THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF NEWS PRODUCTION:
Internal and External Influences on
the Arab Press in London and Beirut

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ABSTRACT

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF NEWS PRODUCTION:
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By

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This study examines the internal and external influences on the news production process in the Arab newsrooms in London and Beirut. It does so by combining three theoretical approaches for the study of news production: the political economy approach, the social organisation of news approach and the culturological approach. In collecting data, three methods were employed: participant observation in the newsrooms, interviews with journalists and analysis of the newspapers' content. At the macro-level, the study focuses on the external influences on the news production process in the newsrooms of two Arab newspapers in London and two Arab newspapers in Beirut. The influences are those related to ownership and control, commercial determinants (advertising and circulation) and media-society linkages. Regarding the media-society linkages, the research examines: censorship, London and Beirut as specific and different "ideological environments", the occupational role and the professional ideologies of the Arab journalists, and the prospects for the Arab national press. At the micro-level, the study explores journalistic practices by focusing on two main dimensions: (1) the news gathering process, with special emphasis on the interaction between the Arab journalists and news sources; (2) the news selection process, with special emphasis on the news values. This study concludes that the use of three theoretical approaches to understand the influences on the news production process demands some qualifications. Such qualifications are necessary for a better understanding of the Arab press in London and Beirut. It also concludes that the use of three methods is useful for tackling the complexities of press organisations.

In the Name of God, the Most Beneficent,
the Most Merciful

بِسْــــــــــــم الله الرَّحْمَن الرَّحِيم

The Lord hath decreed
That ye worship none but Him,
And that be kind
To parents. Whether one
Or both of them attain
Old age in thy life,
Say not to them a word
Of contempt, nor repel them
But address them,
In terms of honour.

And, out of kindness,
Lower to them the wing
Of humility, and say:
"My Lord! bestow on them
Thy Mercy even as they
Cherished me in childhood".

(The Qur'an; 17: 23-24)

وَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُوا إِلاَّ إِيَّاهُ
وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا
إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلاَهُمَا
فَلاَ تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلاَ تَنْهَرْهُمَا
وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلاً كَرِيمًا.

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ
مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ
وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا
كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا.

(سورة الإسراء: ٢٣-٢٤)

... To My Parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Audit Bureau of Circulation
ACI	Arab Centre for Information
AFP	*Agence France Presse*
ANA	Arab Network of America
AP	Associated Press
BCCI	Bank of Credit and Commerce International
CNN	Cable News Network
CPP	Central Press Photo
CSM	Christian Science Monitor
DPA	Dutch Press Agency
DSD	Digital System Di-Modem
ENA	Emirate News Agency
FIS	*Front Islamique de Salute*
INA	Iraqi News Agency
IRNA	Islamic Republic News Agency (Iran)
ISAs	Ideological State Apparatuses
JANA	*Jamahiryieh* Arab News Agency (Libya)
KUNA	Kuwaiti News Agency
MBC	Middle East Broadcasting Centre
MCG	Media Communication Group
MENA	Middle East News Agency
QNA	Qatar News Agency
RDC	*Rassemblement Democratique Consitutionel*
RMC	Radio Monte Carlo
SANA	Syrian Arab News Agency
SPA	Saudi Press Agency
SRM	Saudi Research and Marketing
SRP	Saudi Research and Publishing
TF1	Tele France One
UPI	United Press International
USIA	United States Information Agency
VOA	Voice Of America

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF
TWO IDEOLOGICAL THOUGHTS

The Second World War radically changed the structure of power in the world. In the Arab World, the result of this re-structuring was the end of French and British rule in the Arab countries. The changes in the power structure of regimes in most of the Arab countries, as well as other major events[1], led to the emergence of the nation-state, whereby most Arab countries became independent states. The nation-state era has been marked by the existence of Arab leaders committed to the cluster ideas of nationalism, either at the national level or for the Arab World as a whole. The core ideas of nationalism lie in the goals of Arab political unity, where the Arab nationalists say the frontiers of the regions are a temporary and artificial creation, and in the redistribution of Arab oil wealth towards equality. On the national level, these rulers have had to try to implement policies within societies undergoing a process of rapid change: fast growth of population, expanding of cities and the growth of new mass media have made possible different kinds of mobilisation (see chapter three). The dominant idea became Arab nationalism, aspiring to a closer union of Arab countries, independence from the superpowers and social reforms in the direction of greater equality. By the 1950s and 1960s, the idea of Arab nationalism was embodied for a time in the personality of Jamal Abdul Nasser, the ruler of Egypt (Halliday, 1991; Hourani, 1991; Richards & Waterbury, 1990; Ibrahim *et al*, 1988; Owen, 1983; Ajami, 1981; Lewis, 1964).

A. NATIONALISM VERSUS CONSERVATISM:

Perhaps the phenomenon of the pan-Arab press in general, and the London-based Arab press in particular, can only usefully be approached by a careful definition of the political concepts involved, and by a study of the historical context in which both the ideas and the actions of the Arab nationalists and the Arab conservatives have developed. For the Arab nationalists the concepts of unity, nationalism, solidarity and pan-Arabism are used as though they had, more or less, the same meaning:

> Arab nationalism is the consciousness of the Arabs of their complete social existence, a consciousness which is internal and not merely external objective knowledge, so that the image of the Arab community as a spiritual and living complex is expressed to their conscience. (Al-Alayili, 1976: 120)

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[1] Such events were the Suez crisis (1956), the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962) and the defeat of the Arabs when Israel was created (1948).

The creation of this nationalism, or national feeling, has many contributing factors. The first of these is language, which creates national links in two ways: it is a means of communication which enables people to exchange ideas, and it is a national custom which "cements amicable relations among all members of the people" (Al-Alayili, 1976). The second factor is the geographical environment, where the Arab nation lives without barriers because of the existence of efficient means of communication and transport networks which guarantee rapid movement of individuals, groups and ideas. The third of these factors is the common ancestry and history. The Arab people believe that they share the same origin, and this commonalty has been mobilised by nationalist theorists, whilst the historical context is of great importance in creating a "unified and concentrated feeling". Finally, the result of racial, historical and geographical unity is a similarity in customs (Ajami, 1981; Al-Alayili, 1976; Al-Bazzaz, 1976; Zuraiq, 1976; Al-Husri, 1976; Lewis, 1963). The ideas of Arab nationalism have been mobilised by many Arab leaders, notwithstanding their different political parties, including Nasser of Egypt and the *Ba'ath* (Resurrection) party in Syria and Iraq. In several countries, socialism was a prevalent ideology which had characterised the Middle East since World War II (e.g. Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Tunisia)[2]. The other countries were led by Arab conservatives operating as monarchies, ruled by kings, princes and sheikhs. They have fostered different ideologies from those of the socialist republics. The discourse of the Arab conservatives mainly stemmed from Islam, and viewed the secularism of the nationalists as a serious threat on the ideological level. The power of Islam was one of the main weapons that the conservative states brandished against Nasser's views on nationalism and the ideas of socialism of the *Ba'ath* regimes[3]. These monarchies were to be found mainly in the Gulf states, Morocco and Jordan (Richards & Waterbury, 1990; Ajami 1981).

These two groups of countries in general, represent two ideological schools of thought: one revolutionary led by the late Egyptian leader Nasser (1954-1970), and the other conservative led by the late King Faisal (1964-1975) of Saudi Arabia. These two schools of thought have greatly influenced the economic and political landscape of the Arab World, where they constitute the two main camps of opposition. The political discourse, that the revolutionary camp was mobilising the Arab public for, included the idea of equality in the distribution of wealth on the national (state) as well as regional level. This idea took inspiration from the experience of the Soviet Union. In the other camp, however, because oil had become an extremely important commodity to the world economy, its

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[2] Changes have taken place in countries like Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Yemen, where the regimes moved from the socialist republics to liberal regimes.

[3] In the context of the war between the two camps, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia called for an Islamic Pact in late 1965 to combat the pan-Arabists. The Pact included the Shah of Iran and Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia (Ajami, 1981)

magnified economic contribution was having a deep impact on the oil producing countries[4]. For instance, King Faisal used oil revenues to extend social services and to invest in the infrastructure of Saudi Arabia. Similar schemes were carried out in the other oil-rich Arab countries. With their greater wealth, the Gulf countries were able to "obtain a position of greater influence in Arab affairs"(Hourani, 1991). They did this by, for example, giving aid to poorer countries, and attracting a great number of migrants from around the Arab World. By the 1970s, the migrants numbered about half a million migrants (educated and trained workers), who brought with them the ideas of Nasserist revolution or Ba'athist nationalism and the Palestinians' right to regain their country (Hourani, 1991).

These competing ideas, which prevail in Arab politics, have experienced periods of ascendancy and decline, at the expense of one another. The Arab nationalism of Nasser, or Nasserism, had developed in the wake of the Revolution of 1952[5]. Inspired by the ideas of Socialism and Communism, Nasser began to mobilise the sentiment of nationalism within Egypt and throughout the Arab World. As the 1950s progressed, the calls for Arab unity and nationalism, mainly on Nasser's terms, began to penetrate Arab countries (post-independence state structures) accompanied by an increasing tendency on the part of Egypt to interfere in the internal affairs of the neighbouring states, either through mobilising local supporters who would "influence policy decisions", subsidising particular newspapers or encouraging particular oppositional groups (Owen, 1983; Bill & Leiden, 1974). Nasserism came to end after the defeat of Egypt in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. This war proved to be a turning-point in various ways. Firstly, it changed the balance of power in the Middle East, making it clear that Israel was militarily stronger than any combination of Arab states. Secondly, the ideology of Arab nationalism began to decline in Egypt as Cairo strengthened its alliance with Moscow (Hourani, 1991; Aulas, 1988; Ajami, 1981). Despite the defeat, Nasser remained in office until his death in 1970, at which time he was succeeded by President Anwar Sadat. Sadat adopted a different policy from Nasser in that he turned to the USA, rather than to the USSR for support. Indeed, this set a precedent in the stronghold of Arab nationalism. Elsewhere though, the end of Nasserism and its ideologies, helped fuel the ascendancy of the alternative camp: the Saudi-conservative ideology. The failure of the nationalist trend was taken by the conservatives to mean the "bankruptcy of the entire framework of secular politics" (Ajami, 1981: 63), and consequently the correctness of their own policies, which stemmed mainly from Islam, or what Ajami (1981) called "Conservative Fundamentalism", or traditional Islam.

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[4] By the mid 1960s, the five largest Arab oil-producing countries (Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Algeria) between them had government revenues of some $2 billions a year (Hourani, 1991).
[5] On 23 July 1952, a group of 12 officers managed to seize power in Egypt in one of those *coups d'état*. The republic took the place of the monarchy. Nasser was one of the leading officers in that group, the Free Officers, where he became President of Egypt in 1954 (Aulas, 1988).

As mentioned earlier, oil had become an important resource in the world economy. This enabled the oil-producing Arab countries to exercise more influence in the Arab political arena. Such influence was, however, challenged by the other camp: the nationalists. The defeat of the nationalists in 1967 provided the Arab conservatives with their golden opportunity to dominate Arab affairs. The late 1960s and early 1970s had marked the ascendancy of the conservative trend at the expense of the nationalist one. This period reached a head in 1973, when the fourth Arab-Israeli war took place. The oil-producing Arab countries imposed an embargo on the export of oil to the USA and the EC in a gesture of solidarity with the countries that waged the war, in order to pressurise the West into forcing Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories (Hourani, 1991). The political impact of the oil on the Arabs (and on Saudi Arabia in particular) and the growth of the annual revenues from oil between 1973 and 1978[6] had given the oil-producing countries more prominence in Arab affairs. The conservative camp, holding ideas opposite to those of pan-Arab nationalism, started to mobilise its own ideology in the Arab World. Using means such as economic aid to the poorer Arab countries was one of the weapons used to forge political alliances within the Arab World. This era marked the creation of two mini-Arab Worlds, the oil-resourced wealthy countries and the poor Arab countries, divided on economic and political levels. To convey their ideology to the Arab masses in the opposing camp, both the nationalists and the conservatives began to subsidise the field of mass media. These media were established, however, not in the countries of either camp but, in Lebanon which served as a "small island of political refuge and free enterprise for the rest of the region" (Richards & Waterbury, 1990: 323). So, the extraordinary phenomenon of a country having its own press funded by its own government and yet published elsewhere became established (Koeppel, 1988).

B. PAN-ARAB MEDIA: VEHICLE FOR DOMINANT IDEOLOGY

In these circumstances, the Arab media were also affected by the two main poles of Arab politics. In order to disseminate their ideologies to the Arab masses, both ideological schools used the media of various countries as the forum for their thoughts:

> This common culture and awareness were now spread by a new medium. Radio, cinemas and newspapers continued to be important, but to their influence there was added that of television .... What was transmitted included news, presented in such a way as to win support for the policy of the governments, ...films or serials and also plays and musical programmes transmitted ideas and images and that most fragile of transplants, humour,

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[6] Some figures give an idea on the growth of oil revenues (1973-78): in Saudi Arabia the revenues grew from $4.35 billions to $36.0 billions; in Kuwait from $1.7 to $9.2 billions, and the same growth was matched in Qatar and UAE.

across the frontiers of Arab states. (Hourani, 1991: 424-425)

Given the existence of pluralism in Lebanon and Arab subsidisation of the mass media, Beirut became the capital of the pan-Arab press from the 1960s until 1975 when the Civil War erupted. The role of Beirut has been enhanced by the 1952 *coup d'état* in Egypt (when President Nasser nationalised the press) and the political and economic instability in the region. The nationalists and the conservatives realised that Beirut was the best place to establish their media institutions, the press in particular, in order to address the wider Arab public. Investment was encouraged by the press laws in Lebanon which were comparatively open, and the structure of Lebanese society (see chapter three). In this situation, a large number of newspapers and magazines came to flourish in Beirut, reflecting the conflicting policies in the Arab World (Dajani, 1992).

The era of Beirut, as the capital of the pan-Arab press, came to an end in 1975-76, when the Civil War erupted. The war, which lasted around 17 years, revealed how Lebanon had become a "battleground between the supporters of rival regimes and rival ideologies" (Owen, 1983: 21). As the Lebanese period of the pan-Arab press collapsed, the Arab regimes started searching for another Beirut. Several attempts were made to keep the expertise of such an operation in the Arab countries, but all attempts failed when neither Kuwait, nor any other Arab country took over the role of Beirut (see chapters three and nine). When the Arab regimes realised that it was difficult to find a substitute for Beirut in the Middle East, they turned to western Europe, and to London and Paris in particular.

The Arab media which were established in Europe, mainly the press and more recently the broadcasting media, reflected the differing and conflicting policies within the Arab World. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, London, Paris and Cyprus had become other Beiruts, to the extent that Saudi, Kuwaiti, Libyan, Iraqi, Egyptian, Lebanese journalists and governments had all established media organisations in these countries (Voice International Report, 1993, 1989; 'Arab press in London', BBC Arabic Service, 1990). These organisations reflected mainly the two dominant ideologies of the Arab World (see table 3.2). However, the falling away of Arab nationalism, as the dominant ideology, resulted in the decline of its media organisations. The Iraqi *Ba'ath* party and the Libyan government have mainly reflected this trend in the émigré Arab press. In contrast, the conservative camp witnessed an ascendancy in its ideologies, and consequently its media institutions flourished (see chapter three: sections C and D).

These two main branches of political thought had left an indelible mark on the émigré Arab media in London and Paris during the 1980s, but with more influence for the Arab conservatives at the expense of the nationalists. This situation had echoed in, more or

less, a sort of a pan-Arab media, where both the nationalists and the conservatives were able to address the wider Arab audience. However, this plurality and pan-Arabism came to an end in the early 1990s, with the outbreak of the Gulf War.

In the Arab World, the repercussions of the second Gulf War culminated in the commencement of a new political era: the Saudi era. The defeat of Iraq, the last stronghold of Arab nationalism, and the UN sanctions against Libya after the bombing of an American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, saw the final chapter of Arab nationalism. In this context, Lewis (1991) argues that the second Gulf War can be considered as the "point of no return" in the decline of Arab nationalism, where it marked the primacy of state interests[7], and made clear the increasing disillusionment among the Arabs on the successive attempts to achieve it. Conversely, these events made Saudi Arabia the sole leading nation in the Arab World, as Egypt, historically the leading country, tried to cope with the economic crisis and the on-going war with the Islamic movements (Field, 1992; Khalidi, 1991a, 1991b; Khouri, 1991; MacLeod, 1991; Halliday, 1991; Hiro, 1991). With regard to the ascendancy of the conservative camp, a Saudi editor-in-chief contends that:

> We have the biggest banks, the biggest pan-Arab trading companies, why not the biggest newspapers? Twenty years ago, we were run from Cairo radio and Mohammed Heikal[8] of Al-Ahram. Now it is our turn. It is our age, it is the Saudi trend. (Quoted in Evans, 1992: 16)

The Saudi age is deeply reflected in the émigré Arab media in general and the London-based Arab media in particular. Most of the newspapers and magazines in London and Paris became an echo of the Saudi policy, either through direct ownership or indirect support (advertising and circulation). This trend in Arab politics was further reflected in the other media, the London-based satellite television (Middle East Broadcasting Centre, MBC) and in Paris the radio station (Radio Orient).

Having briefly discussed the political context and recent historical developments in the Arab World, with their consequent effects on the Arab press, this research examines the impact of the socio-cultural context on the media in the Arab countries and London. The study sheds light on the continuity of the phenomenon of the pan-Arab media, compared with a national Arab one. As discussed earlier, the pan-Arab press was used as an instrument to disseminate the dominant ideology, either nationalist or conservative, in the Arab World. The expertise of this press moved from Cairo to Beirut and recently to

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[7] Khalidi (1991b) considers that the Arab World is moving from the pan-Arab concept of a single nation (*raison de la nation*) to the state sovereignty (*raison d'état*), which led to the failure of the Arab political order.
[8] Mohammed Heikal is a prominent Egyptian and Arab journalist, who was the editor of Al-Ahram and was Nasser's chief ideologue.

London. In the three bases, the pan-Arab press was a vehicle for the ideologies of one camp or the other, depending heavily on the change in the balance of power in the Arab World. This press competes with another kind of press: namely the Arab national press, which experiences different influences across the Arab World. This comparative perspective, concentrating on differences in the context of each, takes into account the various dimensions that affect the Arab news organisations in the Arab World and abroad. This thesis is a study of a sample of the émigré Arab media (the London-based Arab press) and the Lebanese press. The various factors that are involved in the process of news production in both kinds of newsrooms, including ownership and control, journalistic practices, professional ideologies of Arab journalists in London and Beirut as well as related factors such as the analysis of the newspapers' content are each investigated.

C. DESIGN OF THE THESIS:

This thesis examines the London-based Arab media as an example of the émigré Arab media compared with the Lebanese press as a model of the Arab national press. Chapter two reviews the literature on media organisations and mass communication theories of the news production process at both the macro and the micro-levels of analysis. The chapter discusses the various approaches to studying the process of news production in different environments, and outlines a framework for the analysis.

In chapter three, a discussion of the Arab press system, with special emphasis on the Lebanese press, is presented. The study of the Arab press, in its political and economic contexts, is necessary in order to appreciate the rationale behind opting for these two examples of the Arab press. The chapter focuses on the different media systems in the Arab countries by discussing an example from each system. The study of the Lebanese press provides a general understanding of the social context and the kind of media system within which the two newspapers (As-Safir and An-Nahar) operate. The second section of the chapter explains the phenomenon of the émigré Arab media in western Europe, with a special emphasis on the London-based Arab press. This section constitutes an introductory explanation of the context of the two selected newspapers: Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat.

Chapter four addresses the methodology. It outlines why participant observation and content analysis were appropriate methodologies for this research, and exactly how the data for the research were collected. A description of each methodology including the advantages and pitfalls of each is also provided. Chapter five analyses the content of the four newspapers chosen for study as well as the content of two British newspapers: The Guardian and The Times. The rationale behind the content analysis is to reveal some aspects of the news production process (news gathering, news selection, etc.) that are not

easily understood by way of other methodologies. The findings of the content analysis complement the observational data and the interviews.

Chapter six explains the patterns of ownership and control in the organisations of the four Arab newspapers, and discusses the influence of the socio-cultural context on these patterns of ownership. It also discusses the commercial influences (such as advertising and circulation) on the work of these newspapers, and how such influences vary from one context to another. In chapter seven, the first section presents a description on the newsrooms organisational hierarchy. The second section studies how the process of news gathering is carried out in the four newsrooms, and the differences or similarities between the two environments: London and Beirut. Furthermore, the section discusses how the Arab editors and journalists view the matter of specialisation. In other words, how the Arab newsrooms perceive the specialist journalist as news gatherer. The third section examines the relationship between Arab journalists and their news sources from a journalist's perspective. It illuminates the kind of interaction that evolves between the journalist and his/her news sources through their daily interaction. Again, the argument of journalist-source interaction is studied in the context of two different milieux.

Chapter eight focuses on the mechanism of the news selection process and discusses the criteria for newsworthiness in the Arab newsrooms. It also sheds light on the readership of these newspapers from two distinctive points of view: the letter-to-the-editor section in the newspaper and the views of the editors themselves. Chapter nine examines many aspects related to the environments surrounding London and Beirut, such as censorship, London as an ideological environment, occupational roles of newsroom personnel, the impact of media technology and the prospects for the Arab national press. The conclusion of this research and the lessons which can be learnt from this research have been summarised in the final chapter.

CHAPTER TWO
THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF NEWS PRODUCTION

The main concern of this thesis is to find out the influence of the prevailing socio-cultural circumstances on the Arab media organisations, their work practices and the relationship with their socio-political environment in two different contexts: Beirut and London. An understanding of the socio-cultural aspects can be effectively realised through dealing with the macro and micro-level approaches of media organisations, where these organisations are subject to, and influenced by, the political, economic, social and cultural factors that result from the interaction of media institution and other institutions in society.

On the macro-level, the research looks at the wider contexts where the media organisations operate including ownership and control, economic determinants and relations with state and legal systems that shape the output of the news organisations. The research studies the same media organisations in two different contexts. On the one hand in London, as a Western milieu, the Arab press enjoys freedom of expression, availability of communications technology and Arab journalists operate outside the Arab World. On the other hand, Beirut, providing the second context, is a model of a Third World country where the press enjoys relative freedom, has a limited technological infrastructure and operates in an Arab society with traditions and culture different from those of the West.

On the micro-level, the research studies the daily journalistic practices of newsroom personnel or the process of news production, aiming to find out how the news of the Arab World is produced in the Arab press in Beirut and London respectively. The news production process can be understood by looking not only at the aspects that affect this process within the news organisation, but also in the wider context of media institutions. McQuail defines media organisation as: "The specific setting in which production takes place, with a more or less self contained management system, as with a single newspaper, television company, radio channel or station, news agency, publishing house, etc." (1987: 138).

The study of the "specific setting" where the news production process takes place implies studying the media organisation on two main levels: organisational and institutional. The matters relating to the organisation itself are those of the production process including the editorial work of the newsroom personnel and the hierarchical division of labour. The institutional level looks at the media organisation as part of a wider context. The issues related to this aspect include the ownership and control; commercial influence; relations with news sources; relations with the audience; relations with the wider society and relations with the state and legal systems. To illustrate the influences on the

media organisation, figure 2.1 points out the various factors that affect the media organisation:
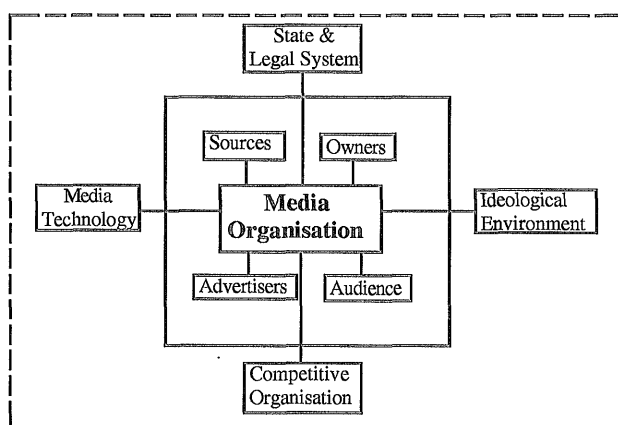
Figure 2.1: Influences on Media Organisations
(Adapted from various figures in McQuail, 1994, 1992, 1987; McQuail & Windahl, 1993, 1982; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Barrat, 1986)

This model, which illustrates the influences on the media organisation, demands further explanation to fully understand the organisational and institutional levels of this study. The influences are to be discussed in this chapter to provide the theoretical framework to the study of the Arab media organisations.

A. MEDIA ORGANISATIONS:

The study of the media organisation as a mainstream feature of mass communication research has emerged only in the last two decades. Three main factors have contributed to this: firstly, the developments in sociological study on a large scale (theories of organisational structure and behaviour) together with the analytical tools which were seen to be applicable to the study of media organisations and the news production process. Secondly, the increasing influence of the Marxist school, with its challenge to the Pluralist models of power in society, which focused attention on the structure and the organisation of the media (structure through ownership, legal regulation, and implicit ideologies in the media). Thirdly, the increasing attention given to the study of mass media in politics indicated the importance of examining the relationship between media institutions and the political institutions in a society, and the way in which political communication emerges as a composite product of the interaction between these two sets of institutions (Curran *et al*, 1988). The combined effects of these three factors has resulted in examinations of different aspects of media organisations.

Schudson (1991b, 1989) argues that three theoretical perspectives on newsmaking are commonly employed: the political economy of news, the social organisation of newswork and the culturological or anthropological approach. In an earlier essay, Schudson (1986) considers that the best work on news production is the one which gains the advantages of the neo-Weberian (emphasises on the ways that organisations seeking power and profit and organised as bureaucracies create cultural forms), neo-Marxist (hegemony and ideology) and neo-Durkheimian (ritual and culture) approaches, and points out the need especially for "work of cross-national comparative studies, of which we have remarkably few sophisticated examples" (1986: 47-48). The approach, taken in this research, adopts the three theoretical approaches outlined by Schudson for a comparative study of the 'same' media (the Arab press) in two different cultural contexts. There have been other studies on news organisations which, though mainly conducted in the same national context, offer relevant insights.

Media researchers who have compared media vary in the extent to which they perceive differences. This variation depends on what exactly they have looked for (Ericson *et al*, 1987). The ethnographic studies on the process of news production have generally argued that there is little difference across media. However, this difference only proved marginal because the media were studied in the same context. Here one can refer to the studies of Gans (1979), Tuchman (1978), Fishman (1980), Epstein (1973) and others carried out on the American media. Across the United States, the media are influenced by much the same political, economic, social and cultural factors. The same could be said of the studies of Schlesinger (1978), Tunstall (1971), Tracey (1977) and Hetherington (1985) in the United Kingdom; Ericson *et al* (1987), Hackett (1991) in Canada and so on. In other words, the news production process was studied in societies (Western, as it happens) where the mass media are largely operating under similar conditions of ownership and control as well as some journalistic practices. One should not overlook Golding and Elliott's study, *Making the news*, on the production of broadcast news in three countries (Sweden, Ireland and Nigeria) as one of the few comparative studies of news production in different cultural contexts, with a wide range of socio-economic conditions and a variety of traditions and philosophies. Golding and Elliott (1979) have found that the comparative study usefully allows examination of not only the universals of news production, but also the differences, and alternative solutions which arise in different situations to the varying problems of journalism. Despite being carried out as long ago as the late 1970s, no subsequent studies have been conducted since to compare news production cross-culturally.

In this research on the Arab press, the process of news production will not only be

studied in the Third World newsroom, but also in two different contexts: the Arab press in Lebanon (Third World) and the London-based Arab press (the West). This comparative study on news production allows us to examine the differences between London and Beirut. Unlike the cross-national comparative studies, here what is studied is actually the same Arab press albeit in two different socio-cultural environments. The theoretical framework of this study is a combination of the above-mentioned theoretical approaches, because this process cannot adequately be understood from a single approach. These approaches are those of Schudson (1991b, 1989) and Golding and Elliott (1979). Both approaches interrelate with each other to offer macro and micro-level perspectives to the study of newswork. In other words, such studies require a macro along a micro view of media operations to identify the influences on the production of news.

The macrosociological perspective embraces on the institutional, professional and cultural contexts, and the relationship between media institutions and the political and economic institutions of the society. Such a perspective, or the political economy of news, studies the patterns of ownership and control in media organisations and how such patterns affect the editorial line and consequently the output of media. The second macro perspective examines the media-society linkage, and how the media institution, as one of many institutions in society, interacts with other institutions in a society. It studies the wider cultural context where news media organisation operates. This culturological or anthropological approach emphasises the constraining force of a broad cultural symbol system regardless of the details of organisational and operational routines (Schudson, 1991b, 1989). The microsociological perspective reveals another dimension. Primarily, it deals with the journalistic routines as practical rules and with the news values or ideologies which govern the daily activities of journalists in gathering and writing the news. This micro perspective, or the social organisation of newswork, includes the day-to-day dealings of the newsroom operations, such as the interaction between news sources and journalists, the editor's role in shaping the news and the news values. When all these approaches are pulled together they provide a comprehensive view of the way in which media messages are produced, and offer insights into ways in which different influences in this process are combined in a single composite product (Curran *et al*, 1988; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Van Dijk, 1985).

B. OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL:

The issues, which deal with the aspects of the ownership and control in media organisations, have been a question of vociferous debate among media scholars over the last two decades where the study of media organisation has emerged as a mainstream feature of mass communication research. Such issues constitute a macro perspective on the

study of media organisation. These were rooted in Marx's views which split capitalist societies into two major sections: a small group of powerful people (the ruling class) who through their ownership of the means of production were able to dominate the other group (the working classes) who were funneled into labour (Barrat, 1986). Despite the fact that Marx's views were written before the development of mass media, many sociologists - including those who study the media - traced how the production of culture was affected by these trends. Such studies (Murdock, 1990, 1988, 1980; Curran & Seaton, 1988; Murdock & Golding, 1986; Altschull, 1984; Bagdikian, 1983, 1971; Compaine *et al*, 1982; Connell, 1977; Pahl & Winkler, 1974; Zeitlin, 1973) concentrated on the production of culture with a focus on the link between ownership of the means of production and control over the output. Thus questions such as who owns media organisations? Who controls the media organisations? Where is control over communication organisation concentrated? Whose interests does it (control) serve? and how does it shape the range and content of day-to-day production? became the hub of investigation.

Murdock (1990) argues that the question of mass media ownership provides, for two reasons, a point of entry into the "structure-culture-agency triangle". First, the power accruing to ownership entails both dynamic action and structural components, and secondly, communications industries play a part in organising the symbolic world of modern capitalist societies, thereby linking economic structure to cultural formations. In an earlier essay, Murdock (1980) refers to Marx's two modified approaches of writings, namely the instrumental and the structural, as radical claims in looking at the ownership of media. The instrumental approach presents the press as an instrument of the capitalist class (the ruling and powerful class), and focuses on the ways in which it influences and controls production in accordance with its own interests. Second, the structural approach directs attention to the ways in which the underlying dynamics of capitalist economic systems structure both the operational strategies and the output of newspapers. Both these approaches continue to dominate radical critique. The concentration of power in the hands of the ruling class and its control of the means of mental production as seen by the Marxist school was criticised by the Pluralists. They assert that the power has been progressively dispersed, producing a plurality of independent elites and interest groups all competing to strengthen their position and extend their influence. The power of capital was considered to be decentred in two main ways. Firstly, by stressing the progressive separation of ownership and control within modern newspaper enterprises, and secondly by presenting a variant of the "Managerial Revolution" thesis stressing the separation of ownership and operational control within contemporary newspaper companies (Murdock, 1980).

