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Satellite Televisions in Lebanon: Agents of Change or Reinforcing the Status Quo?

Yara Youssef

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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**SATELLITE TELEVISIONS IN LEBANON:
AGENTS OF CHANGE OR REINFORCING THE STATUS QUO?**

SATELLITE TELEVISIONS IN LEBANON:
AGENTS OF CHANGE OR REINFORCING THE STATUS QUO?

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

YARA YOUSSEF, B.A.
Lebanese American University, 1998

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University of Arkansas

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Introduction

There has been a noted interest in the new technologies of the nineties, those that have expanded the realm of traditional mass media and the traditional means of communication that people were previously used to. With the start of globalization and the world becoming what some have called “global village,” the act of distributing information to the four corners of the world has become less complicated than it used to be, and boundaries are seen as constantly being eroded by the new pressures of modernization and liberalization. The internet and satellite televisions increased in importance in this realm, and so did the study of the impact of these means of communication on civil society and governments. The purpose of this study is to observe and analyze the impact of the new media, this new public sphere, on civil society and its politics, particularly in the case of Lebanon. My objective is to understand how the dynamics of the New Media and those of local politics interact and affect each other, and consequently to what extent this interaction is encouraging or permitting democratization and freedom of speech. In other words, is the New Media affecting the Lebanese political discourse? Or is it reinforcing the power of traditional politicians?

Case Study

In order to achieve this, I build on Habermas’ work on the public sphere of democratic debate, political dialogue, and of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books, extending it to the audiovisual realm. Moreover, I examine the main criticisms of Habermas’ work and observe alternatives and an expansion of his theory. As a result, I argue that in contemporary societies, an increase and redefinition of the public sphere is taking place because of new technologies and that these developments play an important part in our societies, and can possibly shape their development. My case study focuses

on Lebanon, questioning who are the real voices behind the new mass media, and in particular satellite television? What is their message or function? What are they trying to achieve? And how are they putting forward their agenda or free speech? Or are they able to promote an agenda in the first place? I analyze the political struggle that these institutions face, and their financial difficulties and subsequent limitations. Moreover, I ask how the growth of Satellite will influence Lebanon and the Arab world as a result. How the popularity and accessibility of satellite television is changing the way the Arabs see themselves and the rest of the world? Will increased freedom of information be an indication of a new democracy, or is satellite television just a subtle form of indirect control and a governmental distraction? And how do state interests influence the satellite channels, or are they actually free of any political pressures? Finally, I ask whether the “New Media” should be looked at as one body of communication, or whether satellite technology should be looked at separately from other means of communication such as the Internet, because of the structural differences that these two contain.

Methodology

To do this, I look at satellite television stations in Lebanon and their relationship with the Lebanese government. I provide a historical background to base the current situation of these media in Lebanon, as well as its position within the Arab World and the regional race towards satellite technology. I look at the different attempts to censor these stations, as well as their financial and contextual limitations. I create a longitudinal analysis of the elements of censorship during the years following the creation of the new audiovisual law until 2004. The majority of my research is qualitative, analyzing governmental actions towards satellite stations and the resulting change in the content of

those stations. I also look at self-censorship and the choices these stations make facing governmental pressure. I utilize my own field interviews as well as relevant literature to compile a comprehensive analysis of these changes. My sources range from newspaper coverage and analysis, to books relevant to the study, as well as various specialized journal articles, Georgetown University's "Arab Information Project," and the online Transnational Broadcasting Journal. I also use interviews with executives from televisions to get a grasp on the strategies and proposed mission of satellite televisions, and understand the dynamics between these media and the government.

This study will be divided into two main parts, further organized into different subdivisions. The first part will provide a literature review that discusses satellite televisions and the schools of thought that see it as a new and vibrant Public Sphere or otherwise; It also includes a history of media and satellite televisions in Lebanon and the Arab world in general, dividing this chapter into regional and thematic subdivisions, and comparing Lebanese media with its Arab counterpart, and the latter's effect on Lebanese satellite television; Finally, the second part consists of a longitudinal analysis of the latest developments that occurred subsequent to the creation of the audiovisual law in 1994 up until 2004, and an analysis of the implementation of the various media laws put in place, and the subsequent findings and conclusions one can draw from these events.

Relevant Literature

Freedom of the press is a basic criterion for determining if there is a democracy in a country. (Ungar, 1990) For many schools of thought, press freedom is a catalyst of other freedoms, a step towards full democratization. Furthermore, it is also seen as one of the most important elements needed in order to define a country as democratic. Another

school of thought, on the other hand, focuses on the ideological role of the systems of communication, and does not take their mere existence in a society at face value. Therefore, any consideration of democracy and conflict must begin with an analysis of systems of communication, and a study of their structure and content. For Raboy and Dagenais, "the media-crisis relationship becomes a key factoring the struggle for democracy, and media constitute a contested terrain in the struggles surrounding conceptualization, definitions and transformation of society in different parts of the world. (Alleyne, 1994)

There has been a wide array of literature that studies the New Media and the New Public Sphere that it supposedly creates, especially in the region of the Middle East. For example, one of the most prominent scholars on the subject is Jon Anderson, who studies the New Media and places the Internet and satellite television in the context of other "down-market technologies" such as cassettes, leafleting, magazines, and telephones. He contrasts these with the "old media," i.e. traditional state monopolies on television, radio and newspapers, which are designed to promote nation-building in authoritarian states. The old media, in Anderson's opinion, are known as "state theatres" and have provoked suspicion, social aloofness and conspiracy theories among receivers. By contrast, the New Media is beginning to de-monopolize the content and understanding of information in the Arab world, according to a number of scholars including Anderson himself. Therefore, the common trend in this school of thought is that "Down-market" information technologies will eventually bring a variety of controversial and important issues into every Arabic living room, therefore liberalizing and revolutionizing the existing status quo.

Another school of thought is more pessimistic towards the impact of communication technologies. Jon Alterman, for example, cast the information revolution in the Arab world in the context of the overall globalization process, and draws a distinction between the globalization of information, which erodes censorship and spurs the democratization of information, and the globalization of style -- the "McDonaldization" of the world -- which benefits only the producers of fashionable products. While the globalization of information is beneficial in general, it is relatively difficult to participate in it effectively due to the overwhelming volume of information available, and the limits of ownership that satellite technologies in particular offer. On the other hand, participation in the globalization of style is much easier, as it merely requires the purchase of a product, such as a subscription for cable or the installation of a dish.

In these terms, Alterman is less optimistic about the spread of information technology throughout the Arab world, noting a number of regional constraints. Limited English literacy and a shortage of technical skills and a low GDP per capita in some countries are the main obstacles which Alterman expects to restrain IT growth in Arab countries, though it is not the case in all Arab countries. Other obstacles include the political systems in these Arab countries, mostly ruled by Kings, dictators, and lifelong presidents who dread opposing views. Therefore Alterman believes that change starts within the society, not through mass media, and also notes how information technology can be destabilizing. He hypothesizes that information technologies may further the division of the small, "techno-savvy elites" from the rest of a population that lacks technology, access, and skills, and increased usage of information technology by

"cultural authenticity" movements to promote their message, coexist with the rise of hybrid identities spurred on by information globalization.¹

Nabil Dajani further discusses this idea of segmentation and the power of the elite in the Lebanese case in particular: He argues that Lebanese television channels are more characteristically tools for pursuing sectarian interests in the Lebanese perspective rather than furthering a broadly "Lebanese" agenda. This pattern became exaggerated during the Lebanese civil war and, subsequently, new legislation successfully reduced the number of permitted stations. However, Dajani argues, Lebanese television remains a tool of sectarian elites and is virtually devoid of programming beneficial for national development. Instead, it is mostly filled with European, Syrian, Egyptian and American movies, soap operas and other light entertainment. Dajani furthers his argument even more by suggesting that subscriptions to the satellite channels are driven far more by entertainment than by political and news programs. Moreover, even with the freedom some satellite televisions have, the restrictions imposed on them when it comes to discussing certain taboo issues are many and further impedes any change possible.

Point of study

Consequently, I argue that broadcast media have produced new public spheres and spaces for information, debate, and participation that contain both the potential to stimulate democracy and to augment the dissemination of critical ideas, as well as new possibilities for manipulation, social control, and the promotion of pro-governmental positions. The example of Lebanese satellite televisions is particularly pertinent in view of the false image it gives of a free media with no limits on its discourse, while the reality is different and reaches the extent of closing down stations as well as physical and

¹ Arab Information Project lecture [On-line] www.georgetown.edu/research/arabtech

psychological threats on journalists. The control that the Lebanese government exercises on these means of communication is justified with a number of reasons, mainly internal security, Lebanon's image abroad, and preserving ties with brotherly countries. The main powerbroker in this equation is Syria, a country that has been an occupation force for some, and a savior for others, for more than twenty years. Other powerbrokers include Saudi Arabia, which plays a major role in securing and offering investments to post-war Lebanon. Some politicians in the Lebanese government also regularly use the war with Israel as yet another reason for government censorship, and many justifications for imprisonment and other actions have been justified by the official line "dealing with the enemy." These elements and other regional considerations turn the Lebanese "free" and "new" press more of an old medium in a new disguise than a revolutionary process of democratization.

Significance

Actually, the case of Lebanon is important because it combines the two extremes the development of new technology in communication could lead to: it could help citizens revitalize democracy, or lure them into a surrogate for democratic dialogue. There is a fine line between the two, and understanding the Lebanese case is strongly relevant to prevent the latter on a wider Arabic level because of its deep history of media development. Lebanon is also an example of how Arab states use indirect means of control as opposed to obvious means of repression when the latter means fails to work. In other words, Arab governments have gotten used to fight those who are against them by following the same tactics that the opposing side does; in effect, it seems that governments choose the option of investing in satellite television as a counterattack and

as a way to allow people to vent without creating much change, instead of having to deal with an actual creation of a civil society that promotes national dialogue and the possibility of change. Moreover, often in studies scholars have tended to put the internet and satellite television within the same category, therefore rendering their significance equal in force instead and impact, and not putting enough importance on each medium as a unique and different experiment in communication and free speech.

Chapter 1: Literature

When the term communication is used, it is often used in close association with information. This is understandable, because the Latin roots of both words suggest that they possess valuable potentialities. It is significant that communication and community both share the Latin root *communis*, meaning common. From this root we got the other Latin word *communicare*, meaning “to make common to many, share, impart, divide.” (Alleyne, 1994) Therefore, inherent to the definition of communication is the idea of sharing. And one of the definitions of community is common character, identity, and background. This means communication is essential for the creation of something known as a community at both the domestic and international levels. Moreover, communication is conceived as a process that must be in place for any distribution of information to occur. And, in addition, communication is seen as the medium that promotes the right to hold and impart ideas, which is a fundamental principle of any credible democracy.

Communication and Democracy

Communication in modern democracies can be broadly divided into two main notions: the first one being that there is the democratized media or participatory media that includes the new media such as satellite television and computer-related media and can be termed alternative; and the second is that there are social movements and groups who use these media actively for social change. (Dahlgren, 1995) Notions of the public sphere first started with Habermas, and have been developed by other researchers such as Garnham (1986), Cohen (1985), Curran (1991), Scannel (1989), Blumler (1992), Keane (1991), and Tomlinson (1991). These notions have been picked up on by all media and political communication researchers studying many regions and aspects of the public

sphere. In his milestone book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), Habermas develops the normative notion of the public sphere as a part of social life where citizens can exchange views on matters of importance to the common good, so that public opinion can be formed. This public sphere comes into being when people gather to discuss issues of political concern.

The Notion of Public Sphere

With the term Public Sphere, I refer to communicative exchanges and relations which focus on subjects of political interest, in which the institutions of political power and the institutions of mass media mainly, but not solely, interact with each other. Public sphere, in other words, is where people gather informally to discuss the formal structures of society and government. It is the context where civil society flourishes and becomes active in criticizing and elaborating on the different issues pertaining to the public realm.

For Habermas, the public sphere is "a discursive arena that is home to citizen debate, deliberation, agreement and action." (Villa, 1992) Habermas' earlier work relies on a description of a historical moment during the 17th and 18th centuries when coffee houses, societies and salons became the center of debate, and he extends these arguments to an ideal of participation in the public sphere in today's world. During the era of the Enlightenment and 18th century democratic revolutions, public spheres emerged where individuals could discuss and debate issues of common concern. (Habermas, 1989) Habermas argues that a small-scale press is vital to the development of a participatory public and to related notions of citizenship. However, because Habermas attributed this

activity to the merchant middle classes who were literate and commercially independent, his theory is sometimes referred to as the bourgeois public sphere.

With the emergence of the welfare state in the twentieth century Habermas noted the further transformations of the public sphere. In his view, journalism's critical role in the wake of advertising, entertainment, and public relations becomes muted, and public opinion is no longer a process of rational discourse but the result of publicity and social engineering in the media. Habermas' analysis is truly ambitious and largely compelling, yet there remain some areas of difficulty in the point of view of many of his critics. It can be argued that even the discourse of the bourgeois public sphere at its zenith never manifested the high level of reasoned discourse he suggests, and furthermore that the situation under advanced capitalism is not as bleak and locked as he asserts.

The other significant public sphere theory comes from the political scientist Hanna Arendt. In her major work, *The Human Condition* (1958), she offers a critique of the mass society and the loss of public realm. While Habermas mainly analyses the modern bourgeois public sphere to develop his normative model, Arendt focuses on the public realm in the Greek polis. However, Arendt and Habermas both agree on the loss of distinction between the public and private spheres and the negative effects of this process on public sphere. They both criticize the mass society, with which they associate the decline of the public sphere and the creation of an industrialized society where the public sphere is controlled by different external factors.

Habermas Critics

In effect, the main criticism of the work of Habermas is the fact that he limits his observations to the burgeoning bourgeois atmosphere that culminated in a very lively

bourgeois society. This is why Kluge (1997) argues that the public sphere Habermas envisions is just a forum for the bourgeoisie, and that it does not represent all of society. Therefore, Kluge argued for the existence of a counter public sphere, which includes those that are not part of the bourgeois public sphere, and thus could not use the same medium that the bourgeois have access to. In his theory, there is a public sphere for the bourgeois and one for the proletariat, and the existence of a bourgeois public sphere with limited access does not mean the emancipation or freedom of expression of the other sections of society. Brecht's idea of a many-to-many communication device is an attempt to bridge these two theories. Through his device, Bertolt Brecht envisions a way to include everyone into the public sphere, and to encourage greater discourse within the existing limited public sphere, such as coffeehouses.

Habermas's ideas is further argued in Adorno's (1991) idea of a culture industry: Habermas claims that institutions that previously only published news --such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television-- have turned into "bearers and leaders of public opinion." In other words, that these media shape the ideas of those who have access to them. This sentiment coincides with Adorno's belief in a culture industry, in which he stipulates that this industry creates images and feeds ideology to the masses. Thus, the people who earlier only reported the news, are now creating the news, and Habermas may see this as beneficial because it increases discourse within the public sphere and promotes dialectic between the different parts of society, but Adorno argues the opposite, saying that this culture industry could only restrict the discussion in the public sphere, because it limits it to those who have the power to use these devices, and thus it dictates on those with lesser powers what to think.

