

現代アラブ・メディアの変容と 国際的・域内の競争

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本報告では、20世紀半ば以降のアラブ世界において、人々の生活に大きな意味を持ち続けてきたラジオやテレビなどの放送メディアの展開を概観し、そのうえで今日のアラブ世界において、人々がいかにメディアと関わっているのかを考える。

The Transformation of Contemporary Arab Media: Regional and Global Competition

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The purpose of this paper is to overview the history of broadcasting in the Arab world and explore contemporary broadcasting by focusing on people's methods of accessing satellite television. This paper will conclude that the decrease in consumer costs for watching satellite television and increase in satellite channels are related phenomena that contribute to the diversity of the contemporary Arab media.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to overview the history of broadcasting in the Arab world and explore contemporary broadcasting by focusing on people's methods of accessing satellite television. The goal is to show how the combination of easily accessible satellite television and the actions of satellite companies in the heavily competitive market has begun to bring some local and regional media companies into international prominence.

Before starting, the meaning of the phrase 'Arab world' must be clarified. This phrase generally includes the following eighteen countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen [1]. The majority of people in these countries speak Arabic as the first language and are considered to be ethnically Arabic.

Some early media scholars have described media history through a timeline going as far back as the Lascaux cave paintings and papyrus in ancient Egypt [2]. However, more pressing media studies are confined to the 'mass media', such as print materials, radio, and television. Therefore, contemporary media scholars tend to begin their narrative at the advent of duplication technology, that is, the Gutenberg printing machine of the fifteenth century, or even from the advent of electronic media in the twentieth century [3].

Contemporary media studies of Arab countries tend to begin with the appearance of the printing press at the end of the eighteenth century. Although printing technology had been brought to the Othman Empire in the fifteenth century, it was prohibited in 1484 and 1515 by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire [4]. Some Christians were allowed to use printing technology, but Muslims, comprising the majority of the empire's citizens, were banned from using it for almost three centuries.

After the eighteenth century, use of printing technology spread gradually in the Arab world, beginning with the distribution of academic works among intellectuals. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Arab cultural resurgence in Lebanon and Egypt spurred the publication of many books, which were circulated in the Arab world. However, the literacy rate in the Arab countries was still quite low, so even by the early twentieth century, printed material could not accurately be called mass media. The first media to be widely consumed by Arab people had to be something that did not require literacy as a prerequisite; therefore, the first real mass media of the Arab world was broadcasting media such as radio and television.

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2. Broadcastings in the Arab World

2.1 The Dawn of Radio

The history of broadcasting goes back to the 1920s. According to the Egyptian media scholars ‘Abd, A. and ‘Abd, N. [5], Egypt and Algeria were the first Arab countries with radio service [a]. Other countries soon acquired radio, as shown in the following table [b].

Table 1 The Beginning of Arab Radio

1925	Egypt	1939	Libya	1949	Saudi Arabia
1925	Algeria	1940	Sudan	1951	Kuwait
1928	Morocco	1941	Syria	1966	UAE
1935	Tunisia	1942	Bahrain	1968	Qatar
1936	Iraq	1947	Yemen	1970	Oman
1938	Lebanon	1948	Jordan		

(source) [‘Abd, A. and ‘Abd, N. 2008]

In some countries, such as Egypt and the Gulf countries, individuals and private companies initiated commercial radio services, though governments soon took control and began to broadcast official programming. Some other countries developed radio industries from facilities facilitated by suzerain states after independence.

Some Western countries also broadcasted Arabic radio programming starting in the 1930s. For example, Italy started *Radio Bari* in 1934, and Great Britain started *Palestine Broadcasting Services (PBS)* and *BBC* in 1936 and 1938 respectively. As war approached, Germany started *Voice of the Free Arabs* in 1938 and Great Britain added *The Near East* in 1941 to sway Arab popular sentiment [6]. Some stations discontinued broadcasting during the war.

2.2 The Era of Egyptian Radio

However, it may be said that radio really took off in the 1950s, and Egypt played the most important role in the expansion of radio in Arab countries.

After the Egyptian revolution of 1952, the country’s new government started to dramatically expand its broadcasting services [c]. The most famous station created at this time was one called *Voice of the Arabs*, started in 1953, which president Gamal Nasser regarded as

a) This table, may confuse unofficial and official start dates. However, it is useful as a document of general trends

b) Palestine is not mentioned in that study.

c) In 1952, there were just two radio stations, which broadcasted 15 hours per day between them. However, by 1962, there were many more stations, with a total of 116 broadcast hours per day.

a strong propaganda tool and which he strengthened so that it might reach other Arab countries as well. Although the station was propagandistic, it also broadcast generic entertainment content and became popular across the Arab world. In the 1970s, the stations suffered a loss in credibility. However, one survey shows that nearly 20 percent of the populations of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Jordan still listen to the station [7].

