

Gulf Newspapers and Their Role in Connecting States of the Gulf Cooperation Council

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Introduction:

the winds of change in the world order started from multiple places, especially with the beginning of the disintegration and collapse of the former Soviet Union, and the breakup of the socialist bloc. As the researcher believes, this event has had a very serious importance in the emergence of "the new world order". This latest order swept the world and created new coalitions. It also supported the existing regional organizations, and also resulted in the support of existing regional organizations, such as the European Union, the Asian bloc, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Arab world. Many researchers started to talk about the importance of having a strong international and regional multi-polar powers which play political, economic and cultural roles in this new world order. This study aimed at finding out the role played by the newspapers of the GCC countries in this international order. The study also aimed to identify the role played by the Gulf Press, as one of the mainstays in the formation of public opinion, and to create awareness among the Gulf people and the Arabs in general. Another main objective of this study was to identify the extent of the GCC press contribution in providing the GCC citizen with the new information, achievements, dissemination of news and positive images of the GCC countries. **The first hypothesis:** The Gulf newspapers contribute in the formation of the Gulf citizens' public opinion in terms of published news and information. **The second hypothesis:** There is no cooperation and agreement among the Gulf newspapers regarding publishing news and information which concerns the Gulf citizen. **The third hypothesis:** There are professional and political impediments which play a major role in the process of news and information dissemination about the GCC citizen in the Gulf newspapers.

Related studies

1. Although the survey carried out by the researcher did not result in the presence of Arab or Western studies directly link the reality and problems of the Gulf newspapers, however, the researcher found many studies which deal with the problems of countries in general.
2. The Study of Mansour entitled e-Government in the GCC states. Ahmad Mustafa Mansour, of the University of the United Arab Emirates conducted a comparative study based on a descriptive research on the e-governments in the GCC. The study concluded that all Gulf states tried to create e-governments, but the political wills and bureaucracy have affected the success or failure of using information technology and communications to facilitate their people lives. The Researcher believes that this study is important as it shows that GCC countries are not ready to take advantage of modern development and information technology in serving the people and connecting the Gulf countries through press and information.
3. Al Wardi conducted a study entitled: "information sources and beneficiary services in information institutions". It is an important study as it shows how information from readers is received. Newspapers and magazines come as one of the important sources of information for the people in general, but the study does not specify the Gulf countries and the problems among their newspapers.
4. Abu Isba' did a study entitled "communication in media institutions" This study is important as it deals with the profession, career, and media communication among media organizations. The researcher discusses the importance of communication which achieves information link among institutions and increases their objectivity and professionalism. But the study does not focus on the problems that hinder the objectives of the GCC countries in achieving their development, and does not focus on the press, in particular. (3)
5. William Ruff conducted a study entitled: "the problem of the media and development in the Arab World". The study found out that there is a problem between the media and development in the Arab world in general. The importance of the study lies in its results, but there are big and serious differences between what posed by the media in the Arab countries. The researcher suggested that these issues should be taken into account by politicians in the Arab countries. The Arab media deal with issues unrelated to development, and if dealt with, they are dealt with in a narrative form and do not meet the important goals of the Arab countries. (4)
6. Ali conducted a study entitled: "Private consumption in the GCC countries," It is a study on the (GCC) states: their interrelationships and their similarities and differences. The study deals with the economic and consumption issues, in addition to similarities and differences among them, but it does not refer to the contents of the Gulf newspapers, in particular. The importance of this study lies in its results, as it concluded that there are similarities in a lot of values and ideas, which ultimately affect all consumption products, including

information materials.(5)

Problem of the Study:

The Gulf Press occupied a prominent place in the Gulf community and imposed its presence in the Arab community. The problem of the study resides in identifying the Gulf Press trends and its role in linking the GCC countries together.

Questions of the study:

A – To what extent do the Gulf newspapers contribute in the formation of public opinion in the countries of the GCC in terms of published news and information?

B - What is the extent of cooperation among the newspapers of the GCC countries in the dissemination of news and information of interest to the Gulf citizens?

T - What are the political and professional impediments which play the primary role in the process of publishing news and information?

Objectives of the study:

The main objective of this study is to know the extent of the GCC Newspapers contribution in providing the citizen with information, news and achievements of the GCC countries.

Type of the study and Methodology

This is a descriptive study which is based on accurate following-up and monitoring the phenomenon of units in a quantitative or qualitative manner in a given period of time. (8)

Unit of analysis :

This study adopted the item unit as the unit of analysis, and the item in this study is the subject as a tool for analysis. Analysis was conducted for the first page in the entire sample; analysis was only done for news concerning the (GCC) countries with the exclusion of all local, regional, and international news.

