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This is a copy of the author manuscript of a chapter published in: Flew, T., Iosifides, P. and Steemers, J. (eds.) Global Media and National Policies: The Return of the State, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 173-189, 2016. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

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http://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9781137493941

Media ‘Globalization’ as Survival Strategy for Authoritarian Regimes
in the Arab Middle East

Naomi Sakr

Introduction

In his book about the impossibility of doing journalism ‘as we know it’ in a dictatorship, Joris Luyendijk makes an important point about the terminology journalists have at their disposal. The regimes in police states use ‘labels that are familiar to us: president, parliament, police, party’. But, he says, ‘an altogether different system hides behind this façade’ (Luyendijk 2010: 240). A similar mismatch applies to terms such as state, public and market, when used in relation to politics and media systems in the Arab world. It is customary to hear that large parts of the Arab media are ‘state controlled’. In fact they are controlled by governments with very little in the way of popular mandate or legitimacy. Indeed, such conflation of state and government calls to mind Abrams’ advice (1988: 79-81) that we should recognise the ‘idea of the state’ as an historical construct that seeks to attribute ‘unity, morality and independence to the disunited, amoral and dependent workings of the practice of government’. As for the notion of a ‘public’, this becomes elusive in situations where the people’s opinions and agency are suppressed. The surrogate term ‘Arab street’, used frequently in US media in the 1990s and 2000s, implied ‘volatility and irrationality’ on the part of Arab public opinion and invited publics elsewhere to ‘dismiss or mischaracterize’ it (Regier and Khalidi 2009: 11-12). The term ‘market’ is also problematic. It camouflages politically-imposed distortions designed to prevent popular media outlets or artefacts that challenge governments from accessing the advertising income they need to achieve financial viability (Sakr 2007: 181-88).

Any discussion of Arab media that relies on terms like ‘state’ and ‘market’ thus inevitably risks slippages in meaning. But there is a further complication when discussing globalization, to the extent that media in the Arab region already operate transnationally, and have done so for generations, by virtue of the shared Arabic language. Nineteenth century newspaper owners could flee repression in one part of the Ottoman Empire and resume business in another. Radio propaganda broadcast from Nasser’s Egypt a century later sparked a Saudi Arabian backlash with pan-Arab effects. A twenty-first century proliferation of offshore Arab satellite television channels, staffed by expatriate Arab presenters, could escape national restrictions and still engage viewers not only in their own language but also with the voices and views of their compatriots. With the rapid growth of Arab emigration in recent decades, the Arab region's transnational media system expanded accordingly, developing a quasi-global reach. Hence there has long been a stimulus for forms of globalization arising from inside Arab media, large swathes of which are controlled directly or indirectly by governments.

This chapter therefore rejects the assumption that what is often dubbed 'media globalization' acts against the capacity of Arab governments to shape national media policies and frameworks. Instead it investigates whether forces routinely seen as driving globalization have actually served to buttress authoritarian national controls. These forces include transnational media business corporations, the bureaucracies of international organisations that seek to coordinate media regulation among states, and global non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in media freedom advocacy. The study begins by reviewing some arguments about the nature of globalization processes affecting Arab media and then draws on these to analyse evidence of where exactly decisions have been taken about: management of 'private' media; inter-regional harmonization of media policy norms; and civil society efforts to promote media freedom.

'Liberalized' authoritarianism and global elites: how Arab media are implicated

Parts of the Arab region have been 'ensnarled in great power politics' (Brown 1984: 3) since the start of the nineteenth century. Quoting Leon Carl Brown's strong language about the distinctive and unremitting nature of this entanglement, Clement Henry and Robert Springborg (2001:8) note that a 'tradition of external intervention' defines the Middle East and North Africa more effectively than either Islam or Arab culture. 'Outside parties vying for commercial, cultural, or strategic influence' put indigenous business elites at risk, offered selective foreign 'protection' to local minorities and thereby exacerbated sectarianism, and often withdrew from colonial relationships without any sense of closure that would have endowed national governments with public confidence and political legitimacy (*ibid*: 9-11). Western commentators today are prone to overlook this history and its legacy of local resentment, especially among Arab activists whose predecessors' efforts at political reform were thwarted by Western backing for local ruling elites.