The Managerial Revolution was one of the historical developments in the patterns of the ownership and control of media organisations. It followed the era of "Press Barons",

where the owners built vast empires which they ruled like fiefdoms. Curran and Seaton, in *Power without responsibility: The press and broadcasting in Britain*, had noticed that the newspapers in the hands of men such as Beaverbrook and Rothermere became an "engine of propaganda" to fulfil their political ambitions. They argued that:

> The era of press barons is often seen as a maverick interlude in the development of the press when the newspapers became subject to the whims and caprices of their owners. (Curran & Seaton, 1988: 46)

The developments in the structure of ownership and control had curtailed the authority of the Press Barons, with the modern owners confining themselves to taking general decisions about resources allocation and market strategy and leaving their editors to translate them into journalistic practice (Murdock, 1980). In this context, Pluralists point to the passing of the Press Barons era, and to the fact that the present-day proprietors are less and less inclined to intervene in editorial decision making. However, the Managerial Revolution which developed around the mid twentieth century has transformed and democratised all industrial organisations including mass media. There are two main strands behind this transformation. First, the growth of a new sort of capitalist enterprise: "the joint stock company", which allowed outside investors to buy shares in the company. This led to a diversity in the investors who lack the "unity and decisiveness of a single owner". Second, this first strand led to the reinforcement of the role of professional managers who are not motivated exclusively by profit. The shift of power from owners to managers, administrators and technologists has brought other goals to the surface: a concern for the interest of customers (the audience in the case of media) and employees with producing a high quality product (Barrat, 1986).

After this brief historical overview on the developments of ownership and control in the press in capitalist societies, a definition of ownership, its forms and its connections with control is needed. While Murdock (1988) distinguishes between two perceptions of ownership: legal ownership and economic ownership, Compaine *et al* (1982) split the ownership concentration in the American media along two dimensions, each with different implications: horizontal integration[1] and vertical integration[2]. Murdock's differentiation stems from the fact that not all the shareholders are equal. Economic ownership in large corporations is typically structured like a pyramid with the largest and best organised voting

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[1] Horizontal integration is that of a single firm owning more than one entity in a single medium. The firm became a chain owner of newspapers, magazines, cable systems, etc. A different type of horizontal integration involves what is called a cross-ownership, where a firm controls more than one medium in the same market. (TV station and newspaper owned by the same firm in the same city).
[2] Vertical integration occurs when businesses representing several sequential stages of production, that could be separately owned, are instead directed by a single firm (publisher owns a paper mill, has its own staff of writers and editors, performs its own typesetting, runs its own presses and even handles its own delivery to the customer).

shareholders "determining the composition of the executive board" who formulate policy on behalf of small investors who make up the company's capital base.

Media scholars of both Marxist and Pluralist schools argue that there is a connection between the power of the owners and their control of media organisation, and consequently its output. However, there is a debate between the two schools over the degree of such control. Before proceeding to the connection between ownership and control and the kinds of control that the owners practice, it is essential to define the concept of control:

> How control is conceptualised is a critical question - apart from the problem of obtaining reliable and valid information. Control has generally been defined to refer to the actual power to select the board of directors (or its majority), although control be exercised not through the selection of directors, but through dictation to the management (as where a bank determines the policy of a corporation seriously indebted to it). (Zeitlin, 1973: 1089)

Zeitlin's definition draws a link but carefully distinguishes between economic power and control, saying that they are not the same and suggesting that at least some of the difference lies in the scale perspective - whether concerning broad policies or being more concerned with the day-to-day affairs of an enterprise. Murdock (1990) argues that owners possess two basic kinds of control over the symbolic environment. Firstly, they are able to regulate the output of the divisions they own directly, either by intervening on day-to-day operations, or by establishing general goals and understanding and appointing managerial and editorial staff to implement them within the constraints set by the overall allocation of resources. Secondly, the owners may be able to influence the strategies of companies they do not own in their roles as competitors or suppliers. Furthermore, Murdock (1988) points out two basic levels of control: the allocative and the operational. The allocative control, on the one hand, consists of "power to define the overall goals and determine the general way it deploys its productive resources". It covers four main areas: (a) formulation of overall policy and strategy; (b) decisions on whether and where to expand, and when and how to cut back by selling off parts; (c) development of financial policy; and, (d) control of the distribution of profits (Murdock, 1988). On the other hand, the operational control works at a lower level and is confined to decisions about the effective use of resources already allocated and the implementation of policies already decided upon at the allocative level. Talking about the relationship between ownership and control, is talking first and foremost about the connections between allocative power and economic ownership.

Although the theoretical approach of political economy of news is criticised by the Pluralist school in mass communication research, it constitutes the basis for studying

matters related to ownership and control in the news media organisations. The political economy of news is a macrosociological approach in studying news which directs attention on the empirical analysis of the structure of ownership and control, and the way media market forces operate. Recent years have seen the emergence of two distinctive avenues in this approach. The first, originating in the work of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas, stresses the political in the political economy and focuses on the role of the state. In this respect, Althusser regards the media, and the other institutions such as family, school and church, as the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) which work to engineer the consent of the dominated by disseminating ideology. This is allegorical with Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology* of 1845 which considered that:

> The class which is the ruling force is, at the same time, its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they ... among other things ... regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. (Quoted in Murdock & Golding, 1977: 17)

Althusser's use of the term ISA in relation with the media has been severely criticised on the grounds that it extends the concept of state and non-state institutions. Furthermore, Althusser exaggerates the role of the state and undervalues the role of other elements in the reproduction (i.e. family, education system, church and mass media) of capitalist social relation. In the same context, Murdock and Golding (1973) consider that it is not sufficient to simply list the mass media as one of the ISAs, it is necessary to demonstrate how ideology is produced in concrete practice. The second distinctive avenue of thought, in the political economy approach, attempts to focus the economic dynamics and how they shape the operations and output of the press and other mass media. Giving weight to such economic dynamics is explained by the fact that media companies are locked into the wider economic situation in two ways, firstly through reciprocal investments and shareholdings, and secondly through advertising (Murdock, 1988, 1980; Bennett, 1988; Garnham, 1986; Golding & Murdock, 1979; Hall, 1977; Murdock & Golding, 1973). Moreover, the political economy approach considers media institutions as part of the economic system with close links to the political system, and the contents of the media are determined by the economic base of the organisations in which they are produced. In this respect, Marx argued that the *base* which represents the economic system, or mode of production, influences the *superstructure*, or institutions and values (e.g. legal system, philosophy, religion, ideas, arts, culture) of a given society. However, the relation between the base and superstructure remains problematic. It is an oversimplification to say that the superstructure is shaped by the base, because this argument fails to recognise that

the economic system is dynamic and always in a state of change, and the same for the people involved in the superstructure. Adopting the Marxist theory as the main inspiration to this approach, the studies conducted in this field are based on two important issues in Marxist theory: the relationship between the economic base and the other superstructural institutions of society, and the role of ideology as a force acting for or against social change (McQuail, 1994, 1987; Ransome, 1992; Berger, 1991; Thompson *et al*, 1990; Curran *et al*, 1988; Garnham, 1986; Murdock & Golding, 1977, 1973; Smythe, 1977).

Another recent statement on the political economy of mass communication in the United States is Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. They argue through their "Propaganda Model" that in countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, control over the media makes it clear that the media serve the ends of a dominant elite. Moreover, this model traces the routes revealing how money and power are able to filter the news as fit to print, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public. For Herman and Chomsky the essential ingredients of the propaganda model or "set of news filters" are identified as follows:

> (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firm; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism. These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleaned residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns. (1988: 2; authors' emphases)

The propaganda model has received various criticisms (Schlesinger *et al*, 1991; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Schlesinger, 1989; Chomsky, 1989). Schlesinger argues that the propaganda model is a "highly deterministic vision of how the media operate coupled with a straightforwardly functionalist conception of ideology" (1989: 297). Furthermore, the essential ingredients of the model do not always operate in combination or not, is not specified, where no "theoretical grounds" are given for the efficacy of one factor against another at any given time. For instance, the first two factors refer to the level of economic determination in which the "profit motive is the motor of explanation". The third concerns the differential structure of access to the media (the way the economic and political resources may translate themselves into symbolic presence). The fourth relates to the exercise of political pressure as a means of control. Finally, the fifth points to the "system-maintaining function of dominant ideology present amongst media professionals" (1989:

297). In response to the critique that the model is undermined by the fact that the efforts to "mobilise bias" sometimes fail, Chomsky (1989) has argued that if the media do in fact function as predicted by a propaganda model, then they must present a picture of the world close to the reality, "even if only a selective version" (Herman, 1990, 1986; Chomsky, 1989; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). In this context, Murdock and Golding (1973) argue that to investigate the forces which exercise control over cultural production is a focal question for political economy of mass communication. In practice, this directs attention to two key issues: the first is the patterns of ownership of media institutions and the consequences of control over their activities. The second focuses on the nature of the relationship between state regulation and communication institutions.

Whereas the classical Marxist trend views media as one of the few institutions locked to the powerful/ruling group and considers media as one of the ISAs in society, the neo-Marxist emphasis is on a shift in the relation between the media and the powerful elite. The neo-Marxist analysis of media content has given a redefinition of the power of the media, where media are viewed as "hegemonic", persuasive rather than coercive, and vital rather supplementary to ruling class power (Schudson, 1986). The neo-Marxist period was characterised by the work of Antonio Gramsci and the influence of his thought on mainstream Marxist theory. Gramsci's theory of hegemony has been described as one of the major turning points in Marxist cultural theory because he was the first to stress the material nature of ideology and anticipated the conception of ideology as a practice producing subjects (Berger, 1991; Abercrombie *et al*, 1980; Mouffe, 1979a, 1979b). Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which led to a break away from the dogmatic Marxism approach, has had a major influence on post-war Western Marxism, offering a major alternative to the rigid orthodoxy of Soviet communism, and differing from the orthodox Marxists who used it to obtain political leadership and state domination. Gramsci's emphasis is on ideological, moral and cultural factors, as opposed to simply political and economic ones, and he puts forward a double inversion of the Marxist tradition: first, the primacy of the ideological superstructure over the economic structure, and second, the primacy of the civil society (consensus) over political society (force) (Bellamy, 1994; Holub, 1992; Ransome, 1992; Slattery, 1991; Bocock, 1986; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Hall, 1980c; Mouffe, 1979a, 1979b). In Gramsci's view, hegemony is:

> A ruling class's (or alliance's) domination of subordinate classes and groups through the elaboration and penetration of ideology (ideas and assumptions) into their common sense and every day practice; it is a systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order. (Gitlin, 1980: 253)

Hegemony is accomplished by the agencies of the superstructure (family, education

system, church and media) as well as the coercive side of the state (the law, police and army). Hegemony thus depends on a combination of force (coercion) and consent (persuasion), where in the liberal-capitalist state, consent is normally in the lead, operating behind the armour of coercion. In this situation, media operate by creating a commonsense understanding of the world, which makes it easy for ruling groups to win genuine consent without using force. Creating the commonsense understanding can be achieved by dissemination of the dominant ideology of the ruling fractions or the hegemonic leadership. Such hegemonic leadership involves developing intellectual, moral and philosophical consent from all groups in a nation (Bocock, 1986). This relation between media, as an agency of superstructure, and the dominant ideology has led the media to establish a decisive and fundamental leadership in the cultural sphere, acquiring a main cultural function, which is no less than the provision and selective construction of a social knowledge through which we perceive the world (Hall, 1981, 1977). In this respect, Hall argues that the mechanisms by which media can perform their ideological work are twofold: encoding and decoding. He defines the encoding process as "selecting the codes which assign meanings to events, placing events in a referential context which attribute meanings to them" (1977: 343). Furthermore, Hall argues that the selection of codes casts these events consensually somewhere within the "repertoire" of the dominant ideologies, where the encoder employs the whole repertoire of encodings to win consent from the audience (as the receiver of those codes). The audience will then decode the events within the ideological structure that has been cemented by the encoding party (Hall, 1980b, 1993)[3].

The various studies on ownership and control in the capitalist societies have shown different findings. While the Marxist trend emphasises that the media serve the views of the powerful elite, the Pluralist school asserts that the power has been progressively dispersed, producing a plurality of independent elites and interest groups all competing to strengthen their position and extend their influence. These two opposing schools of mass communication research continue to dominate studies on ownership and control in Western societies down to the present. Being aware of the weaknesses of the political economy approach to the study of ownership and control in media organisation, this research examines the types of ownership and control in the two kinds of Arab press. One might

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[3] Hall (1993) further identifies "three hypothetical positions" from which decodings of a discourse may be constructed. The first is that of "dominant hegemonic position", where the audience decodes the message "in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded". In such a case, the audience is operating within the dominant code. The second position is that of "negotiated code", where the audience "probably understand quite adequately what has been dominantly defined and professionally signified". The dominant definitions represent definitions of situations and events (which are in dominance) and connect events to the "national interests" or to the "level of the geo-politics". The third position is that the "oppositional code", where the audience "detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference" (Hall, 1993: 101-103)

think that because Arab societies, and/or media, are not the same as Western societies, such patterns of ownership and control do not entirely apply to the Arab media organisations. To an extent, this would look like a sound argument. The various theories and studies on the ownership and control in the West are taken as a framework for studying the Arab press, and not necessarily trying to match the differences or similarities between the Western and Arab press organisations. The research studies ownership and control in the Arab press, attempting to examine the current patterns of ownership and control in the Arab press organisations through taking such an approach as a theoretical framework. In this respect, several questions are taken into consideration: What are the patterns of ownership in the Arab press in London and in Beirut? How do such patterns of ownership affect the decisions of the editors, and consequently shape the output of the newspapers? The research examines the commercial influences on the media organisations such as advertising and circulation as primary revenues for newspapers, and whether or not the advertisers have any influence on the content of the Arab press (chapter six).

C. MEDIA AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:

Disseminating the dominant ideology of the ruling class, through the agencies of superstructure (such as the mass media), is achieved by using a repertoire of encodings in consent with the dominant culture of a given society. These three components, ideology, media and culture, are interrelated in such a way as to serve the interests of the ruling group or some of its fractions. In the previous chapter the kinds of dominant ideologies (e.g. nationalism, conservatism) that were, and are, dominant in the Arab World were discussed. It was also argued that these ideologies are a part of the superstructure of the Arab society, and how the mass media, as an agency of this superstructure, have performed their ideological work through the disseminating of the dominant ideology. At this stage, more focus on the Arab media, and the press in particular, as the vehicle of a dominant ideology operating within a certain culture is needed in order to further understand the macro and micro-levels of news production. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that media discourse is a set of interpretive packages, having an internal structure with a central organising idea (or "frame") that makes sense of relevant events. The frame is the meaning of the text and it apparently determines the terms "within which the audience can respond to the message, either in sympathy or in opposition" (Grossberg, 1984: 396). Moreover, Gamson and Modigliani stress that certain media packages have a natural advantage because their ideas resonate with larger cultural themes, whereby such resonances[4] make the media packages appear natural and familiar:

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[4] Gamson (1992) argues that the resonances concept focuses on the relationship between the discourse on a particular issue and the broader political culture of which it is a part. Media discourse has such resonances. Through their link to the same cultural themes, they are brought together in support of a shared frame and

> Since cultural themes remain constant, it may be unclear how they can help us to explain the changes in the ebb and flow of packages in media discourse. **A package's resonances facilitate the work of sponsors by tuning the ears of journalists to its symbolism. They add prominence to packages by amplifying the effect of sponsor activities and media practices.** (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 6; emphasis added)

They further argue that packages succeed in media through a combination of cultural resonances, activities of sponsor organisations (e.g. public relations offices) and a successful fit with media norms and practices. In this context, Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), in their study on the principles of selection of social problems in the American media, have found that the social problems which are related to widely shared broad cultural preoccupations and political biases have a high probability of competing successfully and occupy the prime space in a newspaper more usually than other social problems. This occurs because the "public arenas" are influenced by dominant political and economic groups, and the changes in political culture affect selection of social problems by altering the acceptable range of public discourse. These cultural preoccupations, or the cultural resonances are the "cultural symbols" which constitute a part of culture within which, and in relation to which, reporters and officials go about their duties (Schudson, 1991b, 1989). To roll these three arguments into one, I can say that there is an emphasis on the cultural arena as a key factor in producing media packages, which are a product of the interaction between the media professionals, the sponsors activities and these packages should fit with media practices and norms. In other words, media packages should fulfil the principles of selection (e.g. drama, culture, politics, organisational characteristics). These shared understandings take place within a dominant culture, or what Richard Hoggart called the "cultural air". That cultural air "is one that in part, ruling groups and institutions create, but it is in part one in whose social context their own establishment takes place" (Schudson, 1991b: 154). It was argued previously, the study of the socio-cultural context as one of several dimensions in the study of the Arab press organisations in London and Beirut, merits further attention.

Schudson (1991b) argues that the cultural air has both a form and content, where the content is the "unnoticed background assumptions" through which the news is gathered and within which it is framed. These assumptions are part of an ideology or the common sense of a hegemonic system within which the media organisations operate. The form refers to the assumptions about the news values that shape the presentation of the news that the media produce. As pointed out earlier, Arab media in London are a part of a hegemonic

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promote an integrated discourse strategy.

system operating in the Arab political landscape. The media professionals, therefore, encode the news in a context of the dominant ideology to win the consent of the wider audience (McQuail, 1994; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). To put this argument in different words, the Arab media professionals work with a dominant Saudi hegemonic system, whereby they use a repertoire of encodings of this dominant ideology to win the consent of the Arab audience (see chapter one for more details of this dominance). The dominance of this ideology stems from two main factors. First, there is strong influence from the economic base where the owners of these press organisations are part of the same hegemonic system (see chapter six), leading to an influence on the mass media as an agency of the superstructure. Second, the opposing ideology, that of Arab nationalism, affected by the change in the balance of power in the Arab World, was partially incorporated into the dominant structure - leaving an isolated remnant of nationalism ideology which left as a deviation or enclave without threatening the central emphasis. In other words, the repercussions of the Gulf War II on the Arab political and ideological landscape have led to major changes in the London-based Arab media. The media which were part of the opposing ideology in the Arab World, have either incorporated the dominant ideology (e.g. some magazines and newspapers made a 180 degree shift from the Arab nationalist camp to the conservative one) or distanced themselves. The other media which still operate, as in opposition to the hegemonic system, are portrayed as deviant media, without threat to the central emphasis (McLeod & Hertog, 1994; Gitlin, 1980; Hall, 1977). The impact these change in the socio-cultural context have had on media organisations is much more obvious in London than Beirut. In the latter the media have not been directly affected by shifts in the overall power balance in the Arab World.

Some studies on the socio-cultural context have focused on the cultural resonances, cultural preoccupations and the cultural air where the mass media are perceived as agencies of the superstructure. To understand the nature of links between the Arab press and its wider environments (in both contexts), an examination of both socio-cultural contexts was carried out. In this respect, some points warrant particular attention including censorship, London as an ideological environment, occupational roles of media professionals, impact of media technology and the prospects for the Arab national press. Some of these links have interesting consequences of scale. For example, operating in two different contexts, to what extent have the ensuing matters of censorship and state regulations had their impact on the newswork and consequently on the output of the four newspapers? How do the Arab journalists practise their occupational role within the dominant ideology? Does the technology have repercussions on the work of newsrooms? To what extent has this technology been affected by, or does it relate to, the surrounding context? What are the prospects for the Arab national press compared to those for the London-based Arab press? (chapter nine).

D. THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF NEWSWORK:

As mentioned earlier, the study of the internal process of news organisation is one of several dimensions to understanding the influence of socio-cultural context. At this micro-level the study of news organisation deals with the daily journalistic routines as practical rules and the news values or ideologies which govern the day-to-day activities of journalists in gathering and writing news. This micro-level of study also completes the other two macro-levels of media organisation (discussed earlier). In this regard, Schudson argues that the weaknesses in the political economy approach lead to "necessarily greater scholarly attention to the social organization of the news work and the actual practices of creating the news product" (1991b: 147). The two dimensions of the social organisation of news work are: news gathering and news selection. These two processes are studied in each context (London and Beirut) and then contrasted. Moreover, such study of journalist-source interaction, specialisation of journalists, news selectors, editor's role in shaping news, news values and editor-reporter interaction gives greater insight into the other dimensions of the socio-cultural context that influence the news production process. The study of the internal processes of news production allows also further comparison between the situations in London and Beirut. Chapter seven presents a comparative study on the process of news gathering between (Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat) in London and (As-Safir and An-Nahar) in Beirut allowing us to examine all matters related to this process.

E. NEWS GATHERING:

News gathering as a process of collecting the news is achieved through different channels though chief of these are the personnel of the newsroom and news agencies. The correspondents are concerned with detecting and covering events in particular areas, and so see sequences of events and activities that occur in the same physical locations - a territorial way of reporting events. Alternatively they may be concerned with specific subjects, seeing a sequence of activities and events that are all part of the same topic - a topical way of reporting events. For this reason, newsrooms have correspondents in specific regions, and others who are subject specialists. In addition to this if a region is considered as a frequent source of news, the news organisation would likely establish a news bureau with a number of reporters, in order to achieve both territorial and topical coverage. Stringers are journalists who work for newsrooms as freelance reporters under an interim contract. The newsroom uses such newsgatherers to cover infrequent or unforeseen news, which could be foreign or provisional[5]. Furthermore, the stringers fill many gaps in coverage left

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[5] The newsrooms use the stringers because it is more cost effective, instead of dispatching a home reporter

open by local or foreign news bureaux of the newsroom. A third channel is that of the news agencies. Most newsrooms depend on this "taken-for-granted" material supplied by news wire agencies as first-hand material. Some newsrooms depend entirely on the services of such agencies for the coverage of the world news, whereas other newsrooms consider this kind of service as a part of the whole process of newsgathering. In their cross-national comparative study, Golding and Elliott (1979) have found that newsrooms in the Third World (e.g. Nigeria) depend, to a large extent, on the four global news agencies (Reuters, AP, UPI, AFP) as the main sources of foreign news, and not infrequently for the national news too. The same study has found that other newsrooms (of Ireland and Sweden) depend on news agencies to a lesser extent, preferring other channels of news gathering (that are open to them such as correspondents, Eurovision, UPITN, Visnews, CBS). A fourth channel is regular contact with sources. Journalists contact reliable and productive sources to complete the already available material in the newsroom, or to check the credibility or accuracy of some controversial information (Fishman, 1980; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Gans, 1979; Tunstall, 1971). Matters relating to news sources and their interaction with newsrooms personnel are discussed later.

As mentioned earlier, the four primary channels of news gathering are variously exploited from one newsroom to another. This study focuses on the channels of news gathering preferred in the newsrooms of Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat (in London), As-Safir and An-Nahar (in Beirut) to examine differences and similarities between the London and Beirut newspapers. An analysis of these newspapers' content yields further information about the channels of gathering where differences were identified between the Arab-London and Arab-Beirut newspapers (see chapter five).

E.1. SPECIALISATION OF JOURNALISTS:

The journalists, as newsgatherers, are normally divided into two categories: specialists and generalists. Several studies (Negrine, 1993, 1989; Hackett, 1991; Schlesinger et al, 1991; Morrison & Tumber, 1985; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Gans, 1979; Tunstall, 1971; Seymour-Ure, 1968) have found that newsrooms are increasingly relying on the specialist journalist as news gatherer because the "specialism ensures a regular supply of material" and the specialist correspondents "particularly in the fields of politics (lobby, diplomatic, foreign affairs) have a high status and this propels much of their work onto the front pages of newspapers" (Negrine, 1989: 145). Gans (1979), in his study on the American media, points to the importance of the specialist journalist. He has noticed that newsrooms are depending more and more on

abroad, and where there is no need for permanent correspondent.

specialist journalists because they are sources-related. Hackett has found that the specialist reporters are "arguably better able to grasp nuances and to distinguish the important from the merely dramatic in covering such complex fields as defense and foreign policy" (1991: 106). Golding and Elliott have noticed that:

> Specialisation of correspondents is the highest level of the differentiation in the newsroom and attracts the highest prestige both to the correspondents themselves and to the newsroom with the largest array of specialists at its command. (1979: 98-99)

Tunstall (1971) significantly writes on the role of specialist journalists in his study on the British press. He has found that specialisation in an area or subject has implications by virtue of its ability to attract large audiences and greater advertising. Furthermore, the specialisation of a journalist could enhance his/her power in dealing with news sources. As the newsgatherer becomes specialised in a specific area or subject, s/he, not surprisingly perhaps, becomes aware of most of the details related to the field. This enables him/her to judge and evaluate the information that s/he gets from news sources. Despite this classification, news organisations continue to rely on the generalists in gathering news: general reporters earn less and are more productive. The general reporter is inclined to accept any information from the source in good faith, simply because s/he lacks sufficient background knowledge on the subject to be critically aware. Such unfamiliarity with a subject can lead to distorted reporting since the reporters may "cover one side of a story without ever knowing there are other sides" (Gans, 1979: 49). In this respect, Hackett argues that the generalist journalists, "lacking a long-term relationship with particular sources, such reporters are less likely to ingest the mindset of their sources to the detriment of alternative perspectives" (1991: 107). Furthermore, in their news gathering activity, the generalist journalists are under greater editorial direction than the specialist journalists. This is because they often work on stories from different subject areas and not uncommonly are required to assist their specialist colleagues (Negrine, 1989).

Having discussed the various arguments relating to the specialisation of journalists, a few points should be clarified. Firstly, this study examines the notion of specialisation in the Arab press (London and Beirut), in order to understand how the Arab journalists define this notion. This reasoning enables us to trace the pertinent differences and similarities between the two different socio-cultural contexts. In chapter seven, the arguments of editors are discussed to see how these newsrooms consider the matter of specialisation which is becoming increasingly more important in the Western media. Secondly, the findings of chapter five give an idea of the differences in specialisation between the British press (The Guardian and The Times), and the two groups of Arab papers in London and Beirut. Finally, the emphasis on specialisation did not result in the work of generalist

journalists being neglected. Here there are significant differences between the Arab papers in London and in Beirut, and even to some extent in the same newsroom, such as Al-Hayat. Such differences lie in the Arab editors' outlook to the specialist journalist as newsgatherer (see chapters five and seven).

The journalist's task, specialist or generalist, is to gather news and information from news sources. The need for frequent flow of news requires frequent and reliable news sources and sometimes this raises a particular criticism of journalists. The allegation is that such news is a transmission overwhelmingly of the dominant ideology. Their role being too tightly restricted to serve only to mobilise support for these special interests that dominate the state (Schudson, 1991b, 1989). Journalists reject such allegation by emphasising on: autonomy and suitability. Autonomy exists in the sense that journalists are free to judge the suitability and credibility of news proffered by news sources. This judgement pushes the journalist to reject, edit or even to omit some news most usually because it is controversial or needs more investigation to be suitable for broadcasting or printing. This autonomy of journalists is considered to lead to the suitability of news, journalists claiming to have the power of veto on whether the news of a news source is suitable or not. This claim is, however, criticised by some media researchers who notice that news sources although not determining the news, do achieve a focusing of journalists' attention on certain matters. News sources themselves do not determine the values in the news which, even if attempted covertly, is implicit in the information they provide (Gans, 1979). In this context, Gamson and Modigliani argue that "the smart sources are well aware of the journalist's fancy for the apt catchphrase and provide suitable ones to suggest the frame they want" (1989: 7). Studies on journalist's autonomy show that journalists have a relative autonomy due to the constraints imposed on them from news organisations and news sources. To understand the interaction between the journalists and news sources, it is essential to examine the relationship between journalists and news sources in order to understand who is in control, or who has the upper hand: journalist or source?

E.2. NEWS SOURCES: PRIMARY DEFINERS OF EVENTS

In general, news sources are classified into two main categories: official and non-official. On the one hand, official news sources are those of state bureaucracies and organisations. In other words, they are, more or less, government departments. On the other hand, the non-official news sources are of the institutions and organisations which are not part of state bureaucracies (e.g. experts in different fields, opposition groups to the government, trade and workers unions, etc.). Both official and non-official news sources are considered as "primary definers" of events related to their departments and organisations, simply because they provide the primary and first definition of events. Hall

et al (1981, 1978) argue that the representatives of major social institutions are "accredited" because of their institution's power and position, and because they represent the people (e.g. MPs, ministers), or organised interest groups (e.g. trade unions). One final accredited source is the expert: "the *disinterested* pursuit of knowledge - not his position nor representativeness confers on his statements *objectivity* and *authority*" (Hall *et al*, 1978: 58; authors' emphases). Considering these news sources as primary definers, this will classify the media as "secondary definers":

> The media are frequently not the "primary definers" of news events at all; but their structured relationship to power has the effect of making them play a crucial but secondary role in *reproducing* the definitions of those who have access, as of right, to the media as "accredited sources". From this point of view, at the moment of news production, the media stand in a position of structured subordination to the primary definers. (Hall *et al*, 1978: 59; authors' emphases)

Hall *et al*'s classification of "primary definers" is open to various criticisms (Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994; Anderson, 1993; Linné, 1993; Miller, 1993; Hackett, 1991; Schlesinger, 1990). For Hackett, the "primary definer" hypothesis does not mean at all that powerful sources occupy the field uncontested: "primary definitions themselves are not monolithic" (1991: 73). Schlesinger (1990) argues that the "primary definition" is more problematic than it seems for various reasons. Firstly, the broad characterisation offered does not take account of contention between official sources in trying to influence the construction of a story. For example, in case of dispute among members of the same government over a key question of policy who is the primary definer and can there more than one? Secondly, Hall *et al*'s formulation fails to register the well-established fact that news sources often try to influence the construction of a story by using "off-the-record" briefings in which the primary definers do not appear directly in an attributable form. Thirdly, Hall *et al*'s reference to MPs and ministers intends to include all representative voices but the structure of access is skewed with some members of the political class at times enjoying more access than others: ·

> So not all these 'representative' figures can themselves be treated as having equal access. Unfortunately, there is nothing in Hall's formulation of primary defining which permits us to deal with such inequalities of access among the privileged themselves. (Schlesinger, 1990: 66; author's emphasis)

Finally, Hall *et al*'s model of reproduction deals with the question of the media's relative autonomy from the political system in a purely *uni-directional* way. Schlesinger considers that within this conceptual logic, there is no space to account for occasions on which media may take initiative in the definition process by "*challenging* the so-called primary definers and forcing them to respond - as, for instance, in investigative journalism

dealing with scandals inside the state apparatus, or when leaks by dissident figures force undesired and unintended official responses" (1990: 67; author's emphasis). In a similar argument, Hackett thinks that unauthorised "leaks" by internal dissidents seeking to embarrass or undermine action by political rivals, "limit government's control over its information dissemination" (1991: 73). Although Hall *et al*'s approach clearly fails with a number of conceptual difficulties, there is still a strong case for arguing that the way in which the journalistic practice is organised generally promotes the interests of authoritative sources, especially within the apparatus of government and state. The promotion of the sources' interests is the paramount findings of much of the contemporary sociology of journalism in several studies (e.g. Hackett, 1991; Ericson *et al*, 1989; Hertsgaard, 1988; Sigal, 1986, 1973; Cockerell *et al*, 1984; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Hess, 1981; Gans, 1979; Chibnall, 1977; Roscho, 1975; Molotch & Lester, 1974). The interaction, or the structured relationship, between the media professionals and the primary institutional definers begins. The reality about any event will be firstly constructed by news sources as primary definers, then secondly modified by the journalists as secondary definers, before reaching the audience. The "construction of reality" is criticised since the real world and its daily events are subject to two "refiners" or "filters": news sources and journalists (Tuchman, 1978). These filters would allow the "suitable" and "constructed" reality to pass through to the audience. The role of journalists as secondary definers is to *change* the information provided by professional news sources into language understandable by the public (the "public idiom"). The public idiom is necessary in the communication process because it enables the broad and heterogeneous audience to understand the content of certain types of information provided by professional news sources. In this context, the journalists are criticised for oversimplification of the information of certain bureaucracies, transforming it into public idioms. Such simplification is required, to an extent, in order to make such information understandable by the public. Otherwise, professional information will only be understood by a minority of the audience (Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1978).

