasters with technical and financial resources into the Arab TV world was not an important development until the early 1990s (Al-Shaqsi, 2000). Therefore, in the 1990s the development of satellite systems and telecommunication technologies provided impetus to a direct broadcast satellite revolution in the Arab world (Boyd, 1999), where Arab audiences were able to view and follow what was going on in the other regions across the world. Satellite broadcasts began to have their major impact for the first time in the Arab media when they were used to transmit daily newspapers such as *Al Hayat*, edited in London but printed in some Arab capital cities such as Cairo, Beirut, and Riyadh (Ghareeb, 2000). New media developments in the Arab regimes were described as a revolution in the Arab world that in turn led to the establishment of modern regional means of communication superior to that of the direct control by the region's governments and political systems (Alterman, 2000). Arabs gained their first taste of satellite programming by watching the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) (Ayish, 2001) and then Arab Radio and Television (ART), the Lebanon Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) and Future TV in 1995.

According to Jamal and Melkote (2008), there are three types of Arab satellite TV channels – state-owned, state-backed and privately owned. The last seems to be the most popular among Arabic countries since ART and Orbit have operated, though several are not free of charge. The state-owned TV channels are usually local TV channels and operated by Arab ministries of information to ensure governments' political existence in terrestrial TV (Amin, 2002; Rugh, 2004). At this stage, Arab governments have considered the benefits of creating and operating their own direct broadcast satellite channels that could compete with international TV programmes and news. Lastly, state-backed TV channels are less common in the Arab world. These channels are independently operated and they started when Al Jazeera TV was launched in the mid-1990s.

Historically, in 1990, Egypt, through the Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC), was the first Arab nation to start satellite broadcasting. This was a

long time after the idea of using an Arab satellite for developing Arab audiences was first discussed in Tunis by Arab ministers of information and culture in 1967 (Karam, 2007a). They adopted this technology to support Arab information systems and the modernisation of mass media and communications in the Arab nations. Egyptian satellite TV (ESC) was followed by other Arab nations who usually changed their terrestrial TV channels to satellite channels such as Tunisia's Channel-7, Libya's Al Jamahiriya TV, and other terrestrial TV channels (Miladi, 2006).

The development of Arab satellite channels always faced difficulties due to the control of regional governments on media outputs. As a consequence, several privately-owned channels transmitted from outside the Arab world, Europe in particular (Lynch, 2006), to avoid local government policies and their pressures. Mellor (2005) indicates that censorship by the Arab governments, access to information and lack of technology were the main reasons that led a number of newspapers and other press publications to publish outside the Arab region. For instance, MBC, owned by the Saudi royal family, operated from London from 1991 and then was moved to Dubai in 2003. The channel was the primary provider of news and current affairs on Arab TV in the first half of the 1990s (Rugh, 2004), as it carried credible news programmes with Western-style reporting, and became one of the leaders in news and entertainment programmes (Ghareeb, 2000).

In addition, there is ART TV, a group of television and radio channels broadcasting a mix of programmes including several channels: ART Sports, Children, Music and Film. These are owned by Saudi businessman Salih Kamil and were launched in Rome between 1992 and 1996. The Arab News Network (ANN), owned by Syrian Rifat Al-Assad (the uncle of the current President Bashar Al-Assad), was founded in 1997 in London. Iqra, an Islamic-religious channel, was established in 1998 in Italy (Miladi, 2006). Its funding comes from advertising, sponsorship, and donations. In 1993, a satellite TV channel was launched in Jordan. Morocco followed by establishing its satellite channel RTM in 1994. The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), first established in 1985 as a terrestrial channel by Lebanese Forces militia, began to broadcast through satellite in 1997. It was the first Arabic channel to dub Mexican soap operas, which attracted many Arab viewers (Ghareeb, 2000).