Post-colonial Arab political arrangements became tied to trade deals in arms and oil that suited European and US governments, with Arab petrodollars paying for fighter jets or deposited in Western banks and recycled through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). These institutions then pushed for economic liberalization in countries like Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Edward Abedian (2014) notes that the form of liberalization prescribed in World Bank and IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes

> ‘reduced government spending on schools, medicine, factories and farming, in favour of privatization, but left lucrative state construction projects and large military budgets intact. Elite officials, politicians, the military and construction magnates made lucrative gains, while the region’s general population saw no material reward’.

In the Arab world, predictions that domestic politics would be overhauled through exposure to the assumed dynamism of the international economy proved misconceived. This was not, as Toby Dodge explains, because the region was somehow ‘culturally or politically immune to either democracy or globalization’. It was because Arab regimes, interested first and foremost in their own survival, made the concession of allowing ‘indigenous capitalists to become junior members of the ruling elite’. This gave birth to a ‘”liberal” authoritarianism’, in which the state ‘retreated from the economic sphere in order to guarantee its dominance in the political sphere’ (Dodge 2002: 170). Business leaders enriched by this retreat were tied to the regime. Those who benefited from the relaxation of state media monopolies consequently had little appetite to exploit their newfound media voice to challenge the political status quo.

US and European support for authoritarian power structures in countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, implicit in arms deals and security pacts, was based on a belief that these supposedly pro-Western regimes were good for Western security. When the suicide attacks against US targets on 11 September 2001 suddenly upturned those assumptions, Western governments and aid donors shifted in 2003-04 to a new approach, dubbed ‘democracy promotion’. This incorporated a sizeable media component, with support for journalism training, media freedom advocacy and so on. But promoting democracy is not the same as promoting stability in the short term. Although established democracies may be stable, democratization can be a bumpy process. Ultimately, in the words of Eberhard Kienle (2010: 167), it may be surmised that the European Union (EU, and we might add the US) ‘never made up its mind to choose between democracy and stability’ in the Arab world.

Like neo-liberal globalization, so-called democracy promotion further helped to entrench what Laura Guazzone (2009: 356) has described as a ‘pattern of interaction between the international system and the internal dynamics of the [Arab] region’. Interaction derives from the way in which so-called ‘global civil society’ acts as a ‘driver of globalization’ because of its role in creating new transnational processes of policy-making (Stone 2008: 10). Here again, elitism is the order of the day. On the US side, a 1990s study found that philanthropic foundations supporting journalism had an ‘intricate web of relationships with government, business, academic and military leaders who move back and forth in policy positions’, and that those in their orbit seldom questioned the system that ‘produces both the benefits of industrial capitalism and its terrible costs' (Pratte 1997: 138). On the recipients' side, according to Diane Stone, professional grant-making bodies such as the Ford Foundation, with their 'elite' forms of associational life and high international profile, are not only hierarchical, but 'accessible primarily to those with resources; that is wealthy, westernized professionals and their agencies' (Stone 2008: 11).

Under the relationships fostered by US-based — and partly US government-funded — grant making bodies like the Ford Foundation and Internews, Arab civil society groups working for media freedom and development become dependent on foreign grants and isolated from local support. Shadi Hamid (2010) argues that the 'mode of NGO empowerment' pursued in this manner is 'flawed and often aimless'. He attributes the flaws to three factors: first, many NGOs are co-opted by Arab governments with the aim of controlling change rather than instigating it; secondly, those that are not co-opted are subject to government monitoring and intervention; and thirdly, NGOs are only allowed to operate in the Arab region if they are renounce all political activity (*ibid*). These factors were not changed by the uprisings of 2011. Thus, with the unfreezing of US military aid to Egypt shortly after the swearing in of former army chief Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi as president in 2014, the US government once again found itself financing simultaneously both an Arab government with a record of suppressing free speech and civil society groups interested in promoting it.

In Arab Gulf states, unlike those on the Mediterranean, public policy advocacy by non-government actors is extremely rare. Any such activity that exists requires the direct patronage of ruling elites. Instead, globalization of media institutions and journalistic practices is apparent in business deals. Examples include the recruitment of US universities to teach journalism and media studies in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), collaboration with US and UK-based media institutions in establishing news ventures partly or wholly owned by members of the Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabian ruling families, and — in the case of Prince Alwaleed bin Talal and Rupert Murdoch —shareholdings in each other's companies. Alwaleed's shares in US-based media, communications and entertainment firms, from News Corporation and Time Warner to AOL, Twitter, Apple, Motorola and EuroDisney, have afforded him friendly platforms on outlets owned by these corporations, such as CNN, Fox Business or *The Times* of London. As a result, Western media coverage has often projected an image of Alwaleed as a liberal free-market globalizing 'citizen of the world' assumed to typify a certain global elite of investors (Sakr 2013a: 2297).