In the field of official sources, the government in one way or another plays a leading part in the news source area as being the single biggest source of news (Murphy, 1991; Tiffen, 1989; Hallin, 1986; Sparks, 1986; Hess, 1984; Tunstall, 1971). For the journalists, and the newsrooms, government departments can frequently feed them with information and in different fields of audience concern. Hackett argues that the dominance of official sources and the "institutionally-generated knowledge" occurs for various reasons. First, the practice of objectivity requires the journalists to seek to ground their accounts in statements attributed to "relevant, authoritative and accredited sources". Second, journalists and official sources share an occupational and social milieu. Finally, political and official sources are "organizationally convenient; their articulateness, availability and apparently authoritative knowledge facilitate the efficient production of

news" (Hackett, 1991: 72). Being engaged mainly with the government, as a major news source, the journalists are portrayed as "conduit pipes" and "secondary definers" in their relation with such news sources (Ericson *et al*, 1989). Nevertheless, journalists adopt the "bureaucratic account of events", where the reporters do no more investigative work on stories, treating them as factual and requiring no further investigation or substantiation (Fishman, 1980), because such information is subject to what Gans named as "authoritativeness of source":

> To satisfy the requirements of turning out a daily newspaper on deadline with a limited budget and staff, editors have to assign reporters to places where newsworthy information is made public every day. Reporters need sources who can provide information on a regular and timely basis; they are not free to roam or probe at will. (Sigal, 1986: 16)

This means that journalists prefer to resort to sources in official positions of authority and responsibility. In other words, official sources are often preferred by journalists because the journalists and their editors believe that official sources have important things to say and tend to accept the things official sources say as being factual eliminating the need to double- and triple-check facts (Gandy, 1991, 1982; Hackett, 1985; Paletz & Entman, 1981). For Schlesinger and Tumber (1994), official sources may not always have to be believed, but "they do have to be taken seriously". The journalists can trust such information provided because "the official source cannot lie openly" and "facts and opinions (provided) are official" (Gans, 1979). In the same context, Sigal (1973) has found, in his analysis of 2850 stories in The Washington Post and The New York Times, that official sources comprised half of all single-source stories and were also half of all primary sources. Hackett, in *News and dissent: The press and the politics of peace in Canada*, has found that the most appropriate sources are the Prime Minister Office (PMO) and the two relevant departments: Defence and External Affairs. This occurs because:

> When a journalist wants to get a background, he tends to go to the people who are making the policy. It is a matter of stressing the functional and the pragmatic and the practical as opposed to the theoretical. The relative infrequency of unauthorized leaks also supports the dominance of officialdom, as do journalists' fears of missing deadlines or being "scooped" (Hackett, 1991: 112-113; author's emphasis).

Another reason for the heavy weight given to official sources is partly the matter of cost. Herman and Chomsky argue that taking information from sources that may be presumed credible reduces investigative expenses, "whereas the material from sources that are not prima facie credible, or that will elicit criticism and threats, requires careful checking and costly research" (1988: 19). This study researches the "primary definer of events" as revealed in the content analysis of the newspapers in London and Beirut. The analysis

yields further information on the news sources that Arab journalists refer to in gathering the news. Contrast this to some non-official sources who are required to pass several tests before becoming frequent sources, and primary definers of events, where other non-official sources (e.g. experts) do not require such tests. In this respect, some studies have found that media "tend to have a *stable* set of sources to whom they go back to whenever a topic in their area of expertise crops up for coverage" (Hansen, 1990: 11; author's emphasis). In their comparative study of news coverage of environmental issues on British and Danish television, Hansen and Linné (1994) have found the "independent scientists and experts" have a relative appearance as primary definers along with the government and other public bodies or authority representatives. Testing non-official sources is achieved by checking the "credibility of their news", during a period of time in order to become a frequent and reliable source (Goldenberg, 1975). In this context, Schlesinger (1990) argues that non-official sources have to acquire credibility by dint of media strategies, in which "the aura of expertise is plainly important". Moreover, non-official sources are recognised as essential to cover the different sides of an event. News provided by non-official sources can be used by journalists either to check the authenticity of controversial news, or to complete the elements of news stories provided by official sources[6]. In the course of this study, observation was made to see when and how the Arab media refer to non-official sources. In chapter five, the comparison between the Arab and the British press was made to show how the Arab media refer to experts or academics as primary sources, compared to the British media.

Finally, some media researchers argue that news sources can impose sanctions on journalists. Tunstall (1971) has noticed that news sources have the power to impose certain sanctions on journalists such as elimination from mailing lists, prohibition from attending briefings, prohibition from attending conferences and, the supplying of false or unreliable information in order to involve the journalist in trouble with his/her editors. Such sanctions could create a gap or widen the rift between journalist and news source. To eliminate such sanctions the journalist, and the newsroom, has to find alternative sources, either in the same bureaucracy or an opponent organisation. For example, a top name, who can have more information not only on his/her own but also on other organisations, whilst reluctant to talk about his/her own organisation will often talk about another organisation of which s/he has knowledge (Tunstall, 1971). Another kind of sanction that the news sources can impose on journalists is censorship, when the power of news sources enables them to censor the flow of information (Morrison & Tumber, 1988; Hallin, 1986). Censorship is one such strategy of information management which can be imposed by

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[6] Studies on the non-official sources have found that the inequality of access to the news media between the official and non-official sources are related to the economic resources disposed by news sources, and the power relations (Gandy, 1982; Gitlin, 1980; Goldenberg, 1975).

giving brief and strictly monitored information to the assigned journalists. The coverage of the Gulf War in the Western media has led to hard debate over censorship. The few military briefings and the television pools were the only channels of war coverage. The channels and consequently the information provided were strictly censored by the concerned authorities, and any attempts to violate that *status quo* were unsuccessful[7].

E.3. SOURCE-JOURNALIST INTERACTION: A QUESTION OF CONTROL

After the discussions on the process of news gathering, specialisation of journalists and news sources, it is essential at this stage to discuss the kind of interaction that evolves between media professionals and news sources. The various studies (Murphy, 1991; Ericson *et al*, 1989; Cook, 1989; Tiffen, 1989; Sigal, 1986, 1973; Cockerell *et al*, 1984; Hess, 1984; Gans, 1979; Tunstall, 1971), which have focused on the interaction between news sources and journalists, have attempted to figure out who is in control. The relationship between the journalists and their sources has been characterised by "metaphors ranging from open warfare to collaboration" (Cook, 1989: 30). On the one hand, Gans acknowledges that media personnel have some power when he defines the relationship as a tug of war "while sources attempt to *manage* the news; putting the best light on themselves, journalists concurrently *manage* the sources in order to extract the information they want" (Gans, 1979: 117; author's emphasis). In a similar argument, Ericson *et al* (1989) have found that news media are "very powerful in possession of key resources" that frequently give the upper hand:

> Sources who realize they can only respond within an established news frame, or who are ensnared in a news context such as question period in the legislature, or who are limited to twelve-second clip, feel that it is they who function as conduit pipes and secondary definers for the news media. (Ericson *et al*, 1989: 378)

On the other hand, Tunstall (1971) defines such a relationship as social interaction which can be viewed as exchange, where many journalists describe their own relationships with news sources in terms of exchange and power. The "exchange theory is weak at the middle, above the small group level of exchange between individuals and below the political-economic level of exchange between organizations or governments" (1971: 185). Whether this relationship is a tug of war or an exchange, one would ask who is in control: the journalist or news source? In an influential essay, *News as purposive behavior: On the strategic use of routine events, accidents, and scandals*, Molotch and Lester have argued

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[7] The articles of Robert Fisk of The Independent, Oriana Fallaci in The Guardian and Alfonso Roja of the Spanish daily El Mundo (April, 1991) reflected the issue of censorship on journalists during the Gulf War.

that events are constituted from three agencies: news promoters (e.g. news sources), news assemblers (e.g. journalists) and news consumers (e.g. readers). They have found that "powerful promoters may attempt to increase the correspondence between their events needs and those of assemblers by pressuring media into altering their work routines" (1974: 105). This takes place because there is an imbalance between suppliers and media, where some sources are more powerful than others and have more bargaining power because of their status (McQuail, 1994, 1987). In the context of "source-domination", some media critics have argued that the media's "routinized organizational dependence on *legitimate* sources of information such as the courts, the police, and politicians ensures that they reproduce the definition of the powerful without being, in a simple sense, in their pay" (Negrine, 1989: 147). Even though the secondary definition of the primary definers is subject to what Cockerell *et al* (1986) refer to as "news management technique" by news sources. In other arguments, some media researchers have viewed journalist-source interaction as a "symbiotic dependence". Whereas the media tend to rely on the news sources for a frequent feeding of information, news sources seek the best means to gain access to journalists to publicise their accounts (Ericson *et al*, 1989; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Gans, 1979). It was argued earlier that journalists and sources interact within a certain hegemonic ideology of a given society and the sources are able to suggest the frame they want by "tuning the ears of journalists" to the events. In this context, one can argue that the sources are more powerful in their interaction with journalists, and on the other hand, the journalists can exercise a "relative autonomy" in their dealing with the sources' accounts. Media researchers who have argued about the nature of the relationship between media professionals and the representatives of other institutions in society, have found that the powerful institutions and groups in society have privileged access to the media because they are regarded, by media professionals, as more credible and trustworthy and because they have resources to process information (Lasorsa & Reese, 1994; Ericson *et al*, 1989; Curran *et al*, 1988; Gallagher, 1988; Sigal, 1973).

The matters related to the journalist-sources interaction are discussed in chapter seven, where the different arguments of Arab editors and journalists in London and Beirut newsrooms with regard to interaction with news sources are presented. It is noticed that the arguments of the journalists reflected the two different trends: "source-domination" and "symbiotic dependence". Moreover, the differences in the socio-cultural contexts between London and Beirut have their impact on news gathering channels where the Arab-London newsrooms have greater access to news sources than those of Beirut. Finally, it is argued that there is a major difference between the Arab media personnel with regard to feedback from news sources, where unlike the Western media, the Arab journalists did not experience any sanctions or the seeking of remedy from an offended news source.

F. THE PROCESS OF NEWS SELECTION:

Several interpretations of the news selection process are given (Ericson *et al*, 1987; Gans, 1979; Golding & Elliott, 1979). One of these defines the process as moulding the material coming into the newsroom and converting observed events into news stories. At its lowest level this would include simple correction of style and grammar to conform with standard practice (Golding & Elliott, 1979). This explains how raw material which comes into the newsroom needs sifting and moulding in order to become suitable for presentation. This sifting involves changes in the original texts of news, because the majority of the audience cannot understand the raw material originated by specialists in fields removed from the general scope of a broad audience. The correction of style and grammar is also emphasised by Ericson *et al*:

> A larger component of maintaining a reputation is simply a matter of grammar, style and interpretative flair. Each news organization develops its reputation through the use of words as *trademarks* of its distinctive discourse. Through a limited stock of words used repetitively, each news organization draws upon the common sense, and in the process contributes to it and reproduces it. (1987: 312; authors' emphasis)

Golding and Elliott, Ericson *et al* and others emphasise the importance of the style of writing in the news production process. This part of news production is tightly controlled by the news selectors. Those in charge of such a process should acquire certain standards of professionalism and experience of the news on one level and organisational aspects on another level. They have to rewrite, summarise and edit news items before sending them to the processors enabling printing or broadcast. Knowing that the moulding process has to be done within a few hours, under specific deadlines, one can appreciate the flexibility of this stage of news production.

In a similar interpretation of news selection, Gans (1979) considers that news is information which is transmitted from news sources to audience, with journalists summarising, refining and altering what becomes available to them from sources in order to make the information suitable for their audience. News sources know very well that their information, in order to reach the public, has to be selected, edited and then presented. Looking at Gans' interpretation, one can observe two factors influencing news selection namely: the availability of news and the suitability of news. The availability of news relates journalists to news sources. Sources and journalists must have access to each other before information can become news. Gans' suitability of the news ties journalist to the audience. As news editors work, they have to take into account several considerations with regard to the audience. In this regard, White (1950) has noticed that the standards for selection should refer to an audience who must be served and pleased, and he placed an emphasis on

the style:

> *White:* Do you have specific tests of subject matter or way of writing that
> help you determine the selection of any particular story?
> *Mr. Gates:* The only tests of subject matter or way of writing I am aware of
> when making a selection involve clarity, conciseness and angle. The clarity
> trio is almost a constant yardstick in judging a story... Length of a story is
> another factor (or test) in a selection. The long winded one is usually
> discarded unless it can be cut to fill satisfactorily. (1950: 390)

Another point in Gans' interpretation is that story selection is a decision and choice
which occur at considerable pace. Looking at the span of time in which news selection is
achieved and the rigidity of deadlines for first edition, one can realise that routinely hurried
decisions and choices are based on what Tunstall defines as:

> All the activity is, however, pre-programmed by yesterday's edition, by
> fixed edition times, fixed pages assigned to various subjects, and the
> delegation of responsibility for particular pages to specific desks. (1971: 39)

This delegation of responsibilities under the supervision of senior editors helps in
achieving the first edition of a newspaper within a short period of time. In this context, the
news organisations have a reputation in taking fixed decisions within a limited time; a
procedure which if transported to other organisations would be inappropriately hasty.
Most media researchers (Ericson *et al*, 1991, 1989, 1987; Hackett, 1991; Van Dijk, 1988;
Manoff, 1986; Hetherington, 1985; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Golding & Elliott, 1979;
Schlesinger, 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Sigal, 1973; Epstein, 1973; Tunstall, 1971; Gieber,
1964; White, 1950) who have studied the process of news selection (as part of news
production) have adopted methodology of watching and interviewing media personnel to
see how they choose the news.

Tunstall (1971) has noticed that news organisations act as magnets for news or
would-be-news. The flow of news into the newsroom every day may be ten or twenty
times the number of words which goes out to the audience (90 or 95 per cent of available
material is not used). In this situation the specialised staff, in selection of the news inside
the newsroom, have to deal with an around-the-clock flow of news. The news selection
process initiates the gatekeeping role which includes regulating the total flow to the
processing executive according to space available at the time. In a similar argument,
Golding and Elliott (1979) have observed that the news selection process is carried out by
an editor on numerous kinds of news items including news stories produced by reporters,
the material of wire agencies, and the press releases and hand-outs delivered to a
newsroom. Those who are in charge of editing these kinds of material have to differentiate
between them. Reporters, for example, produce their material under the instruction of their

editors and abide with the general policy of their news organisation. This results in the material of the reporters needing less editing than material produced by the wire agencies. Editors have to do a lot of work, and take into account many considerations in order to ensure that such material is suitable for printing. Some of these considerations prevail in the general policy of a news organisation and news values. Having reviewed the different arguments on the mechanism of news selection, it is important at this stage to focus on the persons involved in this process; the gatekeeper and editor, in order to understand the influences and factors that affect their decisions.

F.1. GATEKEEPER:

The term *gatekeeper* was first coined by an American social researcher, Kurt Lewin. In *Channels of group life*, he had noticed that there was a certain area within each channel which could function as a gate, and the forces before and after the gate region affected the passing or otherwise of the unit through the whole channel. Lewin stated that the gate areas are controlled by rules or individuals, or by a gatekeeper, who "as individual or group is *in power* for making the decision between *in* and *out*"(1947: 145; author's emphasis). Nevertheless, certain points in Lewin's study need some explanation. He talked about individuals or groups *in power* with regard to making decisions. The gate keepers have the authority for allowing and not allowing certain items to pass to the audience. In these circumstances, many items do become beached in the gate area - proceeding no further and many other items avoid beaching only by receiving "salvage modifications" by those in charge of the gate area. The *in* and *out* analogies to the flow of information from news sources through the newsroom, and then out to the audience. In short, Lewin's study can be considered as the corner-stone for studies concerned with news editing in newsrooms, and as the "main theoretical backing to a series of studies dealing with news gatekeeping" (Tunstall, 1971: 23).

Another study on the gate keeper was carried out by David M. White (1950), who mentioned the importance of Lewin's study for students of mass communication, but went beyond Lewin's definition. White, in *The Gate Keeper: A case study in the selection of news*, considered that the channel, through which the news flows has many gates and each gate undertakes its part in a gate keeping role. Reporters, for instance, are the first gate because they have to make the initial judgement as to whether a story is important or not. This echoes what Ericson *et al* (1987) mentioned concerning editing by emphasising that aspects of editing occur throughout the whole process of news making. In this context, White noticed that:

From reporter to rewrite man, through bureau chief to 'state' file editors at

> various press association offices, the process of choosing and discarding is
> continuously taking place. And finally we come to our last gate keeper ...
> who is usually known as the wire editor on the non-metropolitan
> newspaper. (1950: 384; author's emphasis)

White, through his observation of the way in which *Mr. Gates* selects the news,
noticed that about one-tenth of news from the wire agencies was used. To understand the
reasons that stand behind *Mr. Gates* decisions, White concentrated his study on the rejected
nine-tenths of the wire copy and realised "how highly subjective, how reliant upon value-
judgements based on the *gate keeper*'s own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations
the communication of news really is" (1950: 386).

Although it has served as the basis for subsequent research and offered the hope of
conceptual clarity with its central observation that "media products are, in part at least,
about the intervention of individual subjectivities into the communication process" (Tracey,
1977: 14), White's classic study has been both extended and criticised. Many studies
(McQuail & Windahl, 1993, 1982; Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Whitney
& Becker, 1991, 1982; Herman, 1986; Stempel III, 1985; Brown, 1979; Hirsch, 1977;
Tracey, 1977; Donohue, 1972; Snider, 1967) have noticed that despite its obvious
simplicity, there are a number of weaknesses in White's original model which subsequently
demand modification or replacement:

1. The model takes no account of organisational factors, because, as mentioned above, it
considers that the news selection depends considerably on the attitudes and experiences of
the gate keeper. From an organisational point of view, a successful gatekeeper is a person
who can perfectly represent its own interests. For example, the gatekeeper in a big
newspaper might be "required to apply organizational rules more and depend on their
idiosyncratic logic less than gatekeepers in smaller newspapers" (Shoemaker, 1991: 56).
This criticism of White's model attaches importance to the factors that affect the internal
process of a newsroom, such as the organisational and institutional aspects (e.g. size,
sources, audiences, markets, government, interest groups, other media) that influence the
journalists in their work.

2. The model suggests there is only one main "gate area". This is emphasised by Ericson
et al (1987) who speak of many gates in the selection process (sources, reporters, editors).
In a similar argument, Halloran *et al* (1970) have written that gatekeeping begins not only
in the office but with the "reporter in the street" (newsgatherer), and the extent to which
editorial staff act varies between newspapers. However, the gate keeper in the newsroom
constitutes the main gate in a channel containing many gate areas, particularly so for the
wire agencies material.

3. There is some distortion in the impression that the model gives of a "continuous and free flow of a wide range of news" which has to be "tapped" in ways which suit particular newspapers (McQuail & Windahl, 1993, 1982; Whitney & Becker, 1991, 1982).

4. Gatekeeping can also be affected by the ideology of the social system in which the gatekeeper exists. For Gramsci, the ideological system within which gatekeepers exist causes them to select items that serve the purposes of a powerful elite. In this situation, the gatekeeping process could be a tool for shaping a false consciousness (Shoemaker, 1991; Gitlin, 1980).

Having discussed the various arguments on the gatekeeper, this study examines the process of gatekeeping in the four Arab newsrooms to understand the organisational and institutional rules that the gatekeepers are required to apply. To achieve this objective, the process of gatekeeping was observed and the gatekeepers were interviewed. Furthermore, the gatekeeping process was studied to examine the impact of the socio-cultural context on the work of gatekeepers.

F.2. EDITOR:

Actual responsibility for the daily work in the newsroom rests with the editor and his assistants. The editor's responsibility includes the final say on material which has been processed and is ready for presentation. The final say, of an editor on the output of a news outlet, climaxes a series of occurrences in the newsroom. For editors, the news stories that leave their desks have been modified and edited to serve two goals: organisational and professional. The editor's professional goals are a point of discussion within the division of labour in the newsroom. To examine this, it is useful to concentrate on the dichotomy of the editor's role in news selection (profession) and the news organisation (management).

The editor's task to select and edit the news items appears straightforward but hides a lot of complexities in the editing work. The top (or senior) editor has power not only in having his/her complete and final say over what appears in the newspaper, but also in his/her position as a head of a bureaucracy. Despite coming after the owners in the hierarchy of the news organisation, the editor's power is furthered by the fact that s/he does not have to justify his/her decisions or judgements (Gans, 1979). In this respect, Tunstall (1971) has noticed that the editor interacts with business executives responsible for finance, advertising, circulation, production and promotion. On the other hand, the editor interacts with the reporters, the other dimension in the organisation hierarchy. The following quotation helps illustrate the editor's power inside the news organisation:

> How could the editor, with responsibility for the editorial contents only - no
> responsibility for getting advertising, circulation management, buying
> newsprint and making deals - rate ahead of the manager? (Quoted in
> Tunstall, 1971: 42)

The editor's role in policing common sense is a matter of the daily negotiations and directives of the editors within the news organisation (Ericson *et al*, 1987). The goal of policing common sense is to make the news texts understandable to a broad audience, and at the same time, take into account the general guide-line (policy) of the organisation. Sigal (1973) has noticed that the editor, as the 'first reader' for the reporter, decides whether or not a story will appear in print. The editor acts as mediator between his/her superiors and the activities of his/her staff. In many news organisations reporters, rarely have contact with the senior editor and news executives directly, but they do have contact with the editor (of their department), who in turn has contact with his/her superiors. This corresponds with the editors' mediating role between sources and audience. In the case mentioned by Sigal, the editor is responsible for the activities of his/her staff, for example Endreny (1985) stated a similar point:

> The editor and producer are to news journalism what the conductor is to an
> orchestra: their roles are to orchestrate all the reportorial note-gatherers into
> a final, coordinated, integrated total news product... Both are responsible
> for quality control, what the conductor does in rehearsal, the editor does
> with a 'blue' pencil. (1985: 144; author's emphasis)

The editors in charge of Arab affairs were interviewed and the process of editing and selecting was observed and discussed with them. This was carried out to understand how the editors in the London-based and Beirut papers work to achieve "policing common sense". It also helps to understand more fully the influences of the socio-cultural context on the editors role in shaping the news.

F.3. EDITOR-REPORTER INTERACTION: PERMANENT CONFLICT?

The process of news selection involves a daily interaction between reporters and editors. On the organisational level, the editors are above the reporters in this hierarchical division of labour. The reporters work under the instructions of their editors, who in turn implement the instructions of their news executives and senior editors. Our concern though, is on the daily interaction between editor and reporter. For Golding and Elliott (1979), reporters and editors are in "permanent conflict". To the reporter, the editor is an "unfeeling butcher" hacking fine prose for unworthy ends. To the editor, the reporter is "callow and undisciplined", unaware of the overall needs of the product. So, the conflict is over style not substance. In other words, the editor takes into account the time and space

available for the piece of the work. Regarding the substance of the work, in many cases, the editor lacks sufficient background on the reporter's story. Some editors, as they do the editing, consult reporters about what to edit. Editors may suggest a different lead, ask the reporter to place the information higher up in the story, propose reorganisation, and sometimes edit out a conclusion that could result in angry letters from the news sources. In short, the editors consult reporters on stylistic not substantive matters (Gans, 1979). There are many cases in which the reporter works outside the newsroom (e.g. foreign correspondent or beat reporter). In such cases, the editor may consult the reporter if s/he is accessible and if the time is available. But, the deadlines and the distance generally make the reporters inaccessible, and the news stories cannot wait. At this stage, the editors may intervene and make some change to the original news story, which would perhaps lead to some resentment from reporters. The practice in such substantive disagreement (as an experienced reporter put it) is "to edit first and apologize later" (Sigal, 1973). The reporter, however, is affected by the decisions of the editor, regardless of whether s/he agreed with it or added to it (Ericson *et al*, 1987). The reporters feel vulnerable to what editors change, because problems can result between them and their news sources (when the sources see that their information was modified and edited in a different manner but are unable to determine with certainty whether the reporter or the editor was the culprit).

Another side of the editor-reporter disagreement is when reporters write stories to please their editors. Ericson *et al* (1987) have noticed that a beat reporter started to file three news stories on some days to *test* what the new editor would select. Moreover, some reporters are explicit in stating that they are developing angles to please their editors. In contrast to this, Gans (1979) has found it is difficult to please the editors, because they do not have sufficient background on a story to develop their judgements. In this context, it is useful to present two viewpoints: from an editor (deskman), and from a reporter in The New York Times. The editor's point of view was:

> I suspect that many daily failures of the press-particularly stories that go after trivia-happen because deskmen forget their obligation to maintain an independent viewpoint... A deskman should be equipped for this because (a) he is a generalist, while the reporter may be a specialist, and (b) he is removed from the physical circumstances of a story, while the reporter may be in it hip deep. (Sigal, 1973: 20)

From the other side, the reporter's viewpoint was:

> You're the man on the scene and you have to call your shots. In most cases the editor suffers from over-reading. He reads too many other stories... He gets preconceptions. The clever reporter used to be the one that satisfied his editor's preconceptions. But it doesn't work that way any more. The competent reporter is now the man who satisfies his editor's urge to know, and the only way to do that is to write stories that answer questions and

explain situations for your own mind. (Sigal, 1973: 20)

Whether the daily interaction between the editor and the reporter is a disagreement or a conflict, they have to collaborate to produce daily news output. Their conflict remains within the frame of their organisation. The division of labour and the hierarchy of positions within the news organisation crystalise the lines of cleavage for both the reporters and the editors. With such understandings the editor and the reporter are able to maintain a relationship that serves their major goals as members of the news organisation.

In fact, some factors underlying the news selection process, such as the mechanism of news selection, news selectors, editor-reporter interaction, news values and audience warrant discussion. The study of the news selection process will maintain an emphasis on the two different contexts, where the newsrooms operate. In chapter eight a description of the mechanism of news selection will be included to help explain how the news on, and of the Arab World, is actually put together in the newsroom, and how the way it is assembled results in a specific version of reality. The various processes that have to be completed before the newspaper is printed are also explained. Furthermore, the research studies how the Arab World is perceived from the point of view of those involved in the production in London and Beirut? Another main point is to be discussed in the same chapter: the editor-reporter relationship and its impact on the process of news selection. The research investigates through observational data, interviews (with editors and reporters) and informal conversations in the newsrooms, what kind of relationship exists between the Arab editor and the Arab journalist, as they work together on the selection and writing of news, and how such relationships vary between London and Beirut (chapter eight).

G. WHAT ARE NEWS VALUES?

Events that happen cannot simply get into news. To be included, they should fulfil certain requirements. They should be seen as newsworthy. The factors of newsworthiness[8] can be defined as news values: a notion often used to explain the selection of news items and their chances of being published (Van Dijk, 1988). News values are criteria used in the selection of events and in the reconstruction of these events for news representation. In this respect, Golding and Elliott (1979) have noticed that news values are used in two ways: criteria of selection from all the material available in the newsroom of those items deemed worthy of inclusion in the final product, and the guide-

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[8] Lester (1980) argues that to talk about newsworthiness is a commonplace newsroom activity. From newsworkers' and gatekeeping theorists' standpoints, such talk merely reports on or reflects social reality: "Accounts of newsworthiness do not present reality; rather, they forge it. They are one crucial set of practices for *managing* newswork routines" (1980: 985; author's emphasis).

lines for presentation of news which suggest what to emphasise, what to omit or where to give priority in the presentation of news to the audience. Van Dijk (1988) has noticed that different types of news values may be distinguished, where news values are formulated in the economic terms of news production within profit-oriented organisations:

> Constraints such as sales and subscriptions, budgets for news gathering, or the amount of advertising, to name only a few factors, determine the general limitations of editorial spaces. Assumed beliefs and opinions of both powerful news actors (sources) and the public determine agendas for topics and issues and the ideological orientation of opinions formulated or implied by selection or treatment of stories. (Van Dijk, 1988: 120)

These constraints which are derived from economic conditions are not values but material factors. They are important in the formation and confirmation of news values. The second category of news values closely tied to social routines of newsgathering and organisational production, are linked to the economic constraints (e.g. competition and daily deadlines) determines the overall preference for spot news: "instants of events with clear beginnings and ends" (Van Dijk, 1988). Chibnall (1977) has noticed that journalists share the same knowledge as their readers. The journalists do not create this knowledge but they contribute towards its stability and survival. This knowledge, as a framework of concepts and values, is controlled by professional imperatives which act as implicit guides to the construction of news stories. Chibnall's definition of news values concentrates more on the 'common sense knowledge' shared by journalists and audience, and this differs from that of Van Dijk who focuses on both economic and organisational routines of news organisation in line with Golding and Elliott's definition.

G.1. NEWS VALUES:

Despite some criticisms[9], Galtung and Ruge's study *The structure of foreign news* represents an important analysis of news where several studies (Bell, 1991; Fowler, 1991; Negrine, 1989; Van Dijk, 1988; Hetherington, 1985; Hartley, 1982; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Chibnall, 1977, Hall, 1973; Tunstall, 1971) have paid greater attention to twelve factors in particular as the key influences on the choice of news items for inclusion in newspapers. For Galtung and Ruge (1965), events become news to the extent that they satisfy the conditions or factors of: F_1 frequency, F_2 threshold ($F_{2.1}$ absolute intensity, $F_{2.2}$ intensity increase), F_3 unambiguity, F_4 meaningfulness ($F_{4.1}$ cultural proximity, $F_{4.2}$ relevance), F_5 consonance ($F_{5.1}$ predictability, $F_{5.2}$ demand), F_6 unexpectedness ($F_{6.1}$

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[9] Tunstall (1971) specifies some limitations in Galtung and Ruge's (1965) study. It concentrates on three major crises (Congo, Cuba and Cyprus), whereas the day-to-day coverage of lesser events may be of some importance. The study, based on news in four Norwegian newspapers, all its news originate from the four western news agencies (AP, UPI, Reuters and AFP).

unpredictability, $F_{6.2}$ scarcity), F_7 continuity, F_8 composition, F_9 reference to elite nations, F_{10} reference to elite people, F_{11} reference to persons, F_{12} reference to something negative. After they were concerned with what will strike the attention of an audience. They have noticed that these factors (or news values) are nothing but *"common sense perception psychology* translated into event-scanning activities" (1973: 53; authors' emphasis).