Moreover, these “centers of debate” that mass media create, as Habermas theorized, were at some point important to social movements because they took the form of rational-critical debates, with a set of rules, including avoiding the use of emotion or emotive language, and focusing on the rationality of the content alone. In this context, it is the common interest, and the search for the truth, that prevails in the discussions. This entails the need for a conscientious media with a responsible and truthful background, not one that distorts and uses its powerful effect to promote its own interests. Habermas therefore emphasizes the critical role of the media in the public sphere, distinguishing between the early press that highlighted political controversy and the more recent development of media, which turn the news into a commodity. Habermas outlines the development of newspapers in the early 17th century, commenting that the press "was for the first time established as a genuinely critical organ of a public engaged in critical political debate: as the fourth estate." (Habermas, 1989:60)

However, although this might have been the case in England, it was not the norm in other countries. And, moreover, many of the old centers of the public sphere still exist, but are mere strongholds for governmental control and nation-building, especially with respect to developing countries. Many theorists have commented that television and other electronic communications further isolate people from one another and "substituted themselves for older spaces of politics," (Thornton, 1996) instead of bringing about a healthy public sphere for the exchange of ideas. Also, instead of reporting on politics, the media are becoming active participants in the political process through their role in publicity, and the selectivity of news reporting. Increasingly, the media has become central to political life and not only a bearer of truth for the common good.

Nevertheless, public debate on television and in newspapers bears little resemblance to the rational-critical debate idealized by Habermas. Events are manipulated to provide the maximum televisual impact, and debates and talk shows are structured so that extreme points of view can clash to maximum effect, increasing ratings but doing little to contribute to the formation of discursive public opinion. Moreover, topic selection reflects the pressures of commercial, political, and proprietorial interests, and programs can be viewed as providing an illusion of participation, which encourages citizens to feel as though their democratic rights are being exercised. This does not mean that mass media is not seen by some as a gateway to democratic participation. Curran (1991) argues how traditional media could play a democratic role in society by acting as an agency of representation. He suggests that media should be structured to allow diverse social groups to express their views. However, analyzing the democratic effect of these media cannot be carried out only through studying ratings and market shares, but also through studying the process in which programs are structured and put on the air, and what forces are responsible for controlling them.

Studying the Impact of Television

The process with which to study the impact of mass media in general, and television in particular, on the building of a healthy democratic public sphere is not limited only to an in-depth study of each of the phases of television production, it also must take into account the evolution of external influence and the general context. These are factors such as the political situation, cultural situation, communications media, and the dynamics of the audio-visual market. (Sala 2001) Such a study must also take into account the background of each media, the laws that regulate it, and ownership status. As

a matter of fact, “each society has to reinvent broadcasting in its own image as a means of containing and suppressing the geographical, political, spiritual, and social dilemmas which broadcasting entails.”²

Quite a few studies have been dedicated to comparative studies of communication systems and media in different countries and formats, and, in all these studies, members of the public sphere must, especially those in the media, adhere to certain rules for an 'ideal speech situation' to occur. They are as follows: Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse; Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever; Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse; Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs; No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down before. (Villa, 1992) If all these rules are set in place, then television is really a democratic medium that provides equal access to all and helps everyone in attaining their goals, no matter what they are. However, we still have along way to go to achieve a real freedom of access and speech in television as a whole, especially in developing countries where the government has a strong control over media.

Does Television Entail Democracy?

There are among scholars and media observers those who regard television as a genuinely democratic medium with the capacity to bring politics into the houses of voters, thus enabling them to be critical. But on the other hand there are those who consider that television commodifies politics into short 'image bites', and that television campaigns tend to bypass journalists through the use of 'managed' political events.

2. Quote from Anthony Smith. President of the Magdalen College at Oxford, and once a program editor for the BBC

Television is also seen as a medium that promotes a certain trend's point of view, while suppressing the other, because of the financial or political limitations imposed on the medium. However, Habermas is not as worried about analyzing questions of ownership and control. He introduced the idea of the public sphere, describing it as a forum for public opinion, and as a mediator between the private and state spheres. Through the public sphere, individuals can exercise political control and create discourse. Habermas maintains that access should be guaranteed for all citizens. However, he also maintains that "rational citizens" are a prerequisite for such a forum to succeed, making public access more restricted than what he initially argues for. He does not take into consideration the financial reality of starting a medium that is truly expensive, nor does he seem to take the masses into account. Newspapers, magazines, radio, and television act as the media for a "rationally-restricted" public sphere only.

Nonetheless, in its European origins, the free press was inspired by ideas of natural rights and citizenship in respect of monarchy and rulers following Locke's theory, a legal tradition which sought to limit state power, secular views based on rationalism and free thought rather than religious doctrine, and a belief in a pluralist 'marketplace of ideas' and diversity of information based on economic laissez-faire principles. Moreover, Milton was perhaps the most celebrated of those preceding writers who triumphantly argued the case for press freedom, giving a number of reasons to why licensing and censorship was counter-productive: It was not in the tradition of free speech; people should be considered mature enough to discern good from evil; even the Bible would have to be censored because that book contained tales of both good and evil; objective truth is that which is tested by contrary points of view; the government is assuming

infallibility when deciding whether a medium is “good” or not; and, finally, the people might not be as enthusiastic to defend their government in times of foreign attack. (Alleyne, 1994) Furthermore, Mill reaffirmed that “there is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence: and to find that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs, as protection against political despotism.” (Mill, 1859, in Acton 1972: 73)

Interactive Media: Beyond Traditional Boundaries

Earlier in the century, John Dewey envisaged developing a newspaper that would convey "thought news," bringing all the latest ideas in science, technology, and the intellectual world to a general public, which would also promote democracy. (Czitrom, 1982) In addition, Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 1969) perceived the radical potential of innovative technologies similar to film and radio and advocated the seizure of these new forces of production, in order to "re-function" them, and to turn them into instruments to democratize and revolutionize society. Sartre too worked on radio and television series and insisted that "committed writers must get into these relay station arts of the movies and radio." (Sartre, 1974: 177)

In fact, effective use of technology is essential in contemporary politics and that those who wish to intervene in the new public spheres need to deploy new communications media to participate in democratic debate and to shape the future of contemporary societies and culture. As a matter of fact, new communication technologies, especially satellite TV, now seem to serve the purpose of revolutionizing societies. Tyrannical behavior can supposedly be exposed, dissident opinions can be aired, and public opinion can be relayed back to governments. Nonetheless, I argue that

broadcast media like radio and television, and now computers, have produced new public spheres and spaces for information, debate, and participation that contain the potential to invigorate democracy and to increase the dissemination of critical and new ideas. In addition to this great potential is the risk of finding new possibilities for manipulation, social control, and the promotion of pro-government and stagnant positions.

Participation in these new public spheres all requires critical persons to gain new technical skills and to master new technologies. It also requires enabling access to those who do not have the means to promote their views in the traditional means of communication. However, the mere existence of this new public sphere does not consequently imply more freedom and more access by everyone. In effect, the "New Media" as we know it are no longer "Mass Media". Mass media, in the traditional sense of sending a limited number of messages to a homogenous mass audience, was replaced by the new media in which the multiplicity of messages and sources can be sent and the audience itself becomes more selective. Therefore, there is evolution from a "mass society" to a "segmented society," and the Lebanese experience with Satellite televisions is one example of this "segregation."

The New Public Sphere in Lebanon

As we will see in the following chapter, the Lebanese media experience is a complex matter which projects a multi-layered reality of the traditional Public Sphere Habermas and others refer to. In Habermas' view, it is spaces similar to satellite televisions that enabled critical thinking and paved the way towards more freedom of expression and interactive debate. However, the Lebanese structure and experience cannot be only seen as a promoter of the freedom of speech and a "bearer of opinion." In

fact, many other elements come into play in the Lebanese case, one of them being the sectarian structure of media, its elitist ownership control, and the regional players that influence its broadcast. Actually, the Lebanese experience goes beyond the criticisms of Adorno and Brecht and the need for an interactive media, because the former offers interactivity, but is nonetheless still tied down to its regional and local realities. Dajani offers an extensive study of the Lebanese case in his book *Disoriented Media in a Fragmented Society: the Lebanese Experience* (Dajani, 1992), where he observes and analyses the sectarian and elitist structure of the Lebanese society. However, his book was published prior to the audiovisual laws of 1994 and 1996, and before the airing of the first satellite broadcasts in 1996. Moreover, ownership is rarely discussed in similar later studies, although it explains a big part of the media reality in Lebanon. Furthermore, the recent developments play an even more important part in studying and understanding where the supposed Lebanese Public Sphere is heading towards, because of new ownership, mergers, and governmental interferences that I will analyze later in this study.

***Chapter 2: Lebanese and Arab Media and
Satellite History***

Of the 22 countries that constitute the Arab world, Lebanon is by far one of the most liberal countries, whether it is through its liberal market or its society. The Lebanese media has furthermore been a pioneer in distributing information freely, despite the various limitations put in place by the Ottoman, French, and current Lebanese administration. Lebanese journalists have been known to write their opinion regardless of pressures from governments, and have also been known to exile themselves for the purpose of keeping their “pens” free. Numerous have fled to Egypt and the United States under the Ottoman and French rule, and the many that stayed have always defied oppression and been punished for it. Nevertheless, Lebanon remains a country where freedoms are limited and undermined despite all the efforts made to overcome this situation. This is why it offers a great example for this study: Lebanon has acquired means of communication that are not government-controlled by definition, which would fit them into the liberal trade theory of commercial means of communication controlled by independent capital and advertising revenues, and therefore free. However, the complex structure of these “independent” means of communication makes them vulnerable to the traditional means of control, mainly by the government. And this is furthermore exacerbated with the emergence of the new means of communication that constitute a greater responsibility to the traditional power structure.

Lebanon’s “Special Freedoms”

Although part of the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon was given a special “protocol” in 1861 that assured the preservation of freedom in its territories. This protocol was signed by England, Russia, France, Austria, and the Ottoman Empire, and only included the area of Mount Lebanon. However, the early print media misused these rights to promote a

certain ethnic and religious message and spoke for one group to the detriment of the others and thus could not be defined as either objective or journalistic in the professional sense of the word. Ironically, this is how mass media in Lebanon is viewed and operates until this day, despite its ancient myth that the media promote freedom of speech. As a matter of fact, Dajani and other scholars refer to the year 1916 as the turning point when media censorship made it clear that it reached its peak: the year when 16 journalists were hanged in Damascus for influencing public opinion. (Dajani 1992) The hanging came under the last vestiges of the Ottoman rule, which was known to be oppressive and brutal, before the end of World War I and the beginning of a hopeful new era. Many journalists that had fled to Egypt thought the French mandate will improve this situation, and had high hopes for returning to their home country.

However, by 1920, the French mandate was taking a more tangible and colonialist form and did not change the situation but further restricted freedom of the press: 250 publications were discontinued by the end of the French mandate that lasted from 1920 up until 1946. (Kamalipour and Mowlana, 1994) Also, gaining independence from the French did not generate freedom of speech nor did it improve the conditions of the Lebanese media as was thought early on. Actually, the established French laws remained in practice until 1953; 7 years after the last French soldier withdrew from the Lebanese territory. Moreover, the decree put into writing that year further banned the issuance of new licenses for publications as long as a certain number of dailies and weeklies were maintained, and it was not until 1962 that an official Lebanese press law was established, and it only covered print media. This law prohibited the publication of news that endangers the national security or unity or frontiers of the state or that degrade a foreign

head of state. (Kamalipour and Mowlana, 1994) This vague law is still in use today and decides what can be aired or published, and is the basis of self-censorship of all journalists in all media fields. Moreover, the chaotic events that Lebanon went through and is still going through made national security the perfect excuse for the Lebanese government to interfere and exercise its controlling power on mass media, despite the continuous efforts of the latter to rise above censorship, and despite the commercial nature of television. Furthermore, though Lebanese television started as a private commercial venture, it developed into a replica of Lebanese society that could never overcome its limitations.

Television as a Private Enterprise

The French government in Lebanon was the first entity that established the country's radio broadcast service in 1937, and it was then transferred directly to the Lebanese government in 1946. The story of Lebanese television is quite different. Contrary to the development of other Arab countries, the first television company that was founded on Lebanese soil was a private enterprise run by two Lebanese businessmen in agreement with the Lebanese government. This, Dajani insists, is the "Lebanese television's main weakness, for the logic of a commercial enterprise in the developing countries often runs counter to that of public service and societal well being." (Dajani 1992: 91)

Other schools of thought runs counter to this argument, stating that freedom of the media worldwide go hand in hand with free-market capitalism. In effect, it was a combination between private enterprise and government that led to the inauguration of the first television. The endeavor to set up television broadcasting in Lebanon started

October 1954 when two Lebanese businessmen, Wissam Izzedine and Alec Arida, put forward a request to form a television broadcasting company with the financial help of the French government. An agreement was signed on August 1956 after two years of negotiations, and consequently La Compagnie Libanaise de Television (CLT) was born. However, the license was not a monopoly as the applicants had requested, but it authorized them to broadcast television signals on two VHF channels, one in Arabic and the other in French. The first commercial television station in the Arab world station inaugurated its service on May 28, 1959.

However, the agreement signed with the government predetermined that the television would remain under official government inspection, and would not be permitted to broadcast programs that would threaten “public security, morals, religious groups, or enhance the image of any political personality or party.” (Dajani, 2001) This broad form of restriction is what mainly characterizes the relationship between the government and television stations today, whether it comes through voluntary or forced censorship. Under the conditions of CLT’s contract, television programs were restricted to education and entertainment only. It allowed the company a certain appearance of political expression, as superficial as it can be, but was quite generous in giving it all the time it needed for advertising: advertising messages could cover up to 25 per cent of the total broadcast time. (Dajani, 1992) Finally, the agreement also required that the company should broadcast, free of charge, news programs and official bulletins submitted by the Ministry of Information. Additionally, television was to be subject to all laws and regulations relevant to the rights of the press and of authors, as well as all national and international laws and regulations dealing with wireless communication and

broadcasting. The contract was signed for 15 years at the end of which the government had the right to buy the television's installations.

Another group of Lebanese businessmen, backed by the American network ABC, approached the government with a request to set up a second television station, *Compagnie de Television du Liban et du Proche-Orient -- Tele Orient*. In the case of *Tele Orient*, transmission began on May 6, 1962, under an agreement similar to the one granted to CLT, and with programming similar to CLT in Arabic, English, and French. However, a tough competition and a lack of adequate organization, especially in selling advertising time, plagued the two television companies the first decade of their existence. This drove both companies to join forces and develop similar advertising sales techniques, and to coordinate the programming and marketing of their programs. Until the beginning of the civil war in 1975, the two companies succeeded in making large amounts of profit and revenue from television advertising, and total television income from advertising showed a 19.5 per cent increase over 1973 and constituted 35.3 per cent of total 1974 advertising expenditure in Lebanon. (Dajani, 2001) Additionally, both companies sold locally produced programs to television institutions in the Arab countries.

In December 1974 the Lebanese Council of Ministers renewed the license of CLT for a period of nine years only, and the new agreement sought to institutionalize and formalize the political control of broadcasting by the government. Under the terms of the new agreement, the Lebanese government had the authority to buy the transmission installations and lease them to CLT, and two government censors were to be permanently present at the station. The agreement also stipulated CLT would broadcast a daily one-

hour early evening program prepared by the government. It further required that CLT pay 6.5% of its net advertising revenue to the government and authorized a maximum of nine minutes of advertising per hour, with a maximum of three minutes during news programs. The 1974 agreement also made general requests that TV programs should be "of the highest possible standards" and that CLT should "train its staff in the artistic and technical fields." (Dajani, 1992: 96)

However, not only were the clauses in the agreement too vague to be applied fully, but also the outbreak of the civil war a year later paralyzed the government's institutions and made it even harder to follow the contract's rules and regulations. Nonetheless, this did not prevent the government from initiating a similar agreement in December 1977 that tied Tele Orient to similar obligations, although failing to implement them in their entirety as well.