Meanwhile, Jerry Harris argues (2013: 86-87) that Qatar and the UAE have deployed their 'feudal' political structures to build themselves as a 'financial and cultural crossroads for the global elite'. He sees the ruling class in Qatar and the UAE sheikhdoms of Abu Dhabi and

Dubai as being ‘thoroughly integrated into global accumulation and capital flows’ and sharing a ‘common capitalist culture with other global elites’. But, he writes, this class maintains a particular statist character. Rather than ‘deriving its power mainly through the private ownership of the means of production and finance, it wields its dominance through control of the state and its hold on energy and capital’ (Harris 2013: 90). It is through that model, whereby ruling regimes combine control over the state with accumulation of private wealth and integration into global capital flows, that the logic emerges of seeing media globalization not as a threat to regimes but as a means to their survival. The remaining sections of this chapter offer evidence of that combination of integration, accumulation and control.

International managers in Arab satellite television

Starting in the 1990s, Saudi Arabian investors lauched a series of satellite television ventures aimed at the whole Arab world, some free-to-air and some as pay-TV. These private channels relied on state resources, being carried by satellites jointly owned by Arab governments through the organisation Arabsat, in which Saudi Arabia holds a 36.7 per cent stake. Like the Saudi-owned pan-Arab newspapers *Asharq al-Awsat* and *Al-Hayat* before them, the channels were *émigré* operations, based abroad to avoid Saudi Arabia’s own tight media censorship and thereby enjoy the editorial flexibility needed to attract an economically-viable user base. Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), owned by a brother-in-law of King Fahd (ruler of Saudi Arabia from 1982 to 2005), started life in London in 1991. In 1998, amid fears that Fahd’s failing health could reduce his personal subventions to MBC, a British managing director, Ian Ritchie, was brought in to boost revenues and reduce staffing levels through large-scale redundancies that an Arab manager with social ties to staff members might have found impossible to enforce. Ritchie, a barrister who had worked for 16 years in television before becoming chief executive of the UK’s Channel 5 at its launch in 1996, replaced a Bahraini woman, Hala Omran. During 1999 he brought in other non-Arab managers: Philip O’Hara came from Mirror Group Newspapers to direct MBC’s Marketing and Sales, and Steve Clark, former controller of factual programmes at Carlton Television, was appointed to oversee News and Production. Ritchie left his position at MBC in 2000 to head Associated Press Television News, just before MBC moved its headquarters from London to Dubai. But Steve Clark remained with MBC, later joining Qatari-owned Al-Jazeera English (AJE) as head of news and programming to prepare for AJE’s launch in 2006. After leaving AJE in 2008, following a disagreement over staff relations, Clark joined Bloomberg TV.

The departures of Ritchie and Clark did not lessen the prominence of Western managers in MBC. Sam Barnett, who joined MBC in 2002 and was appointed its Chief Executive Officer

(CEO) in 2011, had a background advising on telecoms privatization for global consulting firms Arthur Andersen and PriceWaterhouseCoopers. As General Managing and Chief Operating Officer of the MBC Group before 2011, Barnett was involved in MBC's expansion from a single channel to a multi-channel network, with a heavy emphasis on entertainment, much of it imported from Hollywood and screened with Arabic subtitles and a few cuts.

With MBC's expansion came Tim Riordan's advancement from Director of Promotions and Acquisitions to MBC's first Group TV Director. Riordan, a UK national, was replaced by an Arab, Ali Jaber, on his retirement in 2011. But Andrew Maskall remained as Senior Marketing Manager for Western Channels, overseeing publicity for MBC's huge range of US-made free-to-air movies in all genres —drama, action, horror, crime, science fiction and comedy . MBC's expansion into 24-hour news in 2003, in direct competition with Qatar's Al-Jazeera ahead of the US-led invasion of Iraq, involved the creation of a news agency, Middle East News (MEN), with 40 correspondents around the world, to serve the news channel, Al-Arabiya. MEN was said to have Kuwaiti and Lebanese as well as Saudi finance in its early phase. MEN's Managing Director at its launch was Martyn Wheatley, a UK-qualified chartered accountant who had joined the UK's Independent Television News (ITN) in 1990, where he later became Finance Director and then Managing Director of Euronews, run at the time by ITN.