Most of Galtung and Ruge's factors cover the nature of events and actors in the news. Several classifications are put down to news values. Most media researchers who have written about this aspect give the classification according to the context of their study. Out of the Galtung and Ruge's twelve factors, this research takes a number of news values which tell us the criteria that the Arab editors use in selecting the news.

DRAMA:

News stories about events should be narrated as stories. The narrative structure of story should tell its tale with a beginning, a middle and an end in that order, where the good news story should contain elements of human drama. In this context, a former president of NBC news defined drama in terms of news as joy, shock, fear, etc. (Golding & Elliott, 1979). Furthermore, the dramatic structure of a news story entails the story matching the opposed viewpoints by giving the audience the full picture of the event. This presents some confusion to the audience, because the selectors of news can control the presentation of the opposed viewpoints, and thus can differentiate in presenting the content and the form of such points. In practice, the dramatic structure of a news story is used to serve the journalistic work of reconstructing reality. In this respect, Chibnall has noticed that event-orientation of news is reinforced by an emphasis on the dramatic aspect because: "News is commercial knowledge designed in a situation of competition with profit in mind. Its purveyors are concerned with grabbing the attention of prospective audience by making impact" (1977: 25).

ELITE:

This news value refers to both elite persons and elite nations. The rationale of dealing with the elite is that big names are better than 'nobodies' and the audience is interested in major rather than minor figures (Golding & Elliott, 1979). The events concerning elite nations have probably more chance of becoming news items than those of other nations. In this respect, news stories about elections, wars and disasters in nations such as the USA, (former) USSR, France and the UK claim the headlines and more space than other nations. This news value is criticised by Galtung and Ruge (1973) who have found that news which is elite-centred (persons and nations) is a peculiar criterion. Thus,

in a world of such communication ordinary people and nations are not given the chance to be represented. Furthermore, in cases where they were given a chance, it will be addressed under other news values (e.g. negativity, size).

NEGATIVITY:

In simple terms, bad news is good news. The bad news is unexpected, it happens quickly and suddenly, and this helps it to become the headline story. The size of negative news is bigger than the usual incremental development of positive events (people involved, threshold of event). It is about disruptions to the normal current of life. In other words, it emphasises the consonance and deviance in society since it is:

> Described as a social surveillance registering threats to the normal fabric of society and explaining their significance. The news value of negativity is therefore an important contributor to the social values in news, defining by default both the status quo and the sources and nature of threats to it. (Golding & Elliott, 1979: 120)

Perhaps the best example of negative news is news of problems, scandals, conflict, crime, war, disaster, etc. It is worth pointing out that negative news requires happy endings to aid audience to digest it. Thus in presenting the problems, the audience also needs to the means of problem solving and the re-establishment of norms and values shared in society or culture (Van Dijk, 1988).

PROXIMITY:

Proximity means the presupposition and relevance of news. Events should appear to be proximate in order to become news. Proximity refers to how close events are better understood than more distant ones. In this context, Golding and Elliott (1979) have noticed that proximity has two senses: cultural and geographical. News stories are culturally proximate if they cover the events within the normal and common experience of both journalist and reader. This presupposes the existence of "ready-made frames" or "stereotypes" of the world of events. To make it easier, journalists should put the foreign news into a domestic context to explain to readers their importance and consequences. The other aspect of proximity is the geographical one, where priority in presenting the domestic and regional events comes before the other news of the world. The geographical proximity meets with the cultural one. The nearest cultural proximity (as a news value) would be, in many cases, the nearest geographical one. It is more comprehensible for the reader to take in news from a close cultural and geographical proximity, rather than news from different cultures and terrain far (by geographical means) from his/her society. In such cases, the

journalist has to supply the reader with some background information on the event.

News values are considered as a part of the news production process, because their effect appears in two stages of news production (selection of news and presentation of news). Journalists use the same major news values, but each of the news values may be used according to its political, social and cultural context. For example, negativity in the Western media differs from negativity in the former Eastern media, or the Third World media, and so on. Earlier in this chapter, a definition and classification of news values were discussed. This research studies how Arab editors define news values, and in which preference. In other words, news values (such as elite, size or negativity) are understood by the Arab journalists in a different way from their Western colleagues. News values are studied from the perception of the Arab editors in different contexts (chapter eight).

H. AUDIENCE RESEARCH IN THE ARAB WORLD:

In discussing the macro and micro-levels in the study of mass media organisations, the audience was mentioned as one of the main factors that the media professionals take into account during the news production process (see figure 2.1). The output of the media is audience-oriented and editors point to the audience's interest as a criterion for selecting news. However, in this research the audience is entirely different from that of a Western society, and consequently studies on the audience in such societies cannot entirely be applied to the Arab one. In order to understand which factors do actually relate to the Arab audience, it is essential to shed light on the kinds of audience research and the sources of the research data.

There are two kinds of audience research in the Arab World: market research and academic research. The first one looks at circulation figures, and the size of readerships by country, and by areas within countries. Although its reliability is questionable, this kind of research is usually carried out by marketing agencies for advertisers. The second kind of audience research is conducted by media scholars to study the feedback of readers or viewers. In this regard, there is no tradition of audience research in the Arab World and few are trained to design, execute and interpret the results. The audience research in the Arab World faces several obstacles due to many reasons. First, some Arab countries require formal government permission to undertake a research project. Second, many preconditions for using certain research techniques (e.g. reliable mail, numbered street addresses and reliable telephones) are not fulfilled. Third, some countries do not have the necessary trained staff for survey research. Finally, there is the difficulty of obtaining valid demographic data: census data are often non-existent, dated or inaccurate (Boyd & Kushner, 1976).

Having stated the obstacles that prevent conducting audience research on the kind of wide range routinely carried out in most Western societies, it is important to focus on what sources are in fact available for research on the Arab audience. According to Boyd (1987), audience research in the Arab World comes from three main sources: firstly, market research which is done by the advertising agencies, and "media habit" studies commissioned by international broadcasters like the BBC World Service[10] and the United States Information Agency (USIA). Secondly, audience research which is done by non-Arab academics, and by Arab students doing their research for graduate studies (mainly in Western universities). Thirdly, the studies which have been done by broadcasters themselves. The differences in sources inevitably produce different kinds of data on the Arab audience. The marketing research data are not comprehensive because: "They have tended to be done in the wealthier or more influential states. There is naturally greater interest from the commercial sector in Kuwait than in the Sudan" (Boyd, 1987: 18). The studies by "media habit" groups (BBC, USIA) usually focus on the broadcast media in the Arab World. These kind of studies look at the listening habits of audience for international radio stations, or the viewing habits of audience for national and global television stations in the Arab countries[11]. In spite of the fact that their main concern is audience research, these studies look at the broadcast media of various Arab countries because they are a competitor. Moreover, these studies are limited usually having a specific purpose by looking at particular aspects of the Arab audience.

The data from academic research is often more interesting and a richer source of information. However, most of these studies have been one-off studies and have not been replicated on an on-going basis. Academic studies are usually under-funded, rely on volunteer help and involve small samples. Studies done by the broadcasters themselves are almost non-existent and the accuracy of that which is available is questionable. A particular obstacle for such studies is that any audience dissatisfaction with media content could cause "personal embarrassment" and "possible job loss" for the media officials (Boyd, 1987).

In the absence of reliable studies, this study of the Arab audience uses a journalistic perspective, and supports this with looking at the letters-to-the-editor section in the four Arab newspapers. Several studies (Pritchard & Berkowitz, 1991; Shoemaker, 1987;

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[10] Graham Mytton of the International Broadcasting Audience Research (IBAR), conducted many audience studies in the Arab World. Mytton's work was mainly concerned with the BBC World Service audience in the Arab countries, and other parts of the world.

[11] For instance, the studies of Graham Mytton (1992) on the BBC World Service Arab audience during and after the Gulf War, and Boyd and Shatzer (1991) on the viewing habits in Saudi Arabia, belong to this category.

Tunstall, 1977a, 1971) have found that the journalists who decide the content of editorials and the front page seem to be influenced by their perceptions of the concerns of a highly interested segment of the audience - the people who write letters to the editor. One could argue that the letters to the editor as an aspect is not sufficient for understanding the Arab audience. This, in some measure, is true, but the study of the Arab audience is another dimension of the media organisation and needs its own separate survey or questionnaire. Such lack of audience research in the Arab World, has led this research to rely on the editors' perception of their audience. In this regard, questions about the audience are such as: are the journalists producing news for an audience they actually know, or are they producing news according to their own professional intuitions? Or what are the journalists' perspectives of their audiences? (chapter eight).

CONCLUSION:

In the light of what has been discussed, several approaches must be employed in order to examine the influence of the socio-cultural context on the Arab press organisation. Various studies have shown that a single approach is not sufficient to understand the social context of news production, or influences on the media organisations (see figure 2.1). Therefore, three main approaches are taken as a relevant framework for the interpretation of this thesis.

The first approach is the political economy approach elaborated by many media researchers and concentrated on the link between the ownership of the means of production and the control on the output. It also directs attention on the empirical analysis of the structure of ownership and control and the way media market forces operate. The political economy approach has faced some criticisms from media researchers who support the approach of the sociology of news work. These criticisms lead "necessarily to a greater scholarly attention to the social organization of the newswork and the actual practices of creating news product" (Schudson, 1989: 270).

In the political economy approach two powerful avenues are relevant to the research undertaken for this thesis. The first is the ownership and control; the second is the economic determinants - as a control mechanism. These two dimensions will be applied, with some alterations, to the study of the Arab media organisation. It will be argued, with regard to the first point, that the owners have a key-influence in the decision-making process in the Arab newspapers. As for the concept of economic determinants, this is studied to see whether the market forces (advertising and circulation) have influence on the output of the newspapers, and if so to what extent.

Does the political economy approach explain the dimensions which are outside the political and economic influence? The answer is no, particularly when the media have to deal with events which are culturally resonated to a dominant cultural values (that of conservatism). Therefore, one cannot adequately explain through the political economy why the London-based Arab media coverage of Arab affairs has to resonate to the dominant ideological system. If news does not resonate to the dominant ideological system, it is often covered in a critical fashion to reinforce the validity of one ideology (e.g. conservatism) over another (e.g. nationalism).

The cultural approach is the second approach employed in this thesis for the explanation of matters relating to the socio-cultural context. The cultural approach is valid for a macro-explanation of the relationship between media and society. It fails to interpret how the cultural background of journalists filters down in the selection and presentation process. For instance, how do we know that journalists' nationalist backgrounds influence the way they work in a Saudi conservative newspaper? Here arise the need for a micro-explanation of news production.

The micro-perspective, or the social organisation of newswork, includes the day-to-day dealings of the newsroom operations. It deals with the journalistic routines as practical rules and with news values or ideologies which govern the daily activities of journalists in gathering (e.g. news source-journalist relationship, specialist as newsgatherer) and writing the news (e.g. editor-reporter interaction, news values).

This chapter has emphasised that an adequate approach, in order to understand the impact of the context on the Arab media organisations and their journalistic practices, is to apply three interpretive theoretical frameworks which observe the study of media organisation. Such a tripartite approach is relevant and necessary to the understanding of the complexities of the social context of news production. The three approaches (political economy of news, social organisation of newswork and culturological) explain how the Arab media organisations are operating on two levels giving both macro and micro views of media operations.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ARAB PRESS:
LEBANESE AND LONDON-BASED

Chapter one described how the Arab World is politically and ideologically divided into two main schools of thought: nationalism and conservatism, and that whichever is dominant exerts greater influence on the pan-Arab media. It was also mentioned that London has become the capital of the pan-Arab media after the collapse of Beirut since the Civil War started. This chapter focuses on the media systems in various Arab countries for two main reasons. Firstly, it is important to reveal the wider context wherein the Lebanese press and London-based Arab press occur. Secondly, it is also essential to review the Arab press system, types of ownership and relationships with the ruling regimes to understand why the phenomenon of a London-based Arab press has failed to fill the void created in the Arab World following the demise of Lebanese operations.

Arab political scientists argue that although the Arab countries belong to one nation and the people live in a common single geographical area (between the Atlantic Ocean and the Arabian Gulf), there are some peculiarities in the big Arab regions or *Aqaleem* (sing: *Iqleem*) within the frame of the general unity (Ibrahim *et al*, 1988). The Arab World may be classified into four historical regions which have common characteristics in traditions, cultures and common sense. The traditions and cultures are a result of Islam and the Arabic language[1], which gave the Arab World its "general civilised union" and crystalised the national awareness for its people of being a single Arab nation. These *Aqaleem* are:
   1. The Nile Valley: Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti;
   2. The Maghreb: Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania;
   3. The Fertile Crescent: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan/Palestine, Iraq;
   4. The Gulf: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Yemen, Qatar, Bahrain.

This classification, on geo-political levels, is reflected in other aspects of social and cultural life. The media, and the press in particular, were affected by this classification, where the press in each of the four regions has features unique to that region. For instance, the press in Egypt is not the same as the press in the Gulf, and the press in Lebanon is not the same as in Tunisia and so on. Nevertheless, there are certain common aspects between media systems in countries which have the same kind of political system, which will be

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[1] There are several reasons for the fact that the language carries special meaning for the Arabs:
a) Arabic is intimately connected with Islam, where the Quran is accepted as the highest linguistic achievement in the language and remains after more than 14 centuries the standard for good usage today;
b) There is a close association between Arabic and an historic past in which Arabs take pride;
c) Arabic is an essential element of an "Arab nation".

discussed later. Overall the Arab World consists of twenty one states with different kinds
of political systems, such as republican parliamentary regimes, totalitarian or one-party
regime, socialist regimes as well as some monarchies. This diversity has great implications
in the economic, social and cultural life for each of the Arab countries. The influence of the
political situation is most obvious in the content of the mass media of the Arab states. This
influence has made the media part of the whole political process, where such media have
been identified as "political media". The other functions of media (conveying information
of general interest, advertising and entertaining) carry minor importance. This politicization
has resulted in the establishment of an "organic relationship" between the media institutions
and society through the forms by which those institutions are organised and controlled.
The degree of government involvement, or the organic relationship, is not the same but
varies from one Arab nation to another according to its political system (Rugh, 1987,
1979).

A. THE ARAB PRESS: DIFFERENT PRESS SYSTEMS

With some exceptions[2], the Arab countries are part of the Third World, or the
developing world. The degrees of difference between these countries is much as the
degrees of difference between the developing and developed countries. There are the oil-
rich countries like the Gulf states, and the resource-poor states such as Sudan, Somalia,
Mauritania and Djibouti (Abou Zeid, 1991). The gap in wealth distribution within the Arab
World has created two mini-Arab Worlds. The first contains the wealthy countries which
use the oil revenue to establish an economic infrastructure within royal and socially stable
regimes. The second is of the poor countries which suffer from economic and social
problems, sometimes having to contend with political instability and repression by the
rulers (see chapter one). This disequilibrium in economic resources has implications upon
the development of society, and on the mass media. Furthermore, most of the Arab
countries are known as new nations having become independent only relatively recently.
New states require long-term programmes of development and training in all fields, where
the duration of these programmes varies from one country to another based on the above
mentioned economic factors.

In this situation, the Arab countries suffer from disequilibrium in information influx
on the one hand at the country level and on the other hand at the pan-Arab level. On the
pan-Arab level (see figure 3.1), the disequilibrium appears obvious in the number of dailies
and weeklies produced in the Arab countries. There are, for instance, countries such as
Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Kuwait which have a large number of dailies

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[2] Some Gulf states are regarded as wealthy countries with the highest per capita income in the world.

compared to other countries such as Sudan or Libya. At the individual state level, most of
the Arab dailies tend to be concentrated in the capital cities where the political life is centred.
In most Arab countries, one city serves as the political, economic, cultural and commercial
centre, and all daily newspapers, radio and television broadcasting emanate from that city
(Rugh, 1987, 1979; McFadden, 1953). The phenomenon of provincial or local
newspapers has not reached the vast majority of Arab countries. In Egypt, for example,
the centralisation of the press in Cairo, effected under Nasser, has resulted in some curious
journalistic anomalies, such as the lack of a local daily newspaper in the Mediterranean city
of Alexandria. With a population of five million, Alexandria must be one of the biggest
cities in the world without a daily newspaper (Napoli, 1992).

Figure 3.1: Media Density in the Arab World
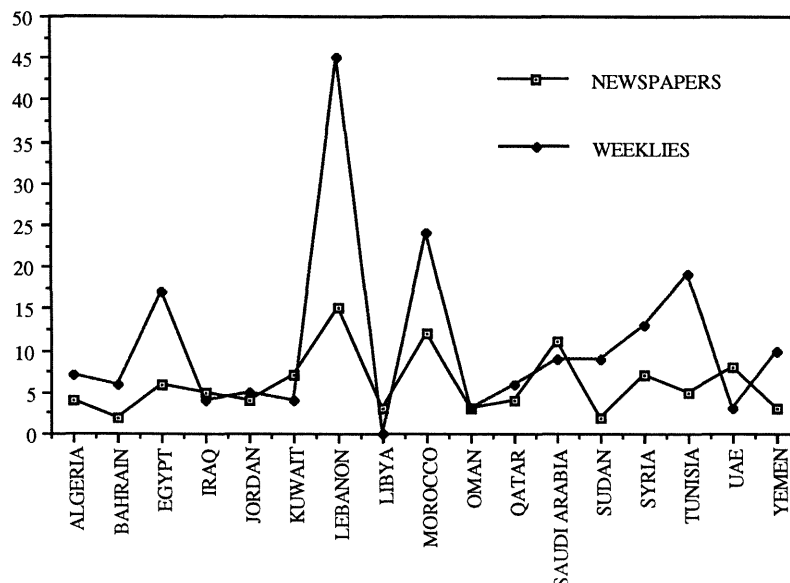
Sources: Europa Book, 1992; Benn's Media Directory 1990; Rugh, 1987, 1979

Moreover, the ruling group controls the media, either directly or indirectly, and has
forced them to function as part of the whole governing process. The rulers' aim, in taking
such a step, is ostensibly to ensure that the media should be controlled, in order to create
consensus, during the process of developing the country:

During the initial period of growth, stability and unity must be sought;

> criticism must be minimized and public faith in the governmental institution
> and policies must be encouraged. Media must co-operate, according to the
> guided press notion, by stressing positive, development-inspired news, by
> ignoring negative societal or oppositionist characteristics and by supporting
> governmental ideologies and plans. (Quoted in Rampel, 1983: 162)

This dedicated mission, in turn, has been a disadvantage for the Arab media, as they have lost their credibility with their audience. The content the media transmitted comes directly from the government (being the only source) to the audience, without comment or analysis. As a result, journalism as a profession has lost its prestige. The rulers' perspective has led to further implications for the future of the Arab media, where in most Arab countries the media have become more and more tied to the ruling political system. **These close ties led to the "political patronization of the press", and the newspaper has become a "political project rather than a professional one"** (Rugh, 1987, 1979; emphasis added). In other words, most Arab newspapers and editors are backed and supported by a group or party within their own or another Arab country. Launching a newspaper or a television station in any Arab state requires political support equal to the economic investment. The recent boom in Saudi-financed media organisations in the Arab World, and mainly in the West, has obviously shown the connection between Saudi business and investment in media and the political support of members of the royal family (see chapter six). In this context, a Lebanese writer working for a Saudi-backed newspaper argues that there are no Arab Murdochs willing to stick their necks out to publish an independent newspaper (Evans, 1992).

It is not a simple matter to achieve an adequate discussion of the press situation in the twenty Arab countries in just one chapter for two main reasons. Firstly, the core of this thesis is to study a sample of the Arab press and not the Arab media system as such. Secondly, and most importantly, the literature on the Arab media, and mainly the press, is very limited. The few available studies by Western media scholars (Rugh, 1987, 1979; Boyd, 1993, 1982; as well as some articles, reports and journalistic accounts) on the Arab media have been the subject of considerable criticism. For instance, Rugh's classification of the Arab press under three main categories[3] has some weaknesses. Such a classification looks imprecise because no country fits neatly into its assigned slot. Furthermore, Rugh has tried to apply a Western model in classifying the Arab press, ignoring the unique political and social context within which this press operates. Rugh's work is media or press-centric, in the sense that he studies the press to understand society and not vice versa. Another weakness is that Rugh tries to generalise his conclusions on the systems in

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[3] Rugh (1987, 1979) classifies the press system in the Arab World into three kinds:
a) Mobilization press operates in countries of Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan and Yemen;
b) Loyalist press in Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and UAE;
c) Diverse press in Lebanon, Morocco and Kuwait.

different countries regarding the connection between the press and the government, and as we have seen, one cannot generalise about the states in the Arab World (Al-Jammal, 1989; Underwood, 1983). Although he has written a second revised edition (1987), Rugh does not regroup or reclassify the Arab press, despite the changes which have subsequently happened in many countries. All he achieved is a brief updating - in the preface of the second edition - to the situation of the press in some of the countries such as Egypt, Lebanon and Sudan[4]. Nevertheless, Rugh's study may be justly considered as one of the very few available comparative studies on the Arab press, and it opens the door for further research on this under-researched field. On the other hand, Boyd's work (1993, 1982) is mainly concerned with the Arab broadcasting media. The work is an attempt at a survey of the situation of broadcasting in the Arab World and international broadcasting to the Arab countries. Despite being a survey on the Arab broadcast media, it similarly fails to focus on the context within which these media operate. Like Rugh, Boyd's work is broadcast media-centric and demands more in-depth analysis on the linkage between media and society.

With regard to Arab studies, the Arab libraries themselves do lack studies on the media systems in their respective countries. One of the prevailing reasons why this is so is access to media organisation which is not easy to gain in most of the Arab countries. Other reasons include the prevailing circumstances in many Arab bureaucracies which *underestimate* the importance of media research in general[5]. In this situation, most media systems in the Arab World are discussed by taking the media theories of Peterson *et al* (1965) and McQuail (1994, 1987) as a frame for classifying the Arab media systems. This depends on the above-mentioned classification of the Arab World into four regions, where each region includes a number of states, an example or two will be taken from each region in order to study its media systems.

The press in *Wadi Al-Nile* (Nile Valley) is one of the oldest in the Arab World. Egypt constitutes one of the main capitals of the Arab mass media. The development of modern mass media in Egypt was shaped by two men, the late presidents Nasser and Sadat. Both men left their marks on the media, reflecting their own personal style and played a significant role in influencing the Egyptian mass media over the last thirty years (Nasser, 1990). When Nasser seized power (1952), he dissolved the political parties and banned their newspapers, took action against dissident journalists and closed critical newspapers. At the same time, the new regime established publishing houses and launched its own newspapers (e.g. Al-Jumhuriya (The Republic)) to promote its policy. The regime

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[4] For more details see Rugh, 1987: xi-xx.
[5] Some reasons for media organisation research were pointed out in the previous chapter when audience research in the Arab World was discussed.

also created a monopoly political party, the National Union, reducing the diversity of political views in the press. The real challenge came, however, in 1960 when Nasser nationalised all privately-owned press organisations[6] under the "Press Organisation Law of 1960", where the major publishing houses surrendered their ownership to the National Union. When Sadat succeeded Nasser in 1970, he allowed the privately-owned press to operate, and began to relax press controls and cease censorship. Sadat's major change to the press came in November 1976, when he announced the emergence of a multi-party system and permitted the parties to publish their own newspapers. Then in 1981, when President Mubarak came to power, he expanded this system. Currently, the press system in Egypt typifies development press theory. The main characteristics of the developmental press in Egypt is that the large circulation newspapers (e.g. Al-Ahram (The Pyramids), Al-Akhbar (The News)) are owned by public corporations whose policies are set by board members having strong ties with the government (Koeppel, 1988). The privately-owned press, on the other hand, is the organ of the legal opposition (socialist and Islamic) political parties and groups, like Al-Wafd (The Delegation), Al-Ahali (The Civil) and As-Sha'b (The People). This press focuses on the corruption in the government agencies and the misuse of foreign policy (Napoli, 1992). To sum up, the experience of the developmental press in Egypt has resulted in freedom of expression for the journalists of the opposition press and diminished the level of interference of the government in the semi-official papers (Salameh, 1992).

The other category of Arab press operates in the Fertile Crescent or the eastern Arab region. In that region, various kinds of political systems operate. There are one-party totalitarian systems like those of Syria and Iraq, monarchies with multi-party systems as in Jordan and republican parliamentary states like Lebanon. Since the Lebanese case will be studied in detail in another part of this chapter, the main focus here will be on the press in Iraq and Syria. But before looking at those nations a brief description of the situation of the press in Jordan is necessary. Rugh's classification of the Jordanian press as a press loyal to the King (and the royal family) needs to be entirely changed due to recent changes in the Jordanian political arena where the general elections have brought a multi-party parliament. As a result, the party-owned newspapers have started to appear in Jordan. The main political parties publish or are in the process of launching newspapers, for example *Al-Mustaqbal* Party and its newspaper Al-Mustaqbal (The Future) and *Al-Ahd* Party and its paper Al-Ahd (The Covenant) as well as other political parties such as *Al-Wahida Al-Sha'bieh* (The Popular Union) and its paper Nida Al-Watan (The Nation's Appeal) and the Jordanian National Gathering Party and its paper Saut Al-Ordon (Voice of Jordan) (Asharq

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[6] Before 1952, most publishing houses in Egypt, such as *Dar Al-Ahram* and *Dar Al-Hilal*, were owned by wealthy Lebanese families, many of whom did not support Nasser.

Al-Awsat, 16/03/1993).

In the other countries of the Fertile Crescent such as Syria, Iraq and Libya[7] the press operates within a one-party system. The press can be classified as Soviet press theory, where it should serve the interest of those in control of the working class (McQuail, 1987) and where it is required to participate in the mobilization of the country[8]. The ruling regimes attempt to mobilise the press by giving it considerable guidance on how to present and interpret events. Through such guidance, the ruling group uses the press to appeal to the people for active support, which is essential in the process of mobilization:

> The mass media can be used to mobilize the energies of living persons... by rational articulation of new interests ... The mass media can simultaneously induce a new process of socialization among the rising generation, that will, among other effects, recruit new participants into political life. (Quoted in Rugh, 1979: 34)

To achieve this, the rulers have control mechanisms by which they can control both the organisation and content of the press. Controlling the press organisation is achieved by taking all the newspapers out of the hands of private owners and making them the property of political agents and supporters of the regime, i.e. the ruling party. This actually occurred in the above-mentioned states, where all media organisations were nationalised by the ruling party (e.g. Nasser's step when he came to power in Egypt in 1952). Regarding the content, the regime controls the content by appointing "right-thinking people" in the key editorial positions, where the editorials and news stories become the same in content: no criticism of the political policy or the ruling elite is voiced. Moreover, the government officials have personal ties and informal connections with the leading journalists of the nationalised newspapers, in order to convey political guidance. Such contacts keep the journalists in touch with the current regime's views on events. In such situations, the press is a part of the overall political process and all its functions are marshalled to support and promote the regime's policy.

A further kind of press is the one that operates in the Gulf region. This region is known for being the wealthiest area in the Arab World, and stable on the political and social levels. The press in these states does not reflect accumulated experiences or inherited journalistic or professional traditions, like other Arab regions and countries. The press in the Gulf is newly-structured, because most of the Gulf monarchies took their independence

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[7] Although Libya is not geographically a country in the Fertile Crescent, it has the same political system like those operating in Syria and Iraq. Thus there are common aspects between the media systems in these countries.

[8] Mobilization is an overall process of change which happens to substantial parts of the population in countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life (Quoted in Rugh, 1979: 34).

in the 1960s and the 1970s, and the press was established in these states after independence and the boom in oil-resources. It reflects financial capabilities which are capable of attracting journalistic experiences from other Arab countries such as Egypt, Lebanon and the Sudan (Al-Jammal, 1991; Ibrahim *et al*, 1988). This kind of press operates in countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain. Despite being privately owned by individuals, families or groups, the press is loyal to the regime avoiding critical issues, and editorially reacting less hastily to events, either on the national level or the Gulf level. This was very obvious in the 1985 Information Honour Charter, when the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members agreed that their newspapers and magazines would not publish material critical of another member state's rulers and its conduct of affairs (Vidal-Hall, 1992). Although it differs slightly from the Soviet press theory, it does share an essential support of the official line and of the government. With regard to the state control of the press, the government controls the press and its content both directly and indirectly. It controls directly by the closing down of newspapers if necessary and through the authority of the Information Minister to veto or select the senior editor of the newspaper. Moreover, the government can and does exercise greater influence over press content, especially in times of national crises (e.g. the Gulf War), by instructing the editors that the national interest requires their support of the regime and its policy (Rugh, 1987, 1979). Indirectly, the government can control the press through governmental advertising (the majority of advertising revenue comes from the government), and subscriptions for government employees. The general effects of legal control, and financial support are used to increase the loyalty of the press to the ruling regime. Legal control and financial support render the press, more or less, a tool in the hands of ruling groups, i.e. the royal families. The state control is perpetuated by the weakness of the press which is not being strong enough to carry out its task as the Fourth Estate[9].

In the Gulf area where the press is loyal to the regimes, the Kuwaiti press is more open and diverse than those of its neighbours. The Kuwaiti political system is known as the only system (in the Gulf) where the opposition openly has criticised the government in parliament, and such a debate has found its way into the press platform. In 1986, when the government felt that this debate had gone too far, the government closed the parliament and ordered the press to cut its staff. This step was mainly due to interference from the Saudis who wield a great influence in Kuwait (Koeppel, 1988). After Gulf War II, however, the Kuwaiti experience of a diverse press came to an end, as the government imposed censorship and suspended newspapers (e.g. 26 February) for criticising the government.

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[9] The classic conception of the Fourth Estate, in which journalism acts as an independent watch-dog of the liberal freedoms in parliamentary democracy, its independence guaranteed constitutionally, its public responsibility by the exercise of consumer sovereignty in the marketplace (Golding & Elliott, 1979: 46).

In January 1992, although censorship was officially lifted, the opposition brought many cases to court (Adler, 1992).

Finally, the press which operates in the Arab Maghreb is owned by both the state and individuals. In countries like Morocco, the press is privately owned and it reflects the differing opinions and viewpoints of the parties, unions, syndicates and government. This press flourished after independence in 1956, when the political parties in Morocco established newspapers in different languages (Arabic, French and Spanish)[10]. The large number of publications in Morocco originates in the liberal laws and regulations that the government introduced in the "Moroccan Press Law of 1958". Under the terms of this Law, the government may take, from time to time, legal actions to restrict the press. These legal measures evoke protests from the journalists, so there has been a kind of "on-going tug-of-war" over how far the press can and should go (Rugh, 1987, 1979).