In addition to *Voice of the Arabs*, Egypt began to broadcast programming in several foreign languages. It is estimated that, by 1968, the country was broadcasting nearly 55 stations around the world [8]. While other Arab countries had their own national radio stations, it does not go too far to describe Egyptian broadcasting as regionally dominant from the 1950s to the 1970s, and Egyptian radio was a uniting cultural and linguistic force in this period.

2.3 Television as a Tool of Government

The first Arab country to start a national television service was Iraq in 1956. Between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s, most Arab countries began national television broadcasting, most with technical assistance from Western companies. However, most of the countries did not have the expertise necessary to create television content, so most Arab countries imported television programs from the West or from Egypt. Some latecomers simply hired staff from Egypt or Jordan.

Table 2 Inaugural Dates of National Television

1956	Iraq	1962	Sudan	1968	Jordan
1959	Lebanon	1962	Morocco	1969	(South) Yemen
1960	Egypt	1965	Saudi Arabia	1970	Qatar
1960	Syria	1966	Tunisia	1972	Bahrain
1962	Algeria	1968	Libya	1974	Oman
1962	Kuwait	1968	UAE (Dubai)		

(source) [Rugh 2004: 186]

Geographically, television is more difficult to broadcast over a great distance than radio. Many Arab countries that regarded television as the better propaganda tool began to strengthen their broadcasting capabilities in the 1970s. The increase in availability, combined with popular preference for television over radio, led to an explosion of television consumption in Arab populations in the 1970s. While it is true that the videocassette recorder (VCR) came to be widespread in the Arab world at this time and some distribution of nongovernmental or even dissident media was therefore possible, the effect of this was probably limited by cost and logistics. The reality is that governments were able to control the

vast majority of television content, and most did so very actively in order to manage public sentiment. Because of this, television in Arab countries carries a strong association with the government.

3. The Satellite Era

It has been noted by the academic community that prior to the 1990s, the content of television broadcasting in the Arab world was mostly propaganda and, in a word, boring [9]. However, some incidents brought change to the Arab world.

3.1 The Gulf War as a Watershed

The most important factor in the transformation of Arab broadcasting has been the appearance of satellite television. The first proposal to launch media satellites was made in 1967 and was agreed to at a meeting of the information ministries of several Arab governments. However, mainly because of internal political tension, the launch of the first satellite took nearly two decades, and after the launch, Arabsat remained unused for five years.

However, the Egyptian government finally started the first satellite channel, *Egypt Space Channel (ESC)*, in 1990. The purpose of *ESC* was to broadcast to the Egyptian military in Kuwait during the Gulf War. Although most of its programming was the same as on Egyptian terrestrial channels, the channel's mere existence stimulated other countries to launch their own.

In addition to this, the Gulf War spawned what is known as the CNN shock. When the war started, the people of Saudi Arabia did not know about it for five days because of a governmentally enforced media blackout. However, word got out because of satellite television stations such as *CNN*, which was broadcast in people's homes. This incident made people aware of the importance of collecting information from outside their nation.

For these reasons, in the 1990s, some satellite channels appeared. And those are categorized to three groups depending on the relation with the governments; the national satellite channels, private satellite channels, independent satellite channels.

For example, after the *Egypt Space Channel*, UAE launched *Emirates Dubai TV (EDTV)* in 1992. And Jordan launched *Jordan Satellite Television (JST)* in the same year. In 1993, Egypt launched *the Nile TV* [d]. And Morocco and Syria also followed it in 1994. Within a few years, the rest of the Arab countries had their own satellite channels.

In contrast to government-controlled the national channels, the number of the private

d) However, the viewer *the Nile TV* targeted was the foreigner who speak English and French. This channel was launched for the commercial and sightseeing purpose.

channels is limited. In 1991, the first private Arab channel, *Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC)*, was launched in London by a Saudi entrepreneur [e]. In 1994, *Orbit and Arab Radio and Television (ART)* were launched in Italy. In Lebanon, *Future TV* was started in 1995, with *Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI)* following in 1996. Other private channels followed.

Al-Jazeera, which started in 1996, can be categorized as independent media, because although it is wholly owned by the government of Qatar and is not likely to criticize its patron, it is thought to receive little editorial pressure [10].

3.2 The Real Expansion of Satellite Channels

The real expansion of satellite offerings began in the 2000s. This chart [11] shows how the number of Arab satellite channels grew 4.5 times between 2004 and 2009.