Categories of analysis

“The precise limitation of categories analysis as viewed by Bearlson is characterized by comprehensiveness and reliability” (1)

The researcher Richard noted that a classified item under a certain category cannot be accepted under other categories. (2).

Based on this assumption, all news related to the GCC countries are placed on the first page of the study sample, and classified to serve the purpose of the study.

Population and Sample:

The population consisted of all daily newspapers of the Arab Gulf: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, UAE and Kuwait. The study sample consisted of the Saudi Al-Riyadh newspaper, the United Arab Emirates Al-Ittihad newspaper, Bahrain Al Ayyam newspaper; Oman Al-Watan newspaper; Qatar Al Raya newspaper and Al-Qabas newspaper of Kuwait. The total was six newspapers. The front page of these newspapers or a total of (186) pages were studied and analyzed for six months from January to July 2012. The researcher focused on news related to the Gulf countries only; other local news related to each state and the Arab and world news was neglected.

Methodology

The study is based on the content analysis method which is used in the classification and tabulation of media material studied, which in turn, the research divided it into categories; then the content of the press article published in all daily newspapers was analyzed and logically and objectively describe. As Bearlson (1952) and Beasley(1960) believe that content analysis is used in the sense of scientific analysis for the communication messages, benefiting from the information available through converting it into a material that can be objectively and orderly summarized and compared .(9)

The results of the study

Trends of the Gulf press and its impact on the Arab and Gulf public opinion:

The study concluded that Gulf newspapers do not connect the people of the GCC with each other. This is due to the presence of different trends in these newspapers. The researcher believes that Press trends are linked with the policies of the countries to which these newspapers belong .The researcher also believes that the trends of the Gulf Press are determined by fixed domains which are the purposes for which the press was founded ,

namely, (news, enlightenment , education, and entertainment). Thus, the purpose of the Gulf press was not to link among the Gulf people. The observer of the Gulf press finds that there are other crucial factors which play an essential role in the trends of press and affect what is published daily, Weekly or monthly. These factors can be defined as follows:

1- The margin of freedom factor in which the Gulf newspapers work.

The observer of the Arab and Gulf press clearly sees the importance of freedom in the field of journalism and publishing; the higher the amount of freedom, and knowledge of the news, the more chance will be there for the dissemination of information in the right way, and then the recipient or reader's information dosage increases. Media studies show that the dilemma of freedom is one of the most important problems facing the press in general, especially in the countries of the third world. Journalism has a commitment towards the recipient readers and audiences. The journalist knows about the requirements of the press as an international industry, which states that "the reader has a complete freedom of knowledge of what is going on in the community, not only the local community, which occupied 85% of the news, but also the Gulf, the Arab and the world. With the exception of Kuwait, we find that local news and information in the Gulf newspapers come abstract and far away from the analysis and discussion". The Freedom in presenting news and discussion of topics is closely connected with news credibility and popularity of newspaper and magazine; and then a person in this new world order started to look for "correct" information everywhere. When he does not find it in the local papers, he looks for it in other means available starting with the BBC, voice of America, Mont Carlo, and others. The Gulf newspapers, therefore started to focus on local news and what is said and raised by state officials without paying attention to the Arab and Gulf news unless there was a big event, such as flooding in winter and other issues. (10).

Along with the technological development and information system through the "Internet", sites for these newspapers and news sites appeared and became accessible to the Arab and Gulf readers. The reader became able to navigate rapidly through the electronic pages and find out what is going on inside and outside his country. Some Gulf States tried to have full control on writings and electronic publishing, such as YouTube, twitter by closing down some sites and trial some offenders. Relative freedom problems which appear among the GCC newspapers are linked with the policies in each country (11). These problems are associated with the following concepts: The state concept of media is that the press is the social need consistent with the policies and laws of the community, but this should be for each state to choose the news and information suitable to their needs. (12)

1 - Some Gulf countries give a space of freedom for newspapers, so they are published without the state censorship, but the government holds these newspapers responsible for publishing or covering some news and information that will disagree with the existing policies. The researcher found that Kuwait and some Gulf newspapers published in English such as "Khaleej Times "has more space of freedom than some Arabic newspapers in the same country. But even in these countries, there is a shortage in the news and information analysis both in the information centers of newspapers and the government at 20%. (13)

2 - Gulf newspapers focus on local affairs, in particular, at a rate of 85%, especially after the decline of Arab national thought, and the rift developed by Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in the 1990, which made the newspapers and newspaper columnists in the Gulf show interest in local issues and stay away from the issues of Arab nationalism. (14)

3. It should be pointed out that all Gulf daily newspapers, even though they were – except in Kuwait - politically licensed, they belong to the authority and write about the ruling authority in the Gulf; even the Kuwaiti newspapers that are belonging to the private sector, still they are not different from the other Gulf newspapers except in having more freedom. One of the characteristics of authority in the Gulf in general is not to talk about the violations that occur by members of the ruling authority. Thus, newspapers, as viewed by the researcher, have no developmental missions concerned with the development of the Gulf States, or the development of man in particular.