In the two states of the Arab Maghreb, Algeria and Tunisia, the situation of the press is different. Before the recent changes in Algeria in 1988, the country was ruled by the National Liberation Front (NLP), where the press was an instrument in the hands of the ruling party. In other words, the press in Algeria was similar to the one currently operating in Syria, Libya and Iraq. The eruption of mass demonstrations in the late 1980s, however, led to crucial changes in the Algerian political and social landscape. These changes were resulted in the establishment of a multi-party system and consequently the appearance of various newspapers and magazines which marked a new era in the history of the Algerian press. This era did not last for long. It came to an end in early 1992, after the first round of general elections, which saw a sizeable victory for the *Front Islamique de Salute* (FIS). As a result of the elections, the FIS was disbanded and its newspapers were closed, suspended or confiscated[11], which also proved to be the fate of the press of the other political parties (Taleb, 1992). In Tunisia, the situation of the press is similar to that of Algeria. The two main political parties in Tunisia are the ruling *Rassemblement Democratique Constitutionel* (RDC) and the unofficial Islamic movement *Al-Nahda* (The Renaissance). In 1991, the Tunisian government decided to assist all the legal opposition parties with funds to relaunch their party newspapers, which were suspended in the course of the previous few years, either because of lack of funds, or as result of governmental

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[10] The Ministry of Information in Morocco conducted an official census on the press, where it found 400 daily, weekly and periodicals published in 1992 (100 appeared only in 1992). The same study indicated that there are 2 Spanish, 2 French newspapers and one in local language. The government owns one newspaper whereas the political parties own 20 newspapers (15 in Arabic and 5 in French) (Al-Salimi, 1993).

[11] In January 1992, the Algerian authorities arrested the journalists of Al-Khabr (The News) the daily of the FIS and seized the weeklies Al-Munkedh (The Saviour), Al-Forqan (The Evidence), Al-Balagh (The Communique) as well as Al-Nahda (The Renaissance) of the Islamic trend which addresses the elite. Moreover, the authorities suspended the press of the other parties like Algeria Al-Youm (Algeria Today) of the National Trend, and arrested journalists from other dailies and weeklies.

harassment. The Islamic opposition though did not benefit from governmental funding, and when these publications were relaunched, the government suspended or seized and arrested the journalists of most of the independent and party publications[12] (Donnadieu, 1992).

Having briefly reviewed the press systems in the Arab World, the research now focuses on the Lebanese press as an example of the press in the Arab World. Several reasons substantiate choosing the Lebanese press as a case study. Firstly, the Lebanese press had known or experienced a pan-Arab model of press before the outbreak of the Civil War (see chapter one). The pan-Arab press is a further dimension of this study, since the London-based Arab press will be studied as an example of the émigré Arab media. Secondly, the Lebanese press is one of the oldest establishments in the Arab World, and has experienced historical, political, economic and social developments, which the press of most Arab countries have not. These developments continue as a dynamic influence on the structure of the Lebanese press, whereas the other Arab press systems (e.g. Gulf, Fertile Crescent) have experienced such political interia since the independence of their respective states that they appear almost static. Thirdly, the Lebanese press is one of the very few press systems in the Arab World which functions without direct interference from the government, and consequently is more *liberal* than other Arab press systems (Rugh, 1987, 1979; Boyd, 1991; Gordon, 1983, 1980). In the study of this model, the research compares probably the most liberal press in the Arab World with the émigré Arab press. The latter has appeared as new trend which is more liberal than those press systems in their home countries (Murad, 1993; El-Rayyes, 1991; Voice, 1993, 1989). In other words, the Iraqi or the Saudi London-based newspapers are entirely different from those at home, either in style or content or both (Koeppel, 1988). The main reason for this difference is that the national press is addressed to the home country audience, whereas the pan-Arab paper serves to mobilise and promote the policy of the respective regime (see chapter one). Fourthly, studies of the Lebanese press can be applied, to some extent, to certain other press systems in the Arab World (e.g. Egypt, Morocco, Kuwait). In other words, studying the Lebanese press gives an understanding of some Arab press systems but *not all* of them, because as discussed earlier, each region has its own cultural and economic features which are different from the other regions. A final reason for choosing the Lebanese press lies in the access which I gained to the Lebanese newspapers.

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[12] The newspapers and magazines which were suspended by the Tunisian authorities were Al-Fajr (The Dawn) of *Al-Nahda*, the independent Le Maghreb, Al-Batal (The Hero) of the opposition, Al-Badil (The Alternative) the weekly organ of the Tunisian Communist Workers Union, as well as newspapers like Le Monde and Asharq Al-Awsat which were seized after publishing interviews with opposition leaders (Donnadieu, 1992).

B. THE LEBANESE PRESS:

Prior to the onset of the war in 1975, the Lebanese economy was expanding at a relatively rapid pace and across a broad spectrum of activities. Relatively liberal and unregulated development had led to a *laissez-faire* economy dominated by services - banking, commerce, tourism - though a light manufacturing and industry sector was growing rapidly and this was quite export-oriented. These economic circumstances produced a relatively prosperous and modern society. But this society was complex and full of obvious contrasts or clashes of the modern with the traditional. This growth was attributed to the role of Beirut in the socio-economic life of Lebanon. Before 1975, Beirut was home to many international companies that favoured it because of its freedom of market regulations, the availability of talented personnel who were polyglot, and the relative efficiency of its infrastructure. The other most important fact about Lebanon's human geography is the multiplicity of religious communities, Christians and Muslims, not one of which can claim to constitute a majority (Tarabay, 1990; Fisk, 1990; Sirriyeh, 1989; Gordon, 1983; Salibi, 1976; Smock & Smock, 1975). In such a country, the different parties, groups and factions were able to criticise the mismanagement and misfunctions of the government, and to articulate their goals publicly in a climate of freedom and equality. To achieve their objectives, the parties and groups established, under government's licence, their newspapers and magazines, which varied from "quality papers" to the "cheapest of political scandal sheets" (Gordon, 1980). Under these political, economic and social circumstances the Lebanese press was established and grew up. This press reflects the societal structure with all its multifaceted affiliations, commitments and trends (Abou Laban, 1966).

The first attempts to establish the print media in Lebanon started in the last century with the efforts of a few Lebanese intellectuals. At that time, the prevailing political and economic situation did not help to promote it. Even so, several attempts continued up until after World War I under the French Mandate, when again such press did not work due to Mandate restrictions. With Independence (1943) a new era had begun. The press started to set up its basis, protected by the government's laws and regulations[13], which helped in establishing an independent diverse press (Abou Mire'ee, 1980). The role of the press had

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[13] Laws and regulations which were passed to organise the Lebanese press:
Law of 1948: regulated the affairs of the print media, and organised the journalists into one union.
Law of 1952: organised journalists in two unions; one for publishers and one for editors, and opened the door for granting new licenses to newspapers.
Law of 1962: the profession and the practice of journalism were clearly defined.
Law of 1977: issued to induce prior restraint because of civil war, but it was rejected by the journalists and politicians and later was amended.

been enhanced, and it began to function as a watch-dog press[14]. In the 1950s, dramatic changes took place in most of the Arab countries where the majority of the political systems regimes became either monarchies or one-party system. As a result of the political and economic instability in the Arab World, Lebanon acted as a major commercial and trade centre for the area. This role was enhanced by the location of the country and the oil revenues which were invested in Lebanon led to prosperity in the Lebanese society. These political and economic changes, in turn, led to the ascendancy of the Lebanese press which became the platform for various policies in the Arab World (see chapter one). In that period, the Lebanese press broadened its outlook and impact, introduced technological improvements, and the public outlook concerning journalism improved considerably. In short, the development of the Lebanese print media of today was established in the late 1950s (Dajani, 1992).

Lebanon's press is privately owned either by individuals, families or groups. Lebanon has more newspapers than any other Arab country. Today there are 105 licensed political publications: fifty-three daily papers; forty-eight weeklies; four monthly magazines as well as over three hundred non-political publications[15]. This large number of publications is due to the fact that the press laws in Lebanon are open in comparison with those operating elsewhere in the Arab World. Unlike the press in most of the neighbouring Arab states, the Lebanese press faces a minimum of state censorship. The laws of press set the limits within which the freedom of expression can be exercised[16] (Dajani, 1992, 1971; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al, 1985; Al-Ghoraieb, 1982; Abou Mire'ee, 1980; McFadden, 1953). But not all of these publications have appeared consistently. The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) led to many economic and social problems. During the war a few dailies were able to survive and to continue publication (see table 3.1). Included in the large number of licensed political publications are a few newspapers, which are currently published in Lebanon, distributed to various parts of the Arab World. Some of these have small circulations, but others are widely read at home and abroad (Rugh, 1987, 1979; Abou Laban, 1966).

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[14] The watch-dog role of press: exercising public vigilance in relation to those with most power, especially government and big business (McQuail, 1994: 142).
[15] The publications in Lebanon are licensed in three horizontal categories: daily, weekly, and monthly or quarterly; and two vertical categories: political and non-political (like publications of cultural, social and scientific matters).
[16] Those laws prohibit the publication of news which endangers national security or the unity of the state.

Table 3.1: Leading Lebanese Newspapers (1994)

Newspaper	Editor	Year	Policy
Al-Bayraq (The Standard)	Raymond Kawass	1911	Right.
An-Nahar (The Day)	Ghassan Tueni	1933	Right-of-Centre
Al-'Amal[17] (The Labour)	Elias Rababi	1939	Radical Right. Phalangist Party Organ.
L'Orient Le Jour[18]	Issa Ghoraieb	1942	Independent
As-Sharq (The East)	Aouni El-Ka'aki	1945	Pro-Syria
Saut Al-Ahrar [19]	Dory Chamoun	1956	Radical Right. National Liberal Party Organ
Al-Anwar (The Lights)	Issam Freiha	1959	Right-of-Centre
Al-Nida[20](The Appeal)	Karim Mroue	1959	Radical Left. Communist Party Organ
As-Sha'b (The People)	Mohamed Doughan	1961	Left
Al-Liwa' (The Banner)	Salah Salam	1963	Pro-Saudi.
As-Safir (The Ambassador)	Talal Salman	1974	Pro-Nationalism. Left-of-Centre
Ad-Diyar[21] (The Homeland)	Charles Ayoub	1987	Pro-Syria and the idea of Greater Syria

Sources: Europa Book 1992: 1709-1711; Rugh, 1987, 1979.

Although the Civil War (1975-1990) crucially affected the press structure and the freedom of journalists in Lebanon, it did not destroy the nature of the press system, where the "political basis (i.e. pluralism of the Lebanese society) on which the press had functioned for more than thirty years remained as it had been" (Rugh, 1979: 91). The collapse of the central government authority and the deterioration in the security situation made the press vulnerable to the sway of the warring militias, or the *de facto* forces[22]. Amid these circumstances, the Lebanese press experienced its worst moments when a large number of journalists and publishers were kidnapped, killed or arbitrarily detained. Some newspaper offices were bombed or closed by force. During the war, several accords were signed to halt the violence and restore peace. Nearly all of these contained press restrictions, where "censorship is portrayed as necessary to keep the peace between Lebanon's religious and political groups" (Middle East Watch, 1993: 26). These restrictions and censorship did not last long, because of the re-escalation of violence over the 17 years of war. In October 1989, the Taif Agreement signalled the end of the Civil War, where the Lebanese central government restored its control over the country. This Agreement addresses media de-regulation where it stipulates:

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[17] Ceased its publication after the divisions within the Phalangist Party in 1991. However, *Al-'Amal* resumed its publication on 27 September 1994.

[18] Printed in French.

[19] Saut Al-Ahrar (Voice of the Liberals): Ceased its publication following the set-backs that the National Liberal Party faced in its leadership.

[20] Ceased its publication in June 1992 by a decision by the Central Committee of the Lebanese Communist Party, which referred the closure to economic problems.

[21] In June 1993, Rafic Al-Hariri, the Lebanese PM bought this newspaper.

[22] See chapter nine for the effects of the war on the Lebanese press.

> All the information media shall be reorganised under the canopy of the law
> and within the framework of responsible liberties that serve the cautious
> tendencies and the objectives of ending the state of war. (Section A,
> Paragraph III, Article F)

Currently, the Lebanese government is working on a new decree to de-regulate the illegal broadcast media institutions which flourished during the years of strife (see footnotes 23 & 24). The political, economic and social consequences of the Civil War have led to crucial changes in the organisational structure of the Lebanese press. The drain of trained Lebanese journalists to the West to work in the European-based Arab media (Paris and London), and the deterioration of the currency left the press somewhat depleted. Moreover, the changes in the press systems in some Arab countries, and the technology that the Arab press introduced into its plants, diminished the importance of the Lebanese press as one of the pan-Arab press. Furthermore, the post-Civil War press is challenged by other crucial changes in the landscape of the Lebanese media due to the enormous competition not only from publications but also from radio stations (national[23] and global: BBC; VOA; Radio Monte Carlo; Radio Orient), TV stations (national[24] and global: CNN; BBC World Service; TF1; MBC) as well as the pan-Arab press which is widely read in Lebanon as the main source of non-domestic current affairs[25].

Most of the daily political publications appear in the large format of 58 by 42.5 centimetres with a five-centimetre column width. They appear in spreads of 10, 12, 14 or 16 pages depending on the advertising space. All the dailies appear six days a week. The decision behind ceasing appearance on Sundays was taken in the mid 1980s by the newspapers' owners and publishers in order to minimise the losses from dramatically

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[23] The Civil War showed the rise of the unofficial broadcasting in Lebanon. There are two factors that contributed to the proliferation of unofficial Lebanese stations. First was the desire among the organised groups to have a voice promoting their points of view. Second was the failure of the government-run radio services to address the issues leading to the Civil War and then to report accurately and thoroughly on those factions involved in armed conflicts during the war (Boyd, 1991). There are more than 20 radio stations in Lebanon. The leading stations are the official radio station; and the unofficial stations like Voice of Lebanon (VOL), operated and run by the rightist Phalange Party; Voice of People, run by the Lebanese Communist Party; Voice of *Watan* (Homeland), run by the Sunni *Maqasid* Association; Voice of *Jabal* (Mountain), run by the Druze's Progressive Socialist Party; Voice of Free Lebanon, radio of the Lebanese (Christian) Forces; Voice of Hope, located close to the Israeli border in southern Lebanon and run by pro-Israel militia; Voice of *Al-Nour* (The Light) of Hizbollah Party as well as many commercial radio stations on the FM wave.

[24] There are more than 30 national private television stations in Lebanon. Some of these stations are owned by political parties like the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) of the Lebanese (Christian) Forces; New Television (NTV) of the Lebanese Communist Party; *Al-Mashrek* (The Orient) of the pro-Syrian groups; Middle East Television of the pro-Israeli group; *Al-Mustaqbal* (The Future) owned by the current PM Rafic Al-Hariri; *Al-Manar* (The Beacon) of Hizbollah party. Other stations are commercial stations run by businessmen like MTV, ICN, CVN, TV1, CTV as well as many regional stations outside Beirut (Tarabay, 1992). The government (which has shares in the three channels of the semi-official Tele Liban 1, 2 and 3) is working towards de-regulation of the broadcast media.

[25] See chapter nine on the prospects of the national press.

decreasing advertising and circulation revenues. Current papers appear in several languages: Arabic, French, English and Armenian[26]. The Lebanese press is exclusively published in Beirut. The Lebanese newspapers follow the same format in presenting news stories as the Western press. Thus, page one is usually devoted to major national, regional and international news with the editorial. Inside, three pages are devoted to domestic news; one or two for Arab news; one for international news; one page for the economy; one or two for culture and arts; and the advertisements are distributed throughout the newspaper. Some of the Lebanese papers have an editorial page with articles and analyses written by the editors or well-known personalities in the fields of politics, economics, education and so on. The letters to the editor are rarely published[27].

Out of the leading newspapers in Lebanon, An-Nahar (The Day) and As-Safir (The Ambassador) are taken as examples of the national Arab press, and the Lebanese press. These are the two most prominent papers with the largest circulation, and are widely read in Lebanon and some other Arab countries. Moreover, An-Nahar and As-Safir reflect two different political trends, where the former is right-of-centre and the latter is left-of-centre (Fisk, 1993; Middle East Watch, 1993; Dajani, 1992; Rugh, 1987, 1979). These matters fulfil the objectives of this research in terms of looking at the organisational, professional and policy dimensions of the Arab press in Lebanon compared with the London-based Arab press, which is the second dimension of this work.

C. THE ÉMIGRÉ ARAB MEDIA:

During the last two decades, London and Paris have become the capitals of the émigré Arab media, with a token presence in Cyprus and the United States of America. The Civil War in Lebanon is considered the main reason for this phenomenon[28]. The emigration of the Arab press is not a new phenomenon; there are examples of such migration in the second half of the 19th century. However, the papers which moved from Lebanon in the last century had a different perspective from those publications which mushroomed in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Western Europe. To understand the current phenomenon of the émigré Arab press, it is essential to briefly review the historical background of the Arab press, which was established outside the Arab World during the present and past centuries.

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[26] The 53 dailies are published in different languages (42 Arabic; 6 French; 3 Armenian and 2 English) and 48 weeklies (43 Arabic; 2 French; 2 English and 1 Armenian).

[27] See chapter eight for more details on the letters to the editors in the Lebanese press.

[28] Abou Zeid (1985) argues that two main factors pushed the Lebanese press to flee the country: (1) the Syrian military intervention in 1976, where the Syrian forces seized or confiscated newspapers and magazines which were opposed to Syrian policy in Lebanon and the Arab World; (2) the Lebanese government issued legislative decree (01/01/1977) which imposed the prior censorship on the press. This set a precedent in the history of the Lebanese press.

During the Ottoman era and the British mandate on the Arab countries, few Arab newspapers appeared in Europe and the United States. The first papers were Pargeus Paris in France (1858), Rajoum wa Ghassaq ila Faris Al-Shidyaq in England (1868) and Kawkab America in New York (1892). These papers, which emigrated for political reasons, did not last for long due to their economic circumstances and the restrictions of mandate (Badrakhan, 1990; Abou Zeid, 1985; Asharq Al-Awsat, 24/06/1992). This experience however encouraged by individual initiatives continued throughout the first half of this century up until the late 1950s. In that period, the Lebanese press became an alternative to the émigré Arab press. However, the outbreak of the Civil War (1975) forced the Lebanese press itself to emigrate, and consequently the pan-Arab press experience in Beirut collapsed (see chapter one).

Today, the Arab media outside the Arab World are mainly centred in Paris and London. There are a few political magazines published from Paris[29], as well as the Arab section of Radio Monte Carlo (RMC) and the pan-Arab radio station, Radio Orient[30]. The presence of the Arab media in London is more obvious and powerful. The importance of London would seem to be for many different reasons. Firstly, London was chosen because of the geographical position it holds connecting America, Europe and the Middle East. In addition to its location, it is important because of the historical and political relations which exist between the UK and its former colonies in the Arab World (Iraq and the Gulf states), where Britain established cultural and economic relations. This sort of relationship did not exist with France or Italy and their colonies in the Arab World. Britain has helped the Gulf states to establish and reorganise their newly-independent states, particularly when the British expertise extended this help to the fields of foreign policy, economy and education (Ibrahim et al, 1988). Moreover, Britain did not wage any war of independence in the Gulf area like the Algerian war against the French and the Libyan war against the Italians. This type of relationship continued to dominate the British-Gulf relations down to the present. Secondly, the freedom of expression, which is not available in most of the Arab countries, permits the publication of any newspaper without any sort of pressure or strict censorship. In England there is no need to have a government licence to publish. All that the Arab editor needs to do is "to go to the post office and to register the publication for mailing" (Evans, 1992: 16). Fourthly, London was selected because of the English language, which is a second language for the majority of Arab editors and

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[29] There are a few magazines publish from Paris, such as Al-Watan Al-Arabi (The Arab World) (1977), Al-Mustaqbal (The Future) (1977), An-Nahar Al-Arabi wa Al-Dowali (The Arab & International Day) (1979), Kul Al-Arab (All the Arabs) (1982), Al-Dowalieh (The International) as well as Al-Muharir (The Editor). Some of these magazines ceased their publications during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

[30] This station is owned by the Lebanese PM, Rafic Al-Hariri, and has a high percentage of audience in the Arab World (Mytton, 1992).

journalists. Finally, and most probably, the undeclared reason is the existence of the oil
countries' business and money, or the so-called "petro-dollar" business, in London. The
Saudi, Kuwaiti, Iraqi and other wealthy Arab companies, businessmen and even
governments have their business in London[31].

      Currently, there is a large number[32] of Arab publications, a radio station and a
satellite television in London. The publications vary from the underground press of the
Arab dissidents and opposition groups to the daily, weekly and monthly political and non-
political publications. The Arabic Section of the BBC World Service is one of the biggest
sections in the BBC World Service. There also exists a local radio station[33] in London
which serves the Arabs and other ethnic minorities. Finally, the Arabs own the television
station Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) which was launched in September 1991.
MBC is owned by Walid Al-Ibrahim (brother-in-law to king Fahed) and a number of Saudi
businessmen. MBC broadcasts by satellite throughout Europe, North Africa and the
Middle East. The same group, which owns MBC, recently bought (June 1992) the
American wire service, United Press International (UPI)[34] (Marlowe, 1992; Evans, 1992;
Kennedy, 1992; Vidal-Hall, 1992)

D. THE LONDON-BASED ARAB PRESS:

      In the last 15 years, the Arab press in the United Kingdom has grown rapidly. A
number of Arab dailies, weeklies and monthly magazines began to make London (and other
cities in the UK such as Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds) the head office for their
plants. Today, there are seven Arab dailies published in London (see table 3.2). Some of
them are published in London, others publish their international edition from London.
These dailies are: Al-Hayat (The Life); Al-Arab (The Arabs); Al-Qabas International (The
Beacon), the international edition of the Kuwaiti Al-Qabas; Saut Al-Kuwait (The Voice of
Kuwait), Kuwait's own London-based; Al-Quds Al-Arabi (Arab Jerusalem), an
international edition of Al-Quds which is published in Jerusalem; Asharq Al-Awsat (The
Middle East); Ath-Thawra International (The Revolution), an international edition of the
Iraqi paper Ath-Thawra; Al-Ahram International (The Pyramids), an international edition of
the prominent Egyptian daily, Al-Ahram; and Al-Ahdath (The Events). Beside these daily

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[31] An unofficial report estimated that there are 400 Arab-owned businesses in London, i.e. Banks,
Companies (The Financial Times, 06/10/1988).

[32] Voice Intelligence Report mentioned 32 publications - daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly - which are
Arab-owned and published from London (Voice, 1989). But Ragab (1993) mentioned in his survey that 50
Arab publications are being published in London till May 1993.

[33] This station is known as Spectrum Radio serves the Arabs, Asians, Greeks, Italians, Afro-Carribeans
and other ethnic minorities (New Horizon, 1989).

[34] UPI has the UPITN which is owned by the UPI and the British Independent Television Network. The
stimulus to acquire UPI came because of the huge amount of money that MBC was paying Visnews.

papers, there are over thirty political and non-political publications (which deal with culture, arts, women, religion, etc.) published in London[35].

Table 3.2: London-based Arab Newspapers (1994)

Newspaper	Editor	Year	Policy
Al-Arab	Ahmed Salhin El-Houni	1977	Pro-Libyan. Critical of the Gulf states. Anti-U.S.
Asharq Al-Awsat	Othman Al-Omeir	1978	Conservative. Pro-Saudi. Anti-Iranian.
Al-Ahram	Ibrahim Nafa'a [36]	1984	Unofficial Egyptian government opinion.
Al-Qabas	Mohamed Jasem El-Saqr	1985	Conservative. Pan-Arab. Independent
Al-Ahdath	Abdul Hamid Hussein	1988	Independent. Anti-U.S.
Al-Hayat	Jihad El-Khazen	1988	Conservative. Pro-Saudi. Critical of Iraq
Al-Quds Al-Arabi	Abdul Bary Atwan	1989	Pro-PLO mainstream. Critical of the Gulf.
Ath-Thawra[37]	Hamid Saed	1990	Organ of Iraq's Ba'ath. Critical of Iran & Syria.
Saut Al-Kuwait[38]	Mohamed El-Romeihi	1990	Voice of the Kuwaiti government.

Sources: Murad, 1993; Ragab, 1993; Voice International Report, (2)7: 3-4

To decide which policy each newspaper adopts appears somewhat *debatable*, because classifying one newspaper or another as anti or pro a certain Arab regime needs in-depth analysis. Such an analysis enables us to conclude how each of the above-listed newspapers deals with the different and conflicting Arab policies. To give a broad and general idea of the identity and policy of each newspaper, I referred to the nationalities of the newspapers and the argument concerning the conflicting policies between the Arab countries. In other words, the Arab World is geographically and politically divided into different axes and each of these newspapers favours, or is supported by, one Arab camp or another. This support (either political or financial) would be acknowledged on the pages of the newspaper. In short, the London-based Arab dailies reflect the different Arab policies and trends. Nevertheless, after the invasion of Kuwait, the London-based Arab media became, to a large extent, a homogeneous rather than heterogeneous in dealing with the coverage of Arab affairs. The defeat of Iraq as a political and financial supporter to a number of London-based Arab papers, had resulted in such media to cease publication. Thus, the media of the Arab nationalism have retreated and the media of the conservatism have flourished (see chapter one).

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[35] For a detailed account on the Arab publications in London, see Voice Reports (1993; 1989) and Ragab (1993).

[36] Ibrahim Nafa'a is the editor-in-chief of the Egyptian edition, and Mohammed Hennawy works as the editor-in-chief for the London-based international edition of Al-Ahram.

[37] Ceased its publication after the beginning of the invasion of Kuwait August 1990.

[38] Appeared after the Iraqi invasion (August 1990) to serve the Kuwaiti issue during the Gulf War II. It ceased its publication in November 1992, when the Kuwaiti cabinet "pulled the plug" on further funds to the Kuwaiti Research and Advertising (KRA), the London-based publisher of the newspaper and a fortnightly English magazine, New Arabia. One Kuwaiti report put the paper's losses at £60 million (Murad, 1993; Evans, 1992).

Out of these dailies, there are a few Arab newspapers with high circulation figures and respect in the field of expatriate Arab journalism. Moreover, each of the Arab newspapers has a different policy and thus its own style with regard to covering, presenting and commenting on news stories. In other words, because most of the Arab press in London is backed and financed by one Arab regime or another, this in turn, results in a kind of commitment from the newspaper to the backing regime. Such commitment has classified most of the Arab press in London as 'in favour' and 'against' Arab regimes (Voice, 1993, 1989). This pan-Arab press has, however, failed to fill the gap left by the Lebanese press, the only pan-Arab press. Thus, instead of having a pan-Arab press in Britain, it has become a Saudi, Kuwaiti, Egyptian and Iraqi backed press (El-Rayyes, 1991). In this context, Fouad Matar, editor of Al-Tadamon[39], agrees with El-Rayyes' argument, when he considers the present phase as a "monopoly of the Gulf's point of view" at the expense of what used to be called the pan-Arab press (Murad, 1993). This heterogeneity in the London-based Arab press has turned into a mainly Saudi backed press:

> The Saudis have been building their media holdings for more than a decade, but the Gulf War, with its 24-hour satellite coverage, whetted their appetite for a CNN of their own. By virtually eliminating Iraq as financier of the Arab press, the war created a vacuum that Saudi Arabia was happy to fill. (Marlowe, 1992: 49)

Out of the current London-based Arab newspapers, Al-Hayat (The Life), and Asharq Al-Awsat (The Middle East) were selected for a case study on the émigré Arab media. These two papers were taken for various reasons. Firstly, Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat are regarded as the most prominent émigré papers with the highest circulation in the Arab World, and are widely read by the Arab communities abroad (Murad, 1993; Evans, 1992; Marlowe, 1992; Voice, 1993, 1989). Secondly, the other dailies reflect predominantly the national identity of the newspaper, e.g. Al-Ahram for the Egyptians; Al-Qabas for the Kuwaitis; Al-Quds Al-Arabi for the Palestinians. In other words, these newspapers focus mainly on their national affairs, and in the second place on the other Arab affairs, where Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat do not have a dominant national identity despite the fact that they are owned by Saudis. Thirdly, the size and prominence of Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat make the coverage of the Arab affairs more diverse. Fourthly, the size of the Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat organisations allows us to examine the research objectives, the external and internal aspects related to the news production process, which were discussed in chapter two. Finally, the study of these two newspapers permits some commonality (i.e. the impact of the cultural context on the London-based

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[39] Al-Tadamon (The Solidarity): is a pro-Iraqi London-based magazine launched in 1982 and suspended in 1991.

Arab journalists) across the London-based Arab newsrooms in general, regardless of their national affiliation.

CONCLUSION:

This chapter has discussed the various press systems in the Arab World with special emphasis on the Lebanese press, and has examined the phenomenon of the émigré Arab-media. Having demonstrated the distinction between these two kinds, it is important to investigate the external and the internal influences on each of the two kinds of Arab media. To achieve the study of influences, both macro and micro-levels of news production are to be studied in the London-based Arab newspapers (Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat) and the two Lebanese papers (As-Safir and An-Nahar). The macro-levels of news production look at the matters of ownership and control as well as the wider cultural context where these organisations operate. The micro-levels look at the internal process of news production. These two levels of study allows us to examine the impact of the socio-cultural context of the two groups of the Arab press organisations.

The next chapter discusses the methodologies have been employed in the data collection for this study, and why such methods are appropriate to this kind of research.

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CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION
AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

As discussed in chapter two, there are many factors that influence media output including questions concerning ownership, control and sources of finance. Just what difference the ownership makes will depend on how the operation of the organisation is controlled, both internally and externally. Understanding the internal control (management structure, hierarchy and division of labour) and how it affects the news production process needs participant observation in the internal process. Moreover, questions concerning policy, attitude of personnel, practices of gathering and production of news, the structure and the relationship with the wider context cannot be understood solely by analysing the media content.

Several Studies (Ericson *et al*, 1989, 1987; Van Dijk, 1988; Fishman, 1980; Schlesinger, 1978; Epstein, 1973; Elliott, 1972a) have found that a combination of social science research techniques, including observation, interviewing, scrutiny of organisational documents, and systematic analysis of organisational products, is a requirement for a full view of a news-media institution[1]. As argued previously, the study of the news product as a part of the continuing social process requires a range of methodologies to capture this process/product relation, including those associated with the techniques of ethnography and those associated with the techniques of content analysis. For the purpose of this research ethnographic approaches which employ observation, interviewing and documents analysis are essential. Ethnography is the means of acquiring knowledge about what it is like to be a member of the organisation under study, observing and describing the communicative activities of the organisational members. Content analysis is a means of revealing patterns in news content, and making evident assumptions about how the news is structured and presented. Content analysis adds to our knowledge of the process/product relation (Ericson *et al*, 1991).

This chapter discusses how both participant observation and content analysis are

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[1] As Gans (1979) outlines it, to understand the production of news, one must first understand the power relationships involved between the various institutions or social forces outside the news organisations. The news is shaped by technological, economic and cultural forces as well as by the audience, advertisers and news sources. The economic forces, which are especially important, include ownership, audience size and circulation and market size (Shoemaker & Mayfield, 1987). Understanding the social and institutional forces operating outside the Arab news organisation is achieved empirically by adopting various techniques of data collection (e.g. participant observation, content analysis). In this respect, the analysis of the newspapers' content reveals various matters relating to the social forces outside the news organisation (e.g. news sources).

appropriate methods for this research. With regard to participant observation, the chapter discusses how the techniques of ethnography are employed with reference to the previous studies[2]. The content analysis section points out why this methodology is employed and how the coding schedule is designed to complete and add to our knowledge about the construction and presentation of Arab affairs in the newspapers, from which content is taken for analysis.

A. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION: DEFINITIONS AND CRITICISMS

The term *ethnography*, dates back to the Chicago School of Sociology[3]. It refers to social research that has most of the following features: (a) people's behaviour studied in an every day context; (b) data gathered from a range of sources; (c) the approach to data collection is unstructured; (d) the focus is usually a single setting or group; (e) analysis of data involves interpretation of functions of human actions with statistical analysis playing at most a subordinate role (Hammersley, 1990). Participant observation, as ethnographic research, refers to a characteristic blend of techniques employed in studies of social situations or of complex organisations, where the researchers study the processes, the relationships among people and events, and the continuities over time as well as the immediate socio-cultural contexts of these settings (Philipsen, 1989/90; Jorgensen, 1989; Wimmer & Dominick, 1987; Light, 1983; Sanday, 1983; Van Maanen, 1983; Elliott, 1972a; Dean *et al*, 1969a, 1969b; McCall & Simmons 1969; Cicourel, 1964). Participant observation involves some amount of genuine social interaction in the field, some direct observation, some formal and a great deal of informal interviews, some collection of documents and open-endedness in the direction that the study takes. The use of multiple methods, or the "triangulation of methods", is a plan of action to steer sociologists clear of personal biases that would stem from use of a single methodology[4]. Furthermore, the weakness of each single method will be compensated for by the counter strengths of another method (Jankowski & Wester, 1991; Jorgensen, 1989; Jick, 1983; Willis, 1980; McCall & Simmons, 1969). In media studies, the ethnographic approach[5] is appropriate in

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[2] Some observational notes on the phases of participant observation are included in Appendix D.

[3] Chicago was among the first universities in the United States to establish a sociology department, and the department was very influential in the 1920s and 1930s. Sociologists working there became increasingly preoccupied with the character of their city. Robert Park, an ex-journalist, was the main force behind the series of studies produced by students at Chicago in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s (Hammersley, 1990).

[4] Jick (1983) argues that the triangulation of methods provides researchers with several important opportunities: (1) the triangulation allows researchers to be more confident of their results; (2) it can stimulate the creation of inventive methods; (3) it helps to uncover the deviant dimension of a phenomenon; (4) it leads to a synthesis or integration of theories "methodological triangulation closely parallels theoretical triangulation"; and (5) it may serve as the critical test, for competing theories by virtue of its comprehensiveness (Jick, 1983: 135-148).

[5] Schlesinger (1980) considers participant observation as an ethnographic approach which is a complementary approach to the various forms of textual analysis and structural and historical studies of the culture.

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order to make available basic information about the working ideologies and actual social practices which constitute cultural production. Such an approach allows the observation of moments of crisis which are otherwise concealed from the outsider simply studying news content (Silverman, 1993; Hartmann *et al*, 1987; Intinoli, 1985; Schlesinger, 1980).

There have been some criticisms of ethnographic research. The first critique is that ethnographic research suffers from lack of precision as a result of the absence of quantification (words like 'often' and 'frequently' are used instead of precise numerical specifications). Secondly, ethnographic observation is subjective in the sense that it is not guided by a structure (questionnaire or observational schedule) that would maximise the chances that another observer would produce the same data (subject to bias). Thirdly, the findings of ethnographic studies are not generalisable because they study a very small sample. Fourthly, by studying natural settings and a small sample, the participant observers rule out the possibility of physical or statistical control of variables. Finally, since the ethnographic studies do not follow a well-designed and explicit procedure that is replicable, the findings of any study cannot be checked by others (Tuchman, 1991; Hammersley, 1991, 1990; Carbaugh, 1989/90; Cushman, 1989/90; Cushman & Nicotera-Mayden, 1989/90; Wimmer & Dominick, 1987; Fishman, 1980; Elliott, 1972a; Schwartz & Schwartz, 1969).

B. PHASES OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION[6]
B.1. SELECTING THE SETTING:

As mentioned previously, the Arab press in London and Beirut were taken as case studies for the understanding of many factors related to news organisation. When it came to the selecting of the settings or newsrooms for fieldwork, two points were taken into consideration. Firstly, there was the matter of selecting the papers that fulfil the requirements of the theoretical framework, in terms of size, prominence, circulation and policy. As this classification was made, a list of newspapers (in Beirut and London) was put together. Secondly, the fieldwork was scheduled to start in the first week of January 1992. So, in early November 1991, an official letter (in English) from the Centre for Mass Communication Research, and a letter (in Arabic) from me were sent to the editors-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, (in London) An-Nahar and As-Safir (in Beirut) concerning the possibility of conducting the empirical study in their newspapers. Within the next few weeks, the letters of permission were received in line with the suggested timetable.

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[6] For a detailed account on the phases of participant observation in the Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar and As-Safir newsrooms, see appendix D.

B.2. INTERVIEWS:

Additional data were generated by interviewing a range of journalists. Interviews constitute a complementary method along with direct observation and are an essential means in the process of participant observation. The participant observer can get more details about the activities and actions of the 'insiders' (persons involved in a single social setting), even during his/her absence. Jorgensen (1989) listed specific kinds of interview questions that the fieldworker might need whilst interviewing[7]. Epstein (1973) used the same questions in his structured interviews with the personnel of NBC, CBS and ABC news networks.

Interviews were conducted with the journalists and managers, who were related to the process of news production, at each of the four newspapers. These persons were chosen because (a) they were involved in the news production process that I had observed during my observational fieldwork, and (b) they represent a range of organisational roles and hierarchical positions within the organisations (see Appendix C). A semi-structured interview schedule was designed to address three major topics related to this research (see Appendix B). First, I focused upon the managers' perspectives regarding matters related to the ownership, circulation, advertising and the personnel. Managers' views were taken to know about the organisational size and the economic determinants of each newspaper. Such views constitute main accounts on the patterns of ownership and control in the four newspapers (see chapter six). Second, the top editors were asked about matters relating to control and the decision-making process as well as the socio-cultural related-aspects (e.g. censorship, London, technology). The top editors' accounts provided an understanding to the organisational and institutional dimensions of the study. Third, interviews with the editors and reporters focused mainly on the daily editorial work (e.g. source-communicator relationship, editor-reporter interaction, news selection). The journalists' accounts allowed for gaining more details about the mechanisms of the news production process. The interviews were tape-recorded with consent of the interviewees, and the tapes were transcribed and translated for ease of access (see Appendix D).

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[7] a) grand-tour questions: request for an overview of some matters of interest
b) mini-tour questions: detailed exploration of a particular matter
c) example questions: illustrations and examples of matters of interest
d) experience questions: investigate about people's direct experience
e) native-language questions request clarification of terms, concepts or phrases used by insiders. In case the researcher shares the same background and experience as the insiders, (e.g. media researcher in a news organisation), there is no need for native-language questions.

B.3. DATA ANALYSIS:

Participant observation is a means of combining several methods towards an analytic description of a social organisation. This analytical description employs concepts of a theory as basic guide-lines to analysis so consequently generates new empirical generalisations based on obtained observational data (Jorgensen, 1989). In this respect, Jankowski and Wester (1991) argue that there are three forms of the qualitative research reports: (1) the descriptive reports, making little or no reference to the theoretical perspectives; (2) the analytical reports, based on concepts emerging from the study; and (3) the substantive accounts, intended to contribute to a general theory. Furthermore, the report should get "close to the data", be truthfully written in "good faith", and should contain much "descriptive material and liberal quotations" from the subjects studied. Finally, the data analysis should be explicit and the report written in a "style which makes sense to members" of the setting studied. In the process of writing up the findings, the descriptive form was used with reference to the theoretical framework of the study. In the findings of this research (see chapters five to ten), the data which emerged from the content analysis, the observation and the interviews were incorporated with the theoretical framework of the study.

C. CONTENT ANALYSIS: DEFINITIONS AND CRITICISMS

Studies on media institutions have adopted content analysis, as one of their research techniques, because it reveals a fuller view of the process/product relation. The ethnographic data of this research give us knowledge about the internal process of news production, whereas the systematic analysis of newspapers' content adds knowledge by revealing some aspects related to the news production process (i.e. how the news is structured and presented which will be discussed in the next chapter). Content analysis is likely to be especially appropriate when used as a supplementary source of data. The investigator may check the results of interview or questionnaire data (in this case participant observation data) by comparing them with content analysis of newspaper content (Holsti, 1969).

Definitions of content analysis have tended to change over time with developments in techniques and with the application of the tool itself. Such definitions still share broad agreement on the requirements which are obvious in the most commonly quoted definition given by Berelson: "content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the *manifest* content of mass communication" (1952: 18).

Holsti (1969) explains the meanings of these requirements[8]. Objectivity means the analysts should follow explicit "formulated rules and procedures". It requires the person doing the analysis to recognise a particular type of content unit, e.g. theme (Hartmann *et al*, 1987). Systematic means that the allocation of content elements should be done according to applied rules. Quantitative means the recording of numerical values or the frequencies with which the various defined types of content occur (Stempel III, 1989a). These requirements are essential to content analysis.

Despite criticisms (e.g. problems of content analysis originate in the reliability and validity of text classification), content analysis has the advantages of accepting large volumes of unstructured data. The systematic nature of the content analysis protects the method from accusations of bias which might follow from a "subjective" reading of the chosen material (McQuail, 1994, 1987; Silverman, 1993; Berger, 1991; Ericson *et al*, 1991; Wimmer & Dominick, 1987; Barrat, 1986; Weber, 1985; Beardsworth, 1980; Krippendorff, 1980; Burgelin, 1972; Gerbner, 1964). To minimise the subjectivity of the researcher, a combination of methodologies backed by a well-founded conceptual framework gives an understanding of the influence of the socio-cultural context on the Arab press organisations.

C.1. SELECTION OF NEWSPAPERS: WHY THE BRITISH PAPERS?

Four Arab newspapers (Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar and As-Safir) were chosen as the site of the participant observation study. In addition, two British newspapers (The Guardian and The Times) were taken in order to analyse the coverage of Arab affairs. The systematic analysis of the content of the Arab newspapers answers some questions that relate to the news production process, which could not have been as easily scrutinised through participant observation. The content analysis of these papers tells us, for instance, which news sources are usually or frequently quoted in the Arab press. Furthermore, the analysis of the subject, the authors, the themes and the dimensions of the news items in the four Arab papers enables us to grasp a full understanding of the way in which Arab affairs are constructed and presented.

One would be right to question why the two British newspapers were included along with the Arab ones, particularly since they were not subject to the ethnographic study which took place in the Arab newsrooms? Evidently, The Guardian and The Times were not taken along with the Arab papers without good reasons - two in this instance. First, the

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[8] Holsti defines content analysis as: "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (1969: 14).

comparative study on the findings that relates to the news production process (e.g. news gathering, news selection) enables us to know the similarities and differences between the three groups of newspapers (British, Arab-London, Arab-Beirut). For instance, the author of the news items category, or the specialisation of the journalist, gives an idea about the similarities and differences between these three groups (see chapter five). Second, the coverage of Arab affairs in the three groups of newspapers allows us to know how these affairs are constructed and presented, and what the criteria are for selecting and presenting them. In the previous chapter, it was argued that the London-based Arab press is considered as one of the well-established models of the Arab press. This tripartite comparison allows the research to draw on a tri-dimensional knowledge linking any differences and similarities between these three groups of newspapers. The core of the comparative study is between the two groups of the Arab press, and the tripartite comparison is chiefly applicable in the fields that relate to the news content of the six newspapers.

C.2. SAMPLE PERIOD:

When it comes to the selection of the period for analysis, the options were either to choose specific periods relating to specific events, or similar periods but not focused on any particular event. With event-oriented periods (e.g. the Arab-Israeli peace conference, the coverage of the *Intifada* (Uprising), Western hostages in Beirut, the on-going coverage of Islamic fundamentalism, etc.) there is a chance that the researcher's subjectivity towards particular events might skew the sample. The alternative approach would take specific periods in 1991-1992, before and during the participant observation study, and look at everything covered in the press within that period without restrictions. A decision to adopt the second approach was taken as it provided a degree of representativeness. It shows the coverage of Arab affairs in normal periods as well as event-oriented periods. Two months (November 1991 and February 1992) were taken because they reflect both the normal and events-oriented periods, and cover the period before and during the ethnographic study.

Having decided on the period for analysis, two options left an uncertainty as to how much coverage of Arab affairs would be present in the British papers. The use of FT-Profile[9] allowed for an estimate of the number of items that would be covered in the first week of October 1991 under the keyword "Arab" in the two selected newspapers: The Guardian and The Times. An average of three items per day was found in each newspaper.

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[9] FT-Profile: is the main on-line commercial database in Britain for accessing newspaper text, provided by the Financial Times Group. FT-Profile holds a large array of different file types (including newspapers). The system is designed to store press items as a full text one. FT-Profile started in early 1980 for several British newspapers (Hansen, 1992).

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The first week of October 1991 revealed that in the case of a normal day, the British press publishes an average of three news items each day per paper. The same procedure was used to check the number of items covered in the first week of November 1991 for the same newspapers under the same keyword. An average of seven items per day was identified. The first week of November 1991 was an event-oriented period (The Arab-Israeli peace conference in Madrid), when the British papers devoted more news items and space to this Arab-related event. This indicated that Arab affairs were covered intensively in the two papers. This also implied a vast amount of coverage for analysis in the six newspapers to be studied. A systematic sample criterion of every fourth issue for each newspaper was adopted to overcome this problem (Krippendorff, 1980). The Sunday issues were excluded because three out of the six newspapers do not publish on Sunday (An-Nahar, As-Safir and The Guardian). Beginning in November 1991, every fourth issue was selected throughout the period:

Table 4.1: Items and Dates selected for analysis

Month/Year	November 1991								February 1992							
Paper/Date	1	5	9	13	18	22	26	30	3	7	11	15	19	24	29	Total
The Guardian	9	4	2	1	5	3	4	2	3	1	5	2	3	8	8	60
The Times	10	7	2	2	7	6	7	2	6	5	3	2	8	7	6	80
Al-Hayat	13	11	10	11	13	12	13	12	14	14	14	13	14	11	15	190
Asharq Al-Awsat	17	17	15	16	16	16	20	17	16	12	15	13	14	15	13	232
An-Nahar	8	7	7	6	8	13	12	12	8	8	9	10	9	9	12	138
As-Safir	11	10	8	11	9	11	10	10	9	11	8	8	8	9	8	141
Total	68	56	44	47	58	61	66	55	56	51	54	48	56	59	62	841

Regarding the Arab papers, the amount of coverage found to be excessive. A pilot study showed that the four newspapers publish an average of 80 to 110 news items per issue. There were available two options, either to deal with the Arab political news items only, or to take a random sample from the whole newspaper. The second option was chosen, because it was not restricted to the subjectivity of the researcher, and it reveals various matters relating to the news production process (i.e. the amount of advertising, news items on culture, international affairs and sports give an idea of the kind and percentage of news that the Arab papers cover). Starting from the front page (top-right) the 10th item was selected counting in an anti-clockwise direction. As table 4.1 shows, an average of 6-20 news items per issue were analysed in the four Arab newspapers over the two months/years. Another problem was whether to analyse qualitatively the total number of items (e.g. international political, culture, advertisements), or to focus only on the Arab affairs items. The second option was preferred, in order to enable the research to include a comparative study of the coverage of Arab affairs across the six newspapers. This led to

the exclusion of the domestic political news items in the two Lebanese dailies, where the ethnographic study was mainly concerned with the Arab and International Desk of As-Safir and the Foreign Desk of An-Nahar. The other items were analysed on a quantitative basis only as will be discussed in the next chapter.

C.3. CODING SCHEDULE:

A coding schedule was designed to operationalise the research questions asked in a previous chapter[10]. These are mainly concerned with news sources and their interaction with the newsroom personnel, the selection and presentation of themes, and the language used to cover the Arab affairs. A final version of the coding schedule was adopted after the completion of a thorough pilot study on the six newspapers.

C.4. DESCRIPTION OF CODING SCHEDULE:

The coding schedule was designed in such a way as to record any information about the news items (see Appendix A). The coding schedule started with the usual descriptive information about the number of items being coded, paper, year, month, date, day, page, total page number, the position on the page, under which page heading the news was classified (e.g. overseas, Arab affairs, editorial), the type of item (e.g. news story, editorial), and the number of visuals (whether they are photographs, cartoons, maps).

The source-communicator interaction is a key dimension in the study of the news gathering process. To reveal some matters relating to this dimension, the coding schedule contained categories[11] such as the *author of the item* (e.g. specialist or generalist), then more precisely, concerning the author him/herself (e.g. correspondent, editor, news agency). These dimensions, which were a matter of scrutiny during the ethnographic study and the interviews and discussions with the Arab journalists, give additional information about these subjects. This leads on to mention the nature of the interaction with news sources. The coding schedule contains crucial variables such as the *news sources/actors quoted, interviewed or referred to.* These variables were aimed at discovering the actors most dominant in coverage of Arab affairs. The actors were divided into their national groups (e.g. Arab, Israeli, Foreign), organisation (e.g. United Nations), profession (e.g. experts, analysts) and others. Under these broad divisions, there were detailed sub-divisions (e.g. under Arab, there are officials, opposition, public). Studies on news

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[10] In designing the coding schedule of this study, I referred to various content analysis studies in general, and Stevenson (1984) in particular.

[11] In creating the category, the coder must take two basic decisions: the first is whether or not the categories are mutually exclusive, and the second is how narrow or broad the categories are to be (Weber, 1985).

sources in the Western media (e.g. Sigal, 1973) have found that media professionals refer and quote mainly the official sources. The rationale behind looking at the news sources in the British and Arab papers was to know more about how and in which preference the press relies on the various news sources. For instance, the content analysis reveals the news sources quoted in the Arab press, and in which order they were presented. These findings, which are later incorporated with the interviews, enable us to identify the news sources, and consequently discuss the dimension of the interaction between the Arab journalists and their news sources (see chapter seven).

The subject of the news items (e.g. International-Arab politics, Armed conflict) is another category which is usefully identified. These are sub-divided into primary and subsidiary allowing us to see which subjects the three groups of newspapers cover, and in which preference. Talking about *subject* leads us to deal with a related category which is *themes*[12]. After the finalising of the coding, 40 major themes were identified. Items were measured against these themes to see which were the primary, secondary, tertiary and fourth themes within each news item. The examination of these themes indicates how Arab affairs are covered in both the Arab and British press. This crucial category tells us what themes dominate the Arab affairs in the three groups of newspapers, and in which preference. It also examines the process of news selection and the news values that influence the work of Arab editors. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the macro-themes (a process by which the themes were clustered under several macro-themes, see chapter five) indicate how Arab affairs are constructed and presented in the three groups of newspapers in general, and in the six newspapers in particular.

Another category codes the *main countries* (up to four) reported in the news items (e.g. Egypt, Syria). Most of the Arab countries, including Israel, were coded in order to know how each of the Arab countries was covered, and in which preference. This tells why some countries have more coverage and prominence than others, and what kind of coverage this is. The rationale behind looking at the country concerned was to combine these findings with those of another category such as the subject, theme and tone of the items.

The coding schedule contained a further crucial category which is the *dimension or tone of the item*. Several issues/countries were selected and the news items were measured against these issues/countries to find out whether the news item was pro, anti or

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[12] Holsti (1963) defines a theme as a unit of text having no more than one of each of the following elements: a) the perceiver; b) the perceived; or agent of action; c) the action; and d) the target of the action (Weber, 1985).

neutral with regard to what was reported. The use of the "Semantic Differential Scale" helps to measure the tone of the news items by referring to the labels used (Barrat, 1986). The technique of the Semantic Differential was designed by having one descriptive word at each end (e.g. pro-West and anti-West). When seven dimensions had been established, the differentiation was graded on a scale one to five. One or five would respectively indicate the item is very pro or very anti. Two and four would identify the item as pro or anti and the mid-point position (3) indicated neutrality. The news items which were not applicable to this scale coded as (9), which would mean excluding them from final analysis. The *labels used* were coded on separate sheets to see what language the press was employing in covering Arab-related news. The coding schedule was not restricted to a prior categorising of labels, thus enabling the researcher to code as many labels as were in the news item. The coding of labels and dimension indicate the way Arab affairs were constructed and presented in the six newspapers, and in the groups of newspapers.

In the next chapter, the data which emerged from the coding schedule are interpreted and related to the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESS CONSTRUCTION OF ARAB AFFAIRS:
ARAB AND BRITISH NEWSPAPERS

This chapter discusses and interprets the quantitative results of the press analysis, and examines how the Arab affairs were constructed in the British and Arab press. The news items were classified into two main groups: Arab political and non-political (international, economics, culture, health, advertisements). All the Arab-related news items in the two British newspapers The Guardian and The Times (hereafter simply referred to as British) were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat (hereafter referred to as Arab-London) An-Nahar and As-Safir (hereafter referred to as Arab-Beirut), the Arab political items were restricted to the same analysis as was the case for the English news items. The non-political (e.g. culture, economy, advertisements) news items were analysed on a quantitative basis only. The political news items were analysed along five dimensions. The first of these looks at the author of the news item, and asks what are the channels employed in the news gathering process? and to what extent do the newsrooms depend on the specialist journalist as news gatherer? The second dimension focuses on news sources (official and non-official). The third concerns the presentation of themes in the coverage of Arab affairs. The rationale behind the analysis of this aspect was to investigate what themes were prominent, and how these themes were framed. The fourth dimension deals with the main Arab country concerned, asking which Arab country, including Israel, was selected and why? The final dimension looks at the tone of the news item, to see whether the news item is in favour of a certain issue/country or otherwise. Several countries/issues were taken to investigate the tone of the political news items in the six newspapers. The tone of the news items was examined in terms of the vocabulary and labels used.

A. ITEMS FOR ANALYSIS:

There were 841 items appearing in the six newspapers (2 British, 2 Arab London-based and 2 Lebanese) included in this study. As table 5.1 shows, the London-based Arab papers had a large number of news items compared to the other papers. This was due to the total page number which exceeded those of Beirut, even before the domestic news items in the Lebanese newspapers were discarded. The research did not look at how the national affairs in An-Nahar and As-Safir were produced, but looked at how the Arab news was constructed. All the Lebanese news items which were discussed and processed in the Arab Affairs Desk were included (e.g. the situation between Lebanon and Israel, the peace process, Western hostages, etc.).

Table 5.1: Number and Percentage of news items

Newspaper	All Items		Arab Affairs	
	N	%	N	%
The Guardian	60	7.1	60	18.9
The Times	80	9.5	80	25.2
Al-Hayat	190	22.6	67	21.1
Asharq Al-Awsat	232	27.6	47	14.8
An-Nahar	138	16.4	26	8.2
As-Safir	141	16.8	37	11.7
Total	841	100	317	100

Out of 841 items, 317 news items were sampled for an in-depth analysis (Arab Affairs items). As seen in the second section of table 5.1, the English newspapers have the lead in terms of number because of two reasons. Firstly, only in the English dailies, were all Arab-related news items included. Secondly, in the London-based Arab press, the number is greater than in the Lebanese newspapers. This could be attributed to the difference in total page number and the number of pages devoted to Arab affairs. For example, Asharq Al-Awsat devotes up to 8 pages out of 24 to political Arab items whereas As-Safir devotes 2 to 3 pages out of every 14 or 16. The same can be said for Al-Hayat and An-Nahar respectively.

B. TYPE OF ITEM:

Studies have shown that most of the items covered in the Western press are news stories (e.g. Sigal, 1973). As table 5.2 shows, overall most of the items are news stories (62.5%), but these constitute 73.5% of the Arab affairs items. The other types are advertisements (11.1%), features (5.9%) and so on. On the political level, other types are editorial (5.1%), features (6.3%), comment (6.9%) and letters to the editor (4.4%).

Table 5.2: Number and Percentage of Type of news items

Type	All Items		Arab Affairs	
	N	%	N	%
News story	526	62.5	233	73.5
Advertisement	93	11.1	-	-
Others	55	6.5	-	-
Feature	49	5.9	20	6.3
Comment	29	3.5	22	6.9
Diary	23	2.7	2	0.6
Editorial	22	2.6	16	5.1
Photograph	17	2.0	6	1.9
Letter	14	1.7	14	4.4
Interview	13	1.5	4	1.3
Total	841	100	317	100

On the groups of newspapers level, the British papers have more news stories, comment and features than either the Arab-London or the Arab-Beirut newspapers. The same difference extends to other types of news such as letters to the editor (see chapter eight). On the Arab level, the Arab-London press has more news stories, comments and letters than those of Arab-Beirut papers (see table 5.3). The reason concerns differences in matters of space between the London and Beirut papers (as explained earlier in this chapter). Noticeably, the letters to the editor are rarely published in the Arab-Beirut papers, and yet frequently published in the Arab-London press. It is argued in chapters two and eight that the letters to the editor are a dimension in the relation between the readers and the newspapers. The lack of audience research in the four newspapers has focused this investigation of the reader's perspective on the letters to the editor section in the four Arab newspapers, compared to those of the two British papers. The number of the letters in the British and the London-based Arab papers is relatively more than their counterparts in Beirut. The aim of such analysis is to know more about the reader's feedback in the London-based Arab and the Lebanese press. These letters are comparatively discussed in chapter eight and incorporated with the argument of the Arab journalists.

Table 5.3: Type of news items by group

Type/Paper	British		Arab-London		Arab-Beirut		Row Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Story	103	73.6	80	70.2	50	79.4	233	73.5
Comment	12	8.5	8	7.0	2	3.2	22	6.9
Feature	8	5.7	7	6.1	5	7.9	20	6.3
Letter	7	5.0	6	5.3	1	1.6	14	4.4
Photograph	4	2.9	2	1.8	-	-	6	1.9
Editorial	4	2.9	7	6.1	5	7.9	16	5.1
Diary	1	0.7	1	0.9	-	-	2	0.6
Interview	1	0.7	3	2.6	-	-	4	1.3
Column Total	140	100.0	114	100.0	63	100.0	317	100.0

C. ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE ARAB PAPERS:

In chapter two it was argued that advertisements are an economic determinant in the newspapers' organisation - and work as a control mechanism. This argument, which is discussed in chapter six, examines the impact of advertisements on the newspapers' content. The content analysis shows that the amount of advertisements varies from one newspaper and from one group of newspapers to another. For instance, Asharq Al-Awsat has the highest percentage of advertisement (46.2%) followed by An-Nahar (26.9%), As-Safir (15.1%) and finally Al-Hayat (11.8%). On the groups level, Arab-London newspapers share (58.0%) of all advertisements. This is because these newspapers operate in a pan-Arab market and thus constitute a channel for international advertising and pan-Arab advertising aimed at the Arab audience (see chapter six). By contrast, the Arab-Beirut papers publish chiefly national advertisements, with few advertisements from multinational companies.

Table 5.4: Number and Percentage of Advertisements

Paper/Advertisement	N	%
Asharq Al-Awsat	43	46.2
An-Nahar	25	26.9
As-Safir	14	15.1
Al-Hayat	11	11.8
Total	93	100.0

D. AUTHOR OF ITEM:

The findings of the content analysis have shown that the specialised journalist (as newsgatherer) is not found in the four Arab newsrooms. This strengthens the argument that the Arab editors, who were interviewed, are not supportive of specialisation. Table 5.5 shows only that the British papers have a specialist author for news (25.6%). The generalist journalist is proportionately far more important in the Arab-London newspapers than those of Beirut. The Arab-Beirut papers depend more on the "others" category (e.g. Arab and international news agencies) as the author of news. Such reliance on the news agencies was mainly attributed to economic reasons, such as availability of resources to establish a bureau or despatch a permanent correspondent (for instance, see Ghassan Tueni's argument in chapter seven).

Table 5.5: Number and Percentage of Authors

Author/Group	British		Arab-London		Arab-Beirut		Row Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Specialist	81	57.8	-	-	-	-	81	25.6
Generalist	39	27.9	78	68.4	13	20.6	130	41.0
Others	20	14.3	36	31.6	50	79.4	106	33.4
Column Total	140	100.0	114	100.0	63	100.0	317	100.0

E. SOURCE/AUTHOR OF ITEM:

Table 5.5 shows how, and to what extent, the six newspapers rely on various channels in gathering news. Table 5.6 specifies the specialist journalist in the British papers (e.g. political, diplomatic and military correspondent). The reporter, as author of the item, constitutes the highest percentage for Arab affairs items. Noticeably, the Reuters news agency ranked as one of the most used agencies followed by *Agence France Presse* AFP. The correspondent/agency, as an author, is common in the British and Arab London-based papers where they rely on their correspondent but add some information from news agencies. During the field work, it was noticed that the journalists of the Arab Affairs Desk in Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat usually synthesised a story from their correspondents with that from news agencies.

Table 5.6: Number and Percentage of Authors

Source/Author	N	%
Reporter	130	41.0
Joint Agencies	35	11.0
Reuters	26	8.2
AFP	24	7.6
Correspondent/Agency	24	7.6
Not Specified	18	5.7
Reader	16	5.0
Joint Correspondent	15	4.7
Editor	8	2.5
Diplomatic Correspondent	4	1.3
Staff/Foreign Staff	4	1.3
AP	3	0.9
Official	3	0.9
Arab Agency	2	0.6
Military Correspondent	2	0.6
Political Correspondent	2	0.6
News Services	1	0.3
Total	317	100

It was noticed that the Arab-Beirut papers depend to a large extent on news agencies (such as Reuters, AFP or joint agencies) as the main source of Arab news. The joint agencies as main author were mainly adopted by the newsrooms of As-Safir and An-Nahar. The editors and journalists of the Beirut papers have argued that they combine material from various agencies in order to have a comprehensive news story. In chapter seven, Sahar Ba'asiri, George Abou Rizk, Sati'a Noureddine and Ghassan Mukahal who are journalists in the Beirut papers argue that they use the material of the Arab and international news agencies to write their news stories. In contrast, the British and London-based papers primarily depend on the reporter as author of a news item, the news agencies remaining secondary as do joint correspondent/news agencies and the like. This reliance on different kinds of authors has its impact on news gathering and news selection processes (see chapters seven and eight). It is noticed that AFP is extensively used as the author of the news in both Arab-London and Arab-Beirut (table 5.7). This can be explained by the arguments of journalists (B. Sharbel of Al-Hayat, Khoza'ai of Asharq Al-Awsat) who consider that the AFP is the main source for news on North African countries, which are given more significant coverage in the Arab-London papers. The same argument was also raised by the Arab-Beirut journalists who explained the reliance on the AFP, by

pointing out that this agency is the sole source of news in some Arab countries. Reuters and the other Arab and international agencies (e.g. MENA, UPI, AP) come after the AFP in the coverage of Arab affairs.