Damages of the Civil War

The first two years of the civil war were seriously damaging and challenging for the two television companies: The war reduced advertising drastically, and both companies incurred heavy losses. The two television stations were able to keep their transmissions going and to prevent their equipment from being damaged, but producing programs was a hard thing to do under these circumstances. On March 11, 1976, an unsuccessful coup d'état led by Brigadier General Abdel Aziz al-Ahdab led militias from both sides to occupy both stations, which made production totally impossible and consequently divided the news rhetoric on both sides to suit the factions' affiliations. Consequently, the news program in the west Beirut station in Tallet al-Khayyat showed

great support for the Muslim "nationalist forces" while that in the east Beirut station supported the President Suleiman Franjeh's Christian supporters. (Dajani, 2002, Dajani, 1992, Rugh, 1987) General Ahdab also took over the medium wave and FM radio transmitters, and both the radio and television in West Beirut broadcast pro-Ahdab newscasts each night. Meanwhile, Franjeh's supporters refused to let him resign and continued to control short-wave radio transmitters and Hazmieh's Tele Liban branch. (Rugh, 1987)

The split of the broadcast media also generated escalation in the war because each faction targeted the transmission and equipment of the opponent's television. Moreover, transmission was also badly affected by chronic power failures, which, combined with all other factors, incurred heavy losses on both companies and pushed them on the verge of bankruptcy. This escalation in events necessitated seeking secure financial assistance from the government, which the companies did when they requested the interference of the government at the end of 1976. At that point a new president, Elias Sarkis, was elected and the pace of hostilities apparently diminished. Hope was growing among people that this new government could bring the end of the civil war.

Following the televisions' request, any decision taken by the new government could either destroy television in Lebanon or strengthen it and use it to promote the institutions of the government and national dialogue. At this point in time, the government viewed television as another tool for nation-building, at a time when war was destroying national unity. However, if it agreed to extend aid, the new regime would also have to aid other institutions affected by the war, and it did not have the means and

resources to do so. To answer these urgent questions a special committee was formed under the auspices of the Council of Ministers to study the conditions of television in Lebanon. The committee was charged with the task of making recommendations to maintain the operation of this medium and preserve it, thus promoting national dialogue. (Dajani, 1992) At the end, the committee's report urged the Lebanese government to take a more active role in the development of television and recommended merging CLT and Tele Orient into a new company controlled mostly by the government, while the private sector would control the remaining portion; it further recommended that the two existing companies be given the option to purchase the shares of the public sector. The Council of Ministers approved the report and a legislative decree was issued on December 30, 1977, legalizing the birth of a new television company, the Lebanese Television Company -- Tele Liban. The company was formed "to manage, organize and utilize the various television transmitting installations, and to undertake all commercial and television production tasks." (Dajani, 1992: 199) Tele Liban was to be managed by a board of directors of twelve members: six representing the Lebanese government and the remaining six representing the two companies, while the chairman of the board was to be appointed by the Lebanese Council of Ministers.

Accordingly, the financial assistance given by the government not only made it possible to rebuild and improve the existing transmitters in order to cover all the Lebanese territory, but it also increased the hours of transmission. However, this change further strengthened the official Lebanese policy, which consisted mainly of seeking to legalize censorship of television programs in order to keep this medium under control by limiting its political influence." The function of Tele Liban, according to an official at the

Ministry of Information, was "to bring together the best of what the public sector had to offer –in terms of its primary concern for the needs of the country- and the strength of the private sector in dynamic management and profit making." (Dajani, 2001) However, both government and the private sector, which jointly managed television under the Tele Liban plan, continued to provide programs that were determined by their private political or economic interests more than by the public interest. Not a single local television program addressed the serious sectarian problem that plagued the Lebanese society and was one of the main causes of the civil war. And while television, and the print media in general, apparently gave their audiences an "over-dose" of political discussions, there always has been an almost total absence of public affairs programming and lack of investigative reporting about issues that affect the livelihood of the average Lebanese -- such as the shortage of water and electricity supplies. (Dajani, 2001) Habermas' idea of the creation of a Public Sphere that would promote national dialogue was rendered in the Lebanese case into a commercial venture that is oblivious of the realities of civil war and the fragmentation of civil society, and no government action would be able to stop the drastic changes that were to come.

The Mushrooming of Illegal Media Stations

Furthermore, what escalated to become a 15 years of civil war in Lebanon destabilized the whole system and shook the existing structures of mass media as established earlier in the century. The war decentralized all the major institutions, including mass media, even with the creation of an official governmental television station. The events that occurred during the war weakened the operation of public media

institutions, both radio and television, and strengthened private ventures instead. Thus, following the divisions that occurred on the state level, private militias, political parties, and others showed interest in sponsoring several television and radio station, as well as newspapers and magazines. As Hammoud and Afifi say, “the opportunity to distribute – often biased – information illegally through mass media channels without penalty was too attractive for most political parties to ignore.” (Kamalipour and Mowlana, 1994: 161) Moreover, the divisions that occurred on the geographical level also instigated the need for television and radio that go beyond the traditional boundaries, and controlling those means permitted different political parties to send their message to others. These televisions and radio stations worked as satellite television do today, sending messages across boundaries to reach people from other “countries” and “societies.” As a result, the worsening of the state of affairs in Lebanon and the further deterioration of the central government during the Amin Jemayel presidency in the mid 1980s encouraged some of the warring factions to establish their own pirate television stations, which resulted in a mushrooming of televisions overnight, with one main objective: spreading each faction’s ideology while undermining the others’.

Most important among these new televisions was the Lebanese Broadcasting Company (LBC), which was the official organ of the Christian militia the “Lebanese Forces,” and Al-Mashrek Television, established by politicians opposed to the regulars of LBC, mainly the Syrian Nationalist Party. Also among the important pirate stations at the time was the New Television (NTV) established by the Lebanese communist party and later bought by independent businessman Tahseen Khayyat and other independents. LBC went on the air in August 1985 and quickly captured the interest of a wide array of

viewers in terms of entertainment and variety. Al-Mashrek (The Orient) Television began its experimental broadcasting in 1989 and started airing regular programs in April 1990. By the beginning of 1991 it became a serious competitor for both LBC and Tele Liban and its heavy use of Arabic programs and films attracted large audiences. New Television began its transmission in April 1991 and aired programs that had no relationship to the ideology of the communist party but were mainly commercial. Other television stations with more limited coverage included Sigma TV and Kilikia Television, both based in West Beirut, the Muslim district, and both were only interested in transmitting music videos and important entertainment programs. (Dajani, 1992) Moreover, the mushrooming of TV stations in Lebanon did not end here: in the early 1990's, C33, Al-Salam TV, TV One, Cable Video Network, and ICN were among a few other televisions with less impact on the Lebanese audience, while Murr TV and Future television were the latest additions to the group, with a substantive bigger effect on Lebanese politics and people.

The creation of de facto television stations faced both the Lebanese government and the private sector involved with Tele Liban with a new challenge; the deterioration of the quality of the human element and technical skills at Tele Liban allowed the de facto stations to easily attract Lebanese viewers to their programs and consequently draw advertisers to them. Consequently, Tele Liban officials filed a lawsuit requesting large financial compensation from the three leading de facto stations at the time: LBC, al-Machrek, and NTV. However, all television stations, including Tele Liban, were generally indifferent to the public needs for the coverage of subjects that relate to their livelihood, such as the problems of the shortage of electricity and water, pollution, and

the high cost of living. Instead, these stations focused on engaging in an ideological war between the various factions, and limited itself to representing and attacking political officials, political parties, and players in the political realm in general. Televisions were also highly biased in covering news of the raging war that was going on.

During the famous 1989 Taif agreement, Lebanese members of the parliament were able to arrive at a regionally and internationally supported accord that marked the end of the Lebanese civil war. The Taif Agreement, which was later incorporated in the Lebanese constitution, called for the reorganization of the media in Lebanon, among other more important “co-existence” clauses. The deliberations of members of the parliament called for legalizing the existing de facto radio and television stations and upon the signing of this agreement many politicians and businessmen hurried to set up television stations so as to establish their "right" for a television license. By the end of 1991, 46 television stations were set up in a matter of few months and some ten of the new stations were on the air, transmitting on UHF channels as all the VHF channels were already in use. (Dajani, 1992) This state of affairs was the natural extension to what civil society was going through during the difficult warring years. As a matter of fact, it was the most natural expansion of the Public Sphere(s) that mushroomed during the war, and came as a result of already-present societal segmentation.

The Sectarian Structure of the Media

Like any set of institutions rooted in a political system, the broadcast media of a country or region reflect the existing distribution of power, and the Taif agreement consecrated this power balance, whether in its parliamentary seats’ distribution, or the

endless effort to balance between the powers of the Maronite President, the Sunni Prime Minister, and the Shiite Chief of Parliament. To see how this structural relationship can result in censorship in the media realm, it is instructive to start by looking at broadcasting arrangements in Lebanon, since these are potentially the most liberal in the Arab world and the most divisive on the societal level. In the Lebanese confessional system, political positions are assigned on the basis of sectarian affiliation, while unified state institutions take a back seat. Parliamentary seats are divided according to a “representative” model, whereby each sect is represented according to a percentage it supposedly holds within the overall population. Moreover, directors, civil servants, diplomats, and even teachers in public service are chosen according to their faith and political affiliation. The Lebanese typical college and high school graduates find themselves having to go back to their religious leaders or political figures that are affiliated with their sect in order to find a job. In other words, there is no space for qualifications in this state of affairs. In the case of media in Lebanon today, each private station is linked to a prominent politician or religious group, and the majority of these stations’ employees reflect the sectarian nature of each station. Furthermore, as we will see at a later stage in this study, ownership reflects not only sectarian but also political and familial affiliations based on sectarian backgrounds. This element of the study is the most important in later discussion of media status and satellite status in Lebanon, because it is one of the most decisive elements in how each station makes internal decisions, and how the government interacts with each station.

The Lebanese media situation is an example of the contradictory state of transformation and persistence that Lebanon is going through. The existing media laws

specify that television institutions be not directly managed or run by the government or private individuals or politicians. The practice, however, is different but is congruent with the special socio-political structure of the Lebanese society. In a country divided intrinsically along sectarian preference, governmental actions of censorship and oppression reflect a power balance that is increasingly unequal. Moreover, dividing these stations along opposition and pro-government lines also show the degree to which the government allows freedom of speech that is different from its own, and to what degree the government allows opposition to state its views about the government and its allies. In addition, internal rifts within the government also play an important role in looking at these means of communication and their effect on government and the public, as we will later see. Last but not least, ownership and economic issues also play an important role in the Lebanese media case because they further reflect the sectarian and political backdrop and strengthen their stronghold through economic means. Furthermore, the fact that these politicians seek support from powerful regional players increases the complexity that they have with the media, creating layers of censorship that go beyond the local arena. All these issues play a role in the Lebanese media structure, and affect the impact of the New Media in particular on democracy and freedom of speech.

Satellite Technology in the Arab World

Despite the fact that Lebanon was developed in the media arena, the country's civil war prevented the technological development brought by satellite and encouraged by Arab countries since the late 1960s and up until the eighties. In fact, Lebanon was a latecomer in this area, although it later became a powerful player in the area of

entertainment. In fact, it was the Gulf that first introduced the medium to countless of Arabs, a fact that goes counter the theory that says that information technology will revolutionize societies in drastic ways. Moreover, this New Public Sphere that was created was first provided for pure entertainment purposes, and in its first stages was only interactive for entertainment purposes also, which limited the area for analytical and constructive political and social discussions.

Still, the introduction of Satellite broadcasting and the Internet challenged information control by Arab states in a way that was not possible before. And this started not only in the 1990s with the advent of satellite television proliferation, but even before that with the introduction of satellite sending of printed information to publish newspapers around the world. With this new technology, government and businessman strived to control Arab audiences in new ways, which created a competitive state of affairs never before seen in the Arab world. Satellite access was and still is limited to government bodies and wealthy businessmen, however, which made this information revolution less powerful than it should have been.

The first major impact of new satellite technologies on Arab media happened in the eighties and not in the nineties as is commonly known: It was the satellite-using daily newspapers, not television, which introduced the idea of sharing information across traditional boundaries. First al-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper, and later al-Hayat newspaper, began satellite transmission from London to major population centers throughout the Arab world. Although owned by private Saudi interests, these papers address themselves to a pan-Arab audience, and their reporters, editors and columnists reflect that sense of different Arabic backgrounds. The irony was that in the end it was wealth, generated in a

conservative Arab country, and not radical Arab ideology such as the Baath party or the Nasserist that had brought about a pan-Arab press. (Schleifer, 1998) This trend still holds truth until today, with satellite televisions owned by Saudi individuals and powerful political and financial elites all over the Arab World.

By the mid-eighties an Arab-states satellite system, called Arabsat, was equipped and ready to be used, but despite the original provision of transponders potent enough to send out signals that could be picked up by small dishes, there was no attempt to use the Arabsat satellites as direct broadcast satellites providing direct broadcast service (DBS) either to cable, MMDS and encrypted terrestrial companies retransmitting the programming or direct-to-home (DTH) services to the rare but slowly growing number of homes equipped with dishes. (Schleifer, 1998) Instead, Arabsat satellites were used in this initial phase for news and public affairs exchanges between existing Arab state-owned national television stations. This meant that the type of news that people received around the Arab world was mainly news of official visits of kings and presidents, without any use of real journalistic skills such as political analysis and investigation. Television stations were owned by governments, unlike other media that had a slightly wider margin of freedom. Moreover, the national television channels were extensions of the ministries of information, with the exception of television in Lebanon. As a matter of fact, it is no accident that in a number of Arab countries the minister of information operated the major offices of his ministry from the national television station building. (Schleifer, 1998)

While recent events have put Arab media at the center of world politics, the history of the development of television satellite broadcasting in the Arab world started in

the early nineties with the second Gulf War, (Amin, 2000; Amin & Boyd, 1994; Barkey, 1996; Kraidy, 1998; Millichip, 1996; Sakr, 1999; Schleifer, 1998) and its rapid growth was made possible by political and technical developments put in place since the late 1960s. During the second Gulf War, the Arab world experienced what has been defined by experts as the CNN effect, whereby governments and people in the Arab world realized the importance of satellite technologies in getting information as well as controlling it. As a matter of fact, as early as 1967, Arab information ministers expressed the importance of a satellite network whose objective would be the integration of the social and cultural activities of the Arab League, a regional organization formed after World War II. Furthermore, the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) was created in 1969 to oversee the establishing of such an organization. Saudi Arabia did not join the Egypt-led and Cairo-based ASBU until 1974, probably because of the tense relationship between Saudi Arabia and Egypt at the time. On April 14, 1976, the Arab Satellite Communications Organization (ARABSAT) was established under Arab League jurisdiction, and was entrusted with serving the information, cultural and educational needs of its members. Saudi Arabia was the main financier of the new organization, because of its considerable financial resources expanded by the oil price boom of 1973, and Riyadh, the Saudi capital, housed its headquarters. (Boyd, 1999) Today, Saudi Arabia takes the lead in satellite communication systems in the Arab world.

