

ABSTRACTS

Prof. Jon Anderson, Catholic University of America

‘Between Freedom and Coercion: Inside Internet Implantation in the Middle East’

Abstract: As media, the Internet is not really liberating, nor even very democratic; a strong state is not required to dash such hopes. Internet implantation in the region occasioned a new round of state-society bargaining that constitute the real politics of the Internet. This paper outlines alliance-seeking, reputation management, and the shift of reference groups that constructed its social infrastructure.

Dr. Fares Braizat, Centre for Strategis Studies, University of Jordan

‘The Perceived Impact of Arab Satellite Channels on Arab Public Opinion Towards the West in General and the US in Particular’

Abstract: The Paper will draw upon previous research we have conducted in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt. Also, recent Data have become available from Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Palestine and Kuwait. The paper will examine the linkages between attitudes toward the West and exposure to Arab Satellite Channels. The working assumption of the paper addresses the presumptuous nature of arguments on the impact of Arab media on attitude formation. While many have contended that Arab Media is the driving force behind unfavorable ratings of the US in the region, it is posited in this paper that Arab media is being responsive to more deeply-rooted political attitudes than shaping them. However, this is not a totally comprehensive argument. It is challenged on many fronts and from different stand points. Each argument will be tested against empirical evidence.

Ms Itimad Elmrani, University of Durham

‘The Impact of Al-Jazeera on US Public Diplomacy’

Dr. Ali Fatemi, The American University of Paris

‘How the Media and the World Have Changed’

Abstract: The purpose of the talk will center around the idea of the reciprocal relationship between the world events and the way they are reflected by the media. This complex inter-relationship is a new phenomenon. Perhaps the first time we noticed how the manner of reporting of an event can influence its course was the Vietnam War. The evening news of the war fed the anti-war movement and that movement ultimately lead to policy shifts. In the post-September 11 world in addition to the classical media such as the printed press, the radio and the television, the rapid growth of ITC during the past two decades has made a significant difference. Public officials in closed societies of the Middle East, for instance, now have to worry about millions of bloggers who have a far more important influence on public opinion than the old fashion media. The race is between the Censor and Technology with a predictable outcome.

Luca Gaballo, rainews, Italy

‘Clash of words’

Abstract: September 11 and the war on terror brought about a new challenge for journalists. We had to report about no one hiding everywhere, while time and space lost their meaning altogether. The vocabulary was not there, some words were missing, other misleading. How to report the elusive notion of a struggle staged like a traditional war without a traditional enemy? The lack of definition was complemented with abundance of suggestive comparisons. In Italian the word "insurgency" could be translated with *resistenza*, but when in Italy you write *Resistenza* with capital letter you mean the heroic struggle of militants against fascism and Nazism at the end of World War II. The mere use of this word may lead the reader to think that you put coalition forces in Iraq on the same ground of Nazi occupiers of Europe. A few journalists felt the obligation to find neutral, technical words, but most of them made heavy ideological use of vocabulary in accordance with their political affiliations. The effects over media were on one side radicalization and on the other side a strong dose of auto censorship: nuances were perceived as dangerous and stories were systematically put on "safe" tracks. While the authorities still keep on explaining that the war against terrorism is not a "clash of civilization", media found the easiest way out describing it exactly as a clash of civilization. The West against the East, Christians against Muslims, Europeans against immigrants, Athens against Persian Empire.... Immigrants of Muslim religion working and leaving in Europe felt the heat. The same elusive ambiguity used to define enemy combatants was implied also in the home front. Some western leaders helped to create confusion: Spanish base in southern Iraq was called "al andalus" and José Maria Aznar's soldiers had the *sant'Jago* cross sewed on their sleeves, evoking the atmosphere of reconquista and crusades. Cardinal Camillo Ruini, head of Italian bishops, said that Italian soldiers dead in Iraq were martyrs of western civilization. It was politics to influence media or it was media system to devour sense and reason? Going back to the meaning of the words may be our last chance of mutual understanding.

Dr. Khalid Hajji, Aljazeera Center for Research
'Rethinking the Image Culture: A Multidisciplinary Approach'

Abstract: My essay/talk focuses on the urgent need to outgrow the limits of the traditional prisms of looking at the reality of the relation between the West and the Arab/Islamic world. Once convinced of the inanity of "Clash of civilization" theories and their polarized vision of the world, it becomes our duty to fray a way towards a new space of third alternatives.

The divide between Western and Arab/Islamic media takes place within the boundaries of a very coercive global Image culture. Unfortunately, in the struggle for survival in the field of media, the target of the fighting parties is the same: "imposing a set of images as representative of reality". Fundamentally, it doesn't matter who is going to win or to lose, for nothing basic is likely to change at the end of the struggle. Unless there is a serious hard work of debunking the conceptual basis upon which the dominant Image culture is predicated, it will remain difficult for the media companies vying for viewers throughout the globe to hint at new prospects of a better future of the world.