MBC was by no means unusual among the Saudi *émigré* channels in hiring non-Arab managers with experience of global corporate finance and management practices. ART, a pay-TV network part-owned by Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, initially based itself near Rome. In spring 2000, as part of a bid to improve competitiveness, ART recruited John Tydeman, a management policy and economic analyst who had worked in Australia and the US, to be CEO of its distribution arm, ADD. Tydeman, a former News Corp employee, had benefited from his experience at News Corp's Star TV to play a critical role in the first ten years of the Astra satellite project, Europe's first private satellite venture, based in Luxembourg. Before leading ADD he headed another pay-TV venture, Showtime Arabia, during its start-up phase. Showtime Arabia was a partnership between the US-based conglomerate Viacom and a Kuwaiti company, designed to provide English-language content to Arab homes. Shortly after its launch the position of Showtime President and CEO went to Peter Einstein, until then President and Business Director of MTV Networks Europe, a division of Viacom, who had worked his way up through MTV Networks over 15 years.

When Dubai-based Showtime merged with Bahrain-based rival, Orbit, in 2009, it was Showtime's then CEO, Marc-Antoine d'Halluin, who became CEO of the merged entity, OSN. D'Halluin, a French executive, had started his television career with Sony Pictures in

London in the mid-1990s, moving from there to Fox Kids Europe and the Scandinavian pay-TV group, Canal Plus Nordic. Orbit had also started out with an international manager. Launched by the Saudi-owned Mawarid Group in 1994 under the ownership of a cousin of King Fahd, Orbit was headed by an American, Alexander Zilo, who had helped to found Star TV. Like ART, Orbit originally sited its headquarters in Italy but relocated to the Arab region in the early 2000s. When Orbit's successor, OSN, replaced d'Halluin in 2010, it appointed David Butorac, managing director of the Australian media operator, WIN Corporation. Butorac's background also included positions at the UK's BskyB and Malaysia's Astro.

Senior managers recruited from Europe, the US, and Australia helped to shore up the business credibility of television networks owned by Saudi and Kuwaiti entrepreneurs. Their input did nothing to alter the fact that these businesses — and others like them owned by the governments of Abu Dhabi and Dubai — are controlled by allies and members of unelected Gulf ruling elites, who have a vested interest in minimising challenges to the local political status quo. Saudi satellite ventures were able to hire Western managers to apply their know-how because they were based beyond the direct reach of constricting Saudi Arabian legislation. By being based abroad they enabled the Saudi government to delay responding to pressures for domestic media liberalisation. The Saudi General Commission for Audiovisual Media, created in 2012-13, took its time over licensing rules for private broadcasters and warned that its censorship remit also covered online video sites such as YouTube.

Intra- and inter-regional negotiation of regulatory norms

Arab governments have various forums for seeking intra-regional policy convergence on media issues and these forums in turn engage with wider membership bodies set up to represent broadcasters or broadcast regulators to each other and the rest of the world. Overt moves towards official Arab government coordination in this field gained global attention in 2008 with efforts to establish a Pan-Arab Satellite Broadcasting Charter, which sought to normalize withdrawal of accreditation for television channels deemed to be flouting a government-imposed list of vaguely-worded editorial curbs. More often such coordination is achieved away from the international limelight, through bodies such as the six-member Gul f Cooperation Council (GCC) or the Tunis-based Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU). When the Egyptian and Saudi governments failed to get agreement on either a charter for satellite broadcasting or creation of a special audiovisual media commission within the Arab League, Arab information ministries agreed instead to 'scale up cooperation' through ASBU (Kuwait News Agency 2010).

Through ASBU, as well as individually, Arab state broadcasters interact with non-Arab counterparts in organizations like the Asian Broadcasting Union (ABU) and Asian Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD), both based in Kuala Lumpur, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), based in Geneva, and the Permanent Conference of Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators (COPEAM), which has its secretariat in Rome. Additionally, the broadcast regulators of Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco belong to the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (MNRA), created in 1997 by the broadcast regulators of France and Catalonia. Interaction with international institutions that formally espouse norms of human dignity, rule of law, pluralism and accuracy can offer a veneer of legitimacy. How far these norms are applied by state and non-state actors in Arab media can be assessed in part from an analysis of co-ordination between the GCC and ASBU, ASBU and COPEAM, and Arab members of the MNRA.