Abu Dhabi TV, a state-owned service, was launched in 2000 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is operated by the Abu Dhabi Media Company (Ayish, 2001). It was the first channel to react to the success of

Al Jazeera TV by copying its news format in order to gain back their viewers (Wessler and Adolphsen, 2008). During the Iraq war in 2003, the channel aired highly successful news programmes that were utilised and referred to frequently by the Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahhaf and Western media. The channel is described as the closest channel to Al Jazeera TV news as a competitor (Miles, 2005). Finally, the Al Libiya satellite channel, established in Libya in 2007, endeavoured to change its headquarters to Jordan and then to London (Cherian, 2011) in an attempt to avoid government pressure. However, such moves proved futile, as it became a state-owned channel in 2010 and broadcast from Tripoli (Elareshi and Gunter, 2010; Elareshi, 2011).

These developments of the transnational Arab satellite channels have had a major impact on Arab viewers, which can be seen as a phenomenon that promised to change public opinion in the Arab world (Ghareeb, 2000; Kraidy, 1998). At present, the Arab audience is exposed to dozens, perhaps hundreds, of private Arabic TV channels via their own satellite dishes. These services have brought to Arab viewers new programming types that continue to be distinctive features of Arab government TV services (Ayish, 2001). Although Arab viewers can watch several privately owned and state-backed satellite TV channels, they still watch state-owned TV channels which are directed by state governments.

Auter et al. (2005) described the emergence of new international TV services by stating that the face of Arab television news has been changed, and at the head of this change was Al Jazeera TV, then followed by a number of other privately owned and state-backed satellite TV services. This has transformed the way information and entertainment are being received in the Arab world (Ghareeb, 2000). Prior to the satellite dishes, especially before the emergence of Al Jazeera TV, Arab viewers used to tune to outside media outlets, like BBC World, CNN and the Voice of America radio to be well informed of the happenings around the world (Ghareeb, 2000). In addition, media development has had a great impact on the government television audience, in that many Arabs have abandoned regional government media in favour of international satellite channels (Ayish, 2001; Ghareeb, 2000).

Al Jazeera Satellite Channel

A Qatari government-owned satellite television service, broadcasting from Doha and called Al Jazeera TV, was established in February 1996 (Ayish, 2001). It first started airing in November 1996 by broadcasting six

hours a day (Zayani, 2005). The channel was funded with US$150 million by Emir Hamed to construct its services (Fandy, 2007). It is described as the first independent Arab news broadcaster. It now broadcasts 24 hours a day without charge to audiences throughout the Arab world and around the world in both the Arabic and English languages (Sakr, 2007a).

Al Jazeera TV covers its business by advertising and selling its programmes to different companies (Jamal and Melkote, 2008). It has employed more than 350 media professionals, most of them with experience from the BBC Arabic Service, CNN, Orbit Channels and other popular known media. The station's strong financial backing has allowed it to open offices around the world (Zayani, 2005). However, Al Jazeera TV has been criticised by a range of commentators, from regional Arab (Ajami, 2001) and Islamic governments to Western governments (Powers and Gilboa, 2007). In 2000, the Libyan envoy in Qatar was recalled following criticism of the regime by one of Al Jazeera's programmes (el-Nawawy and Iskander, 2002). Moreover, Arab governments have described it as being operated by and working for Western governments, especially the US and Israel (Johnson and Fahmy, 2008) and have at least temporarily shut down its bureaux in their countries (el-Nawawy, 2003). This was clearly evident when its presenters and anchors infuriated much of Arab public opinion by inviting Israeli speakers onto its programmes (Zayani, 2005), even though Arab audiences have adopted Al Jazeera TV as the most reliable source of news for Arab and international news (Lynch, 2006; Powers and Gilboa, 2007).

Currently, Al Jazeera has many different packages: Al Jazeera Sport +1, +2, +3, +4, Al Jazeera Sport HD, Al Jazeera Children, Al Jazeera English, Al Jazeera Direct, and Al Jazeera Documentary; in addition there is the ability to access its programmes via the Internet (Miladi, 2006). As mentioned above, Al Jazeera TV has high-quality presenters who have trained or worked for known channels such as the BBC (Auter et al., 2005), Orbit, and other Arab networks. Such presenters include David Foster, Darren Jordon, Hafez al-Merazi, Jamil Azar, and Faisal Al Kasim. The channel also employs professionals who know how to deal with camera positioning, news presentation styles and rhythm (Jamal and Melkote, 2008; Lynch, 2006).