4. The Gulf newspapers mostly have two objectives, either to reinforce the ruling authority of the country, or to have a commercial goal , or both together ,as for example the Emirates newspapers . The Gulf newspapers, therefore, appeared to the researcher as having no goal or clear political vision. Most of them turned into a press of opinion rather than news imposed press. Hence, a columnist or a free-lancer became more famous, and more important than the editor. In this case, the importance of the journalist job was lost and the private views became the prevailing feature of the Gulf press. (15)

5. The researcher believes that Gulf newspapers are active only during conferences, events and visits of the Gulf States leaders. They widely cover these visits which become the main headlines in some newspapers, but this visit information and the Gulf News disappear at the end of the conferences, visits and events. The researcher also noticed that Gulf newspapers are active when there are athletic competitions, such as the Gulf sports, the Asian, and the World Cup tournaments and other sporting and religious programs, besides local entertainment series in Ramadan.

6. Editors and chief editors of newspapers in the Gulf are appointed by the ruling authority with the exception of the Kuwaiti press. They are mere employees for the ruling authority; they do not work as leaders of opinion,

rather they work as gatekeepers of information and ideas that help Gulf citizen develop, and help them to discuss a lot of public and private issues which caused retardation of the Gulf States. (16).

7- There are violations in the press industry as it has lots of non-qualified personnel. Those workers in the gulf press have no goal except getting is closer to the ruling authority and trying to please the ruling authority everywhere in the Gulf. They also have private and personal goals to achieve. (17)

8. Lack or weakness of laws that if found, and lack of eligible press associations which follow up what is written and published in the Gulf press; there are also no laws that defend and protect the Gulf interests. The researcher attempted to find laws or studies which show interest in the Gulf citizens, but he found none conducted by the GCC countries. (18)

By analyzing the respondents' answers, the researcher believes the Gulf newspapers do not form the Gulf public opinion and do not link among its members the right way. Thus, the research first hypothesis is not met. (See Tables 1, 2, 3)

Table No. One: shows newspaper and type of license

Newspaper	Starting Date	Country	Type of License
Al Qabas	1971Daily	Kuwait	Private/ based on social responsibility
Al Raya	1980Daily	Qatar	Private/ social responsibility/ officials appointed by authority
Al Itihad	1972 Daily	Emirates	State / appointment of officials
Al Riyadh	1965 Daily	Saudi Arabia	Yamama Foundation / appointment by the establishment with authority approval
Al Watan	1971Daily	Oman	Individual ownership /appointment of officials with authority approval
Al Ayyam	1989 Daily	Bahrain	Individual /appoint officials with the consent of authority

Table No Two: shows newspapers and the quality of published Gulf News

Newspaper	Number of news	News Quality	Rank in Publication
Al Qabas	99	Analytical	First
Al Raya	15	Descriptive	Third
Al Itihad	9	Descriptive	Fourth
Al Riyadh	98	Descriptive	Second
Al Watan	7	Descriptive	Fifth
Al Ayyam	99	Analytical/ Descriptive	First / Repeated

The Relationship among Gulf Newspapers

The study results showed the beginning of cooperation among the Gulf states in 1981, when the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates signed a declaration of establishing the Gulf Cooperation Council. This declaration pointed out that what connects these six countries is the "special relationships and common features stemming from their common faith and similarity of their regimes, the unity of its heritage, and their identical political, social and demographic structure, besides their similar culture and civilization." (19).