After an unsuccessful launching endeavor by a French Ariane rocket led to the loss of the first satellite 1-A, the U.S. space shuttle Discovery successfully launched a second ARABSAT satellite, 1-B in 1985. (Amin & Boyd, 1994) ARABSAT then launched its second generation satellites 2-A and 2-B in July and November, 1996

respectively, and the expanded technical capacities of ARABSAT 2 were said to give ARABSAT a competitive edge in the region. (Kazan, 1996) The third generation of ARABSAT 3-A satellite was launched in February 1999 and is currently co-located with 2-A. This last satellite is a powerful transmitter with one single transponder covering all Arab countries, most of Europe and a good part of Africa. In 1997, Egypt launched its first Satellite NILESAT 101 and by 1999 there were 68 channels, Arab and foreign, using it because of its coverage in the region. Other satellites that serve the region include EutelSat w2 and Hotbird 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. (Darouny, 2000)

During the course of all this technological advancement, Arab governments competed with private companies for a share in the distribution and content of information and entertainment directed towards more than 300 million Arabic speakers across the Arab Middle East and other regions of the world. A race to occupy the living rooms of Arabs around the world began. Initial satellite broadcasts by the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) and the Egyptian government satellite channel (ESC) in 1991 were followed by a variety of contenders: In 1993, Arab Radio and Television (ART) began broadcasting in Arabic and English. It was soon followed by Orbit Satellite Television and Radio Network, which in 1994 transmitted on 19 television channels. (Russell, 1994) Both these stations aired from Italy, while MBC aired from London. By 1996, Arab skies were raided by a surplus of satellite televisions. Several government-sponsored services emerged, such as Libya TV, Yemen TV, Jordan TV, Oman TV and the Syrian Satellite Channel, and they competed against private corporations such as MBC, ART, Orbit, and also Lebanon's Future Television and the Lebanese Broadcasting

Corporation International, both of whom were relatively late comers when they went on the air respectively in 1994 and 1996. (Kraidy, 1998)

Lebanon's position in the Arab World

Historically, Lebanon has always been an essential component of pan-Arab and transnational media. Baha Abu Laban reported that in the 1960s, President Nasser of Egypt read the Lebanese press first thing in the morning to get a sense of current affairs in the Arab world. (Kraidy, 2000) This is due to the fact that the Lebanese press has traditionally reflected the political currents and power struggles occurring in the region as well as on the local level. In reality, Lebanon's unique political and social history has given this small country leverage and influence in the rest of the Arab world, particularly in mass media. Lebanese journalists have always been pioneers in the field of media and, despite various repressions, have been able to maintain their status as political and social analysts even if they had to immigrate to do so. Also, with all the technologies at hand today, scholars view the digital age of satellite broadcasting and the Internet as a way to increase Lebanon's media's influence in the Arab world furthermore. (Kraidy, 2000)

The pan-Arab influence of Lebanese television can also be explained by other factors. Even though LBC, and since 1994 LBCI, was first created as a mouthpiece for the Christian right-wing militia group the "Lebanese Forces," the station remained focused on its main goal, which was commercial initially. As a matter of fact, throughout the civil war, LBCI attracted a large section of the Muslim audience by broadcasting Fawazeer Ramadan, an entertainment program produced only during the holy month of Ramadan, in addition to other special programming. This is seen as a grand gesture in a community divided along sectarian lines with each sect having its own television and

radio station. This commercial logic, imitated later on by other stations such as Future television, has made these companies competitive, aiming for international production standards despite limited specificities. Moreover, unlike other Arab broadcasters, these companies did not have to please a certain ruling class to acquire a budget for their productions, but had to attract and keep an audience in order to maintain a stable flow of advertising dollars. In other words, the relationship between the media and the government was not as obvious as was the case with other Arabic channels.

In the 1990s, Lebanese television stations, and most prominently LBCI, produced a variety of socio-political talk shows which became wildly popular with Lebanese audiences. These shows tackled many issues usually considered taboo in the Arab world, many of which were social issues such as premarital sex, incest, and homosexuality. Other episodes had distinctly political themes, such as representative democracy, civil rights, gender equality, religion and atheism, freedom of speech and others. (Kraidy, 2002) Many of these shows were not broadcast via satellite at first, such as Ziad Njeim's "Istifta" on Murr TV, and therefore they did not reach a vast pan-Arab audience. However, some of them gradually reached the transnational level and reached Arab homes over the globe, therefore affecting in one way or the other the usual status quo that Arab leaders were used to. This novelty was seen as a first step towards an active role of the Lebanese media in Arab countries including Lebanon, especially in the light of the fact that the trend in other Arab satellites' programming was geared solely towards entertainment, with the exception of Al-Jazeera television that was founded later in 1996.

Transition between War and Satellite

During the period between 1960 and the early 1990s, broadcasting exploded out of proportion within the Lebanese borders. The years of civil war created a state of chaos in the Lebanese skies so, in order to control the rising number of TV stations and their coverage, the Lebanese parliament passed a set of regulations in 1994 to re-structure broadcasting. According to the new law, the only four authorities that could control a media source were the Prime Minister and his/her cabinet. In formulating media regulations, Arab states are primarily concerned with national security, often very loosely defined as any criticism of the current regime. Moreover, laws regulating the media tend to be ambiguous and flexible, giving the governments a lot of power to interpret them however they want to. In addition, law enforcement tends to be very selective, meaning that if a media outlet has close connections to government officials and it breaches a regulation, it is protected from being shut down. Besides, there are still many overlapping legal jurisdictions. For example, television stations have to abide not only to the newly-created audiovisual law, but also to election laws, press laws and media laws.

The attempt to regulate television stations in Lebanon happened during Elias Hrawi's presidency, which had the enormous job of re-establishing government authority after the civil war. The first Hrawi government felt the urgency of introducing new legislation that puts order into the broadcasting field, and therefore in 1991 the Minister of Information recommended the reorganization of television broadcasting in Lebanon. The first attempted reorganization granted local licenses only to stations whose total assets are Lebanese and whose stations broadcasted exclusively on UHF channels. However, in order not to upset the delicate status quo, the Minister recommended that

Tele Liban be able to lease temporarily some of its channels to other stations in return for a fee. By that, the government insured the rights of Tele Liban and provided it with funds to improve its facilities and services while at the same time allowing the de facto stations to continue their operation, thus appeasing the different warring factions. The recommendations of the Minister were referred to a special ministerial committee, and the committee's deliberations were the basis of a January 1992 Council of Ministers decision, which stated that "all television institutions which are presently operating de facto and in contradiction to the existing laws as well as anybody who wishes to invest in television must submit, within a period of one month, an application for commercial television broadcasting. (Kraidy, 1996) The Council of Ministers also requested the ministerial committee to determine the criteria and fees for granting licenses.

However, according to press reports, the ministers' deliberations also dealt with the likelihood of restricting television news to Tele Liban, which created a huge turmoil. Press reports suggested that both the President and the Prime Minister called for an end to the chaos and to the lack of restraint in the operation of media institutions, and following the meeting several members of the Council of Ministers and numerous politicians issued statements criticizing the deliberations. The ambassadors of England, France, the United States and the Vatican also made statements supporting freedom of the press as a reaction, and a newspaper reported that an ambassador of a prominent country declared that suppressing news on television was a demand "forced on the government" from outside, but that "freedom in Lebanon is a red line which may not be crossed without negatively affecting the country." (Kraidy, 2000)

A New Audiovisual Law

This resulted in a prompt response from the spokesman of the Prime Minister, who denied that any decision was taken to restrict television news to Tele Liban, and the ministerial committee quickly addressed itself to the task of drafting proposals for legalizing the de facto stations and recommended that, until a new law governing broadcasting in Lebanon is issued, the de facto stations be given annual leases, not licenses, on the available UHF channels. Two years of indecision and delays passed until the Council of Ministers finally approved a draft law regulating the chaotic use of the broadcasting channels in Lebanon, and the new law was adopted with minor modifications by the Lebanese parliament in November 1994. Under the terms of this law Tele Liban was to be fully owned by the government and its exclusive television broadcasting right was to be revoked in return for granting it the right to broadcast on all the VHF channels and one UHF channel. However, no compensation by the de facto stations was granted to Tele Liban.

The new law required that establishing TV stations inside Lebanese territories or its national waters be subject to prior licensing (Chapter 2, Article five)³. It stipulated that the duration of the license be sixteen years, renewable (Chapter 5, Article twenty-six)⁴, and confirmed that licenses be granted by a government decree after consulting the new council established by this law: "the National Council of Audio Visual Media." This council has, according to the audiovisual law, the power to recommend the suspension or closure of stations, and is formed of ten members appointed jointly by the government

³ Audiovisual Law of 1994 translated by Marwan Kraïdy, 1996

⁴ Ibid.

and parliament (Chapter 5, Article seventeen).⁵ The only other entity that exercised this kind of authority was to be the minister of information, following a suggestion by the cabinet. Moreover, the law classified television stations according to the following: the first category being the television stations that transmit visual programs, including news and political programs, covering all the Lebanese territory. The second Category contains the television stations that transmit visual programs with the exception of news and political programs, covering all the Lebanese territory. The third category falls under the television stations that transmit coded signals and can only be received by subscribers who possess the necessary technical equipment, while the fourth category contains the international television stations that transmit via satellite and whose coverage goes beyond the Lebanese territory. (Chapter 3, Article ten.)⁶

Granting broadcasting licenses requires, among other things, obtaining approved technical transmission standards; meeting the necessary operational standards in terms of its human and physical resources, and presenting evidence of its ability to sustain expenses for at least its first year of licensing. The law, furthermore, requires the station to broadcast a volume of local production fixed by the "terms of conditions" of broadcasting in Lebanon (Chapter 2, Article seven)⁷. What's more, the law limits granting radio and television licenses to Lebanese citizens or companies, and the number of licenses is also limited to one for individual companies or persons, meaning that one entity cannot own shares in more than one medium. Most importantly, the audiovisual law does not allow for a person or entity to own directly or indirectly more than ten

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

percent of the total company shares. This includes the husband or wife and all direct relatives, all considered one person or entity. (Chapter 4, Article thirteen)

The new audiovisual law was faced with a massive open debate. The weight of the very vigorous audio-visual lobby was obvious in the press campaigns and statements by politicians warning against "the dangers to freedom in Lebanon." (Kraidy, 2000) Clearly, owners of the de facto stations and the political opposition were afraid of the way licenses will be granted, and they had reason to worry. In September 1996, the government granted licenses only to four television stations other than Tele Liban. Ironically, the four television stations belonged to either members of the government or their relatives, maintaining the sensitive religious sectarian balance, a paramount element of balance in Lebanese politics.

The stations that received licenses were the Lebanese Broadcasting Company International (LBCI), representing the Maronite Christians and whose shareholders included prominent members of the government; Future Television, representing the Rafik Hariri's economic vision for Lebanon and owned by the Prime Minister himself; Murr Television (MTV), representing the Greek Orthodox Christians and owned by the brother of the then Minister of Interior Michel Murr; and The National Broadcasting Network (NBN), representing the Shiite Moslems and owned by the family and supporters of the Speaker of the House of Parliament, Nabih Berry. The governmental decision was faced with a very vocal public opposition because it was based on political and sectarian than on professional grounds, and the stations that were not licensed refused to stop broadcasting, while the government used both threats and promises to implement its decision: in some instances it used force to close some stations but in others it allowed

some to appeal the decision. Only one additional television station, al-Manar, a branch of the Islamic Hezbollah Party, which started broadcasting in June 1991 and spoke for the resistance against the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon, received a license in July 1996. However, a Christian religious station Tele Lumière continues to broadcast till this day without a license but with implicit government backing.⁸

Change came in 1998 when new elections change the government and put Hariri's opponent Salim El Hoss in the prime ministry. The new government reconsidered the applications rejected by the previous regime and consequently granted three more licenses. Amusingly, the stations that received the new licenses were ones that opposed the former Prime Minister: the New Television (NTV), in June 1999; The Independent Communication Channel International (ICNI) and United Television (UTV), both in September 1999. Nevertheless, these two channels did not broadcast further than during their trial period.

Satellite Television in Lebanon

Following the 1994 audiovisual law, a race to reach the Arab and international audience commenced. Satellite reception dishes became among the fastest selling commodities in Lebanon by that time, and LBCI started promising to include Canada in its coverage plan. December 1998 statistics by Ipsos-Stat, a media research company, stated that 58.2% of all Lebanese households had cable subscription to satellite stations and Lebanese televisions needed to affirm its presence with those subscribers as well. In fact, the local television stations felt that they are losing a major share of their audiences to the cable system and decided to be part of the new wave.

⁸ Ibid.

Lebanese businessmen and television stations saw an excellent profit potential in this new development. Two stations ventured into this field even before getting officially licensed. These were LBCI and Future Television who established LBCSAT and Future International SAT respectively. Both satellite stations were ranked among the leading satellite programs in the Arab Gulf countries, an important source of advertising income. Founded in February 1993, Future Television started a trial transmission in October 1994; the testing period lasted two months on Arabsat 1A and was later launched on Arabsat 2A. Future International Television has 5-meter and 7-meter dishes installed in its Beirut and Sidon sites. An additional 13-meter dish was later installed in the government earth station in Jouret el Ballout as a redundant uplink facility. It covers the Middle East, North Africa, Southern Europe, North America and Australia.

LBCI plunged into this field in April 1996 when it established LBCSAT, a free satellite channel. The channel has been broadcasting 22 hours a day since January 1997. Later in 1997 LBC launched three new encrypted channels: LBC Europe, LBC America and LBC Australia. Today, LBC Europe is broadcasting 16 hours a day while the two other channels broadcast around the clock. A number of recent audience studies indicate that LBCSAT has a leading position alongside Al-Arabiyya in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf countries, especially as a negative reaction to Al-Jazeera. LBCI also empowered its broadcast by allying itself with Al-Hayat newspaper and thus aiming to become a more news-oriented television station alongside its entertainment side.

Faced with the success of both Lebanese satellite stations, the Lebanese government decided that the best way to respond was to have its Tele Liban get into satellite broadcasting. An official government decision was adopted late in 1999 and

Tele Liban began its satellite broadcast in the first week of March 2000. The TL service covered the Arab world and part of Europe. However, it merely broadcasted its terrestrial programming via satellite, not special programs to satisfy Arab viewers or the Lebanese Diaspora, and was later shut down with the collapse of Tele Liban in 2002 because of budget deficiencies. A fourth station, al-Manar requested a license for satellite transmission and approved the request in April 2000. The satellite service of al-Manar began a four-hour satellite on the eve of May 24, 2000, the day of the liberation of South Lebanon. After the Palestinian "Intifada" broke out, on September 28, 2000, al-Manar increased its satellite broadcasting to 18-hours a day. The success of Lebanese satellite stations encouraged two other stations to get into this field. MTV began its satellite service in November 2000, on the eve of its ninth anniversary, along with New TV.

Satellite broadcasting in Lebanon faced a number of obstacles at the beginning, during the regime of President Hrawi and Prime Minister Hariri. The first obstacle was to get government clearance to get a satellite connection, and the second and more serious one was for the stations to secure the right to broadcast political news. At the beginning, the Hariri government did not permit stations to transmit news on their satellite channels. The argument by the government was that Lebanese news programs might negatively affect Lebanon's relations with some Arab countries inasmuch as these countries may not tolerate the freedom the Lebanese media have. Moreover, it was decided that Lebanon's image is of utmost importance after the end of the civil war, in order to secure aid and investment from interested and wealthy countries such as the Gulf countries. LBCI challenged the ban and continued airing its satellite news program. The Hariri government reacted, late in December 1996, by deciding to censor all news as well

as direct and indirect political programs prepared for satellite broadcasting in general; and a special "censorship team" was named including a number of well-respected journalists. Again, LBCI challenged the decision and sought a ruling from the state's judiciary advisory council. The council supported LBCI and consequently the Lebanese satellite channels won another battle for the freedom of information.