The crisis of the current media can be traced to a decisive moment in the history of human culture. Its seeds were strewn by Aristotle and Plato. With these two major

representative figures of the development of human reason started an inexorable process of schisms between the senses, the culmination of which is the triumph of "image culture", or *Design* culture, at the expense of *Da-Sein* culture.

Today Only a *wise attitude* can help us find the ways out of the crisis and beyond the rules of the "coercion-resistance" game dictated by Globalization. An equilibrium in the field of media passes necessarily through a harmonizing of the human senses. Beyond the hegemony of the visual media culture, we are desperately in need of new media that would accept to reconsider their role and consent to mediate between: 1- the self and the other; 2- the self and Nature; 3- the self and the Divine.

George Hawatmeh, Former Editor-in-Chief for both the *Jordan Times* and *Al Ra'i*, now an independent media consultant.

'U.S.' image in the Middle East: Problem is with the policies not the messenger.'

Abstract: Prior to the Sept.11 terrorist attacks against American targets, the U.S. was not unaware of problems its image had suffered among Arabs. A license to broadcast Radio Sawa in the region was sought well before Sept.11, 2001, for instance. But following the attacks, the Bush Administration followed different routes and used various tools to "explain" its policies, trying to tune them to the actions on the ground it was taking in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. Efforts to polish its image, and change perceptions, have largely failed partly because those who have directed them followed an orientalist approach, but mainly because the Arabs themselves perceived President George W. Bush's policies to be actually adventurous, hostile and dangerous. The issue was not the message or its bearer, but with its sender, those "self-righteous" policy-makers in Washington who wanted and sought to change an extremely complex region of the world, with the force of arms, and before they even attempted to properly understand it.

Prof. Emma Murphy, University of Durham

'The New Arab Media, Informational Capitalism and the Public Sphere'

Abstract: Much of the research which has been done on the new Arab media has drawn upon the terminology of the *public sphere*, a concept devised by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas to explain emergent civil society in industrial Europe. However there has been little agreement on either the features or the salience of any new Arab public sphere. The manner and degree to which it might differ from its European counterpart, and the significance of such differences in terms of the function of civil society in the processes of political democratisation, have yet to be fully explored or even acknowledged.

This paper reviews some of the most substantial studies to date on the shaping of an Arab public sphere through the embedding and proliferation of new information and communication technologies. It identifies some of the issues which arise from the collection of studies and suggests that one way of reconciling apparent divergences and contradictions in existing research might be to return to Habermas' linkage of the public sphere with the development of contemporary capitalism and, more specifically, of informational capitalism as has been envisaged by Manuel Castells.

Prof. Andreas Musolff and Abedal-mutaleb Al-Zuweiri, University of Durham

‘Milestone metaphor in the CNN and Aljazeera discourse about the Iraq war’

Abstract: The metaphor of *passing a milestone* as a reference to political/military developments has appeared in the Iraq war discourse in many media reports since April 2003. This study sheds light on the way the media structures the public awareness of the Iraq war by using common metaphors. Furthermore, it discusses the possible interpretations and implications of using this metaphor scenario. A corpus of CNN and Aljazeera records of the Iraq war news has been analyzed through applying the methods of cognitive metaphor analysis (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1991; 1996; 2003; Musolff, 2006). The data shows that the *milestone* metaphor is politically loaded in order to express a particular perspective on the ‘progress’ of the war. The analysis also shows that the scenario provides the basis for specific predictions regarding the outcome of the war.

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Mr. Salameh Nematt, Washington Bureau Chief, AlHayat International Arab Daily

‘The Role of the Arab Media in the Arab World’

Abstract: To understand the role of the Arab media in the Arab world, it is important to understand that most of the mainstream Arab media organizations, with a few exceptions, are either state-run or state-controlled. Also considering the fact that most Arab governments are undemocratic and not elected by the people, these media organizations are, to varying degrees, more interested in supporting the governments that finance or control them rather than reporting and analyzing events in an objective or balanced manner that would better inform the general public. While the mainstream Arab media is able to freely report and comment on matters related to say the U.S. presence in Iraq and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, without fear of U.S. or Israeli retribution, these media are generally unable to report about oppression or violation of human rights perpetrated by many Arab governments against their own peoples. This results in the general Arab public getting only part of the picture in relation to national and regional developments due to press control, manipulation and widespread censorship.

On the other hand, the U.S. and the west have so far failed to adequately address Arab public opinion in a manner that would compensate for the lack of media freedom in the Arab states. At the same time, the western media is ill-equipped to promote a

better understanding of the situation in the Arab world due to the lack of knowledge of the culture, language and socio-political context. It is increasingly looking like a Byzantine dialogue which is leading to widening the gap of understanding between east and west.

Ms. Saima Saeed , Jamia Millia Islamia, New Dehli

‘The theatre of 9/11: Media technology and the ‘war on terror’

Abstract: Terror sells. Twentieth century will be remembered for making wars a mass phenomenon. In 1916 the Creel Commission had to ‘manufacture consent’ for the First World War, years later, the ‘Vietnam Syndrome’ had to be cured. By the time the Gulf war happened, no questions were asked; many attributed it to the ‘CNN effect’.