This declaration - which is important for this meeting – highlighted the desire of these countries to deepen and develop cooperation, and coordination in various fields. Studies indicate that experts of the GCC countries hastily engaged in putting legal, political, economic and social formulas. These formulas have been signed to form a statute of the Gulf Cooperation Council .Signing occurred in "Dubai" in the United Arab Emirates on May 25, 1981. (20)

One of the items of this signed declaration gave attention to media and tourism affairs. It is noted that attention has been primarily given to tourism, while media was left behind except for exchanging TV shows, some skits and plays between TV channels and theaters. This is due to the progress and experience of some Gulf countries in this field. As for journalism, cooperation was semi-official punctuated by some visits and interviews of some professional aspects. The relationship between the Gulf newspapers became as follows: (21)

1- Formal relations between the owners of Gulf newspapers, including exploratory and socializing visits,

Some figures of the Gulf newspapers, such as Abdul Rahman Al-Rashid tried to break some formalities and establish knowledge and news link between the Gulf newspapers when he was editor of "Middle East newspaper," but this idea did not spread, and ended when Al-Rashid left the Middle East paper. After the liberation, Yasin Al Yasin and Yusuf Ulayan tried to link their Kuwaiti newspaper "Al fajr Al Jdid "with some Saudi, UAE and Egyptian newspapers, but the idea did not succeed. There is simple news and knowledge

cooperation with the Kuwaiti Al -Siyasah newspaper through Ahmad Al JarAllah and some Saudi and Egyptian newspapers, but without commitment of both parties of publishing. There is also close cooperation of the Kuwaiti Al-Qabas newspaper with some Lebanese newspapers , Al-Riyadh of Saudi Arabia and Al-Ayyam of Bahrain newspaper in terms of publishing some books ,news and information on the same day and time .(22) .

2. Quantitative rather than Qualitative relationships. Quantity relationships dominated quality as one of the researchers in this field stated "we are now happy with the number of our newspapers and magazines more than the news quality. (23)

3 - Professional marketing relationships, mostly looking for the distribution manner which was still a major constraint to the Gulf press. When private distribution companies emerged, professional relationships between the Gulf newspapers were almost none existing.

4 - Competitive relationships. Though competitive relationships are legitimate among newspapers and magazines, this competition is limited to the Gulf markets. An Observer of this relationship can find that it is inevitable due to the existence of a vast amount of diverse newspapers and magazines in the Gulf market. Because of the lack of focus on time, one can notice that all the daily newspapers come out in the morning. Many magazines, however, compete on some sectors of local population , others ,as the researcher found out, compete among themselves within the same Gulf state ; as the case in the competition between the old and new newspapers in Kuwait; and between Ashorouq and Al Raya newspapers of Qatar, as Al Shorouq publishes 60% of the Gulf news more than the daily Al Raya. Al-Ayyam newspaper, on the other hand, compete with other newspapers in Bahrain in terms of publishing Gulf and local news ,while other newspapers show larger areas for the international ,Arab and regional news. (24)

The study concluded that the relationships among the Gulf newspapers are vague and mostly formal, these newspapers do not agree on a lot of Gulf positive concepts. Therefore, this research enhances the second hypothesis which states that there is no professional relationship between Gulf newspapers in terms of transferring daily news and information about the Gulf citizen evolution in various areas of life, except for Al-Qabas and Al Ayyam of Bahrain, as there is cooperation regarding information and monthly books. While we find that Al-Qabas newspaper publishes analytical news, Al-Riyadh newspaper and the Bahraini Al Ayyam both publish descriptive, sports and religious news. On the other hand, the Omani and Qatari newspapers do not care much about the GCC news coverage.

The study also referred to the absence a common plan among Gulf newspapers to raise cultural or political awareness of the Gulf citizens. Besides, the relationship between the Gulf newspapers is formal. There is also a simple cooperation unable to achieve the desired progress which may connect the Gulf countries in terms of news and information.

Obstacles which encountered and will encounter Gulf newspapers:

The study showed that most of the Gulf newspapers believe that a journal message in general is to provide people with correct news, sound information and facts that will help them to form an opinion about what is going on, and to realize the resulting local, regional or international problems.

The researcher also believes that press is based on openness ,clarity, and dissemination of accurate and documented news, in addition to commitment to honesty and trust, which are the basic criterion for each newspaper. Therefore, many newspapers depend on the reliability of the news that comes from local or global news agencies. In the light of these agreed upon standards, there appeared some obstacles which sometimes stand against adopting these principles by the Gulf newspapers: (25)

1 - There are no clear press and information strategies for the GCC, but there are personal initiatives by those who run it.

2 -The philosophy of some Gulf States about the confidentiality of information, and the fear from publishing it under the pretext that it may be misunderstood by the recipients.