Today, only five channels remain in the satellite realm, and these are LBCI, Future TV, New TV, NBN, and Al-Manar. The others were either shut down for political or financial reasons. Within the Lebanese territory, cable gives access to the four channels without the need for subscription, while you pay to get them in the Arab world, North America, Europe, and Australia. While Al-Manar is mainly political, even in its entertainment programming, the other three are more commercially oriented, while not receiving a lot of advertising revenues. Till this day, the race to reach satellite access remains political, regardless of the fact that they might not generate profit, and they rarely do. Moreover, the news section of these channels remain directly tied to their terrestrial counterparts, which makes them oriented more towards local issues and regional issues that relate to the local level. This has created problems for these satellite televisions because it has made them vulnerable to the government's will, and more so because they project an image of Lebanon that government officials would rather hide. These tensions and others created a relationship between the government and satellite televisions that can be best portrayed as controlling, as we will see in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Recent Developments

The decade that followed the civil war brought change and hope for the Lebanese media industry and for the Lebanese people in general. The creation of a law regulating the audiovisual realm brought some legality to the chaotic situation that preceded it, and many thought that regulating television will give more legitimacy to those stations that were already present, and a diversity of opinions that would pave the way towards a fully democratic state. However, the post-war era brought a different reality than what media and people were anticipating. After the relatively “free” and unrestricted years of the civil war, where multiplicity of opinion came as a natural consequence of the situation, the political landscape in Lebanon came to be ruled by one dominant political discourse, and Syria became an increasingly major player in Lebanese daily, regional, and international affairs, along with other powerful regional players. Moreover, the full-blown freedom of promoting every station’s own political discourse came to a halt with the Lebanese government trying to take control of what was left of the country, and the audiovisual law of 1994 and the more indirect restrictions imposed on mass media became recurrent and more frequent as the country rose further away from the chaos of civil war. Media was once again seen as a tool for nation-building instead of tool for promoting democracy, and was considered a dangerous element if it was given full freedom of expression.

The Syrian influence was the main factor, and still is, in trying to regulate what information survives censorship and what doesn’t, and striving to keep control and remain in power was the main drive behind the constant oppression of freedom of speech throughout the nineties and until this day. Syria’s interference in daily politics, in addition to its military presence on Lebanese soil, dictated much of how the Lebanese

government interacted with the Lebanese media. For example, the cabinet of Prime Minister Salim Hoss, fearful of partial election coverage by private stations, evoked a storm of protest in early 2000 by introducing a bill that forbade all such stations from reporting on parliamentary election campaigns, which are often seen as rigged and designed especially to favor the traditional government supportive of the Syrian influence. This attempt at blanket censorship provided yet another reminder that the scope for political commentary by both terrestrial and satellite broadcasters based in Lebanon remains subject to local regulation. Thus the survival instinct of the Lebanese regime continues to preempt any liberalizing impact of satellite television especially that these fall under its territorial jurisdiction.

Opposition vs. Government

The official ending of Tele-Liban's monopoly under Lebanon's 1994 Audiovisual Media Law occurred at a time when the spread of Arab satellite channels was in full swing. Indeed, it gave the country's private broadcasters, led by LBCI and Future TV, a timely opportunity to enter the satellite race, keeping in mind that its primary purpose was to regulate the chaotic explosion of small broadcasting stations that had mushroomed during the Lebanese civil war. When, mainly for political rather than technical reasons, only six Lebanese television stations were awarded licenses under the law, those deprived of access to the airwaves denounced this as an act of suppression. (Kraidy, 2002) It was not a shock, for example, that Rafik Hariri, Lebanon's prime minister at the time, became a beneficiary of the licensing system through his shareholding in Future TV, even if his name was not originally present among the shareholders. The fact that "opposition" televisions were granted licenses constituted more of a shock to the general population

than anything else: LBCI, a Maronite and dissenting television, MTV, with Christian Orthodox affiliation that is opposed to Christian Orthodox government officials, and NTV, owned by Tahseen Khayyat, a businessman strongly opposed to Prime Minister Hariri. However, the developments that occurred later on proved that opposition was only permitted to the extent that it does not cross the accepted boundaries, and opposition's role in promoting freedom of speech was continuously controlled and threatened by government interference, generated by regional pressures.

There are still, however, distinct attempts to regain the freedom previously enjoyed by the media. These are constant, coming from opposition forces and certain more vocal journalists. For example, the Lebanese parliamentary elections in September 2000 showed one more time an unpredictable and independent trend that some Lebanese journalists still have despite the pressures. For the longest time, Syrian-Lebanese relations were considered a taboo issue, one of two red lines for the Lebanese press, the other one being current President Emile Lahoud. Other red lines are still present, even though not as strong in their effect on incurring censorship. These are Hezbollah's legitimacy as a resistance backed by Iran and Syria, the Palestinian cause, and Saudi Arabia and its ruling family. However, during the 2000 parliamentary elections, *An-Nahar's* publisher and Editor-in-chief Jibrán Tuéni wrote a strong editorial calling for a reassessment of bilateral relations between Lebanon and Syria and advocating a more equal partnership, (Kraidy, 2000) a demand that was discussed only in private circles, and was considered a typically Christian demand. The effect this editorial had on the Lebanese political and journalistic realm was so strong to the extent that during the electoral campaign of the months of August and September, even Lebanese politicians of

all political groups began calling for revision of Lebanese-Syrian relations, with the Lebanese media covering these developments very closely. Tensions began to increase furthermore in September 2000, when the Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir made cutting comments and asked Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon during an interview with the BBC. (Kraidy, 2000) Relayed on BBC radio and heard throughout the Arab world, the patriarch's comments induced a forceful response from the Syrian information minister, who criticized those opposed to Syria's presence in Lebanon. It also reached countless of exiled Lebanese and interest groups that supported this idea and saw this as a sign to go forward in their demand.

In addition to the BBC and other foreign sources, Lebanese stations such as LBCI covered the story closely, leading to a power struggle within the station to control news about bilateral relations between Lebanon and Syria. However, such stories often turn into a sectarian mess once the local stations come into play and are often seen as holding sectarian views: for example, in the case of LBCI, criticism was voiced against the station for holding “anti-Lebanese” views, a criticism often directed towards the Christian denomination, and in particular the Maronites, leading the channel to step back and carefully study its selection of news and their content. Moreover, the Syrian occupation began to be measured with Lebanese nationalism, with Chief of Parliament Nabih Berry proclaiming that the Syrian troops will only get out of Lebanon “over my dead body,” and Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah gathering up his Shiite supporters to proclaim that the real majority does not want Syria out of Lebanon just yet, and so the trend created by Tuéni soon calmed down, though it never totally disappeared.

This example demonstrates the power of transnational media to expose political discourse by taking it public on the airwaves. However, there still exist an assortment of legal and less legal control mechanisms on Arab media and the Lebanese television in particular, however independent it may seem to be. Government interaction with the media still dictates the content and language of media, because of the close economic and political relationship these two have. Hariri's influence on media and politics, for example, polarizes the Lebanese political, business, and media circles, as most people have either celebrated or unmistakably expressed rejection to his reappointment as prime minister in 2000. His dual status as both player, as a media mogul, and arbitrator, as prime minister, is a very striking example of how media and politics interact. As Vice President of the National Media Council Marwan Shalak described it, (personal communication, August 2003) whenever a politician owns or proxy owns shares of a certain television stations, one can be sure that the latter will be influenced by the former in various forms and ways. NBN's CEO Nasser Safieddine describes it in a different way: "It is only natural that not to take positions to make these people unhappy, after all they finance the company." (Personal communication, August 2003) Even though this statement is true to any company in general, the effect that this statement has on Lebanese media is drastic: because the elites monopolize the economic and political power in Lebanon, the content of media becomes a mere projection of what this power wants to broadcast. In this context, the multiplicity of media outlets becomes a mere playground for political elites and loses its role as a Public Sphere.

Moreover, not only being in a pro-government television defines the content of this television among certain predetermined lines. As the case of NTV shows, being in

the lines of opposition against a certain political figure also determines news selection: since NTV's owner Tahseen Khayyat is known to be against Rafik Hariri in particular, much of NTV's news content is focused to the economic situation, and how Hariri's yearly budgets and policies are only worsening the situation. As a matter of fact, the word on the Lebanese street is that NTV is the "economy station," while LBCI is more often than not seen as the "Maronite station" or the "Entertainment station," depending on the political situation. Among the government side, Future TV is often referred to as "Hariri station," while NBN (National Broadcasting News) is ironically termed "Nabih Berry Network," referring to the chief of parliament whose family and entourage combined own more than 40% of the shares. This only goes to show how much credibility these stations have lost over the years of their existence. The audience already knows what to expect when watching a particular television, and thus the whole idea of the media generating thoughtful discussion becomes obsolete. Though the journalists themselves need not be allied directly to the owner's or shareholders' ideology, they do not have complete control over the content of their work because they themselves have self-censorship mechanisms that they use to protect themselves.

Preserving Lebanon's Image

In addition, with the recent violence between Palestinians and Israelis, the war on Iraq, the pressures on Syria, and Lebanon's looming economic recession, the Lebanese government is most probably expected to play a delicate balancing act, keeping a vigilant eye on satellite broadcasters in particular in an attempt to control Lebanon's image in the Arab world. This is a role that is not only demanded by Lebanese officials but also by different regional players. Firstly, Syria is more and more wary of the Lebanese

discourse on whether Syrian military forces should withdraw from the Lebanese territories. It intends to keep its presence in Lebanon as an ultimate resource in its peace negotiations with Israel, and thus does not want this discourse gaining any more importance than it already has, especially with the introduction of the Syria Accountability Act that includes withdrawal from Lebanon as a necessary step towards bettering relations with the United States. Secondly, Saudi Arabia is wary of discussing any of its national matters on satellite television, especially with the growing effect the Jihadists and reformists are having on Saudi Arabia's internal discourse, and the fear of any attempt on toppling the Saud ruling family.

Therefore, the political forces that have shaped the emerging satellite industry remain problematic for that industry's growth, not only in the Lebanese arena but in the whole Arab world. And, even though satellite television did undermine state control of television flows by transmitting programs from other Arab countries that are more open in certain social trends and traditions, it did not achieve the same effect on the political level, maybe with the exception of Al-Jazeera, which is more news-oriented and relatively less constrained in its political coverage. NBN's Safieddine explains the need for state control by saying that there is no need to display "our internal cuisine" to potential tourists and investors, and discuss the electricity company's scandal or the polluted beaches in front of viewers from around the world, and sees censorship in that sense as a great tool to encourage tourism in Lebanon, which is one of the main resources the country actually has. He sees that criticizing Saudi Arabia, for example, will only result in less tourist influx and less investments. He also sees the Syrian predicament as a necessary reality that will not end until the war with Israel officially ends. This is a

position defended by many officials in the government as well as Lebanese businessmen and others.

Idealists see developments such as the case of Al-Jazeera as the precursor of a pan-Arab civil society unshackled from government censorship. They view satellite television in the Arab world as a threat to the regimes themselves, along with the advent of the Internet. In this logic, satellite television talk-shows, as well as news, all serve as a catalyst for a democratic renewal, where Arab audience members would mobilize as citizens and become increasingly interested in participation in democratic politics. (Kraidy, 2000) The reality of the situation, however, is that most governments in the region that have allowed a level of freedom in satellite televisions still exercise considerable power, even if implicitly. And Lebanon is no exception, even though it relatively enjoys more freedom than others.

Indirect Control of an Uncontrollable Medium

Indirect control of privately owned media companies takes different shapes. In Lebanon, most members of the board of LBC are associated with the Syrian regime, and thus the station is always limited by politically sensitive issues that it cannot address. According to documents provided by the National Council for Media, (Shalak, Marwan, personal communication, August 2003) Suleiman Franjeh and Issam Fares own each ten percent of LBCI's shares. Both parliamentary deputies and ministers, their link to Syria is obvious through the extent of their power in politics. Moreover, the division of the shares among family members further makes the channel more politically oriented towards one main pattern: Sheikh Pierre Daher owns nine percent of the shares of LBCI, while his brother Sheikh Marcel Daher owns ten percent, and his wife owns one percent.

And, even though LBCI's shares are separate from terrestrial LBC, the fact that most newscasts and political program are the same give terrestrial ownership and affiliation a great deal of leverage when choosing news content. As a matter of fact, only LBCI is changing this dependence pattern among Lebanese television: it has created a bureau for satellite news, and has affiliated itself with Al Hayat. However, it continues to broadcast its local news broadcast for the purpose of reaching interested Lebanese immigrants abroad, and thus still mixes terrestrial issues with the broader satellite issues.

Such an ownership pattern is also seen in the other television stations, such as Future Television: Hariri's wife owns 10% of the shares, while his sister Bahiya Hariri -a deputy at the parliament- owns another 10%. Ghaleb Abdel Latif Shamaa, one of the most prominent counselors and businessman closely related to Rafik Hariri, owns 9.9%, while Rafik Hariri's children, Saadeddine and Bahaeddine, each own 8%. To top it all, even his brother-in-law owns 7.3% of the shares, which totals 51.3% of the television owned by the Hariri family alone. (Shalak, Marwan, personal communication, August 2003) Article IV, clause 13 of the audiovisual law of 1994 clearly limits the acquiring of shares in any media institutions, though the Lebanese political system has found other ways to control what the station broadcasts.⁹ The law specifies that one person cannot acquire more than 10% of the total shares, but it does not address the fact that people from the same political or business affiliation or from one extended family often find ways to control bigger shares of each station.

While several countries, such as Bahrain, Jordan, and Qatar, have been discussing the elimination of their Information Ministries, Lebanon's Minister of Information is

⁹ The Official Document of the Terrestrial Audiovisual Law #382

being rendered irrelevant by the intervention of state security agencies in the daily operations of the media, under the excuse of enforcing laws and regulations. Moreover, the Minister of Information is given the power to decide whether a certain station is abiding to the rules according to the 1994 audiovisual law, though most of the time decisions to shut down or punish a station are done through other means. This is in spite of assurances by the current Lebanese administration that it would protect media freedoms, and despite the clear wording of the press and audiovisual laws that state that freedom of the press should be respected fully, while taking into consideration laws and regulations.¹⁰ The closure of Murr Television by security forces on September 4, 2002, revealed some of these troublesome trends: the Minister of Information, Ghazi Aridi, was not informed of the decision, and objected to it in strong terms. Moreover, the National Media Council was not consulted with and also received the news with utmost surprise and shock. Also, since the Audio-Visual Law would not condone the station's closure, authorities resorted to the Law of Publications and the Elections Law to justify the crackdown. A court ruled that MTV harmed relations with Syria, undermined the dignity of the Lebanese president and broadcast illegal electoral propaganda. (Kraidy, 2002)

Creative interpretation and enforcement of the law is thus an instrument of political control even in the Arab world's supposedly most liberal countries. The suspension provoked an outcry over fears for public freedoms and rifts within the government, with four ministers boycotting the weekly cabinet session which newspapers criticized for failing to address the issue.¹¹ Thus, multiple layers of censorship persist. In

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Agence France Press

addition to the control that Syria exercises over Lebanese affairs, and the limitations on free speech carried over from the Penal Code and Press Law to the Audiovisual Media Law, individual stations impose unwritten restrictions of their own, because of an array of pressures that they predict or encounter. The idea that a satellite television station would create a venue that goes beyond regular government attempts of control and would foster the creation of a critical and analytical audience seems like a theory that has yet to be implemented in the real dealings that occur between government and media. In the Lebanese example, media seems to be caught in the middle of forces that go beyond civil society and are more elitist in their structure and format.