Al Jazeera TV has brought clear images and news about wars such as Operation Desert Fox in Iraq in 1998, the second Palestinian Intifada in 2000, the war in Afghanistan and the Iraq war in 2003. This achievement was not celebrated by several Arab governments and their TV services,

which pushed them to produce an extremely competitive and increasingly fragmented market which they called the "moderate alternative" approach to Al Jazeera TV (Lynch, 2006). This was made through alliances and co-operations between different mediums such as LBC and the *Al Hayat* newspaper in 2005 to upgrade the news side of its offerings. Nearly every Arab country offered what they could to support Egyptian television in its attempt to counter the development of Al Jazeera TV. Perhaps the most exciting of these challengers has been the Dubai-based Al Arabiya TV (Lynch, 2006).

Al Arabiya Satellite Channel

Al Arabiya TV, the youngest Arabic news channel in the Arab world, was established in Dubai in 2003, only a month before the Iraq war. It is owned by Saudi Arabia and funded by the Saudi royal family (Zayani, 2005; Lynch, 2006; Fandy, 2007). It started with a US$300 million budget from Saudi Arabia (Lynch, 2006). It broadcasts 24 hours a day with up-to-date news each hour through NILESAT, ARABSAT and BOLTSAT. It is viewed free of charge and it aims to provide an Arab alternative to news services marked by the Arab point of view, in particular after the successive events of Iraq's invasion and the Palestinian uprising. The channel carries news, current affairs, business and financial market reports, sports news, entertainment and documentaries. It is part of the MBC group, which consists of MBC One, Two, and Three (Fandy, 2007). Its programmes have adopted the "unbiased" vocabulary preferred by Arab and Western governments. Moreover, the main reason for establishing it was to respond to Qatar's media attack, launched through Al Jazeera TV (Lynch, 2006). Its ambition is to establish itself as the responsible alternative to Al Jazeera TV (Lynch, 2006). It aims to provide rational news coverage and avoid ambiguous agendas (cited in Wessler and Adolphsen, 2008). Zayani and Ayish (2006, p.483) explained that:

> *Al-Arabiya* strives to match *Al-Jazeera's* proclaimed independence while avoiding its provocative style, eschewing its sensationalistic appeal, insisting on making a clear distinction between fact and opinion, and steering clear from the politics of other Arab and especially Gulf countries. By and large, *al-Arabiya* pitched itself as a neutral channel that cares for Arab interests and staying away from pursuing ambiguous agendas and other parties' interests.

However, Karam (2007b) indicated that Al Arabiya TV has limited scope for criticising several Arab governments' policies such as the UAE

and Gulf countries. With other new TV channels, it is part of the new media platform which has attracted Arab viewers around the world, in that way intensifying the withdrawal of Arabs from watching state-owned TV services (Lynch, 2006). These new Arab TV services are able to reflect Arab viewers' opinions and interests (Elareshi and Gunter, 2010; 2012b).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the development of Arab TV services in an age when satellite dishes have offered Arab viewers different options for information, especially entertainment and news from across the world. Thus, Arab TV services have undergone significant development in recent years as a consequence of the launch of satellite TV services which have expanded the range of channels and especially choice of news services. Prior to the arrival of satellite technology, the majority of ordinary people were limited to one or two local state-owned TV services. These channels are directly controlled by the government or their ministries of information. This led to many Arabs turning to whatever foreign sources were available, such as the BBC World, before private and state TV satellite channels were introduced (Al-Asfar, 2002).