The GCC brings together Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar. As unrest mounted in Bahrain in 2011, in the wake of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, other GCC governments rallied to support the Bahraini government against pro-democracy protestors. Besides its military dimension, this support was reflected in GCC media coverage of Bahrain's situation, including editorial controls on reporting at Qatar's Arabic-language news channel, Al-Jazeera. A number of Al-Jazeera staff resigned over alleged distortions in news narratives relating to Syria and Bahrain. Ali Hashem, a war reporter with Al-Jazeera's Beirut office, said he had been asked to downplay militarization of the Syrian uprising that he had seen in person, apparently on instructions coming from 'people outside the TV centre — the same people who asked the channel to cover up the situation in Bahrain' (Hashem 2012). In late 2011, months after Saudi troops had entered Bahrain to help its security forces break up demonstrations, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal announced that 100 people working for his Rotana Media Group in Riyadh would relocate to Bahrain and that his planned 24-hour news channel, Alarab, to be supplied with news by Bloomberg, would be based in Bahrain. Two years later, GCC foreign ministers, meeting in Riyadh, signed a joint security agreement that explicitly outlawed GCC backing for 'hostile media outlets'.

The GCC and ASBU are interconnected through personal as well as institutional links. Riyadh Najm, first president of the Saudi General Commission for Audiovisual Media in 2013, is a former president of ASBU. ASBU Director General Salaheddine Maaoui is Tunisia's former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, who held several senior political positions under the deposed Tunisian dictator, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Attending the Asia Media Summit in Jeddah in 2014, Maaoui called for 'unified Arab standards to monitor what is aired on satellite television channels', complaining that lack of regulation led to the broadcasting of 'all kinds of stuff, resulting in chaos and confusion' (Wahab 2014). In September 2013, ASBU undertook, in collaboration with the EU-funded Euromed Audiovisuel programme, the Council of Europe's European Audiovisual Observatory, and COPEAM, to strengthen data collection and transparency in all aspects of broadcast regulation and broadcasting operations. A joint communiqué noted that, in its dealings with Arab states, the European Audiovisual Observatory follows 'policies on human rights and freedom of the media' that 'aim at complying with the standards promoted by the Council of Europe' (Working Group of Experts 2013:2).

In practice there are few precedents for Arab governments fulfilling commitments that are linked to human rights observance in the field of media rights and responsibilities. In 2005, the state broadcasters of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya and Morocco were among the first signatories of COPEAM's Seville Charter, whereby they pledged to respect pluralism of opinions, show fairness and accuracy in reporting facts and events and 'abstain from any form of misinformation through omissions'. According to its own account (COPEAM 2007), COPEAM passed the Charter to ASBU to 'ensure its adoption by the greatest possible number' of ASBU members; in 2006 and 2007 it was signed by Palestinian and Tunisian broadcasting officials respectively. Given the record of Egyptian, Libyan and Tunisian media under the dictators who were overthrown in 2011, the Charter appears to have been both a dead letter and an alibi for those in power.

The MNRA bases its actions on similar values of pluralism and accuracy. Its 2008 Declaration on Audiovisual Content Regulation, subsequently reinforced and expanded through further declarations, emphasises respect for human dignity, accuracy of information and pluralism of opinions (Carniel-Bugs and Crusafon 2014: 379-80). Since one route to pluralism is through expansion of non-government broadcasting, regulatory authorities belonging to the MNRA might be expected to step up licensing of new channels. This was not the case in Morocco. Bouziane Zaid's research on Morocco's Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle (HACA) shows that, although the number of TV channels in Morocco increased from three to nine between 2002 and 2013, only one new channel was private. While five licences for privately owned TV channels were denied in 2009 on the grounds of a 'deteriorating situation in the advertising market', new government channels were licensed (Zaid 2014: 1-2; 23). Despite increasing rigour in HACA's monitoring of broadcast content in respect of pluralism and accuracy in both government and private stations, it drew the line at an expression of support for a republican Morocco during a talkshow on Radio Mars; it suspended the station for 48 hours and imposed a fine (Carniel-Bugs and Carsafon 2014: 389-90). Having scrutinised interventions by the broadcast regulators of Morocco and Lebanon, Carniel-Bugs and Carsafon conclude that both differ substantially from their European counterparts in levels of transparency, independence and criteria for content regulation. Jordan's regulator, meanwhile, despite its membership of the MRNA, has only an advisory function. Licensing decisions rest with the Jordanian Council of Ministers and have been criticised for lacking fairness or transparency (Freedom House 2014; Sakr 2013b: 103-08).