What's more, even the Saudi and Gulf Sheikhs who usually have shares in stations such as MBC and ART –which are Saudi stations by excellence-, have business and personal links to Lebanon's LBCI and Future TV. The satellite television law that was introduced in 1996 gave more leeway to the limits of ownership previously set up for terrestrial stations. In fact, law number 531 that appeared in the official magazine number 33 on 29/7/96 licensed satellite companies following the recommendations put by the telecommunication minister, and does not totally abide by the rule of terrestrial broadcasting. In fact, although it still abides to clause 4 of the audiovisual law of 1994, which states that the information minister has power over the content and broadcast of these stations, it does not follow the 10% limit in ownership and does not specify Lebanese nationality as a criterion to own shares in a satellite company. (Francis, Tony, personal communication, February 15, 2004) For example, Sheikh Walid Bin Talal from Saudi Arabia owns shares in terrestrial LBC, and was even naturalized through his mother to achieve the conditions of ownership, something that is usually inconceivable

since women cannot give their Lebanese citizenship to their offspring. (Personal communication, August, 2003) Moreover, Sheikh Walid Bin Talal recently purchased a 49 percent stake in the satellite broadcasting arm of the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) for \$98 million, a transaction made possible from the fact that the one-page law that regulates satellite televisions does not limit ownership to a certain percentage.¹² In addition, NTV announced in the beginning of 2004 that it will be selling its satellite shares to Qatari princes not yet named, in order to expand and diversify its scope to reach a more regionally-oriented level of news. This step, in addition to Bin Talal's latest purchase and LBCI's merger with Al-Hayat at the end of 2003, signify a new era for these satellite televisions, whereby limitations will go beyond the local to the regional, while at the same time strengthening their ratings and news content in face of rising competition. In fact, government interference on the Lebanese level would pale in comparison to the more complex control mechanisms used by monarchies such as Saudi Arabia, and image concerns would become more astute due to the fact that businessmen not only have media outlets, but also investments they want to protect and promote.

Clearly, politicians in the region consider the printed and seen word extremely powerful, or they would not be so determined to silence their critics or try to buy them out. Given widespread illiteracy in many Arab countries and the undisputed potency of the television image, the stakes in television censorship are even higher. Where Penal Codes, codes of ethics or straightforward government censorship fail to achieve the desired effect, the authorities have shown that television journalists are liable to receive the same treatment given to newspaper journalists throughout history. Therefore,

¹² Al Iktissad Wal Aamal Group

journalists are driven more and more to watch what they publish or broadcast under the threat of detention and imprisonment for a variety of reasons. With such an armory of methods still in use for inducing self-censorship, satellite channels will not be the instrument that erodes censorship in terrestrial television especially that it is linked the latter by headquarters, journalists, and news content. As a matter of fact, for this to happen, a change in political systems themselves is required. As members of UNESCO, Arab governments are party to the Sanaa Declaration, adopted by the 29th session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris in 1997. This enjoins them to end censorship and the intimidation of media professionals and to grant statutes of editorial independence to their state broadcasters and news agencies. (Sakr, 2002) This has yet to be implemented, as is the case of many other laws that have been stipulated or ratified along the years.

In the Lebanese experience, the government is not as forceful in exercising control over freedom of information, but it is getting less and less implicit lately, despite the technological revolution of information. Still, Lebanese satellite televisions have learned their lessons from the terrestrial experience, and operate accordingly. This convenient setup has allowed television stations a certain degree of freedom while at the same time limiting them on the kind of reports they broadcast. Thus, although LBCI is a mouthpiece for the Maronite in Lebanon, the fact that some shares are owned by some pro-Syrians makes it more limited by some sensitive issues it cannot address. In an answer to my question on the degree of freedom NBN television has, NBN director Nasser Safieddine said, “It is only a show of respect to our shareholders not to broadcast news that would be harmful to them.” (Personal communication, August 2003) In his point of view, this is not a limitation of freedom but a consensus already accepted.

However, this "show of respect" is practiced in a wide array of examples, and not only when it affects a certain shareholder. New TV, owned by a competitor to PM Rafik Hariri Tahseen Khayyat, had to withhold from showing a talk show that criticizes Saudi Arabia because of pressures from Hariri himself to close down the station. NTV news director Miriam El-Bassam insists the reason for the channel's compliance with what the government "advised" them to do was a pure strategic one: to her and other journalists, it was a matter of prioritizing and deciding how to tackle certain issues. (Personal communication, August, 2003) Under the threat of being shut down, this is the strategy most channels pursue; they tone down their controversial stances in order to gain more ground in other more important issues to them. In fact, NTV's news director considered local issues more important than broadcasting a talk show about opposition in Saudi Arabia, and thus preferred to opt for compliance rather than confrontation, and keep the medium open for more local issues than regional ones. The case of NTV also showed the degree of interference the government has on satellite television: because of internal tensions between the prime minister and the president, the fate of NTV proved to be less tragic: though NTV was shut down on the orders of the prime minister, the president ordered it should be opened again as a political show of strength, and NTV was spared the fate of Murr TV.

Murr TV did not have the same luck even though the prime minister in this case tried his best to re-open it: in an official court order, Murr TV was shut down by hundreds of internal security forces, and was denied several appeals to re-open it throughout 2001 and 2002. The reason for the shutdown was different than that of NTV: it was not based on censorship or preserving relations with a friendly country, but

supposedly on local elections. This time the government used a far more powerful tool to silence an opposition voice that was becoming more vocal, which is the power of the judiciary branch, bypassing the National Media Council and other Media committees, as always. The reasons for the shutdown were clear: the owner of Murr TV had just won a very controversial seat in the parliament, and furthermore had a television station and a radio to voice his opposition. However, the official reasons were that Gabriel Murr used his media to campaign for himself, something that is forbidden under the elections law. This was being practiced by every station at that time, but was still used as a pretext to silence the opposition.

Also, in this case, it became apparent that the reasons for shutdown were not only political, but also due to external pressures, because the television station was strongly opposing the Syrian army's presence in Lebanon for more than 20 years. Many opposition figures criticized this move as a pure show of force on the part of the Syrian government, and a clear submission from the part of the Lebanese government. In this instance, the government used the most indirect means to censor media, through bypassing the ministry of information, and the audiovisual law, and justifying the crackdown by resorting to the elections law. Consultant Marwan Shalak of the National Media Council condemned this as a purely political move, and criticized the government for not resorting to the body who is supposed to decide upon these cases, which is the national media council itself, put in place ironically by the same government that is bypassing it. (Personal communication, August, 2003) This is a perfect example of the extent to which the Lebanese and consequently the Syrian government allow freedom of speech and the voicing of differing opinions on national and cross-boundaries television.

This trend is not particular to Murr TV; in fact, multiple layers of censorship exist, and are justified not only by the audiovisual law, but also by the penal code, the election law, and the publications law, to which the audiovisual law refers to extensively. In addition, individual stations impose restrictions on themselves to avoid confrontation with the government, which creates a web of limitations on the freedom of expression, which the audiovisual law defends, so vehemently in its first clause. The examples mentioned above are just a part of the current attempts that the government made to limit the power of television, and especially the satellite ones that have a wider coverage. The government has always realized the importance of mass media, and recognized the responsibilities and burden that satellite television added to the equation, because of external as well as internal considerations. Moreover, the Syrian role in this example also makes itself clear, as well as its interference in elections and their outcomes.

Ever since the first publication law and up until the audiovisual law of 1994, the first and foremost concern for the Lebanese government has been to take care of not upsetting its neighbors. In article seven, clause 2 of the audiovisual law¹³, it is stated that it is not permitted to air news that affect national security and national interests, but the law is vague on what exactly constitutes these interests, and lately the interest of the Lebanese government has been to please Syria as well as any potential Arab investor. Throughout the past decade, the government has shut down institutions temporarily on the ground that they are destabilizing national security, which can range from airing news on an internal religious issue or criticizing the Syrian government. In fact, at the beginning satellite televisions were not permitted to air political news whatsoever. When

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LBCI challenged the ban and aired political programs, a “special censorship” team was put in place to enforce the ban. LBCI managed to challenge the government’s decision by going to court, and won the battle. However, as it proved later on, this was not the only obstacle satellite televisions had to face, and the battle still goes on to this day. With Syria being the main power broker in Lebanon, it does not matter how many media outlets the Lebanese people have, because they all fall under one tent, which is a pro-Syrian government and consequently a lot of red lines that media is not supposed to cross.

Media as a Projection of Lebanese Affairs

The Lebanese media situation is an example of the contradictory state of transformation and stagnation that Lebanon is going through since the end of the civil war. The existing media laws specify that television institutions may not be directly managed or run by the government or private individuals or politicians. The practice, however, is different but congruent with the special socio-political structure of the Lebanese society. An examination of the development of television in Lebanon suggests that the measures taken by government to regulate television broadcasting since its inception in Lebanon were not intended to encourage television officials to deal with themes of significant concern to the average individual, mainly those emerging from the civil war. Themes that deal with the need for the cooperation of the different sectarian groups in the reconstruction of the country and in bringing about the unity of its people are almost absent in Lebanese television. In fact, the different government legislations that were introduced aimed neither at promoting original productions, nor at providing more opportunity for local talent and developing responsible and professional organizational structures. Moreover, themes that deal with election reform, Syrian

military presence, or the religious political system are often penalized or censored for the sake of “national security.” As a matter of fact, state legislation in the area of television broadcasting is aimed at allowing government officials and the ruling political bosses to exploit this medium for their own political goals.

The assessment of the growth of television in Lebanon shows that government officials and political bosses endeavored to legalize their monopoly over television news and what might threaten their political ambitions or the status quo. Additionally, its control over programs shows that the friction between television authorities with the government during the past four decades was due to the interest of the television officials in financial and political gain more than their interest in securing increased freedom to produce programs that address themes relevant to the social and economic problems that are confronting the country. No serious investigation has been carried out by the media about claims of corruption in the government, which was often voiced by senior government officials, despite the fact that there exist a number of opposition televisions that would be interested in this theme. Instead, opposition televisions such as NTV and LBCI have limited themselves to criticize on person in the government, thus weakening their credibility among viewers and distracting them from the bigger issues.

Additionally, no serious program, to date, has been produced to deal with the sectarian conflict that plagues the country. In fact, even though one of NBN’s critically acclaimed programs goes under the name of “Lebanon’s Sects,” the program limits itself to introducing those sects to the viewers, a good informative step still not tackling the issues at stake. In addition, when a worker at the Education Ministry killed eight of his co-workers in a mad rage in the summer of 2002, LBCI’s coverage of the tragedy

consisted of criticizing the fact that six of these eight workers were Christian, while the killer was Muslim, and implied that this was a sectarian crime. NTV, on the other hand, implied that the reason for this heinous crime was Hariri's bad economic policies which drove the poor man to madness, which is typically what the audience expects these two stations to do. This, among other examples, shows to what extent the New as well as Old Public Spheres are engaging civil society into constructive and critical discussions. The fact is, in the current media structure, there is no room for freedom of expression of opinion. It is only through a reform of the media itself that civil society can start using this outlet to reach a vaster audience and attain the desired effect this new technology supposedly produces.

Restructuring the Media

The main problem facing broadcasting in Lebanon is a double-edged sword. It is primarily one of both the government and media institutions lacking the adequate structures that would provide the opportunity for this medium to contribute to its society's unity and cohesion as well as to address issues that are relevant to the every day life of the average citizen. Instead, this medium gives prevailing interest to commercialism at the expense of professionalism and social responsibility. It is also focused on criticizing one factor affecting Lebanese affairs at the expense of giving the whole journalistically objective picture. As a matter of fact, news programs focus mainly on news of politicians, with little reflective coverage of issues that concern the general public. For example, when Marcel Ghanem's "Kalam El Nass" (People Talk) invited Finance minister Fouad Sanioura to a surprise meeting with a family way below the line of poverty (Kalam el Nass, 2004), the questions were more limited to pinning down the minister in general

instead of asking him to defend and explain his budget plan that does not help the poor in any material way.

Examining the content of television programs one gets the impression that television officials believe that their viewers will accept whatever is given to them and, therefore, do not feel the necessity to make more effort to provide them with content that addresses their needs for information about issues that concern their livelihood and that are relevant to their daily concerns. This has led television stations to air low quality entertainment programs and talk shows that may entertain the average audience but does not appeal to their mind or meet their intellectual and developmental needs.

It is true that the Lebanese government has hampered the growth of television and kept broadcasting in a state of stagnation. It is also true that Lebanese television today, especially the type depicted on the satellite channels, is a *mélange* of various inconsistent programs, policies and structures, predominantly foreign in orientation and barely relevant to the needs of Lebanese society or Arab world. If one examines the content of these satellite channels one finds the following: Television soap operas that come from Egypt, Syria, and Latin America; talk shows which usually host a discussant and a political or economic personality, with a discussant frequently biased towards one opinion and consequently attacking or complimenting the guest on their acts; entertainment programs in the form of contests and games that saturate satellite channels heavily; as well as imported movies and series from different regions. Nevertheless, there were and still are to some extent some satirical programs that make fun of the current political or social situation, but these too were deemed too daring by the Lebanese government: as a matter of fact, as of January 2004, the government issued an order to

stop airing “Basmat Watan,” (A Nation’s Smiles, or When a Nation Died, depending on how the sentence is worded) under the pretext of, once again, harming relations with a neighboring country.¹⁴ Still, there is a growing awareness among journalists and producers of the importance of the medium in tackling important issues. For example, poverty was one of the most recurring themes that filled LBCI’s programming during the Christmas holidays of 2003. However, the programming consisted of giving out aid to needy families and looked more like a “makeover” program than a serious one that discusses the roots and solutions to this alarming and growing phenomenon.

Prior to the advent of satellite broadcasting in Lebanon and other third world countries television broadcasting constituted a limited local problem: it was restricted to few channels for a moderate capacity audience. It is true that national audiences then had to watch programs that were controlled by censors "to protect the interests of the country." Today, however, with satellite broadcasting, the national audiences are at the mercy of tens of satellite stations whose broadcasters continuously bombard them with low culture and a variety of low quality programs. Lebanese television broadcasting is in urgent need for reorganization in order to cope with the role it is expected to play in the reconstruction of a country that has suffered from a long and costly civil war. While the government is in need to provide the climate of freedom that is conducive for the broadcasting medium, the broadcasters need to be committed to their social responsibility and to developing a well-trained corps of professionals in the different fields of television production.(Dajani, 2001). Moreover, television and government officials need to be separate from each other in terms of interest and affiliation, in order to give the television the objectivity and professionalism it needs to thrive in a competitive world. Today,

¹⁴From Assafir Newspaper, December 2003

there are numerous attempts to modernize the traditional means of communication that Lebanon has been plagued with ever since its founding, and one of them is the recent merger between LBCI and Al-Hayat, which resulted in an expansion of bureaus and access for LBCI, and thus raised its professional commitment to report the news without restrictions. However, with an increasing tendency of government interference, television will always be limited in news reporting, especially when this interference is growing in intensity and directness: on December 6, 2003, the owner of New TV was arrested for allegedly harboring illegal links with Israel, and was released a day later though he remains under investigation according to court sources¹⁵. Tahseen Khayyat was arrested in his office by military police on charges of harboring illegal links with Israel and damaging Beirut's Relations with neighboring countries, and was accused of meeting with Israeli officials in Qatar. The fact that he was released the following day shows that the whole move was political. In fact, his arrest was denounced by former PM Hoss and the media, linking it to his NTV's hard-hitting coverage of a money-laundering probe at Lebanon's Al-Madina bank, saying it was intended to intimidate NTV into silence and stop its investigations. This latest attack on freedom was a hard-hitting reality to many of those who were hoping for an increased freedom of voicing opinions and digging through issues that affect public opinion and people's livelihood, but was still a living proof that the government is not ready to let down its guard concerning satellite freedoms.