Several new Arab satellite TV channels were first born in the Western media environment where there is less political pressure exercised on media organisations and an availability of advanced technological facilities. Arab news TV services have succeeded in changing the old-style news reporting that represented little more than propaganda opportunities for Arab leaders. However, many Arab leaders rely on these new TV channels to reach their own people at home particularly in national events where many of them address their people (Omar, 2009). The emergence of new satellite channels such as Al Jazeera TV and Al Arabiya TV has established the notion that the flow of information and news need not come from the West only, and that world events are no longer covered by them (Harb and Bessaiso, 2006). The arrival of these news TV services is conceptualized as "alternative sources of information" for most Arabs. These new international TV services have revolutionised the Arab world by challenging censorship imposed by the government-controlled media (el-Nawawy and Iskander, 2002). The next chapter examines the development of Libyan media and their impact on Libyan society and culture.

Chapter Two

The Development of Libyan Media

[The] Libyan government has set all the media agendas: radio, television and print media have all served as a means to promote the government's political, religious, cultural and economic programmes and to filter what receivers hear and see. (Rugh, 2004)

This chapter explores the development of the media structure in Libya, which has been affected by political, economic, culture and social changes in the last three decades. This chapter is divided into several sub-units. It starts with the background and general characteristics of Libya, including geography, population, history, political framework, and economy. A further section reviews media development over the last 50 years. This is followed by an examination of the Libyan press, press laws, and newspapers and magazines. It provides historical accounts of broadcasting (radio and television) in Libya, covering Libyan satellite channels, in particular Al Jamahiriya TV and Al Libiya TV. The Libyan news agency, the financial situation of Libyan media over the last 30 years, Libyan media problems and electronic news media are also described. Once again, it is essential to express that this chapter is reviewing the development of Libyan media when Gadhafi was in power and before the 17th February 2011 uprising took place in Libya. Therefore, this chapter serves as a documentary volume on the development of Libyan media during the Gadhafi regime.

Background and General Characteristics of Libya

Geographically, Libya is a country in northern Africa, 1,759,540 square kilometres in area. It is the fourth largest country in Africa and seventeenth largest in the world. It shares borders with six nations: Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Algeria, and Tunisia. It is also on the Mediterranean Sea, with a coastline of about 1,770 kilometres (CIA, 2011). The greater part of the land is desert. The climate is Mediterranean, which means warm and dry summers, and cold and rainy winters.

There are approximately 6,597,960 million Libyan citizens (CIA, 2011). The majority, 97 per cent, are Muslims who belong to the Sunni branch of Islam, and 2 to 3 per cent are Christians (World Facts Index, 2008). The age distribution is 32.8 per cent aged between 0 to 14, 62.7 per cent aged between 15 and 64, and 4.7 per cent over 65. The median age is 24.4 years. The population growth rate is 2.06 per cent (CIA, 2011). Socially, Libyans are described as mixed modern and Badu. Generally, they are influenced by Arab-African culture. The vast majority of Libyans speak Arabic, but other languages are spoken in addition; different languages are spoken by rural groups in the south, such as the nomadic Tuareg, who use dialects of the Berber and Hausa languages. Many also can understand but cannot write Italian, English and French.

Historically, the first inhabitants of Libya were the Berbers, around the seventh century B.C. Cyrenaica (now Benghazi), in the east, was colonised by the Phoenicians, and Tripolitania (Tripoli), in the west, was colonised by the Greeks. At the time Tripolitania was dominated by the Carthaginians. From 46 B.C. to A.D. 436 the city was part of the Roman Empire. Later, Cyrenaica also became part of the Roman Empire. In 642, both cities were invaded by Arab forces, and in the sixteenth century both cities were ruled by the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the country has been influenced by a number of foreign conquerors, such as the Phoenicians, the Greeks, the Romans, Ottomans and finally the Arabs. The latter established Islam in the early eighteenth century (US, 2007).

In the modern age, between 1911 and 1934 there was fierce fighting between Libyans and Italian troops, finishing with the uniting of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica as the colony of Libya. During this time, the nation was a site of fighting in World War I and II. When the Italians lost the war against the Allies, Libya was governed by the British, French and the US. In 1951, Libya became independent and its three geographical areas, Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan, were established. The official name was the United Kingdom of Libya, led by King Idris for nearly two decades.