Foreign grants for media assistance

The Euromed Audiovisuel programme, still a vehicle for deliberations with Arab state broadcasters in ASBU in 2013, has been around for a while. In 1997 it was the umbrella for ten regional projects in broadcast and film, together worth €20 million, that were agreed in Thessaloniki at a conference of EU states and 12 Mediterranean countries, eight of them Arab. The agreement's avowed aim was 'cultural interpenetration', linked at the time to the civil society and cultural pillar of the Euro-Med 'Barcelona Process', which had been formally launched in 1995 to promote stability and dialogue in the Euro-Med region. In the sphere of cultural interpenetration and mutual promotion of good media practice, backed not only by European but also by US funds, the question is how far Arab governments opened the way to a widening and deepening of supportive transnational relationships among media practitioners and wider civil society.

International aid for media development can be traced to the Allied Powers' reorganization of news media in Germany and Japan after World War II. However, contemporary interventions lack the 'clarity of authority and purpose that the Allied military victory provided in 1945', which was reflected in an imposed legal regime (Thomson and Price 2002: 5). Even in Iraq, after the US-led invasion of 2003, media arrangements put in place by the occupiers were hollowed out by the Interim Government of Iraq as soon as it took power in 2004 (Sakr 2005: 244-246). Elsewhere in the Arab world, fundamental progressive change in media laws has also been lacking. Yet, as noted by commentators on the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a regional pro-reform programme launched under former US president George Bush in 2002, the 'basic limitation of all democracy assistance' is that its 'effectiveness depends on the local government's readiness for reform' (Wittes and Masloski 2009: 7). BBC Media Action, evaluating the effectiveness of different forms of media assistance, cites UNESCO's Media Development Indicators, devised in 2008, to support the assertion that 'what matters, above all, is the enabling environment within which independent journalism can flourish' (BBC Media Action 2012:4).

Arab governments' readiness to draw on financial assistance that Western donors intended for promoting civil and political freedoms can be seen in the 32 per cent of MEPI money allocated to governments during the programme's first four fiscal years, in contrast to 13 per cent for NGOs over the same period. It was only after 2005 that the imbalance started gradually to be redressed (Wittes and Masloski 2009: p 5). Meanwhile, an evaluation of US grant-giving specifically for media in Egypt reveals that Egyptian government agencies took the lion's share of funds. The five-year, US$15.5m, USAID-funded Media Development Program (MDP) for Egypt, launched in 2006, was originally intended to improve the 'enabling environment' for free and independent media at the national and local levels (ARD 2009: v). But, according to a mid-term evaluation of the project in 2009, the MDP ultimately refrained from addressing 'politically sensitive topics such as legal reform' because the Egyptian government asked it to (*ibid*: v). Six of the MDP's eight designated Egyptian partners were consequently all arms of government, including the State Information Service, Supreme Press Council, state-owned news agency, two state-owned newspapers and the state-owned broadcaster, the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU). The other two partners were controlled by government, namely Cairo University's Faculty of Mass Communication, headed by a government-appointed dean, and the Egyptian Press Syndicate, mostly representing government employees who work for state publishing houses (Sakr 2010: 43-44). At the time of the evaluation, the Supreme Press Council, ERTU and state-owned newspaper *Al-Ahram* had yet to agree to work with the MDP (ARD 2009: vii). But Management Systems International, which provided MDP training, later reported on its website that its training of 1,000 *Al-Ahram* 'professionals' in photojournalism, writing for the internet, and page layout had paid off during the January 2011 uprising.

The MDP reportedly had to 'work around the margins' on its objective of improving the enabling environment, which led it to restrict its dealings with NGOs, providing them only with ad hoc training and limited follow-up. Some NGO beneficiaries of the scheme were found not to meet the MDP's own credibility criteria (*ibid*: viii). Yet the centrality of an enabling environment was demonstrated very forcefully in December 2011, after the MDP had ended. Under an international cooperation minister appointed by Mubarak but kept in place after his overthrow, security forces raided the offices of ten Egyptian and seven foreign civil society bodies, including the Washington-based International Centre for Journalism (ICFJ). After a protracted trial, 43 NGO workers were convicted in June 2013 of receiving illegal foreign funds. Some received suspended sentences; the ICFJ's Yehia Ghanem, a senior Egyptian journalist from *Al-Ahram*, was sentenced to two years in jail with hard labour (ICFJ 2014). MDP partner *Al-Ahram* published an opinion piece in February 2012, by deputy editor Ahmad Moussa, approving the indictment against Ghanem (Sakr 2013c: 85).