Al Manar Television might be the only exception to the fate that awaits opposition televisions in Lebanon: a propaganda tool for the Hezbollah resistance, Manar

15 Agence France Presse

TV has been vocal of its opposition to participate in the Lebanese government, considering it a corrupted institution that does not represent the people. Not one Hezbollah deputy has ever been minister in any of the Lebanese cabinets following the Taif agreement, and the party is very adamant until today in its decision not to participate in anything other than representative elections. In addition to its controversial position as the only war militia that still has the right to hold guns, and due to the fact that Syria and Iran are main regional brokers that support Hezbollah, Al Manar TV has managed to maintain a relative liberty in showing programs that might be frowned upon if they were broadcast somewhere else, like controversial Syrian production that criticize Israel and the United States. Al Manar TV also airs programs that show Hollywood movies, while criticizing them by showing their stereotypes towards the Arab community. While this might be seen differently if it were shown on other channels, Al Manar TV defends itself with the support of regional powers, in addition to its powerful role as a national resistance and supporter of the Palestinian cause. Al-Manar's website describes its mission as follows: "Lebanese TV channels have been overwhelmed by a trend of movies and programs that can only be described as immoral. At the time when the Lebanese - such as any people coming out of a devastating war- needed what could erase the effects of that conflict and work on building the personality of good citizenship, numerous TV channels have been broadcasting programs that would decay one's ethics and provoke his or her instincts in addition to instigating violence and identifying with western living patterns which are quite remote from our Islamic and Eastern values and culture."¹⁶

¹⁶ From <http://www.almanar.com.lb>

Despite the fact that televisions in Lebanon have differing characteristics and cater to different tastes and backgrounds, there is still no constructive discourse that would enable civil society in Lebanon to analyze and discuss a unified, or at least a representative image of Lebanon that all of the population can agree upon. Furthermore, until this day no independent voices have been able to gain access to these mass media, and by independent I refer to those not affiliated with wealthy opposition businessmen or wealthy pro-government businessmen. As a matter of fact, the only discourse that has occurred within mass media until this day has happened on the elitist level, leaving the rest of the population at the mercy of censorship or lack of televised access. It is this reality that has plagued Lebanese television since its inception and one that hinders the efforts for democratization in its full form.

CONCLUSION

Media scholars often address the relationship between government and television in the context of either a western societal structure where this medium usually operates within the private sector, or a third world structure where the medium customarily operates within the public sector, typically as a government arm. Lebanese media institutions, however, do not fit either the third world model nor the western model of media operation, because it is the existing societal forces in every state that determine the structure, content and operation of media institutions. The mass media, therefore, are unique to their society, and come into existence as result of the existent civil society and community structure, not as a catalyst to the creation of a new one. They cannot have identity or effects without the influence of the concrete instances within which the different forces operate. Lebanon is a curious country with many contradictions, pluralism and deep divisions. It is a society fragmented along sectarian lines, and is currently going through a search for identity: its institutions are torn between change, which is exhibited in its relatively modern laws and perspective, and that of stagnation, which is demonstrated by the performance of its political and religious traditional leadership who put obstacles in the introduction of change or application of laws that may lessen the sectarian nature of the system of government.

My point is that the impact of the New Public Sphere on civil society might not be as influential as some analysts have predicted it to be, or at least not yet. The growth of this new form of communication is relatively new, and is still deeply connected to the traditional state of affairs. Furthermore, the interaction between the New Media and civil society cannot be described as one that is encouraging or permitting democratization and freedom of speech, because of the political and economic structure that directly

influences the New Media. In other words, it is more accurate to say that the New Media is a projection of the Lebanese political discourse, with all its omissions and censored components. Also, the New Media, in the way it is structured today, is fortifying the traditional power structure rather than criticizing it, and in some cases it even emulates the establishment in the format of its control mechanisms.

Even though transnational media can strengthen a certain discourse by taking it out on the regional and international level, it does not mean that transnational media can go beyond the local limitations. Just because a media is transnational in its essence does not mean that the rules that apply to it are very different from the terrestrial media. In fact, being a satellite television seems to have more limitations than a terrestrial one, especially because of the fact that it reaches people beyond boundaries. The responsibility becomes bigger and the censorship greater, because the government not only wants to keep the people under control, but also the country's image under control, which means that content and style must be constantly monitored to preserve this idealistic image a country like Lebanon should have. Moreover, it is not only Lebanon's image that plays a role in determining satellite television content in the Arab world. With the advent of reality shows inspired by their Western counterparts, like Future TV's "Superstar," LBCI's "Star Academy," and the ill-fated "Big Brother" on MBC, optimists started hoping that change might indeed come from across the boundaries. However, "Is the region's tight moral yarn starting to unwind? No way, say viewers and producers - not while satellite TV has to cater to the social codes of 22 Arab nations." (Farah, 2004)

Also, the study showed that the voices behind the new mass media do not differ in its content and essence from the terrestrial media already put in place. In addition, media

ownership still follows the structure put in place by satellite's predecessors. The study also shows that the difference between satellite and terrestrial content is minimal, and do little to promote democratization and much less critical thinking that goes beyond the red lines already put in place. Satellite television is thus playing the traditional role of promoting political agenda for the benefit of the political and economic ruling elite, which goes counter the theories put forward by Adorno, Brecht, Sartre, and others. Moreover, even Habermas' bourgeois approach cannot be compared to the elitist approach the Lebanese elites have towards media. As a matter of fact, Habermas' bourgeoisie confronted the aristocratic status quo, even if its scope did not go beyond this particular class. In the Lebanese case, the elites hold the political, religious, and economic power, and furthermore they control the majority of the communication means, which implies that those with less fortune can do little to change the current state of affairs.

The New Public Sphere that has been created by satellite televisions in Lebanon did not quite go beyond the usual terrestrial boundaries as was expected by some observers. In fact, my point is that all that it helped to do was provide the government with more excuses and incentives to censor and tone down the opposition. The disillusion that media has provoked among Lebanese is only part of the more general disillusion that the Lebanese political structure engenders, because media is and remains a part of the political body. For this to change, the audiovisual law needs to be respected by both the government and the satellite television stations alike. Moreover, the satellite television law needs to be addressed and revised, instead of relying on a one-page law that links satellite television stations with all kinds of other media and other laws. This cannot be

done, however, without a change in the political structure itself, thus it needs to be done first by a change from within society, because this is where the public sphere ultimately exists in its entirety. Media can be an effective tool for social movements, but it remains a tool that can be manipulated by anybody who has the power and means to do it. In the case of Lebanon, there is little leeway on how much media can force change on the political landscape, especially because of its close connection with this landscape in the first place. The only way it can disassociate itself from politics and would be by becoming financially independent, as well as by disassociating itself from its terrestrial counterparts.

Actually, for a real liberalization of the medium to happen, it must entail a change in the political system first, and a change in the social structure and what people perceive as the root of the problem is. And this cannot happen through the effect of the media, because of its lingering relationship with the political structure itself. Moreover, no change is possible with the different satellite television channels relying mostly on private capital to sustain its existence. With the economic recession and a lack of advertising revenue, these channels are doomed to remain under the stronghold of their local shareholders, and will not be able to overcome their limitations. Lebanon is a country of many contradictions, with a severe identity crisis: it is both a country that is trying to modernize its institutions, and one that is clinging to the traditional balance of power. The measures taken by government officials throughout Lebanon's existence were aimed not at promoting change, but at making sure the real issues are not dealt with. In fact, until this day, few attempts have been made to analyze the civil war or the religious tensions that plague this country, and anything that seems to threaten the status

quo has been stopped in its early stages. Although Lebanon's democratic development is hampered by the unstable regional situation, the continued influence wielded by regional players over Lebanon's domestic and international politics, and the mistrust among the country's various religious communities, the emergence of citizen-based movements outwardly critical of the Syrian presence in the country has been seen as an encouraging step towards a more open political system. Public debate over media freedoms, electoral law and the confessional system itself, has also recently emerged and took force. In addition, Lebanon's vibrant and diverse civil societies play a vital role in restoring a degree of authority to its citizens. Through their efforts to increase the government's responsiveness to citizens' needs, civil society is leading the movement for further democratic reform in Lebanon, keeping in mind that satellite and terrestrial television stations are great tools these movements can use to reach a bigger popular base and raise awareness, but not limiting itself to it.

This study only tackles the beginnings of the new phenomenon of mergers and expansions that these New Media are currently going through. However, these latest developments are of utmost importance to further critical studies that will determine the actual impact of satellite televisions on societies similar to the Lebanese society. I also believe that Lebanese satellite televisions have only recently started to take upon themselves the role they are really supposed to play on a regional and international level, through putting their shares on the market and focusing on news in a credible and professional manner. In fact, Al-Jazeera's success owes it first and foremost to the professionalism and its focus on pertinent news, (Ghadbian, 2001) two elements that until recently lacked from the Lebanese satellite industry. Therefore, foreign capital as well as

tackling critical regional and international issues will most probably take Lebanese satellite into a new level, and improve the current discourse. Not relying on local capital might also give these news outlets increased freedom of information and less governmental control. However, it is still early to determine whether satellite television in Lebanon will be able to overcome its local and regional challenges, or whether the coming Lebanese governments will find new ways to control every new technology that is put in place, no matter how sophisticated. Moreover, a study of the development and metamorphoses of these stations in the light of increasing pressure and competition from their regional and international counterparts will definitely be essential in getting a fuller grasp of the dynamics of the “New,” and “Newer” media.

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Appendix A:
Lebanese Broadcast Act
October 19, 1994

Chapter One:

Terms and Objectives

Article One:

The objective of this law is to organize radio and TV transmission by any technology, means, or apparatus, regardless of its situation or its name, and to organize the rules and all matters related to this transmission.

Article Two:

For the purpose of applying this law, the terms mentioned here below have the following meaning:

Radio Transmission: transmission via electromagnetic waves, or any other means, that can be received by an audience.

TV Transmission: the transmission of pictures on air, whether moving or otherwise, accompanied by audio transmission or unaccompanied, via electromagnetic wave or any other means, that can be received by an audience.

Channel: the frequency slot used by a TV station for TV transmission.

Wave: the frequency slot used by a radio station for radio transmission.

TV or radio stations: all kinds of transmitter devices, stationary or mobile, and relays and responders and magnifiers and all networks, whether on earth or in space, which can directly continue TV and radio transmission.

Re-Transmission: the acquisition of radio or TV programs wholly or in part, regardless of the technical means which the licensed station uses to transmit these programs to the audience, and re-transmitting these programs without change, live or delayed.

TV station: any entity that organizes and transmits a TV program to an audience, or that copies it unchanged to a third party.

Radio station: any entity that organizes and transmits a radio program to an audience, or that copies it unchanged to a third party.

Program: All the service elements provided by the station, as mentioned in the previous section.

Advertisements: The commercials that are directed to the public, within the time frame granted to the advertiser, for the purpose of promoting a product or a service, or buying

or renting it, or to propagate a certain a certain issue or opinion or induce any other effect the advertiser wishes to induce.

Literary, artistic, musical, scientific right owner: Any real person or entity that creates an achievement of literary, artistic, musical, or scientific nature. Or that requires the investment rights of such an achievement.

Chapter Two:

Article Three:

Audiovisual media are free enterprises. The freedom of the media is to be practiced within the framework of the constitution and the applied laws.

Article Four:

It is meant by audiovisual media, any TV and radio transmission operation that addresses the public or part of it, via signals or pictures or sounds or writings of any sort that are not characterized by the personal communication characteristics, through channels and waves and transmission devices and networks and other transmission or transmission devices or technologies.

Article Five:

Establishing TV or radio stations inside the Lebanese territory or in national waters is subject to prior licensing.

Article Six:

It is prohibited for nay person or entity without the prior licensing to import or manufacture or assemble or use any transmission device or relay any audio or visual transmission. The authorities will confiscate all devices, parts and equipment that are imported or manufactured or used or being assembled without prior licensing. Penalties mentioned in the applied laws will be imposed on whoever violates the above rulings.

Article Seven:

The flowing matters are taken into consideration when granting a license. First: imposing on the station a certain technical standard for its transmission via its channel or wave, meeting the operational conditions or requirements, of human resources, programs, locations, installations, equipment, studios, and stations. Also, the station's ability to sustain its costs at least for the first year of its licensing.

Second: the respect of the human character and the freedom of others and their rights and the multitude of opinions and points of view and the objectivity of the news bulletins and keeping of the public order and national defense requirements are all imperative.

Third: imposing on the station the volume of local production that is determined by the book of conditions for each category or local production.

Fourth: stations are obliged to apply the general laws, in a way that does not conflict with this law.

Fifth: stations are not allowed to retain any financial gain that is not secured from its operations, whether directly or indirectly.

Sixth: stations are prohibited from transmitting whatever may promote relations with the Zionist enemy.

Article Eight:

On granting licenses it is taken into consideration that there are rights related to channels and airwaves that exist in Lebanon as a result of previous agreements. These channels and airwaves will be determined and distributed according to technical criteria of international standards assuring a clear and advanced transmission.

A technical committee is formed and called the TV and Radio Transmission Organization Committee. This committee works in conjunction with the Minister of Information and consists of the Director General of Investments at the Ministry of Information, a representative of the Defense Ministry, four experienced communication engineers appointed by a government device upon three recommendations of the Minister of Information and the Minister of Telecommunications and Post, Technical Director at Radio Lebanon and the Technical Director at Tele-Liban and the technical representatives from other TV and Radio stations.

This committee will study all the technical aspects relating to TV and radio transmissions, and submit the necessary recommendations to the minister of Information and the members of the committee.

Article Nine:

The State is the sole and exclusive owner of all the channels and airwaves and these cannot be sold or leased.

The station can utilize the channel; or airwaves by renting it according to the applied laws and regulation. The right to utilize an airwave or channel is not by any means an exclusive concession and after the end of the rent contract, no compensation right ensues of any kind and the rent duration is determined by the license. The TV or radio station has no right to sell its rental rights, wholly or in part, or even to lease them or to waive them, directly or indirectly. In the event of any violation of the above, the station will be forced to cease transmission immediately.

Chapter Three:

The classification of TV and Radio stations:

Article Ten:

TV stations are categorized according to the following:

1. TV stations that transmit visual programs, including news and political programs, and that cover all of the Lebanese territory.
2. TV stations that transmit visual programs, except news and political programs, and that cover all of the Lebanese territory.
3. TV stations that transmit coded signals that can only be received by subscribers who process the necessary technical equipment.
4. International TV stations that transmit via satellite and whose coverage exceeds the Lebanese territory.

Article Eleven:

Radio stations are categorized according to the following:

1. Radio stations that transmit different kinds of programs including news and political programs that cover all the Lebanese territory.
2. Radio stations that transmit different kinds of programs except news and political programs and that cover the Lebanese territory.
3. Radio stations that transmit coded signals that can only be received by subscribers who possess the necessary technical equipment.
4. International radio stations that transmit via satellite whose coverage exceeds the Lebanese territory.

Chapter Four:

Setting up the station

Article Twelve:

The TV or radio station is established in the form of a Lebanese Anonymous Company that cannot own more than one TV or radio station.

Article Thirteen:

All the shares in this company have to be nominal and the shareholders have to meet the following conditions:

- The real shareholder has to be a Lebanese citizen legally eligible and not convicted of any crime or violation and not deprived of his civil rights.

- The entity shareholder has to be a purely Lebanese company, the internal system of which prevents it from passing over these shares to non-Lebanese persons or companies.
- It is not allowed for a real person or entity to own directly or indirectly more than ten percent of the total company shares. The husband and wife and all direct relatives are to be considered one person or entity.

Article Fourteen:

Founders of such a company are obliged to own at least thirty five percent of its capital and are not allowed to sell their shares for five years from the date of issuing the license.

The company has to publish in the official gazette a list of all its shareholders with their relative shares at the time of issuing the license. In case shares are bought and sold, the company has to republish this list in the same manner.

Article Fifteen:

All the shares' movements in the TV and radio stations are subject to prior licensing. Any selling or buying or passing over of shares that is done with no prior licensing is considered null or void.

A penalty is imposed on whoever commits an illegal action, of the sort mentioned above, or participates in it, that consists of the value of the shares that were sold or passed over and of a jail sentence from six months to three years, and the confiscation of shares by the state, which can sell them according to applied laws.