Table 5.7: Author per groups

Author/Paper-Group	British		Arab-London		Arab-Beirut		Row Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reporter	70	50.2	56	49.1	4	6.3	130	41.0
Reuters	17	12.2	5	4.4	4	6.3	26	8.2
Not Specified	10	7.1	2	1.8	6	9.5	18	5.7
Reader	10	7.1	5	4.4	1	1.6	16	5.0
Joint Correspondent	8	5.7	6	5.2	1	1.6	15	4.7
Correspondent/Agency	7	5.0	13	11.4	4	6.3	24	7.6
Diplomatic Correspondent	4	2.9	-	-	-	-	4	1.3
AP	3	2.1	-	-	-	-	3	0.9
Official	3	2.1	-	-	-	-	3	0.9
Staff/Foreign Staff	3	2.1	1	0.9	-	-	4	1.3
AFP	2	1.4	12	10.5	10	15.9	24	7.6
Military Correspondent	2	1.4	-	-	-	-	2	0.6
Political Correspondent	1	0.7	1	0.9	-	-	2	0.6
Arab Agency	-	-	2	1.8	-	-	2	0.6
Editor	-	-	4	3.5	4	6.3	8	2.5
Joint Agencies	-	-	6	5.2	29	46.2	35	11.0
News Services	-	-	1	0.9	-	-	1	0.3
Column Total	140	100.0	114	100.0	63	100.0	317	100.0

F. SUBJECT OF ITEM:

In order to know what subjects the British and Arab newspapers cover, and with which preference, the primary and subsidiary subject of each news item were coded. It was noticed that "other politics", as news item subject, was prominent (table 5.8). This category includes subjects on Western hostages in Beirut, cabinet reshuffle or resignation in the Arab countries, Israeli affairs, and some inter-Arab issues like the Hayaleb border dispute between Sudan and Egypt which is discussed in chapter eight, as a case study in news selection. The other categories that were occurred frequently (e.g. diplomacy, mediation, international Arab politics), can be explained because coverage of Arab affairs often deals with the on-going diplomatic activity to finalise the peace agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbouring countries (e.g. Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians). Despite (or perhaps because) of peace activities being extensively covered,

there also is considerable coverage on subjects of a military nature (such as armed conflict and defence).

Table 5.8: Number and Percentage of Subject		
Subject	N	% (R)
Other Politics	111	17.5
Diplomacy	102	16.1
Arab Politics/Internal	98	15.5
Peace Moves/Mediation	82	12.9
Other Military/Defence	71	11.2
International Arab Politics	60	9.5
Armed Conflict/Threat	36	5.7
Economics/Trade/Industry	33	5.2
Crime/Legal/Law	13	2.1
Disaster/Famine/Relief	9	1.4
Religion/Classic	5	0.8
Personalities	4	0.6
Culture/Education/Arts	3	0.5
Health/ Family/Social Services	2	0.3
Science/ Medicine/Computer	2	0.3
Total	634	100.0

Table 5.8 shows the relative prominence of the subjects which the six newspapers cover in their reporting of Arab affairs. The coding of the primary subject separately has shown how the primary subjects differ from one group of newspapers to another. For instance, the British papers focus on the peace process, Arab internal affairs and various other subjects (e.g. military, armed conflict, other politics). The Arab-London newspapers chiefly concerned with internal affairs and the peace moves. The Arab-Beirut papers are similar in the coverage of the same subjects, other military subjects coming before diplomacy and internal politics. Table 5.9 shows the subjects of the Arab affairs in the three groups of newspapers. As explained earlier, these primary subjects, which vary from one group to another, are studied qualitatively when the themes of each subject are analysed later in this chapter.

Table 5.9: Primary Subject by group

Primary Subject /Paper	British		Arab-London		Arab-Beirut		Row Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Peace Moves/Mediation	34	24.3	20	17.5	10	15.9	64	20.3
Arab Politics/Internal	23	16.4	31	27.1	8	12.7	62	19.7
Other Military/Defence	18	12.9	16	14.0	13	20.6	47	14.9
Armed Conflict/Threat	14	10.0	4	3.5	3	4.8	21	6.7
International Arab Politics	14	10.0	9	7.9	5	7.9	28	8.9
Other Politics	14	10.0	6	5.3	4	6.3	24	7.6
Diplomacy	9	6.4	13	11.4	10	15.9	32	10.2
Disaster/Famine/Relief	5	3.6	1	0.9	1	1.6	7	2.2
Economics/Trade/Industry	5	3.6	9	7.9	3	4.8	17	5.4
Personalities	2	1.4	2	1.8	-	-	4	1.3
Culture/ Education/Arts	1	0.7	1	0.9	-	-	2	0.6
Environment/Ecology	1	0.7	-		2	3.2	3	0.9
Crime/Legal/Law	-	-	2	1.8	4	6.3	6	1.3
Total	140	100.0	114	100.0	63	100.0	317	100.0

G. SOURCES/ACTORS QUOTED, REFERRED TO, OR INTERVIEWED:

It was argued in the theoretical framework of this research (see chapter two), that the official sources are widely recognised by the media professionals, and have the widest quoting, reference and interviewing. Such sources try to dispel opposing ideological views, and so bring to the surface vital issues, with the aim of discrediting the other side and wining publicity for their countries and their organisations. The use of the Relative Percentage (%R) of the Multiple Response in the analysis allows us to know what kind of news sources/actors are quoted, interviewed or referred to in the press in general. As seen in table 5.10, the six newspapers collectively quote and refer to the official sources. The official sources (e.g. Arab, Israeli, foreign) as well as official bodies and organisations (e.g. Arab and foreign governments, Arab League, UN) are given prominence in all six newspapers. The non-official sources, or the sources that stand in the opposing camp of the state or bureaucracy (e.g. experts, public, opposition), are quoted relatively infrequently. The reliance on the official sources has its impact on the story as we will see in the discussion on themes.

Table 5.10: News Actors Quoted

News Sources	N	% (R)
Arab Officials	311	16.5
Arab Figures	187	9.9
Arab Governments	164	8.7
Foreign Officials	146	7.7
Israeli Officials	127	6.7
Arab Parties	125	6.6
Foreign Newspaper	79	4.2
Foreign Organisations	79	4.2
Foreign Figures	78	4.1
United Nations Agencies	76	4.0
Israeli Figures	67	3.6
Foreign Government	57	3.0
Arab Newspaper	53	2.8
Arab Sources	52	2.8
Arab Masses/Public	47	2.5
Foreign Spokesperson	37	2.0
Foreign Sources	33	1.7
Opposition Groups	30	1.6
Reports/Books	25	1.3
Other Expert	22	1.2
Statement/Letter	22	1.2
Arab Spokesperson	18	1.0
Diplomatic Experts	18	1.0
Commentators/Analysts	8	0.4
Economic Experts	8	0.4
Poll/Survey	8	0.4
Research/Study	4	0.2
Military Experts	3	0.2
Political Experts	3	0.2
Total	1887	100.0

In order to make the argument about reliance on the news source more obvious, a two-fold regrouping was adopted: firstly by looking at the primary source in the three groups: British, Arab-London and Arab-Beirut newspapers, and secondly by looking at the Relative Percentage (%R) of all news sources coded in the three main groups of papers.

Firstly, on the primary source level, this strategy was adopted to know who the primary sources in the coverage of the Arab affairs were, which gives an idea of the content of the news story itself. It was noticed that the three groups of newspapers have a similarity in their dependence on official sources as the *primary sources quoted, referred to or interviewed*. In the three groups, the Arab officials were often the primary sources. Most interestingly, the British group of papers quoted the Arab parties as the primary sources (some of these parties are the ruling party: Syria, Iraq, Tunisia, Libya) and other parties are illegal or opposition groups (e.g. FIS in Algeria, *Al-Nahda* in Tunisia, *Hizbollah* in Lebanon) and so on. This contrasts with the Arab-London and Arab-Beirut groups who most frequently quoted the Arab organisations (e.g. agencies of the bureaucracies, Arab League) as primary sources, most of these organisations are, or represent official bodies. The same argument, concerning the reliance on Arab official sources, can be applied to the other sources including Israeli and foreign. Furthermore, the non-official sources were rarely quoted as primary sources in the three groups of newspapers (e.g. opposition groups, experts, etc.). Moving on to consider the experts, as table 5.11 shows, the expert, as news source, was mostly not quoted in Arab-London and Arab Beirut. The journalists of the Arab-London and Arab-Beirut papers explained such absence to limited access to these kinds of sources (for instance see the argument of Sahar Ba'asiri of An-Nahar in chapter seven).

Table 5.11: Primary News Actor Quoted

Primary News Sources	British		Arab-London		Arab-Beirut		Row Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Arab Officials	19	13.6	24	21.1	7	11.1	50	15.8
Arab Parties	17	12.7	8	7.0	3	4.8	28	8.8
Arab Organisations	15	10.7	18	15.8	10	15.9	43	13.6
Israeli Figures	14	10.0	5	4.4	3	4.8	22	6.9
Israeli Officials	11	7.9	5	4.4	5	7.9	21	6.6
Arab Figures	9	6.4	16	14.0	7	11.1	32	10.1
United Nations Agencies	9	6.4	-	-	1	1.6	10	3.2
Arab Masses/Public	8	5.7	2	1.8	2	3.2	12	3.8
Foreign Figures	8	5.7	6	5.3	1	1.6	15	4.7
Foreign Officials	8	5.7	9	7.9	4	6.3	21	6.6
Foreign Organisations	8	5.7	2	1.8	6	9.5	16	5.0
Foreign Government	6	4.3	-	-	2	3.2	8	2.5
Arab Newspaper	4	2.9	1	0.9	3	4.8	8	2.5
Opposition Groups	2	1.4	2	1.8	2	3.2	6	1.9
Foreign Sources	1	0.7	-	-	2	3.2	3	0.9
Poll/Survey	1	0.7	1	0.9	-	-	2	0.6
Arab Sources	-	-	6	5.3	3	4.8	9	2.8
Arab Spokesperson	-	-	1	0.9	1	1.6	2	0.6
Diplomatic Experts	-	-	1	0.9	-	-	1	0.3
Economic Experts	-	-	1	0.9	-	-	1	0.3
Foreign Newspaper	-	-	2	1.8	1	1.6	3	0.9
Foreign Spokesperson	-	-	1	0.9	-	-	1	0.3
Other Expert	-		1	0.9	-	-	1	0.3
Reports/Books	-		2	1.8	-	-	2	0.6
Total	140	100.0	114	100.0	63	100.0	317	100.0

Secondly, the regrouping of all sources under three main groups of newspapers was adopted, on a wider level, to know who the sources were, who are frequently quoted in coverage of Arab affairs. The findings in table 5.12 support the previous argument about over-reliance on the official sources at the expense of other kinds of news actors. In the three main groups (British, Arab-London and Arab Beirut papers) the official sources (Arab, Israeli, Foreign officials and organisations) were most often quoted, interviewed or referred to. Moreover, the Arab-London and Arab-Beirut papers tend to quote, in the first place, Arab official sources (persons or organisations), while non-Arab official sources (Israeli and Foreign) occur only secondarily. More interestingly, the Arab-Beirut papers frequently quoted foreign and Arab newspapers. This confirms the argument put forward concerning the channels of news gathering. Namely that the newspapers rely, to a large

extent, on the news agencies as the main channels of news in the coverage of Arab and foreign affairs. These agencies usually quote the national and international newspapers and magazines, where the Arab-Beirut papers refer to a news story in the Los Angeles Times (LAT) or The Washington Post (WP) or The Times as it is quoted in Reuters or *Agence France Presse* (AFP).

Table 5.12: Number and Percentage of News Sources per groups

News Sources	British		Arab-London		Arab-Beirut	
	N	%(R)	N	%(R)	N	%(R)
Arab Officials	116	15.2	118	18.9	77	15.6
Israeli Officials	69	9.1	35	5.6	23	4.6
Arab Organisations	64	8.4	72	11.5	28	5.6
Foreign Officials	64	8.4	53	8.5	29	5.8
Arab Figures	63	8.2	71	11.4	53	10.6
Arab Parties	51	6.7	36	5.8	37	7.6
UN Agencies	43	5.6	13	2.1	20	4.0
Israeli Figures	40	5.2	18	2.9	9	1.8
Foreign Organisations	37	4.8	16	2.6	26	5.2
Foreign Figures	31	4.1	24	3.8	23	4.6
Arab Masses/Public	28	3.7	12	1.9	7	1.4
Foreign Government	27	3.5	14	2.2	16	3.2
Arab Newspaper	20	2.6	11	1.8	22	4.4
Foreign Newspaper	19	2.5	22	3.5	38	7.6
Other Expert	15	2.0	7	1.1	-	-
Opposition Groups	14	1.8	7	1.1	9	1.8
Reports/Books	11	1.4	9	1.4	5	1.0
Diplomatic Experts	10	1.3	8	1.3	-	-
Foreign Spokesperson	10	1.3	15	2.4	12	2.4
Foreign Sources	9	1.2	13	2.1	11	2.2
Arab Sources	6	0.8	23	3.7	23	4.6
Statement/Letter	3	0.4	4	0.6	15	3.0
Others	14	1.8	24	3.8	15	3.0
Total	764	100.0	625	100.0	498	100.0

To sum up, the data emerging from the quotations of the different groups of actors involved, suggest that the British, Arab-London and Arab-Beirut papers interact mostly with officials belonging to different systems (Arab, Israel, USA, EC, UN). The British press, in the coverage of Arab affairs, uses sources other than official ones. These sources

are often consulted by the journalists: thus experts were regularly asked their opinions and views. Such reliance on experts as sources for the newspapers is unheard of in the Arab press, whether in London or Beirut.

H. THEMES:

The dependence of journalists and media organisations on predominantly official news sources makes the nature of the news a somewhat bureaucratic account of events (Fishman, 1980). As mentioned in chapter four, Arab affairs were measured against many themes. The investigation endeavoured to find out what themes dominate coverage of Arab affairs in the three groups of newspapers? and how such themes have been presented? Numerous themes were found in the British and Arab press coverage of Arab affairs that satisfy the criteria of news values. For example, the Arab-Israeli conflict has all the newsworthy elements of negativity, drama and importance. The issue of Islamic fundamentalism offers drama and negativity. Not all themes, however, are covered in the same manner, or to the same level of importance. Some themes clearly gain a prominence (see table 5.13). They included Arab internal affairs, the Arab-Israeli peace process, Arab-West relations, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Islamic fundamentalism and so on. The themes that were awarded least attention in the British and Arab papers included the Arab detainees in Israel, the environmental issues, development, BCCI and so on.

Table 5.13: Number and Percentage of Themes

Themes	N	% (R)
Arab Internal Affairs	110	9.5
Arab-Israeli Peace Process	104	9.0
Arab-West Relations	93	8.1
Arab-Israeli Conflict	68	5.9
Palestinian-Israeli Conflict	58	5.0
Islamic Fundamentalism	57	4.9
Israeli Affairs	51	4.4
Military Actions	50	4.3
Political Inter-Arab Relations	42	3.6
Famine/Economic Problems	41	3.6
Other Relations (UN, NAM)	36	3.1
Iraqi Issue/Internal Affairs	34	3.0
Legal Suits/Courts	31	2.7
Diplomatic Inter-Arab Relations	29	2.5
Loans/Debts/Aids	29	2.5
Dialogue/Talks	28	2.4
Terrorism/Violence	28	2.4
Elections/Democracy	26	2.3
Opposition to Arab Regimes	25	2.2
Lockerbie	23	2.0
Gulf War	22	1.9
Economic Inter-Arab Relations	16	1.4
Riots/Demonstrations	16	1.4
Arms/Weaponry	15	1.3
Sanctions	15	1.3
Western Hostages (in Lebanon)	13	1.1
Government Change/Reshuffle	12	1.0
Political/Economic Reforms	11	1.0
Scandals	11	1.0
Detention/Prison	10	0.9
Civil War	9	0.8
Kurds (Turkey and Iran)	9	0.8
Military Inter-Arab Relations	6	0.5
Treaty/Protocol	6	0.5
Arab Detainees (in Israel)	5	0.4
Environmental Issues	4	0.6
Cease-fire/Truce	4	0.3
Development	3	0.3
BCCI/Arab Dimension	2	0.2
Total	1152	100.0

H.1. MACRO-THEMES:

Having presented the various themes that the press have covered, it is essential at this stage to regroup these themes into macro-themes which allow qualitative analysis of

their coverage. Themes which were closely related were classified into a smaller number of macro-themes. More importantly, the regrouping of these macro-themes allows a measured understanding of the influence of the socio-cultural context on the presentation of media discourse. This can be achieved by considering each of these macro-themes as a "media package", having a central organising frame that makes sense of relevant events. It was argued in chapter two that "media packages" have a natural advantage because their ideas "resonate" with larger cultural themes, whereby such "cultural resonances" make the "media packages" appear natural and familiar. Such larger cultural themes have roots in (or originate from) the dominant ideology in the Arab political arena, as discussed in chapter one. This regrouping was determined by looking at the main themes that the six newspapers covered and clustering other related themes under the main ones. For instance, the Arab-Israeli issue was taken as a macro-theme, which included all the themes relating to this issue such as the Arab-Israeli peace process, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian uprising (*Intifada*) and so on. As table 5.14 shows, there are a few macro-themes that the press commonly covered during the period of the study. These macro-themes were interpreted to know how each of the newspapers covered Arab affairs. Those themes which, were covered in a minimal way and not clustered under one of the macro-themes were gathered as "Others". The coding of such themes was recorded in only a very few news items in each of the newspapers.

Table 5.14: Number and Percentage of Macro-Themes

Macro-Themes/Paper-group	British		Arab-London		Arab-Beirut	
	N	% (R)	N	% (R)	N	% (R)
Arab-Israeli Issue	175	35.7	101	24.0	55	22.9
Arab Internal Affairs	75	15.8	100	23.6	56	23.5
Arab-West Relations	75	15.8	72	17.0	41	17.2
Islamic Fundamentalism	72	14.6	43	10.1	35	14.6
Iraqi Affairs	34	8.1	14	3.3	12	4.6
Others	59	10.0	92	21.8	41	17.2
Total	490	100.0	422	99.8	240	100.0

The interpretation of the macro-themes (Arab-Israeli issue, Arab internal affairs, Arab-West relations, Islamic fundamentalism, Iraqi affairs) and their respective themes employed the coded headlines, sub headlines, leads and editorials as well as any related material (e.g. photograph).

H.1.1. THE ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE:

The Arab-Israeli issue was one of the main macro-themes in the six newspapers,

but the degree of coverage varied from one newspaper to another. In November 1991, the US-brokered peace process between the Arabs and the Israelis was launched in a conference in Madrid, Spain. Most of the papers were in favour of the peace process but not so As-Safir. Besides this, the on-going Palestinian uprising (*Intifada*) was taken as another theme under Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as were Israeli affairs and military actions. How, then, did the six newspapers construct the macro-theme of the Israeli-Arab issue during the period of analysis?

Headlines in the newspapers constitute an important part of press presentation because they suggest the "interpretative frame" within which the news story should be read (Hansen & Murdock, 1985). Headlines in the British press showed differing emphases on the peace process. Significantly, The Guardian was in favour of the Palestinians in the Madrid Conference, whereas The Times was *critical* of the parties of conflict. Headlines included "A battle of spirit and tone between peoples' champions" (The Guardian, 01/11/1991), "Fighters give way to the talkers" (The Times, 01/11/1991). The difference was more obvious in the words used "Champions" in The Guardian and "Fighters" in The Times. The difference was obvious in the editorials as well, where The Guardian was in favour of the Palestinians: "Israelis' champion Mr. Shamir's speech was that of a man who has learned nothing and forgotten nothing... Dr. Abd Al-Shafi said just about everything right" (The Guardian, 01/11/1991). On the other hand, The Times was critical to both the peace process and its delegates:

> Arab and Israeli delegates yesterday marked the departure of President Bush from their peace conference like naughty children left alone by the headmaster. They were largely an unknown collection of middle-aged and elderly academics, journalists and doctors; well meaning but neglected in a region which has always favoured the fighters over the talkers. (The Times, 01/11/1991)

The Arab-London papers reflected, more or less, the same argument: supporting the peace process and emphasising the American catalyst to establish just peace in that area of the world. Headlines included "US President assures Al-Sharaa of his commitments to Syria" (Al-Hayat, 01/11/1991), "Inauguration party ended the easy stage, to open the road for difficult negotiations" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 01/11/1991). The Arab-London papers were in favour of the process, but differed slightly in the angle of coverage and analysis. Whereas Asharq Al-Awsat predicted a start of tough negotiations and stressed the American role as a catalyst, Al-Hayat emphasised the US role in the matters of guarantees for Syria, and the start of dialogue between the US administration and the Palestinians. The arguments look much the same between the Arab-London papers. This similarity was reflected in the editorials of the newspapers: "The confidence-building measure between the Palestinians and Americans achieved some progress. This is the most important result of

the Madrid conference" (Al-Hayat, 05/11/1991). "How the American catalyst works to change the conflicting chemistry into proactive chemistry? The Bush Administration pushes political arrangements to fulfil the security and justice needs of the Middle East" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 05/11/1991).

The Arab-Beirut papers did reflect different points of view. Whereas An-Nahar was in favour of the peace process, As-Safir bluntly criticised it. Headlines of both papers reflected this difference: "US efforts to keep talks in Madrid" (An-Nahar, 01/11/1991), "Shamir attacking Syria: No confession of the independence by the Palestinian delegation" (As-Safir, 05/11/1991). The former paper emphasised the American role in mediating between the Arabs and the Israelis. The latter paper went further by emphasising Shamir's attack on the Syrian position in the conference. These different attitudes in An-Nahar and As-Safir were attributed to the fact that the two newspapers belong to different political trends (see chapters three and six). This difference was also apparent in the editorials where An-Nahar argued about the different ideologies prevailing within the Palestinian camp by saying: "Palestinians these days are two contradictory teams: the first is national represented by the PLO, and the other is Islamic represented by *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad*. Which one is stronger?" (An-Nahar, 01/11/1991). As-Safir, ideologically on the other side, fiercely attacked the Arabs' incapability against Israel:

> Shamir... facing the whole world... addressed the owners of the occupied territories to comply with his simple conditions... Occupation is an implementation to God's will and a return to the promised land of God's chosen people... The Arabs are facing the Israeli military legend with disabled dreams. (As-Safir, 01/11/1991)

The three groups of newspapers reflected, not surprisingly, different stands in the coverage of the Arab-Israeli peace process, but there were also some similarities. For instance, As-Safir and The Guardian reflected the same position by attacking the Israeli positions and supporting the Palestinians. The similarity can be attributed to the left trend of the two newspapers (Hetherington, 1985; Dajani, 1992; Voice, 1991). The two Arab-London newspapers reflected, more or less, the same stand on the peace process, with special emphasis on the event itself (through publishing the news story on the front pages). In Beirut, the two papers reflected different (and opposite) positions in relation to the process, but both papers devoted the front page to headlines and editorials on the peace process. Finally, it was noticed that most newspapers mentioned official actors in the headlines (e.g. Bush, Shamir). These actors appeared in relation to what they had said about the event and how they defined it.

Does the socio-cultural context have an influence in the coverage of this macro-

theme? The answer is yes. It was argued in chapter one that the dominant ideology in the Arab World is currently the Saudi-led conservatism which is in consent with the US policy in the Middle East. This consent was obvious in the headlines and editorials of Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat. This cannot be said of the Beirut newspapers. Whereas, An-Nahar focused on the different trends within the PLO (and the Palestinian people), As-Safir critically covered the Arab-Israeli issue in general and the peace process in particular. This critical coverage by As-Safir has an echo in the paper's identity as being one of the promoters of the Arab nationalism which opposes the peace process (see chapter six).

H.1.2. ARAB INTERNAL AFFAIRS:

The second macro-theme that the newspapers focused on was Arab internal affairs. This included themes such as famine, elections, opposition to Arab Regimes, civil wars, cease-fires, environmental issues, development and cabinet resignations or reshuffles. Headlines, on the one hand, in the British press were mainly on the news items that fulfil the news values of drama, threshold and negativity such as: "Somaliland in desperate need of aid" (The Guardian, 07/02/1992). The same perspective was also obvious in a lead in The Times: "Fighting raged in Mogadishu the day before UN mediators were due to arrive in a renewed effort to arrange a cease-fire" (The Times, 29/02/1992). Editorials covered various subjects (e.g. Somalia war; Jordan's total ban on alcohol, Syrian Jews; Druze novel burnt; rescue of Sphinx, etc.). On the other hand, the editorials focused on the Arab internal affairs such as one editorial on the Libyan ruler:

> Last days of the prophet. Gadafy put the Third Universal Theory ...
> Concerted US, British and French campaign to punish him ... Not all the
> Libyans love Gadafy like Saddam and the Iraqis ... As for a successor,
> there is no obvious one ... Arabs have mixed feeling about the future of
> Libya... (The Guardian, 24/02/1992)

The Arab-London papers differed in their coverage of Arab internal affairs from the British ones, but they showed some differentiation in dealing with the Arab countries. In other words, some of these stories focused on the opposition groups in *certain* Arab countries such as Sudan, Mauritania Yemen, Jordan and Morocco. Headlines included different subjects such as "Al-Bashir: End of the year will see the toppling of the rebels" (Al-Hayat, 30/11/1991. "Al-Ahmar: Why fear judging of the elections" (Al-Hayat, 11/02/1992). "Mauritania: Opposition asks to postpone elections" (Al-Hayat, 11/02/1992). "Moroccan opposition demands again a national committee to supervise the elections" (Al-Hayat, 15/02/1992). "Amman: Towards new economic procedures which may be used by the opposition against the government" (Al-Hayat, 19/02/1992). "Noukshout: Police occupy University faculty" (Al-Hayat, 19/02/1992). "Khartoum tough in granting visas,

and accuses the immigrants of co-operating with the opposition" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 03/02/1992). "Yemeni parties accuse the government of delaying the elections' bill" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 07/02/1992). "Elections during the summer for the first time in Lebanon within 20 years" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 11/02/1992). Looking at the headlines of the Arab-London press, two points are observed. Firstly, the news on the opposition varies in emphasis and *angle* from one Arab country to another. It also reflects a sample of the kind of Arab internal affairs that the Arab-London papers cover. There is a considerable emphasis on the opposition in Sudan, Iraq and Yemen because of the rapprochement between these groups and the officials of some Gulf states (see chapter six). Secondly, the argument of the Arab-London journalists referred to the coverage of these groups due to circulation figures, where the supporters of these opposition groups constitute the main slice of Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat readership (see for instance arguments of Jihad El-Khazen, George Sama'an and others in chapters six and eight). In this respect, the editorials and leads reflected the same argument:

> Sudanese government sources told Al-Hayat that the Colonel Al-Bashir government will issue, within two days, a decision disbanding all the workers' syndicates and vocational unions in the country and decreasing their numbers. (Al-Hayat, 19/02/1992)

Despite the fact that this news story quotes Sudanese government sources it shows the intention of the Sudanese regime to suppress the workers' unions, and can be taken as a 'credit' to the Sudanese opposition. Asharq Al-Awsat (22/11/1991) went 'considerably further' by criticising some aspects of the Lebanese political landscape:

> Priorities needed to rebuild Lebanon: There is a continuity of the political crisis ... Explosion in the American University of Beirut ... Error within the structure of the cabinet ...The cabinet started an active campaign to entrust the investors ... All the efforts could be useless unless an agreement on the basic bases of the nation (e.g. identity; relations) is reached ... Indicators are going exactly in the opposite direction.

The Arab-Beirut papers focused on the same internal affairs but they differed from those of the Arab-London papers. The Arab-Beirut papers, for instance, did not support the opposition like their Arab-London counterparts. A headline such as "Morocco: Opposition calls for elections" (An-Nahar, 15/02/1992) shows a different tone if it is compared with Al-Hayat's headline on the same issue. On the other side, As-Safir focused mainly on the internal affairs in the context of the Arab-Israeli issue: "Eitan and Jordanian experts for regional co-operation to solve water problem" (As-Safir, 13/11/1991). "Jews of Syria support Al-Assad's candidacy" (As-Safir, 30/11/1991). "Red Cross asks the world to intervene in Somalia as battles threaten peace talks" (As-Safir, 15/02/1992). Unlike those of the Arab-London papers, As-Safir did not show an obvious support for the

Sudanese opposition when it published a news story about Sudan: "Colonel Omar Al-Bashir declared his intention to take over the responsibility of the information and education ministry, and instructed all working women in the civil services, universities and schools to respect the Islamic custom" (As-Safir, 18/11/1991).

In coverage of Arab internal affairs, the three groups of newspapers do have some similarities. The British and the Arab-London papers look similar in the focus on the opposition groups in some Arab countries, nevertheless, the tone of the Arab-London papers is more apparent. The other common aspect between these two groups is that they have the facility (e.g. correspondents) to quote the news sources, which is not the case for the Arab-Beirut papers. Furthermore, the impact of the socio-cultural context was much obvious in the London-based Arab papers in their criticism of the official line of certain Arab countries (e.g. Yemen, Sudan, Iraq). These countries had publicly supported Saddam Hussein during the invasion of Kuwait (Summer 1990). As a result, the diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia (and the Gulf states) were halted. Relevant here is how the Saudi authorities have escorted the activities of the opposition groups of these countries[1]. The coverage of these countries in the London-based Arab newspapers has achieved a twofold objective: undermining the official line and persuasively supporting their own political opposition. The Beirut papers depend for the coverage of Arab internal affairs on international news agencies with some minor contribution from the Arab news agencies. This dependence means the papers of Beirut cover the battles in Somalia through the versions supplied by AFP or Reuters. The Beirut papers did not reflect the dominant ideology in the coverage of internal Arab affairs as the London-based Arab papers did. Another major difference exists between the Arab-London and Arab-Beirut papers, namely that the coverage of Arab internal affairs is subject market-oriented for London, where Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat's market is more diverse than that of the Beirut papers. This demands that the London-based Arab papers (and mainly Al-Hayat) please and serve the interests of their readers.

H.1.3. ARAB-WEST RELATIONS:

The third macro-theme is Arab-West Relations, where various themes were covered including the Lockerbie case between Libya and the West, the bankruptcy of the BCCI, arms deals between the Arab World and Western or eastern countries, the medical treatment of a Palestinian figure in a Paris hospital and the loans from the IMF and the World Bank to Arab countries. Headlines, leads and editorials of the British papers reflected, more or

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[1] In this respect, Saudi Arabia organised and hosted one of the main conferences of the Iraqi opposition. It was considered as a precedent in the Saudi foreign policy.

less, the same angle by emphasising a Western point of view on Arab-West relations. The headlines included: "UK extradition request rejected" (The Guardian, 22/11/1991). "More Czech tanks heading for Syria" (The Guardian, 03/02/1992). "The Sphinx loses his cool in unfunny Habash farce" (The Times, 03/02/1992). "Delays to BCCI's compensation plan worries creditors" (The Times, 03/02/1992). In their coverage on these issues, the headlines form an important part of the news story. These headlines were mainly pointing at events from a Western perspective and the same can be said for the editorials. Editorials and leads were on "A British request for the extradition of two Libyans accused of the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, has been rejected by the Libyan Foreign Minister I. Al-Bishari, BBC TV claimed" (The Guardian, 22/11/1991). This lead of a news story shows the refusal of a British request by quoting a Libyan official. This news story involves the news values of negativity to the accused Libyans, and the human interests in the victims of the Lockerbie bombing. Another story in The Guardian (03/02/1992) reflected the same trend when it reported on: "A fresh batch of Czechoslovak-made tanks was believed to be heading for Syria yesterday despite a three-cornered arms trade row that erupted after the German government last week ordered the seizure of Syrian bound T-72 tanks". The Times was more supportive of the West in an editorial criticising the French government's performance in Habash's medical treatment in Paris, and reminding the West of the terrorism of Habash:

> Habash's brief visit to Paris was an unqualified fiasco ... Socialist party is in embarrassed disarray ... A demoralised government has acted without any compass...Who authorised Dr Habash's entry? ... Who tipped off the press and for what motive? ... The state goes mad ... Habash has performed another act of terrorism in blowing up public confidence, aided and abetted by bungling at the heart of the French government. (The Times, 03/02/1992)

The Arab-London papers covered the same news, but tended to be against Libya, with slight support for the West. Headlines were similar where they emphasised Libya's diplomatic effort to find a compromise with the West, mainly the UK: "Libya continues diplomatic attack for Lockerbie" (Al-Hayat, 26/11/1991). "Libya starts diplomatic campaign to reject accusations" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 18/11/1991). "US adopts UN resolution to impose oil siege on Libya" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 30/11/1991). However, the similarity in the position of Arab-London papers was more obvious in an editorial in (Asharq Al-Awsat, 18/11/1991) which blames the ruler of Libya and sympathises with the people:

> There is talk about the probability of President Bush to refer to the military option ...Why threaten before the other alternatives such as international law and the World Justice Court ... The force of the UN in facing and failing the invasion of Kuwait could be the same in the case of the Hague Court ... Libyan people pay more for more misery without having been guilty.