Political Framework

In 1969, a revolution was led by Muammar Al Gadhafi, who created his own political system, the Third Universal Theory (a state of the masses). The official name of the country was the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Tripoli is the capital. The political system was a combination of socialism and Islam derived in part from ethnic practices,

and *The Green Book* was the constitution of the country beginning in the 1970s. In this system the General People's Congress, whose members were elected by universal and obligatory suffrage across a pyramid of people's committees and local government, guided the country. The purpose of government was to serve as the intermediary between the masses and the leadership. With regard to law, the country was governed by Italian and French civil law systems and Islamic law.

Economically, Libya is a land of considerable agricultural potential and has a well-established industrial base. Libya has been dramatically developed since oil was found in late 1957, which contributes about 95 per cent of export earnings. Oil revenues are used to construct many facilities. Since 2000, Libya has had one of the highest per capita GDPs in Africa and has recorded favourable growth rates with an estimated 5.8 per cent growth of GDP in 2007 (World Facts Index, 2008). The nation relies on oil, and the main objectives are improvements in agriculture, electrification, industrialisation, transportation, and housing (McDaniel, 1982). However, climatic conditions and poor soils harshly reduce agricultural crop output and, as a result, the country imports around three-quarters of its food, consumer goods and textiles.

Media Development in Libya

The Libyan media,[1] like other Arab media and social institutions, were affected by the government authorities during colonisation. As a result, the press and journalists had to follow official government policies (Rugh, 2004). During the Gadhafi era there were also several laws and pieces of legislation which controlled the media in Libya; these provided a framework and abstract principles about the freedom of speech and human rights. The only legislation with specific details which regulated the print media and publications was issued in 1972 and remained the main legislation in this field until 2011. For example, the law emphasised that journalists and writers had the right to express their opinions which had to be in accord with the orientations of society. The following sections shed light on the development of Libyan media beginning with the press.

The Libyan Press

This section discusses the development of the Libyan press since the Ottoman Empire through to the present day. It also presents the laws which have guided and continue to guide journalism and journalists.

During the rule of the **Ottoman Empire**, Cyrenaica and Tripolitania saw no press development. Nonetheless, some publications were begun in 1827 by the French foreign consuls in the form of a newspaper called *Al-Munaqqib* (The Investigator). It was available to people who read and understood French (Mezran, 1994). In 1897, an Arabic newspaper called *Al-Taraggi* (Progress) appeared as the first Arabic political newspaper in the country. While the country was controlled by the Ottoman Empire under-Sultan Abdal-Aziz a few items of news were written in Arabic and Turkish in a newspaper called *Tarablus Agharb* (Tripoli of the West) (Martin and Copeland, 2003). The newspaper published news which was related to the Empire in Turkey and the Sultans' news and their families, more or less only covering the elites. At this time, people were unable to obtain newspapers because of the expenses of paper, as well the inability to read or to write.

Prior to Independence: As mentioned earlier, in 1911 Italian troops took Libya after aggressive fighting with the Libyans and Turks. The country was colonised by Italian Fascists, who began what would become the most severe occupation experienced in modern Libyan history. The colonists did not educate citizens, even though some roads, civic buildings, schools and hospitals were constructed for their use. As a consequence, the percentage of the population who were unable to read and write was very high and poverty was pervasive in this period. Regarding the press, the *Tarablus Agharb* was replaced by an Italian newspaper called *Jaridat Al-Italia Al-Jaridat* (the New Italy Newspaper) that contanined both Arabic and Italian lanuguages (Mezran, 1994). There were no Libyan-run newspapers. This did not help to improve the press in Libya. Rugh (2004, p.45) indicates that "press development in Libya was even slower, due primarily to the small size of the literate populations. Libya had no Arab-owned newspapers before independence in 1951."