As with reservations about the MDP's impact, evaluations of EU finance for Egypt found little evidence of civil society being strengthened. The European Court of Auditors noted (2013: 16-17) that the European Commission had continued to provide large sums to the Egyptian government and to public bodies directly linked to Mubarak's wife Suzanne, whereas NGOs involved in human rights and democratization received ‘very limited funding’. In April 2012, after the uprising, a sum of €4 million for enhancing the capacity of civil society organisations was cancelled because of Egyptian government objections to the wording of a Call for Proposals (*ibid*: 16). A report to the European Commission specifically on the subject of EU media support in the decade to 2010, mentioned a small project, of indeterminate impact, to train 40 journalists at *Al-Ahram* in 2003-04 to use Microsoft Office (EPRD 2012: 29). The same report highlighted the prominence of the EU’s main contract partners in media support, with BBC Media Action alone accounting for almost 10 per cent of the total project value over the decade (*ibid*: 7). BBC Media Action, formerly the BBC World Service Trust, worked with the ERTU in 2006-07 on editorial guidelines and a style guide (Sakr 2103c: 68). The guidelines were not in evidence in ERTU coverage of protests in Cairo in October 2011, which was so unprofessional as to earn the ERTU a rebuke from the European Broadcasting Union (*Ibid*: 5).

A similar picture of obstacles to an enabling environment, with media assistance going to government agencies and civil society organisations subject to tight government controls, emerges in Jordan. There, the US authorities paid for management consultants Booz Allen to advise Jordan on legal and regulatory reforms, and then commissioned IREX to implement a 3-year US$5 million ‘Jordan Media Strengthening Programme’, launched in 2006 to ‘improve the enabling environment for independent media’ (IREX 2008). Yet one manager who worked at the state broadcasting body, JRTVC, while the programme was under way, reported later that changes would have been needed to the wider political and electoral system for any attempt at reform inside the broadcaster to stand a chance of success (Zureikat 2011). As soon as the foreign experts are back on the plane, she said, everything in the country ‘stays the same as it was’ (*ibid*). An evaluation of Danish support for youth programming at JRTVC concluded in 2007 that the foreign partner had been relied upon to carry out all administrative and logistical aspects, including providing production and editing facilities (Brice 2007:30). Meanwhile, Law 51 of 2008 obliges Jordanian civil society bodies to register formally with authorities and submit to close scrutiny of their affairs, including seeking Cabinet approval before accepting any funding from abroad. In June 2013 some 300 Jordanian news websites were blocked without prior notice under a new law that equated websites with newspapers, forcing them to obtain a licence and appoint an editor-in-chief who had been a member of the Jordan Press Association for at least four years (Kuttab 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter hypothesised that various agencies believed to drive media globalization, such as transnational business conglomerates, the bureaucracies of international organisations, and transnational non-governmental organisations, may have helped to shore up authoritarian Arab governments in ways that need to be explored. It revealed a long list of British, French, American and Australian media executives, who applied experience gained from a range of global firms to enhance the international credibility and viability of privately-owned television networks linked to the ruling family of Saudi Arabia. Since these networks, by their transnational nature, bought time for the Saudi government to stall on domestic media reform, it is fair to see the global business expertise co-opted into the networks as having contributed to that outcome. As regards inter-regional bodies, the evidence presented here suggests that Arab government-controlled broadcasters and broadcast regulators were willing to pay lip service to international membership obligations, such as standards of transparency and independence, while ignoring them in practice without losing membership privileges. Opening up to global civil society was meanwhile seen to be a lopsided process whereby Arab governments accepted that media agencies under their control could receive foreign-funded training and other technical support, while tightly restricting the same activities for non-governmental groups within their jurisdictions.

The findings could be used to question the value of globalization theory and to validate an alternative explanatory model: one with a dual focus on the agency of national ruling elites and the international structures that continue to underpin the power of those elites today, as in the past. Where authoritarian regimes are able to manipulate state institutions, business and civil society, they deny space for any discourse that distinguishes between state and government and, thereby, for any vision of independent regulation of media markets in the interests of democracy.

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