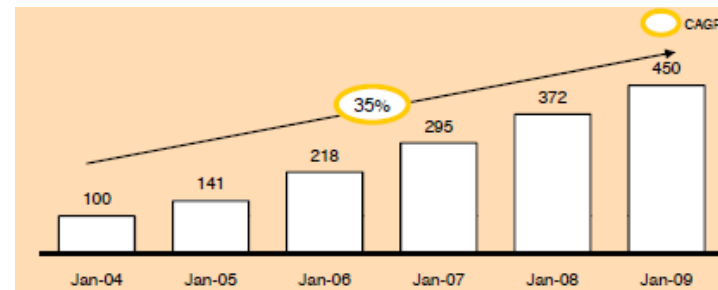


Chart 1 The Increase in the Number of Arab Satellite Channels

(source) [Dubai Press Club 2010: 46]

This increase can be explained through several factors. First, in 2000, new satellites were launched to facilitate digital technology and reduce set-up costs of new channels. Therefore, more and more investors regarded satellite broadcasting as a viable business arena. Second, as previously mentioned, demand for information in the Arab world has grown since the early 1990s. Third, many Arab states increased their state-controlled satellite offerings. Some countries broadcast official channels even though it is not profitable. Fourth, access to satellite television has become much easier for ordinary people. The following chapter will focus on this last factor in particular as a driving force for the expansion of Arab satellite television.

e) Most private investors are directly or indirectly connected to the royal families in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Therefore, those channels are not critical to their home countries.

4. Accessibility to Satellite Channels

When satellite television appeared in the 1990s, its viewership was thought to be limited to a handful of rich people. Some of the reasons stem from bans of certain satellite channels. For example, in 1994, the government of Saudi Arabia issued a ban of satellite dish ownership [12]. Although some governments followed, such bans became more difficult to pass and enforce as awareness and demand spread. By this time, people in every Arab country watched satellite channels without restriction.

Another reason for satellite expansion has to do with the cost of satellite sets. The price of the dishes and receivers in the early 1990s was too high for ordinary people [f]. However, technological improvements, economies of scale, and growth of the electronic imports from China and Korea have made satellite equipment more attractive to the average consumer.

4.1 The Decrease in Cost

Field research conducted between January and February 2011 in Egypt and Jordan found that most of the dishes and receivers are imported from China, Korea, and Germany [g]. Although the price of dishes and receivers were different in each country, as shown in table 3, the minimum cost in both countries has decreased dramatically. The minimum cost of receiving satellite channels is JOD 25 (JPY 3,000) in Jordan and EGP 105 (JPY 1,575) in Egypt [h] [i]. In the early 1990s, the price was ten times as high, roughly equal to the average annual salary of an adult male in those countries.

Jordan		Egypt	
Dish (50cm)	JOD 7 (JPY 840)	Dish (60cm)	EGP 25 (JPY 375)
Dish (60cm)	JOD 8 (JPY 960)	Dish (85cm)	EGP 55 (JPY 825)
Dish (75cm)	JOD 10 (JPY 1,200)	Dish (100cm)	EGP 70 (JPY 1,050)
Dish (90cm)	JOD 22 (JPY 2,640)	Dish (120cm)	EGP 80 (JPY 1,200)
Receiver (max)	JOD 175 (JPY 21,000)	Receiver (max)	EGP 900 (JPY 13,500)
Receiver (min)	JOD 18 (JPY 2,160)	Receiver (min)	EGP 80 (JPY 1,200)

Table 3 The Price of Dishes and Receivers in Jordan and Egypt

f) It is said that the price of a satellite dish was EGP 1000 (nearly JPY 15,000–20,000) in the early 1990s in Egypt. This price was nearly the salary of an average worker in Egypt. In some Maghreb countries, people used the Couscous, a pot used for cooking traditional the Maghreb couscous dish, instead of dishes to receive satellite channels.

g) This study did not find any German receivers in Amman, Jordan.

h) Actually, people need to buy other equipment, such as cables. However, the variety of such accoutrement renders comparison between countries difficult.

i) USD 100 = JOD 71 (JOD 1 = JPY 120), USD 100 = EGP 588 (EGP 1 = JPY 15) (2011/January–February)

By another comparison, satellite television access costs about as much for urban Arabs as mobile phone ownership did. Most of the urban Arab residents have mobile phones, so it is easy to see how satellite television might seem affordable.

4.2 The Expansion of Satellite Dishes

Although one Jordanian surveyed said that ‘to buy the dishes and watches the satellite channels [is] more important than eating for many Arabs’ [j], the decrease in cost must have contributed to the spread of satellite dishes and the increase in satellite viewership in the Arab world.

