

Media stereotypes in Libya

Discussing media's
negative diversity
structure in Libya

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In light of many human rights and legal violations committed ,ideological and military rivalry are worsening between parties to the current conflict ,and just as gaps ruling this country are widening two sectors are quickly emerging ,one is full of tribal ,political and financial conflicts and the other is expected to lead the country into even a worse scene.

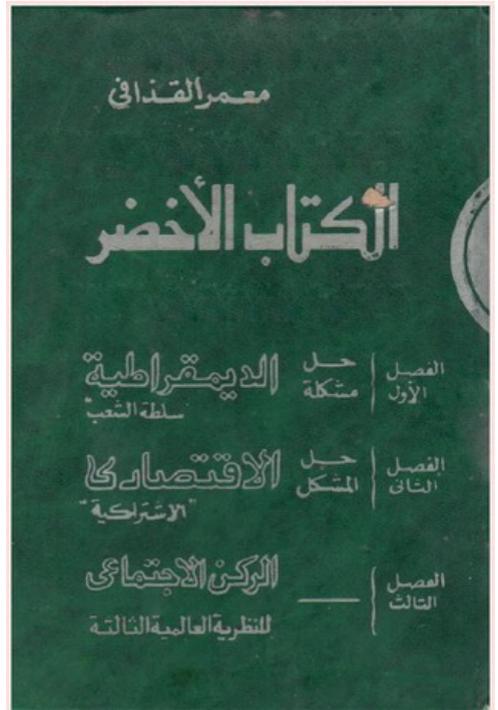
Usually and naturally ,media’s work during an ongoing violent crisis is contributing to this kind of conflicts and more effective than affected ,as media outlets play an important role in directing this war towards one of those two sectors: the first is a positive one that pushes towards stability ,ballot boxes ,a peaceful transitional stage through elections ,establishing a unified legislative parliament and promulgating a constitution that all Libyans agree upon ,the other negative sector is the one pushes towards security vacuum ,political apprehension ,social collapse and cycles of endless wars like the ones the country has been witnessing after nine years of revolution.

And both sectors are controlled by media governance which is consisted of traditional media tools or social media websites which recently is having a great clear dominance.

We can divide the Libyan media according to time criterion into three main stages:

The first stage :which is the stage prior to entering to the democratic transition in 2011 when all media outlets where connected to one general governmental outlet ,which is a type of media with one-sided prevailing role for the correspondent with no role for the receiving audience in creating the content or the provided material ,this unilateral type of media is characterized by the lack of critical talk shows satirical political sketches ,or even providing content that contradicts with the media policy that is previously planned by the totalitarian regime which considered the media to be a tool that it administrates and totally control and no one has the right to rebel or criticize that course.

After Gaddafi seized power through a military coup in ,1969 the media’s con-



tent became politicized to a great extent to support the newly established regime.

However ,despite the emergence of more politicized political content ,this content was subject to the State's control as stipulated in Gaddafi's Green Book on Political Philosophy) published in .(1975 This control was achieved through linking all public institutions including media outlets to" People's Committees ,“as according to the Green Book ,media is the only means of conveying the current situation inside or outside the country ,it was the only voice in the country and all its mission was to broadcast what they are ordered to ,and thus it became a promoter of specific ideas and news that contribute to increasing the closure of society from the existing reality at this time ,Media was just controlled by authority under the justification of reforming it .And under totalitarian governments as Gaddafi's ,there were no laws or legislation specific for media even those that legally restrict freedom of expression and punish for cases of defamation ,discrimination or spreading hatred speech ,as all related laws bind journalists to just follow orders and be subject to de facto policy.

Likewise ,Libyan law did not stipulate on the right or freedom of practicing journalism as all decision makers in Libya used to avoid addressing individual freedom ,professional or intellectual freedoms ,as this is considered the most deadly red line that they are not supposed to cross.

During the1970 s and the until the mid-eighties many restrictions were imposed on the media due to the economic collapse and reducing the budget allocated to supporting the public media ,and the local political news became headlines and formed most of the media content at the time ,and no voice should prevail over unilateral dictatorial government ,despite Gaddafi's quotation which was included in the Green Book) the press or the media is the means of expression of society as a whole and not a means of expression for any natural or legal person and so logically and democratically ,you cannot own either of them) (Gaddafi - 1984 p. .(68

These restrictions continued until the early nineties because of the sanctions imposed on Libya as a result for the Lockerbie plane incident) Pan Am Flight/103 Lockerbie bombing (which resulted in a ban on Libya from importing paper and modern technological means to keep pace with Arab and international media, and this has increased Libya's isolation within a closed frame.