Modern media with its ‘annihilation of space and time’ lend a sense of urgency to conflicts. Powerful news organizations exhibit their technological *tour de force* by airing events ‘live’ as they unfold extending the terror front into the home front. Who can forget the images of 9/11 in their various slickly packaged on-screen representations which were bombarded at us 24X7. Post September 2001, Middle East became an important ‘beat’ for the global media sphere. But as this one ‘event’ changed the relationship between the Middle East and the West it opened fresh debates. The disturbing trend that ‘foreign policy decision making has become epiphenomenal to newsroom decision making’ needs scrutiny. It was also felt that this glut of images of terror does not necessarily make people more ‘enlightened’ about human suffering but ends up trivializing it.

‘Mediated reality’ is not always ‘real’. Representation are often made depending on which side of the fence one is, much like President Bush’s now infamous words - “You’re either with us or against us”. Media instead of questioning this logic become instrumental in furthering the ‘just war’ argument resulting in Habermasian ‘refeudalization of the public sphere’. From being ‘oxygens of democracy’ to Thatcher’s proclamation that publicity is the ‘oxygen of terrorism’- media’s transformatory potential then becomes questionable.

My paper voices these concerns: Why do all stories related to the Middle East become ‘breaking news’? Has media reinforced stereotypes leading to ‘Islamophobia’? Will media as the ‘hypermarkets of terror videos’ be able to regulate themselves? Where must we draw the line when showing images of extreme violence? And finally what can be done in this age of ‘broadcast democracy’ to make media take centre stage in conflict resolution?

Mr. Michael Shrimpton, Barrister, National Security Lawyer and Adjunct Professor of Intelligence Studies at the American Military University.

‘The Role of Propaganda in the Iraq War and Insurgency’

ABSTRACT: 1.This paper analyses the crucial role played by propaganda in undermining Western support for the War on Terror with specific reference to Iraq. The author will not hold back from expressing controversial opinions or challenging liberal orthodoxy. The thrust of the paper is that our opinions and policies on the Middle East should be founded on truth, not propaganda.

2. The propaganda techniques employed against the United States and the United Kingdom are mostly familiar, most being deployed during the Vietnam War. Their clear purpose has been to undermine support for the War on Terror. There have however been differences, noticeably in the greater use of faked imagery and greater willingness to murder civilians in order to blame US forces.

3. Abu Ghraib has undoubtedly been the most successful. The naivety of the Western media in accepting the faked 'hood' photo as genuine, even though it appeared at the same time as the even more obvious *Daily Mirror* fakes (they were in fact faked by the same intelligence agency, the Syrian Mukhabarat, at the same time) has been astonishing, but perhaps even more astonishing has been the unwillingness to ask obvious questions, such as who took the real Abu Ghraib photos and how did so many allegedly 'secret' images reach the media?

4. At least no one died in Abu Ghraib, but at al-Haditha Iraqi women and children were murdered by Al Qaeda, presumably under the direction of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, in order to set up a smear on the US Marines Corp. A similar tactic was employed Hezbollah in 2006 at Qa'ana during the July War, although this was exposed in part. In these cases liberal willingness to believe the worst of the US forces may actually have endangered Arab lives, as it simply encourages the murder of civilians by terrorists.

5. The USMC Guantamano Bay facility (Al Qaeda resentment at the numbers of captured terrorists detained by the Marines may go some way to explaining why they chose to target the USMC at al-Haditha) has been a rich source of inspiration for propaganda, such as fake torture claims (a standard al-Qaeda tactic) and the story about US personnel showing a lack of respect for the Koran.

6. Relentlessly negative reporting is a tactic familiar from Vietnam, and the results are the same – a false picture is built up, from which wrong conclusions may be drawn, both in the West and the Middle East.

7. The wider disputes over Iraq and Iran, and Palestinian grievances, real or imagined, against Israel, are beyond the scope of the paper, but surely all can agree that policy choices should be founded on fact and that propaganda should have no role in democratic decision-making.

Dr. Ahmet Uysal, Dumlupinar University, Turkey

'The Nature of Arabic and International Al-Jazeera's Prime-time Broadcasting and the coverage of Turkey's possible EU membership'

Abstract: Al-Jazeera continues to play a major role in today's Middle Eastern and international politics, becoming a reliable source of news along with its pan-Arab orientation. It causes major problems for the current Arab governments' and American policies in the region. In this study, I tried to argue that Al-Jazeera in Arabic and Al-Jazeera International display significant differences in their approach and content. By conducting a content analysis between the TV channels and web sites of Al-Jazeera, I argue that the differences in content is can be attributed to editorial preference and to the type of format, and that the differences in its approach is related to the editorial preferences of Arabic and International outlets. Additionally, I

analyzed the framing of the Turkish presidential crises of mid-2007. I found that there were significant differences in their coverage of the crises that can be attributed to their editorial preference and audience characteristics.

Dr. Mahjoob Zweiri, Durham University

‘Arab Media: a new front of Conflict between Religion and Secularism’