After Independence: The post-independence period of Libyan history consists of two different times that have affected the development of local newspapers in Libya; these are the period since independence to the revolution of 1969, and the post-revolution period. From 1951 to 1969, after independence, the United Kingdom of Libya was economically and socially exhausted. People were living at a subsistence level, there were socioeconomic problems, a depletion of resources, health service problems and a lack of education (Abu-Nasr, 1971). At that time, the majority of the citizens in the Kingdom lived below the poverty level. Newspapers were struggling at this time. However, several different Libyan parties and groups published a number of daily and weekly newspapers reflecting

their allegiance to one of the ideologies: communist, capitalist or Nasserite (those who followed the thoughts of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Leader and President of Egypt 1953-1970), and from conservative and religious standpoints. As a result, the government began to restrict the press. Meanwhile, the regime published its papers in Tripoli and Benghazi. Libyan journalists were also employed by British-owned papers (Rugh, 2004).

From 1969 to 2010: The revolution of 1st September 1969, by a group of military officers led by Gadhafi, set the political, economic and social structures of Libya based on Gadhafi's theory; Libya became united under one political and economic entity. Several rules that had existed under the King's rule were renewed based on the changes to the country. Officially, the Libyan state owned all the media suppliers, and according to *The Green Book*: "the press is a means of expression of society and is not a means of expression of a natural or corporate person. Logically and democratically, the press, therefore, cannot be owned by either of these" (cited in Ghejam, 1990, p.237).

Therefore, individuals were not permitted to own newspapers, only government organisations were allowed to do so (Human Rights Watch, 2006). However, since 2005, private Libyan satellite TV channels have been launched as a new media development (Cherian, 2011). Newspapers were designed to be "impartial", so they were organised so as to help people to find the right way of making their decisions without being influenced by any single ideology. Theoretically, people were free to express their thoughts, feelings and beliefs based on social rules, and newspapers were seen as one medium through which state development could take place. Thus, society was the only owner allowed to organise the media, and in the media anyone could express himself as an important person in a collective group (Ghejam, 1990).

The Press Laws

As mentioned earlier, the state owned and controlled almost all the media under laws made after the 1969 revolution. The concept of the mass media owned by individuals was not acceptable to the Gadhafi regime. In comparison to other ideologies, mass media in Libya were different from those that existed in the former USSR, and the current mass media in Western countries, led by the US. In Libya, mass media were used to provide knowledge, teaching and culture to Libyans. In other words, media were tools and were not used to gain profit or used as trade. The

regime believed that there should not be a trade in knowledge or culture. According to Libyan law, no private media or political parties were allowed. The Libyan media during the Gadhafi period can be divided into three categories:

- Public media, which were controlled by the Libyan state authorities and relied completely on the government.
- Professional media, including those published and funded by different professional syndicates and unions.
- Local or regional media, which were owned and controlled by the Committees for the Media in the various regions and which focused on local activities and events.

By law, four languages were permitted for newspapers: Arabic, English, French and Italian. Several international publications were allowed to be distributed in the country. However, this was done under strict rules and their entry to the country may have been prohibited. In 1993, the government issued new laws to restructure the print media, which merged all the press into one institution called the National Press Organisation. This law was known as decree No. 246 of 1993.

The General Press Institution was launched in 1993 under decree No. 17 of 1993, issued by the People's General Committee. The institution was amended by decree No. 246 of 1993, modified its name to the General Press Corporation (GPC) in 2001 under decree No. 180 of 2001, and became linked with the ministry of information based in Tripoli. The main aims of the organisation were:

- To raise public awareness of the contemporary world, Arabic and African issues, and to enlighten public opinion on different world ideologies in a way that helped to achieve the objectives of the 1969 Libyan revolutionary ideas.
- To shed light on the Al-Fateh revolution's achievements and successes on both the state and international fronts in order to create an intellectual and spiritual bond among the Arab people and the African continent.
- To reflect the true reality of Libyan society and emphasise its international, African and Arabic historical context.
- To build up a new generation of journalists, writers, and thinkers who respected Islamic ethics and values, and beliefs in the values and targets of the Al-Fateh revolution of 1969.