The use of hate speech by the Libyan media until the nineties was used as a speech directed to governments of enemies and unfriendly foreign countries as Great Britain and the United States describing them with defaming insulting characteristics and calling them imperialists and spies and thus ,the focus of any TV or radio content presented in that period ,and there were also executions and death

The first phase

1969

After Gaddafi's coup to seize power

The media's content became politicized to a great extent to support the newly established regime, as the (Al-Jamahirya) was the only media outlet to and the only means of conveying the current situation inside or outside the country, it was the only voice in the country and all its mission was to broadcast what they are ordered to, and thus it became a promoter of specific ideas and news that contribute to increasing the closure of society from the existing reality at this time

During the 1970s and the until the mid-eighties

Many restrictions were imposed on the media due to the economic collapse and reducing the budget allocated to supporting the public media, and the local political news became headlines and formed most of the media content at the time

The Second stage

2011

Revolution events

Many private channels emerged during and after the revolution, some them emerged in Benghazi with licenses that were easily and smoothly provided by the transitional council at that time - as they did not set specific standards that govern The tasks and mechanism of action of these channels- and other private channels that were directly supported by certain countries that had a role in overthrowing the rule of Gaddafi and ending his term of presidency also were launched, these channels to misleading the audience about general contexts through broadcasting false or exaggerated content and sometimes a counter-speech that lacks scientific or news value

This stage was characterized by a direct hate speech that contributed to promoting tribal and regional differences between many Libyan cities. And between and those who support the revolution and those who oppose it hate speech and description emerged which represented the first social rift for the post revolution period as many hatred terms was broadcasted through these channels such as: parasites, rats, slaves, returnees, conspirators, etc

This forced many to choose a counter-speech that guarantees them a social presence and use it as a media tool to confront being excluded

The Third Stage

2014

It is the stage in which the parties to media struggle changed from multiple minor forms to clear major poles, which made the media playing a clearer role with clearer identities without hiding themselves behind complicated titles, and thus not only did their speeches target certain politicians and governments but also it became platforms for supporting warlords and armed formations to invade specific cities and regions

On one hand, these platforms had foreign sources that were continually providing them with funds as they are clearly supporting certain parties to the war

They were also supported by a good size of fan base as they represent their opinions and point of views.

The early nineties

These restrictions continued because of the sanctions imposed on Libya as a result for the Lockerbie plane incident (Pan Am Flight 103/ Lockerbie bombing) which resulted in a ban on Libya from importing paper and modern technological means to keep pace with Arab and international media, and this has increased Libya's isolation within a closed frame.

2006

Saif al-Islam established two newspapers, "Oea" and "Qurina", which were affiliated with "Al-Ghad Media Group" as well as "Al-Libiya Channel" due to the international criticism of his father's arbitrary policy towards freedom of expression and the press, and so he made this alleged reform initiative, which was a great opportunity for new journalists to engage in journalistic work and benefit from limiting the journalistic censorship and monitoring which was limited to prohibiting criticizing Gaddafi only, but unfortunately, overall the style of these newspapers were not very different from the previous ones in terms of lack of objectivity and politicization of media material.

Escalated events

The newly created Libyan channels became the only existing commodity presented to its viewers or its pioneers

LIBYAALHRAR.TV



The first launch of the "Libya Al-Hurra" channel that was presented as a gift to the Libyan people by the State of Qatar motivated by stimulating democratic transformation in the region and which first provided content that supports the revolution in its early beginnings and then later its provided content kept changing according to changes in its administrations and change in goals from one period to another

It contributed to the formation of interest groups with Islamic affiliations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood whether as parties, individuals, or associations

This phase represented a crucial stage in pushing towards a civil war that have been going on for years and is expected to continue beyond that

The aggressive atmosphere caused by media during what Libyans know as (Airport War year) was expanding and reached many news and program correspondents even up till today as it has become the primary criterion from which they begin to denounce or oppose a city, a class or certain persons

Most of the divisions on the ground are an extension of the initial media divisions that acts impartially according to the sources of their financing and funding the entity or region from which they were broadcast, and the political current that they advocate

sentences broadcasted on T.V .for what the government called as stray dogs and these facts confirm that this period is the most violent and hatred inciting period in the history of the Libyan media.

But at the start of the twenty-first century - Saif al-Islam established in 2006 two newspapers” ,Oea “and” Qurina ,“which were affiliated with” Al-Ghad Media Group “as well as” Al-Libiya Channel “due to the international criticism of his father’s arbitrary policy towards freedom of expression and the press ,and so he made this alleged reform initiative ,which was a great opportunity for new journalists to engage in journalistic work and benefit from limiting the journalistic censorship and monitoring which was limited to prohibiting criticizing Gaddafi only, but unfortunately ,overall the style of these newspapers were not very different from the previous ones in terms of lack of objectivity and politicization of media material.

As for the second stage :which is the stage of the 2011 revolution events ,and this was a major turning point in the history of Libya and the Libyan media as many private channels emerged during and after the revolution ,some them emerged in Benghazi with licenses that were easily and smoothly provided by the transitional council at that time - as they did not set specific standards that govern The tasks and mechanism of action of these channels -and other private channels that were directly supported by certain Arab countries that had a role in overthrowing the rule of Gaddafi and ending his term of presidency also were launched.