3 - The freedom given to journalist affects the "press material" published; as it is often either far from reality of the Arabian Gulf citizen's worries and problems, or it is not allowed to be published. Thus, the study showed that the press discussed and analyzed global issues far away from the local and Gulf reality. The freedom problem also played part in banning circulation of some Gulf newspapers in countries of the Gulf .(26)

Table No. Three: newspapers and the margin of freedom and its impact on the news:

Newspaper	Margin of Freedom	Degree
Al Riyadh of Saudi Arabia	Poor/Average	30-40%
Al Itihad of the Emirates	Poor/Average	40-50%
Al Qabas of Kuwait	Average/ High	50-80%
Al Raya of Qatar	Poor/Average	40-50%
Al Watan of Oman	Poor/ Average	30-40%
Al Ayyam of Bahrain	Average/ High	40-70%

4-The expatriates play a role in the press and media, in general and their concentration in newspapers and magazines have an impact on the Arab and Gulf public opinion. The expatriates still affect the press decisions through selection and presentation of news and headlines, and through the formation of information, tabulation and production of newspapers and magazines. (27)

5 - The problem of non- existing mechanism to attract Gulf newspapers editors. If this mechanism was available, it was valid for less than 1%. This made Gulf newspapers focus on official, marginal and local issues, and adopt single-minded policy in spite of the multiplicity of writers.

6 - The problem of not developing the information centers, the lack of cooperation between them led to a cultural "isolation" and information shortage for the Gulf journalist.

7 - There are no mechanisms for the exchange and cooperation among the Gulf Journalists at all professional levels .This led to solely rely on the employment of Arabs, Asians and foreign workers in the non- Arabic speaking newspapers.

8 - With the advent of new media or Social-Media, and the easy access of news sites, smart phones and electronic pads, the majority of young people turned to the new media. As a result , many Gulf newspapers lost their high income produced by advertising and subscriptions , consequently many Professional Journalists quitted their jobs; and they were replaced by unqualified and semi educated editors who are illegible for the press industry resulting in a lower technical level of each newspaper. This action prompted many to distribute the Gulf newspaper free of charge. They also put a lot of temptations to attract subscribers to newspapers, such as car contests, gifts and other. (28)

Suggestions and Ambitions

In order to participate in the required role of building the modern Gulf character, and to rise up to the regional and global developments, it is suggested that Gulf newspapers should play a clearer role in the new millennium, as the world order and the information new system demand that the Gulf press play a prominent role in the formation of the Gulf Arab endangered identity. (29) Proceeding from this basis, the following roles can be considered functions for the Gulf new journalism:

1- Adopting cultural and information democracy and not necessarily the political: Studies show that information and culture are a human right agreed upon among countries, including the Gulf States, as this right is recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The role of the Gulf Press is to publish news and culture which aim at enlightening the mind and forming the Gulf Arab character, coinciding with the evolution of mankind. The Goal is never to fill in the pages just with any information because it is received via international agencies.

2 – There should be a focus on the news and information that promote the Gulf and Arab intellectual production. This requires the development of Arab Gulf strategies put by editors in chief editors of Gulf newspaper. News and information content published daily in the Gulf newspapers must be developed to serve the public opinion of the Gulf Arab. Although the Gulf citizen achieved progress and development in various scientific and cultural fields, he still does not know what is going on in the neighboring countries regarding intellectual , practical and civilized production; he more or less depends on the transmitted rumors and distorted news .

3 - A Mechanism for the the process of press and news exchange and cooperation among Gulf newspapers should be developed; jobs should be occupied by the local people who have press and media competence in all fields of journalism and news, such as, editors ,reporters, news makers, advertisers , distributors, and other areas of journal work.

4.- A Mechanism for the exchange and spread of the Gulf heritage among the generations should be developed. This heritage should be the target for Gulf newspapers, so we contribute to the building of the Gulf and preserve it from loss and fragmentation in the context of globalization, and the proliferation of space stations and electronic pages on the internet.

5.-Chief editors of the Gulf newspapers should agree to highlight the identity of Gulf Arab, which is about to be lost in the absence of the Gulf, and Arab

" model"; and the abundance of Arab political, economic and social, problems ; in addition to the attraction of young Arab generations in the Gulf and beyond to the Western "models" published in newspapers and

magazines, and amply presented on satellite channels.

6.-A Mechanism for job security should be created to support journalists and help them to be creative and contribute in building the Gulf nation. The Gulf journalist, whether a "columnist" or an editor- like many journalists -does not have job security and he is always in fear of the Gulf governments' tyranny.

7 - Chief Editors of Gulf newspapers should agree on developing a training strategy for journalists on all journal arts, so that they can keep up with scientific, technological and intellectual developments.

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