Of course, as more people came to watch satellite channels, big changes occurred in the media market. Satellite companies began to target different viewers by creating larger varieties of programming. As a result, more specialized channels appeared.



Satellite Dishes in Cairo, Egypt

5. The Media in Competition and Transformation

5.1 The Competitive Media Market

As a result of an increase in viewership and channel variety, severe competition has now begun in the Arab media market. Research-based media marketing companies have appeared and initiated Western-style market mechanisms. Now, not only private channels but also national channels are required to provide viewers with attractive programming to attract large viewership and advertising revenue. Even prominent private companies have been forced to merge with other media companies to stay afloat [k].

j) From a conversation with a Jordanian on January 29, 2011.

k) Two famous channels, Showtime and Orbit, merged recently to become Orbit Showtime Network (OSN).

These changes are reflected in the content of satellite channels. Many satellite companies are trying to attract viewers by providing more attractive programming, and some countries such as Egypt, UAE, and Jordan have coaxed media production companies to their borders with tax and other incentives. Because of these subsidies and the incentive of mass viewership, many Arab media channels can provide attractive programs to viewers.

5.2 Change in Programming

The most obvious changes have occurred in programming. Some entertainment channels imported program formats from Western hits such as *Star Academy*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, and *Big Brother*, adapting them for Arab consumers, with widespread success.

Likewise, news channels have begun to operate along international standards for entertainment quality and content accuracy. In addition to the famous *al-Jazeera*, other news channels such as *al-Arabiya* and *Abu Dhabi TV* are also watched by many Arabs.

Lately, a new religious segment has developed in Arab television, with 80 religious channels registered as of early 2009 [13]. Although religious television programming in the Arab world goes back to the early 1970s, recent religious programs are sometimes so close to entertainment programs that the distinction can be difficult. Some television preachers have wide fan bases among women and the youth.

At the same time, any discussion of Arab television expansion should include the fact that foreign countries are now broadcasting their channels in Arabic language for Arab viewers. The U.S. started *al-Hurra* after the Iraq War; France and Russia started the Arabic channels *France 24* and *Russia al-Youm* respectively. Foreign media are contributing to the diversity of Arab media and prompting further competition.

5.3 From the Arab Media to the International Media

Now that many Arab media companies are in competition and can produce quality programming, some channels are also broadcasting not only in Arabic but also in English in order to attract viewers outside of the Arab world. *Al-Jazeera*, which became famous particularly after the Iraq War in 2003, started its own English Channel in 2006. Other networks such as *MBC* also broadcast some channels in English [1], and some channels offer individual programs in both languages.

These changes may suggest the following result: Arab media companies are beginning to reach international standards for broadcasting quality. Therefore, some companies are now targeting viewers in the international arena. A primary example of this phenomenon is seen in the *MBC* group.

MBC has changed the way Arab eyes look at the world. With today's advanced technology, *MBC* continues to expand the landscape of broadcasting for a fast growing global audience. Our continued goal is to provide broadcasting values of unquestionable ethics and unparalleled quality. It is our focus. It is our vision [14].

As we see in this mission statement, the goal of the *MBC* group is not only to succeed in Arab countries but also to succeed in the international media market. The same can be said of the *al-Jazeera* network: When the channel started, it only broadcast in Arabic. However, after launching the *al-Jazeera International* channel in English, the network has placed an emphasis on international channels as well as its Arabic offerings. These networks understand that a market exists for viewers who do not understand the Arabic language but still desire the Arab perspective.



Main Studio in al-Jazeera International

6. Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of the history of broadcasting in the Arab world, with a particular focus on contemporary satellite television. Historically, Egypt has played an important role in circulating electronic media such as cinema and radio, and after the 1950s, Egypt broadcast its radio programs not only in Arabic but also in several foreign languages. However, in recent decades, Arab broadcasting has expanded to include multiple nationalities as well as private companies.

As the number of channels increases, media content has become more sophisticated, with some networks beginning to broadcast not only in Arabic but also in English in order to draw

1) The *MBC* network owns several channels.

non-Arabic viewers from outside the Arab world.

This paper has also shown how increases in the number of satellite channels are related to a decrease in consumer costs for watching satellite television. At the same time, the provision of more attractive programming has induced more and more viewers to purchase dishes and receivers than ever before. The demographic growth has in turn spawned local and regional competition, spurring networks to expand into the international market. The media situation in the Arab world is changing dramatically, and to understand its continuing development and impact on international markets and consumers, further study should be encouraged.

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