Among these countries are Qatar ,the United Arab Emirates ,and Turkey ,and these channels contributed to the promotion of certain revolutionary ideas that led to misleading the audience about general contexts through broadcasting false or exaggerated content and sometimes a counter-speech that lacks scientific or news value ,such as defaming famous political characters or public figures and setting specific grounds that falsify the existing reality ,contradicts with real news and other unprofessional media practices.

This stage was characterized by a direct hate speech that contributed to promoting tribal and regional differences between many Libyan cities .And between and those who support the revolution and those who oppose it hate speech and description emerged which represented the first social rift for the post revolution period as many hatred terms was broadcasted through these channels such as: parasites ,rats ,slaves ,returnees ,conspirators ,etc.

This type of speech was the first stone in dividing Libyans and categorizing and describing them according to their political and social affiliations and this forced many to choose a counter-speech that guarantees them a social presence and use it as a media tool to confront excluding them.

The tone of the newly opened private channels at that time made the audience unable to comprehend the correct description of media professionalism that had been absent for decades and was tough to identify while ending years of Gaddafi's tyrant rule,

Consequently ,these channels were the only way to transfer and exchange information and news for audience willing to hear ,regardless of whether or not it was valid information.

When events started to advance quickly ,the newly created Libyan channels became the only existing commodity presented to its viewers or its pioneers - through the first launch of the" Free Libya "channel that was presented as a gift to the Libyan people by the State of Qatar motivated by stimulating democratic transformation in the region and which first provided content that supports the revolution in its early beginnings an then later its provided content kept changing according to changes in its administrations and change in goals from one period to another, which contributed to the formation of stakeholders with Islamic affiliations ,such as the Muslim Brotherhood whether as parties ,individuals ,or associations ,as well as some channels that were broadcasted from other countries which contained all kinds of hate speech ,hostile rhetoric ,and the language of skepticism in others and allowed themselves to attract dozens of media voices that contributed to worsening the situation and cause the required propaganda.

As for the third stage ,which came after ,2014 it is the stage in which the parties to media struggle changed from multiple minor forms to clear major poles ,which made the media playing a clearer role with clearer identities without hiding themselves behind complicated titles ,and thus not only did their speeches target certain politicians and governments but also it became platforms for supporting warlords and armed formations to invade specific cities and regions - where their rhetoric became more intense and inciting ,and these platforms had foreign sources that were continually providing them with funds as they are clearly supporting certain parties to the war and their stances were also supported by a good size of fan base as they represent their opinions and point of views.

What characterized this period is the speed and diversity of hate speech which included false news coverage and news bars full of textual and informative fallacies, in addition to dealing with some topics n a temporary and timeless manner without making reviews or montages for these pre-prepared articles ,but rather Conversely, most of the channels were trying to show the worst of their media weapons in that period to prove only the righteousness of the party they were supporting and this is what made that year a crucial stage in pushing towards a civil war that have been going on for years and is expected to continue beyond that

The aggressive atmosphere caused by media during what Libyans know as) Airport War year (is expanding to many news and program correspondents till today as it has become the primary criterion from which they begin to denounce or oppose a city ,a class or certain persons.

Throughout these years and stages ,the Libyan media was characterized by taking forms and using tools at are the most dangerous in the region in terms of adopting verbal violence incitement to killing ,invasion ,and wars between conflicting parties in addition to the offensive language that contributed to delaying the peaceful transfer of power between governments and leadership positions in the country.

Although everyone realizes the seriousness of this type of discourse on the political process and economic conditions in general ,these media outlets are getting increasing popularity and multiple sources of funding every day ,it is even gaining more multiplicity and getting renewed such as Channel ,218 which has taken upon itself a journalistic mission through devoting a channel to this matter ,which derives most of its news from the pages of social networking sites that sometimes lack the source and credibility.

However ,the channel's attempts to access information or news are often quick and urgent ,but it lacks the importance or the correct timing .As for channels such as Al-Hadath ,which support the militarization of the state without paying attention to Libyan's aspirations to achieve their democracy ,for which they have fought for all these years ,the channel attempt ,through their inciting discourse to silence voices and criticizing opinions that support other opposing parties ,as participants in some episodes were watched many times being oppressed and prevented from talking openly and frankly and that made the channel's tendencies clear to many media observers and followers.

Despite the repeated cases of hate speech and inciting discourse and defamation cases in general ,no laws or decisions have been enacted to limit this matter by ministries competent authorities - and if this happens ,it shall end this dilemma which might push towards other wars and others that would have not occurred if a real material deterrent or certain punishment existed to reduce this poisonous speech

Finally ,most of the divisions on the ground are an extension of the initial media divisions that acts impartially according to the sources of their financing and funding the entity or region from which they were broadcast ,and the political current that they advocate whether it was liberal ,Islamic ,or otherwise .The steps for political ,economic ,and social reform are related to the discontinuation and seizing of these entities as preventing this poison would end enraging these organizations and armed political battalions.