The rules of this article also apply to actions committed by an intermediary, who is considered liable for the fine mentioned above.

Any agreement or contract pertaining to the above mentioned is considered null and void and no compensation of any kind ensues.

Chapter Five:

Licensing

Article Sixteen:

Licenses are granted to the TV and radio stations in accordance with a decree issued by the government after consulting the National Council for Audio Visual Media.

Article Seventeen:

A committee is formed under the name The National Council for Audio Visual Media (NCAVM) that comprises ten members appointed jointly and equally by the government and parliament.

Article Eighteen:

The members of this committee have to be Lebanese citizens qualified in the fields of science, literature, technical specialization and so on, and who are not employed by the state or municipalities for any function or in any capacity.

Article Nineteen:

In addition to other functions mentioned previously in this law, the function of the National Council of Audio Visual Media is as follows:

1. The consideration of license applications submitted to the government and referred to it by the Ministry of Information. When necessary, this committee can seek the advice of a specialist in the media.
2. Making sure that the legal requirements are met.
3. Submitting recommendations in which they state whether any license application should be approved or rejected. This recommendation is published in the official gazette as soon as the Minister of Information deposits it in the governmental system and before any decision is made by the government regarding license application.
4. The National Council of Audio Visual Media has to finalize its recommendation and present it within forty days from the date it received the license application.
5. The government through the Minister of Information will place the license application and all the required documents and technical information at the disposal of the National Council of Audio Visual Media.

Article Twenty:

1. The NCAVM's term is three years, renewable.
2. In the event of any membership vacancy, for any reason, a new member will be appointed in the same manner adopted to appoint the previous member, and within one month, for the rest of the term.
3. Any member who fails to attend three consecutive sessions with no valid excuse is considered to have resigned.

Article Twenty-One:

Members of NCAVM are prohibited from engaging in any other business that conflicts with the nature of their work for the council.

Article Twenty-Two:

The NCAVM legislates its modus operandi and the government approves it.

Article Twenty-Three:

The members' compensation schemes are specified by the government.

Article Twenty-Four:

Any decision issued by the government can be reviewed before the State Jury in case any legal licensing law was broken.

Article Twenty-Five:

All the exemplary conditions are to be prepared and listed by one or more specialized committees depending on the nature of the subjects. This committee is formed by a decree issued by the government, and the committee can seek the advice of specialists and technicians of its choice.

This exemplary condition logbook is accredited by a government decree after consulting the higher media council.

Article Twenty-Six:

The duration of the license is sixteen years, renewable, provided the station applies three years prior to the expired date of the license.

Article Twenty-Seven:

First: The license fee payable by the TV or radio station is determined as follows:

1. TV stations of first and second categories: two hundred and fifty million Lebanese Pounds (1\$=1,500LP)
2. Radio stations of the first category: one hundred and twenty five million Lebanese Pounds.
3. Radio stations of the second category: fifty million Lebanese Pounds.

Second: the yearly rental fee payable by the TV and radio stations is determined as follows:

1. TV stations of the first and second categories: one million Lebanese Pounds.
2. Radio stations of the first category: twenty million Lebanese Pounds.
3. Radio stations of the second category: fifteen million Lebanese Pounds.

Chapter Six:

The management and duties of stations

Article Twenty-Eight:

Each television or radio station must appoint a program director. First category stations that transmit news bulletins and political programs must appoint a director in charge of such programs.

The director has to be a Lebanese citizen for more than ten years, enjoy legal competence, not be convicted in any crime or misdemeanor, and ready to work in full time capacity for the station.

Article Twenty-Nine:

The TV or radio station must publish in the official gazette, in local newspapers and in the commercial register the names of its chairman and board members and has to also provide the public with a list of all shareholders.

Article Thirty:

TV and radio stations have to transmit national orientation programs, educational, health, intellectual, and tourist programs at the rate of one hour per week. These programs are to be aired free of charge and according to the request of the Ministry of Information in the air times determined by the conditions logbook. Materials required for transmission are either supplied by the Ministry of Information or from the stations' archives.

Article Thirty-One:

Any person or entity has the right to defend himself against any allegations transmitted by any TV or radio station.

The station in question has to transmit the defense under the same technical conditions that the allegations were transmitted in, and in a fashion that ensures the same audience.

It is up to the Minister of Information to request transmission or negation of any news item that has to do with any public interest or administration according to the norms specified under the publication law.

The right defense has to be exercised during the specific periods, and according to the law, and under the penalties mentioned in the publication laws and their amendments.

Article Thirty-Two:

The license decree is issued after verifying that the station has abided by the required conditions. The station is given a one year period, from the date it is informed by the government, to put itself into operation according to the legal conditions, and the government can extend this period if it deems it necessary, and it loses its rights to obtain a license should it fail to request from the Ministry of Information verification that the station has abided by the legal, technical and financial licensing conditions, before the one year period.

Article Thirty-Three:

The TV and radio stations bear the legal responsibility that ensues legally from any malpractice in its operations.

Chapter Seven:

Restrictions and penalties

Article Thirty-Four:

The TV and radio stations are obliged to abide by the licensing and legal rules.

Article Thirty-Five:

1. In the event the station does not abide by the requirements of this law and other laws, the following procedure is applied.

First violation: Based on the recommendation of the National Council for Audio Visual Media, the Minister of Information orders a three-day suspension of the station in question.

Second violation: Based on the Minister of Information's recommendation, originating from the recommendation submitted by the NCAVM, the government orders the station in question to halt its transmission for a minimum period of three days and a maximum period of one month.

The NCAVM meets under its own initiative or if summoned by the Minister of Information.

The Minister of Information can waive the council's recommendation should the council fail to meet within forty eight hours of the minister's summons.

All decisions mentioned under this article are subject to revision before a specialized court that studies the case within a period of one year according to the applied laws. In the event that the procedure inflicted on the station is not

constitutional, the station can claim a maximum of up to 10 million Lebanese Pounds for every day of non-transmission, and the radio station 3 million LP.

2. In addition to item 1 above, all the penalties mentioned in the general penalties law and in the publication law and in this law and others, are applied to the violations committed by TV and radio stations. These penalties will be applied to their maximum as mentioned in article 257 of the penalties law. The sentence “TV and radio stations” is added wherever needed in the mentioned law and transmission is considered equal to publication, which is mentioned in article 209 of the penalties law.

Chapter Eight:

Advertisements

Article Thirty-Six:

TV and radio stations should refrain from airing any advertisement that might misinform the consumer, harm his health or interests, or includes any violation of public morals.

Article Thirty-Seven:

Advertisements should be prepared clearly and easily and in a manner different audio visually from the programs during which they are aired. Newscasters are not permitted to appear or be heard in an advertisement.

Article Thirty-Eight:

Advertisements are to be aired between each program and can be aired during a program, provided that the unity and value of the program are intact, and in a manner not harmful to the owners of the program’s literary and artistic rights.

Article Thirty-Nine:

It is mandatory that each station establishes or deals with a media concessionaire (Régie) that solicits advertisements and that manages its advertising affairs.

The advertising management in a TV or radio station and the advertising agencies are not permitted to contract their advertisements to one medium exclusively.

It is forbidden for the owners of a TV or radio station or their Régie and their spouses and children to have shares in more than one establishment. Also full-time employees in a Régie can only serve on TV and one radio station.

Article Forty:

All matters related to the subject of advertisements that are not mentioned in this law are to be regulated by a special law.

Chapter Nine:

Télé Liban

Article Forty-One:

1. The exclusive rights originally granted to Télé-Liban to utilize all TV channels are canceled. Télé Liban is granted the right to transmit on all VHF channels and one program on the UHF channels, according to the technical organization that would distribute the channels to the licensed stations.

In compensation Télé Liban will be exempted from paying the fees applicable to other stations until the year 2012 when its exclusivity rights will end.

2. Télé Liban has no right thereof for compensation in any kind, with the exception of the compensation mentioned above.
3. The government has the right to reorganize Télé Liban's operation by special government decrees issued on the basis of recommendations issued by the Ministers of Finance and Information.

Chapter Ten:

Station income audit

Article Forty-Two:

At the end of every six months, the station has to submit to the Ministry of Information as statement of its investment account.

This account includes only the sums and income that originate from the station's business operations under the legal and technical consensus. The ministry in question has to audit this account and verify the income from advertisements, production sales and others if necessary, utilizing all available audit methods including auditing the licensed stations and advertising agencies' books.

In the event the station falls under financial deficit that does not exceed three quarters of its capital submitted in the previous statement, the Minister of Information can grant the licensed station a period of six months at the end of which the station should submit its investment account. If after this period the income did not cover half of this deficit, the Minister of Information has the right to request the publications court to issue a verdict

by which the station has to cease transmission for a period decided by the court but not exceeding one year.

Should the deficit turn out to exceed three quarters of the stations' capital, the Minister of Information has the right to refer the station to a specialized jurisdiction in order to decide on ceasing transmission immediately and without prior notice, for a period not exceeding one year. Financial deficit means the accumulated financial deficit.

Article Forty Three:

After the suspension period expires, the station cannot resume transmission unless it proves it has acquired the necessary funds required to cover the whole deficit, in which case it has to submit the source of funds and the method by which they were acquired. The Minister of Information can request more clarification and evidence and consequently make a decision to allow the station to resume transmission in light of that evidence and statements submitted by the station, clarifying the sources of the funds and their authenticity, and after ensuring that the station was not engaged in any action that could conflict with public interests.

Article Forty-Four:

Any violator of articles 42 and 43 previously mentioned in this law, or to any of them, is penalized by jail sentence varying from three months to one year; and by a fine of ten to thirty million LP, or both penalties.

Article Forty-Five:

In the event the station achieved a financial gain that cannot be legally accounted for, the Minister of Information can request the publication court to issue an order to cease transmission for a period ranging from three to six months.

The court must also impose a fine on the station in question equivalent in value to double the amount unaccounted for financial gain.

In the event that it was proven that this gain was obtained with the intention to serve another state, or any foreign or local institution in a manner that conflicts with the public interests or that touches on the political system or that ignites sectarian conflicts or encourages havoc and acts of turmoil, the penalty would be six months to two years jail sentence and a fine ranging from 50 to 100 million LP.

The court can rule that the station ceases transmission for a period ranging from six months to two years and can also rule to cancel the license issued for this station indefinitely.

Article Forty-Six:

The mechanism by which the station audit is carried on is determined by a decree issued by the government based on the Minister of Information's recommendation.

Chapter Eleven:

Censorship on TV and Radio stations

Article Forty-Seven:

By request of the Ministry of Information, the National Council for Audio Visual Media practices censorship over TV and radio stations.

Chapter Twelve:

Article Forty-Eight:

All the rulings of the law of commerce that do not conflict with the rulings of this law are applied.

Article Forty-Nine:

If necessary, the details required in the application of this law are specified by government decrees based on recommendations submitted by relevant ministers.

Article Fifty:

TV and radio stations are granted a period of two months prior to putting this law into effect to present license applications after the Ministry of Information announces that it is receiving them. The government can grant additional extensions to complete the application file.

These stations remain operational until the license decree is issued and resume their operation accordingly thereof, or are given a period of time to liquidate their assets in case their application were rejected.

Article Fifty-One:

All the TV and radio stations are exempted from fines, taxes, and fees of any kind before this law came into force.

Article Fifty-Two:

All the previous legislation that contradicts or conflicts with this law is canceled.

Article Fifty-Three:

This law becomes effective immediately after its publication in the official gazette.

Source: The National Council for Audio Visual Media (Kraidy, Marwan, Trans.)

Appendix B

Satellite Broadcast Amendments

1996

Chapter One:

This law specifies:

1. The rental process or transmitters and airwaves through satellites dishes and terrestrial stations owned by the Ministry of Telecommunications.
2. The fees that such rental incurs.

Chapter Two:

Renting equipment for satellite transmission is approved through recommendation of the Minister of Telecommunications, according to guidelines set by the ministry and by this law.

Licensing falls under the jurisdiction of laws 233, 234, 235, and 250 of decree number 126 dated 6/12/1959.

Chapter Three:

The licensing application should be submitted to the Minister of Telecommunications in three copies, and the Minister then asks for the counsel of the Minister of Information in decision-making, for a duration that does not exceed 15 days.

The application should include the following:

1. Name and address of the station to be licensed.
2. Name and address of the person responsible for broadcasting.
3. Technical study that delineates the source of transmission and clarifies the equipment's technical description to be linked to the terrestrial station, as well as the technical means of transmission.

Commitment

4. The station commits to follow the laws and not **to transmit**:
 - a. Political news, directly or indirectly, unless it is licensed to do so through a decision made in the Ministers' Cabinet following the recommendation of the Minister of Information.
 - b. Programs that might endanger public safety and national security, or that would affect the nation's relations with Arabic or Foreign friendly countries, or programs that would endanger these countries' national security.
 - c. Pornographic programs.
 - d. Programs that might instigate confessional conflicts or that would insult a certain religion.
 - e. Anything that might promote a relationship with the Zionist enemy.
 - f. Any programs without permission by its owner(s).
 - g. The Institution should get an approval from the Minister of Information before airing its programs.

- h. The Institution should put a bank deposit that is unconditional (200 million LP) to pay for any violation of the laws, especially law 382/94, and should make sure the amount stays the same after each fine, under the risk of having its license revoked.

The Minister of Information is responsible for implementing the clauses mentioned above, and in case of violation the Minister's Cabinet, following a recommendation from the Minister of Information, can suspend transmission for a month at the most and without compensation.

Chapter Four:

The Court Jurisdiction

The Ministers' Cabinet, following the recommendation of the Minister of Information and Foreign Affairs Minister, can ask for the court's decision in a matter of violation, and the channel can have its license revoked without any compensation except for the license fee of the duration of time it was stopped.

License can be revoked in case of any violation, including laws number 126 and 127 or 1959.

Chapter Five:

The station should provide:

1. The Microwave equipment needed to link its satellite station with its terrestrial counterpart.
2. The necessary equipment needed for the UP Link and the DOWN Link to receive and transmit airwaves through the terrestrial stations.

The following guidelines should be followed:

- a. The conditions put forth by the Ministry of Telecommunications
- b. The conditions put forth by the International Counseling Committee for Telegraphs and Telephones. (CCITT) and the International Counseling Committee for Telecommunications (CCIR)
- c. That its transmission does not affect other communications on the airwaves.
- d. That the institution provides maintenance for its equipment continuously.

Chapter Six:

Rental Duration

1. Rental lasts three years, and transmission can go up to 24 hours daily, but no less than 12 hours daily.

2. The Ministry of Telecommunications may rent the airwaves for a duration that is less than three years, especially for international news agencies.

The rental conditions and fees are decided by the Ministry of Telecommunications.

Chapter Seven:

Rental process

Fees are due every beginning of the year and every rented year is 12 months, with 30 day months.

Chapter Eight:

Rental Fees

1. Application Fee: 1 Million LP (Due when applying)
2. Founding Fee: 400,000 LP (Due when signing the contract with the government)
3. Monthly Channel Fee: 1st channel: 75,000 LP; 2nd channel: 50,000 LP; all other channels: 40,000 LP. Digital channel fees are doubled.
4. Yearly fess: 60.000 LP for each channel.
5. Yearly equipment fees: 5,000 LP

Chapter Nine:

The fees are paid in Lebanese Pound.

Chapter Ten:

All laws that contradict this law are cancelled, except for law 382/94

This law does not include encrypted television transmission.

Chapter Eleven:

The implementation of this law is undertaken in the Minister's cabinet through official decrees.

Chapter Twelve:

This law becomes effective immediately after its publication in the official gazette.

Source: The National Council for Audio Visual Media (Youssef, Yara, Trans.)