The Arab-Beirut papers covered, more or less, the same news stories as both the British and the Arab-London, but with different emphases. Significantly, As-Safir was in favour of Libya in its dispute with the West: "Libya calls for disarming the Middle East, 'IAAP' assures *Al-Jamhiriyeh's* co-operation" (As-Safir, 03/02/1992). On the contrary, An-Nahar reflected the same tone like the British and Arab-London papers: "Washington to take suitable measures against Libya" (An-Nahar, 29/02/1992). On the Arms and weaponry issues, As-Safir pointed out the Syrian view: "Damascus: Germany will return the tanks" (As-Safir, 03/02/1992), and critically emphasised Kuwaiti-US military co-operation: "2300 US marines start manoeuvres in Kuwait" (As-Safir, 09/11/1991). On another matter, the Arab-Beirut papers show some similarity in coverage of Habash's treatment in Paris where As-Safir highlighted its consequences within France: "2 of Mitterand's aides sacked, Opposition might demand confidence for Cresson's government" (07/02/1992). The same case was apparent in a lead in An-Nahar: "The departure of the general-secretary of the PFLP[2], Dr George Habash, the French capital to Tunis ended an expected diplomatic crisis, but it left the string of a political crisis in flames" (03/02/1992).

The three groups of newspapers have covered, more or less, the same issues relating to Arab-West relations. Not surprisingly, the British press was supportive of Western views on Lockerbie, Habash and arms deals. The Arab-London papers were similar to the British ones, with little emphasis on the Libyan people "as a victim of their ruler's performance". There is an obvious reflection to the socio-cultural context on the London-based Arab papers. Libya, as an Arab country that supports Arab nationalism, stands in the opposite ideological camp to the Saudi-led conservative one. In the coverage of the Lockerbie issue, the London-based Arab papers distinguish between the political leadership of Libya and the Libyan people where they "blame" Qaddafi for being responsible for the on-going political and diplomatic crisis with the West. It was discussed earlier that Libya opposes the conservative camp (through supporting Iraq and its Arab allies), and that this appeared vividly in the coverage of the London-based Arab papers. The Arab-Beirut papers, however, differed on the Lockerbie issue, where As-Safir supported the Libyan point of view and An-Nahar adopted the view of the Arab-London papers. The British, Arab-London and An-Nahar reflected a Western point of view in the Lockerbie issue. As-Safir's different coverage reflected its left-wing and nationalist orientation (see chapter six).

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[2] PFLP stands for the Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine. It is an opposition group within the PLO.

H.1.4. ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM:

The fourth macro-theme which the press covered was Islamic fundamentalism. There are various related issues such as the Western hostages in Beirut, the riots in Algeria, legal suits and violent actions in some Arab countries. In general, the three groups of papers adopt the same tone against Islamic fundamentalism, with the exception of As-Safir which was less aggressive in its coverage of this issue. Headlines were: "Muslim activists killed three left-wing students in Morocco" (The Times, 05/11/1991). "Fundamentalists warn of violence (in Algeria)" (The Guardian, 24/02/1992). "Trip by UN negotiator raises hopes for Waite" (The Times, 18/11/1991). The leads and editorials in the British press have the same angle in dealing with this subject, emphasising the threat that comes from fundamentalists and attributing the violence and riot in the Arab world to Islamic fundamentalism. For instance, a lead in The Guardian (09/11/1991) reflects this argument: "A car bomb tore through the heart of the American University of Beirut on its 125th anniversary yesterday, killing one Lebanese man who worked on the campus that has long been a target for Muslim extremists". An editorial in The Guardian reflects the above-mentioned argument: "Muslim fundamentalists pose the greatest threat to the existing order...Islamic fundamentalism now firmly in power in Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco" (24/02/1992). Like The Guardian, The Times was against Islamic fundamentalism, when it took the case of Algeria to warn the West (mainly Western Europe) of the consequences:

> The Algerian military government's declaration of a state of emergency and its banning of the FIS is an understandable reaction to weeks of bloodshed ... Inevitably the fundamentalists will become more radical. They will portray the crack-down as an attack on Islam ... The West has enormous interest in stability in Algeria. To prevent an explosion of unrest that could spur emigration, Europe must look at large-scale aid to North Africa. The West should use aid pressure to prevent a state of emergency becoming a settled dictatorship. (The Times, 11/02/1992)

The photographs and their captions were essentially part of the persuasive rhetoric in the British papers. They covered the Islamic fundamentalism in much the same way as the editorial material: "Coming Islamic earthquake: Supporters of the FIS take to the streets in Algeria" (The Guardian, 29/02/1992). "Eye for vengeance: A boy in Beirut holding a picture of Sheikh Abbas Moussawi; killed by Israel, at a ceremony at which Hizbollah swore revenge" (The Times, 24/02/1992).

The Arab-London and the British papers have the same view when it comes to the issue of Islamic Fundamentalism. Headlines reflected this when Al-Hayat drew a

connection between failure of peace and Islamic extremism: "Failure of negotiations with Israel leads to Extremism" (07/02/1992). Asharq Al-Awsat adopts the same line when it uses words such as "extremists" and "Afghans" in headlines including: "Clashes between extremists and Marxists in Morocco" (05/11/1991). "Arrest of the Afghans' leader and disbanding a demonstration in Cosntina" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 19/02/1992). Likewise, this viewpoint about fundamentalism was very obvious in an editorial in (Al-Hayat, 01/11/1991):

> Lebanon between Conference and Front: When the issues become too serious on the regional and international levels, it is not permitted to leave the country (Lebanon) and its population to be left under the control *Hizbollah* and *Harakat Al-Tawheed*[3].

Like the British and the Arab-London papers, the Arab-Beirut papers used the same general angle of coverage on Islamic fundamentalism, but As-Safir was less aggressive. Headlines were: "Hamas to escalate holy jihad in response to the storming of the religious court" (An-Nahar, 22/11/1991). "Muslim fundamentalists responded to the siege state by killing 8 policemen" (An-Nahar, 11/02/1992). "Jordan: hanging 8 fundamentalists charged with an attempt at destabilisation" (An-Nahar, 26/11/1991). "Kuwait: Veiled women allowed to enter the university" (As-Safir, 19/02/1992). Noticeable from such headlines, was a difference between the two Lebanese newspapers in their coverage of Islamic fundamentalism. Whereas An-Nahar closely met with London (British and Arab) papers, As-Safir was not as critical as the others. The same posturing was discernible in the editorials as well. "Oil of relations: Egypt was bothered from Al-Bashir's escorting of the extremist fundamentalist Egyptian groups ... Washington fear Sudan to become a shelter for Islamic fundamentalist movements" (As-Safir, 07/02/1992). An-Nahar's editorial reflected the worry of the conservative Arabs on the connection between Iran and Algerian fundamentalists. In other words, the editorial widens the circle of concern about Islamic fundamentalism:

> Iran, Algeria and the 'fundamentalist' revolution: Iran's political and media support of the FIS in Algeria evoked the worry of Algerian authorities and international circles ... Could the worry of diffusion (or proliferation) of the fundamentalism in the Islamic world (especially some Arab countries) be reflected in a dangerous action on the Islamic republic in Iran? (An-Nahar, 07/02/1992)

The three groups of newspapers reflected, to a large extent, one stand on Islamic fundamentalism: portraying fundamentalism as a threat to the status quo, a threat to the peace process and a cause of unrest. The six newspapers used the same labels such as

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[3] Two of the Islamic parties in Lebanon.

extremists, fundamentalists, vengeance, bloodshed, Afghani, Islamic earthquake, violence, threat, veil, etc., to construct themes on Islamic fundamentalism. This kind of coverage is expected in the British press as some studies have concluded (e.g. Mohsen, 1991). However, in the Arab-London papers this trend can be understood if we look at the wider context or the dominant ideology within which these papers operate. How does the impact of the socio-cultural context appear in the coverage of Islamic fundamentalism and how such coverage resonate with a certain dominant ideology? It was argued in chapter one that the dominant ideology in the Arab World is that of conservatism, where most of its policies stemmed mainly from traditional Islam (Ajami, 1981). Historically, moderate Islam (or traditional) differs from the wave of Islamic fundamentalism which erupted in the last two decades in the Middle East and North Africa. On the one hand, the Saudi-led conservative camp adopts the traditional moderate Islam, where on the other hand, countries like Iran, Algeria and Sudan adopt the revolutionary (or radical) Islam. The difference between the two schools in Islam has led the Arab-London papers to cover the issues relating to Islamic fundamentalism as alienated to the dominant cultural themes on Islam. So, it is understandable to see the coverage of events in Algeria, for instance, in Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat is portrayed as destablising the status quo in the Arab World, and a proliferation of an Iranian influence on the radical Muslim movements in the Arab World (e.g. Hizbollah, FIS). In Beirut, An-Nahar's anti-Islamic coverage is better understood by looking at the identity and the ownership of An-Nahar (see chapter six). As-Safir's sympathy with the Islamic movements is due its nationalist trend, and its ideological policy stance against the Arab conservatism (Saudi-led policy). The coverage of "media packages" relating to Islamic fundamentalism inevitably resonate with the dominant cultural themes (presently conservatism). For such packages to appear familiar and natural, they should be approached by news values such as negativity, size and drama.

H.1.5. IRAQI AFFAIRS:

The fifth macro-theme was on Iraq related subjects such as Iraqi internal Affairs, the Gulf War and the Kurds. Not surprisingly, the headlines, leads and editorials of the British papers were in favour of any Iraqi opposition such as the Kurds. On the one hand, headlines had a great deal on the suffering of the Kurds: "Kurds close to starvation as UN delays meeting on humanitarian aid" (The Guardian, 24/02/1992). Photographs also focused on the plight of the Kurds. "Struggle for survival: Kurds in Zakho often have to queue up to 10 days for what little fuel" (The Guardian, 24/02/1992). A lead was on "Lynda Chalker, the minister for overseas development, yesterday demanded to know exactly how the United Nations had spent the money donated for the Kurds by contribution to the Simple Truth campaign" (The Times, 13/11/1991). On the other hand, the British press focused on Iraq's refusal to comply with UN resolutions, and the preparations for an

assault on Saddam: "Iraq rejects Security Council's Scud ultimatum" (The Guardian, 29/02/1992). "US seeking pre-poll assault on Saddam" (The Times, 26/11/1991). In this context, an editorial in The Times (29/02/1992) explains the on-going diplomatic war between Saddam and the UN:

> The Mother of Fudges: Giving a deadline to President Saddam Hussein is a mug's game ... He has no prospect of respect or credibility, nothing to lose ... The problem for the UN in Iraq is that sanctions are the last fig leaf between it and admitting that Saddam has virtually won the post-war diplomatic battle.

The Arab-London papers were more critical of the Iraqi leadership and very sympathetic with the Kurds' plight. Headlines were "Saddam Hussein to the Iraqis: Why complain?" (Al-Hayat, 13/11/1991). "Wataban: Security comes before bread" (Al-Hayat, 18/11/1991). "Al-Barzani in Baghdad to activate the self-autonomy talks" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 30/11/1991). Editorials reflected an aggressive stand towards the Iraqi President, with Asharq Al-Awsat (29/02/1992) comparing Saddam Hussein's terrorism and the racist Nazi actions in Europe:

> Terrorism and terrorists: Saddam's regime practiced killing and invented torture and submission ... The Arab is the first victim of terrorism whether the source of terrorism is a tough Arab regime, an occupying Zionist regime, or racist European groups who work to get back the Nazi from its grave.

The Arab-Beirut newspapers were, not unlike the British and the Arab-London papers, in favour of the Kurdish issue. Headlines were "The Iraqi siege fatigues the Kurdish cities and obstacles the efforts of international relief" (An-Nahar, 09/11/1991). "Washington: Saddam's position deteriorates, Agha Khan continues his talks in Baghdad" (As-Safir, 22/11/1991). "Collective leadership to succeed Saddam" (As-Safir, 11/02/1992).

The three groups of newspapers focused on the plight of the Kurds, and emphasised the aggression of Saddam Hussein. However, whereas the Arab-London papers were vociferous in attacking the Iraqi leadership and emphasising the repercussions of the Gulf War, the Arab-Beirut papers were less aggressive especially As-Safir which actually tended to be against the Western intervention in the region. It is known that the invasion of Kuwait (Summer 1990) by the Iraqis led to a rift within the Arab World. The repercussions of the Gulf War II were most apparent in the political arena, and the Arab media (see chapters one and three). Most of the Arab newspapers (national and émigré) condemned the Iraqi initiative towards Kuwait. In London, two Arab dailies (Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat) have attacked the Iraqi leadership and shown a sympathetic attitude

towards the Iraqi opposition groups (e.g. Shi'ite and Kurds). The coverage of the Iraqi-related "media packages" in the London-based Arab papers resonates with the dominant cultural themes. Saudi Arabia has hosted a conference for the Iraqi opposition, where it publicly made clear the support of an Arab political opposition. This public support is reflected in a sort of dual coverage of Iraqi affairs: emphasis on the atrocities of the Iraqi leadership, and propagating the activities of the Iraqi opposition. In Beirut, such influence was not much in evidence. As-Safir, as an Arab nationalist paper, dealt with the coverage from an angle of denouncing the Western intervention in inter-Arab affairs. Such coverage, however, appeared as "dissident" when compared to the other daily, An-Nahar which postured much the same as the London-based Arab papers.

I. MAIN COUNTRY CONCERNED:

The previous sections discussed what subjects and themes the British, Arab-London and Arab-Beirut papers cover in the field of Arab affairs. This section moves on to look at the main countries covered and why particular countries receive more coverage than others. The main concern in the coverage of Arab affairs in the six newspapers was Israel followed by Palestine (or the PLO). This coverage referred to the fact that the main portion in Arab affairs was the issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the peace process. This intensive coverage of both Israel and Palestine also applies to the countries related to the conflict and peace issue particularly Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan. Lebanon had more coverage due to the Western-hostage release and the explosion at the American University of Beirut (AUB), as well as the unsettled situation on the southern border with Israel. Iraq was extensively covered in the six newspapers due to the ramifications of the Gulf War II, the Kurds plight and the international sanctions. Libya was covered considerably due to the Lockerbie issue. Algeria had been covered due to the dispute between the *Front Islamique de Salute* (FIS) and the Algerian government. The coverage of other Arab countries was connected due to the macro-themes discussed above. "The others (non-Arab states)" refers mainly to Arab relations with others in macro-themes. Such relations as those with the USA, Russia, EC, UN, etc. (see table 5.15).

Table 5.15: Number and Percentage of country

Country	N	% (R)
Israel	121	21.2
Palestine	80	14.0
Lebanon	64	11.2
Syria	57	10.0
Iraq	40	7.0
Egypt	34	5.9
Jordan	29	5.1
Libya	25	4.4
Algeria	20	3.5
Others (non-Arab States)	20	3.5
Kuwait	15	2.6
Other African Arab States	15	2.6
Morocco	14	2.4
Other Gulf States	13	2.3
Saudi Arabia	12	2.1
Sudan	10	1.7
Tunisia	3	0.5
Total	572	100.0

Israel received the highest amount of coverage in the three groups of papers (see table 5.16). Then came Lebanon, Palestine (or the PLO), Iraq and so on. The amount of coverage inevitably differs from one group of papers to another for each of the countries because of the reasons mentioned earlier. Although Israel received overall highest coverage in the three groups of newspapers, such coverage varied from one group to another. For instance, Israel came first in the British papers, but it was actually second (after Lebanon) in the Arab-London and (after PLO) in the Arab-Beirut papers. The amount of coverage inevitably differs from one group to another for various reasons. First, in the coverage of Arab affairs in general, and the Arab-Israeli issue in particular, the Arab papers (London-based and Beirut) emphasised the Arab point of view over the Israeli one (see for instance the news sources quoted, where the Arab news sources quoted more than the Israeli and other sources). Second, the access to the Arab sources, which is obviously far greater than access to Israeli sources. Third, the impact of the socio-cultural context, where the Arab papers promote the coverage of the issues relating to the Arab World from an Arab perspective.

Table 5.16: Primary Country per groups

Primary Country/Group	British		Arab-London		Arab-Beirut		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Israel	27	19.3	12	10.6	8	12.7	47	14.8
Iraq	21	15.2	7	6.1	5	7.9	33	10.4
Lebanon	17	12.1	21	18.5	6	9.5	44	13.9
Palestine	16	11.4	9	7.9	11	17.5	36	11.5
Algeria	10	7.1	3	2.6	4	6.3	17	5.4
Libya	10	7.1	7	6.1	5	7.9	22	6.9
Egypt	9	6.4	8	7.0	3	4.8	20	6.3
Jordan	7	5.0	4	3.5	3	4.8	14	4.4
Kuwait	6	4.3	3	2.6	4	6.3	13	4.1
Other African Arab States	6	4.3	5	4.4	3	4.8	14	4.4
Syria	5	3:6	6	5.3	3	4.8	14	4.4
Saudi Arabia	2	1.4	3	2.6	1	1.6	6	1.9
Other Gulf States	1	0.7	11	9.7	-	-	12	3.8
Others (non-Arab States)	1	0.7	4	3.5	1	1.6	6	1.9
Sudan	1	0.7	4	3.5	2	3.2	7	2.2
Morocco	1	0.7	4	3.5	4	6.3	9	2.8
Tunisia	-	-	3	2.6	-	-	3	0.9
Total	140	100.0	114	100.0	63	100.0	317	100.0

J. TONE OF THE ITEM:

Having demonstrated what kind of themes the six newspapers covered during the period of study, it is important at this stage to examine the tone of the news items. As argued in chapter four, seven main issues were taken on the "Semantic Differential Scale" to examine the attitude of each newspaper to these issues. The selection of the seven issues was undertaken to complement the previous two categories: countries and themes. The seven issues were the West, the Saudi axis, Islamic Fundamentalism, Arab Nationalism, the Peace Process, the Arab opposition, and the Arab governments. These seven issues constituted a further understanding of the coverage of Arab affairs in the British and Arab press. The first of these issues was the West in addition to the macro-theme (Arab-West relations), examining the coverage of the West in the papers broadens our understanding of how the press dealt with this issue. The second issue is that of the Saudi-axis. This issue was taken to investigate how the papers are influenced by the balance of power in the Arab World (see chapter one), and how Saudi-axis news was covered in the press. This is crucially connected to another issue: Arab nationalism. As argued in chapter one, Arab

nationalism is experiencing (witnessing) a decline in its policies in the Arab political arena. This would show how the Arab press (mainly the London-based) is affected by the influence of the dominant ideological system. Another two related issues (Arab governments and Arab political opposition) were examined in addition to the macro-theme (Internal Arab Affairs), where the London-based Arab press supports the opposition groups of some Arab countries (e.g. Iraq, Sudan, Yemen and Somalia). These two related dimensions allow for further examination of the press-government relationships. The Islamic fundamentalism was taken to further trace the individual and collective tone of coverage in the six newspapers. We understand from the analysis of the macro-theme of Islamic fundamentalism that the papers have covered this issue in a very negative manner. The analysis of tone gives adequate understanding on how each of the six newspapers dealt with this issue. The peace process (between the Arabs and Israel) also adds to our knowledge how each of the six newspapers covered this process in particular, and the Arab-Israeli issue in general. Deciding whether the news item is in favour or against a certain issue was achieved by looking at the labels used concerning each of these items. As discussed in the previous chapter, the table shows the average rating for each tone/dimension in each newspaper.

For instance, Islamic fundamentalism as a dimension has generally recorded more than 3 on the scale one to five. In other words, most of the news items that covered the issue exhibited a marked anti-fundamentalism trend and so on. This can be explained by looking at the labels that the three groups of newspapers used in dealing with the issue of Islamic fundamentalism. On the one side, many which were used were extremely anti Islamic fundamentalism. These labels included "extremists", "fundamentalist", "fanatic", "hardliners", "hostile", "illegitimate", "militant", "zealots", "terrorist", violent", "hostage-takers", "kidnappers", "outlawed", "threat", "strict", and "activists". On the other side, some labels which ranged from pro-Islam to neutral included: "moderate", "tolerance", "dialogue", "liberal", "free-thinking", "reconciliation", "religious-based laws", "*Sharia* (Islamic law)", "Islamic verdict", "*mojahedin* (Holy fighters)", "*Jihad* (Holy war)" and "martyrdom". Furthermore, the three groups of newspapers have presented the supporters of the Islamic movements in the Arab World, as they are "anti-alliance" (during the Gulf War II), "anti-democratic regimes" (Algeria's case), "anti-Western interests" (bombing the American University of Beirut), "causing disorder", "unrest and disunity" (the cases of Egypt and Algeria), following an "Iranian-style" (of revolution) and "pro-Iranian groups" like *Hizbollah* in Lebanon.

Figure 5.1: Tone of the items
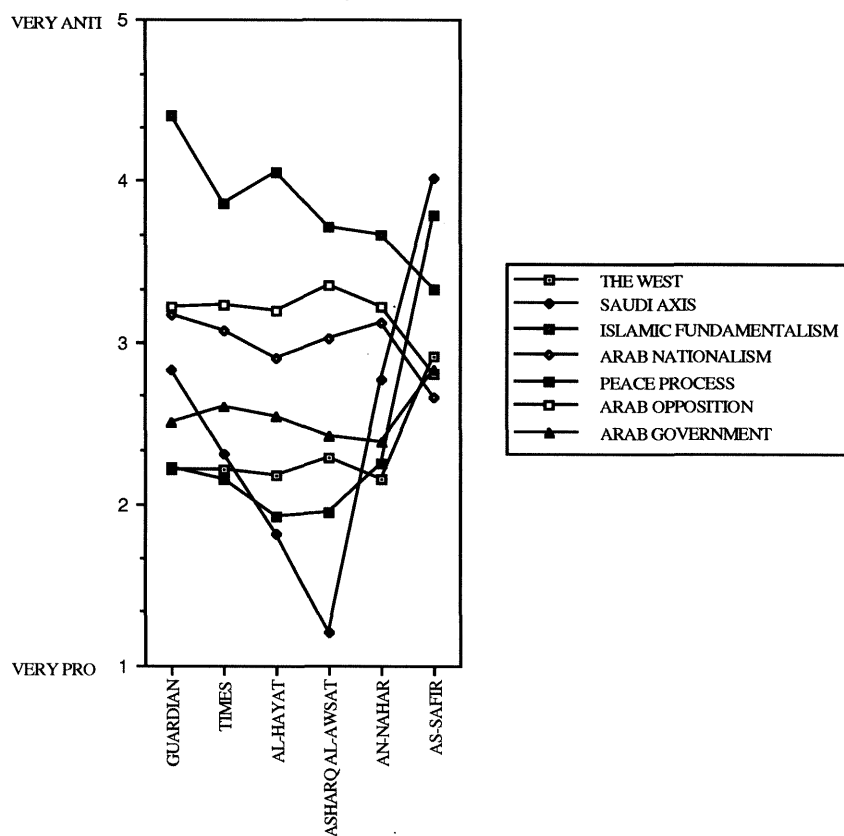
Figure 5.1 shows how each of the six newspapers covered each issue in a different tone or dimension. In other words, all the newspapers were in the 'against' section in covering Islamic fundamentalism, Arab political opposition and Arab nationalism. As the figure shows, The Guardian was strongly against in dealing with Islamic fundamentalism (4.4), The Times (3.8), Al-Hayat (4.0), Asharq Al-Awsat (3.8), An-Nahar (3.8) and As-Safir (3.5). Regarding the Arab opposition, the tone was almost in the 'neutral' to 'against' range, where it varied between (3.2) in The Guardian, The Times and Al-Hayat, to become (3.3) in Asharq Al-Awsat and An-Nahar and finally As-Safir was in favour of Arab opposition (2.8). When it comes to Arab nationalism five newspapers out of six were neutral except As-Safir which was in favour of Arab nationalism (2.6).

Moving to the other half of figure 5.1, most of the newspapers were in favour of

the peace process, the West, the Arab government and the Saudi axis. Five newspapers were in favour of the Arab governments in particular, while <u>As-Safir</u> was neutral. With respect to the Saudi axis, five newspapers were pro-Saudi in different ratios. <u>The Guardian</u>'s coverage of the Saudi axis ranges between 'in favour' to 'neutral' (2.9), where <u>The Times</u> was slightly in favour of the same tone (2.3). Not surprisingly, the Arab-London papers were 'in favour' of the Saudi axis, where <u>Al-Hayat</u> (1.8) and <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> (1.2). In Beirut, <u>An-Nahar</u> like <u>The Guardian</u> ranges between 'neutral' and 'in favour' (2.8), whereas <u>As-Safir</u> is very anti the Saudi axis (4.0). Regarding the peace process, five newspapers were in favour of the process (2.2) in <u>The Guardian</u> and <u>The Times</u>, (1.9) in <u>Al-Hayat</u> and <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>, and (2.2) in <u>An-Nahar</u>. <u>As-Safir</u> (3.8) was against the process of peace (see the headlines and editorials of As-Safir). Again, five newspapers tend to be in favour of the West, except <u>As-Safir</u> which is neutral or disfavours the West.

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the core of this analysis is to draw a comparative perspective on the coverage of Arab affairs in six newspapers from three basis: British, Arab-London and Arab-Beirut newspapers, and to understand in which tone each of the six newspapers have covered the issues, figure 5.2 shows each group of papers:

Figure 5.2: Tone of the groups of newspapers
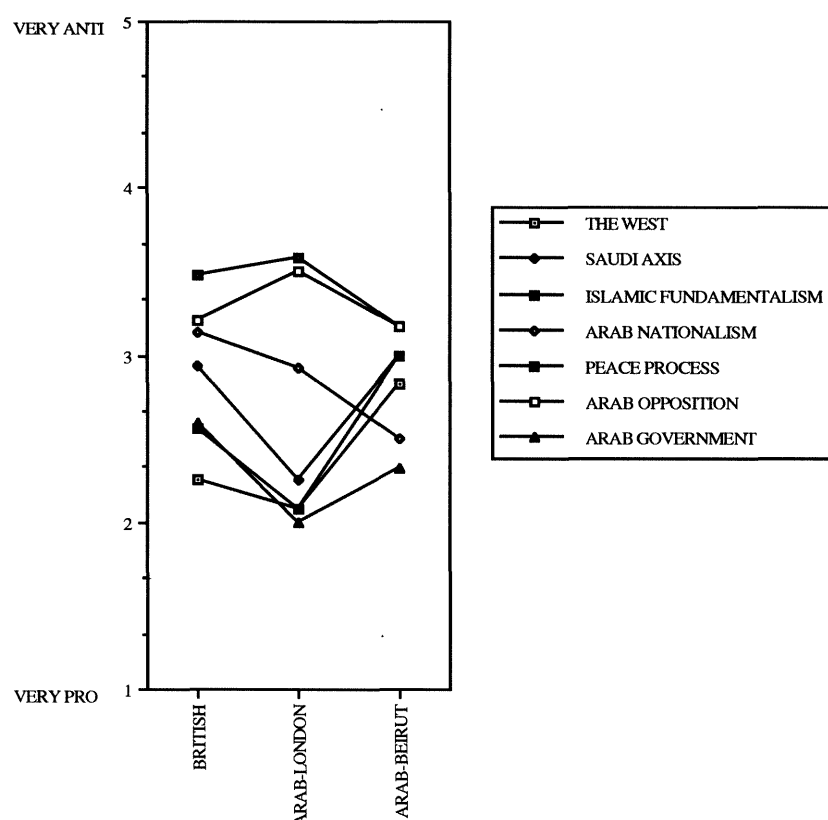
Figure 5.2 shows the perspective of each group of newspapers on the seven issues, which were discussed earlier. The three groups of newspapers were against the issues of fundamentalism and Arab political opposition. The British and the Arab-London papers were more or less neutral or against Arab nationalism, whereas the Arab-Beirut papers were in favour of nationalism. Noticeably, the Arab-London papers were supportive of the Saudi axis, which was recorded as neutral in both the British and the Arab-Beirut papers. The same argument on the similarity between Arab-Beirut and British papers can be applied to the issues of the West, peace process and governments. It was noticed that the Arab-London press showed, more or less, the same tone either individually or collectively. In this regard, Beirut was a contrast with some differences appearing between An-Nahar and As-Safir in both results (newspapers and groups).

CONCLUSION:

The data and the interpretations have demonstrated that news on the Arab World was constructed in the six newspapers. The selection and presentation of the news were mainly influenced by different aspects involved in the news production process (e.g. ownership, news sources, social context). The analysis of the macro-themes has shown how the London-based Arab papers covered the themes, or "media packages" that resonate with the wider context of the dominant ideological system (e.g. Saudi-led conservatism). The impact of the socio-cultural context on the selection and presentation of Arab affairs was very obvious in the various macro-themes (e.g. Islamic fundamentalism, Arab internal affairs, Iraqi affairs). This influence, in the wider context, has another dimension related to the ownership of these papers: the influence of the economic base on the mass media as an agency of superstructure (see chapters two and six). These aspects were nominally apparent in the Beirut papers, with As-Safir and An-Nahar being less affected by the wider context than the Arab papers in London. They were, however, influenced by their national (Lebanese) context where the "cultural resonances" are different from those in London. On the micro-level, the London-based Arab and the Arab Beirut papers rely predominantly on the official sources in the coverage of Arab affairs. The reliance on the official news sources as primary definers of events is a common phenomenon in the press (see chapters two and seven).

The findings of this chapter will be combined with the observational data in order firstly to understand how the Arab newspapers operate and secondly to examine the impact of the socio-cultural context on the work of these papers in London and Beirut respectively. The next chapter discusses the patterns of ownership and control as well the economic determinants (advertising and circulation) for the newspapers of Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat in London and An-Nahar and As-Safir in Beirut. Some of the findings in this chapter will be taken to examine the journalists' perception of the above mentioned matters.

CHAPTER SIX
OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

In the previous chapter, the content of the newspapers was analysed to understand how Arab affairs were constructed and presented. The analysis provides further data, which is combined with the observational data and interviews. This illuminates the internal and external influences on the Arab press organisations in London and Beirut. Chapter two argued that the political economy of news directs attention to the empirical analysis of the structure of ownership and control and the way that media market forces operate. This chapter studies the patterns of ownership and control in the Arab papers: Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat in London as well as An-Nahar and As-Safir in Beirut, to examine the impact of the socio-cultural context on this macro-level of news production. It further focuses on the economic determinants (e.g. advertising and circulation) to see to what extent these factors affect the editorial line of the newspapers.

A. OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

This section looks at the patterns of ownership and control in the four newspapers. The main concern being to find out how such patterns differ from one context to another. To achieve this perspective, a line will be drawn between the London-based papers and those in Lebanon to see to what extent these two kinds of contexts share characteristics.

A.1. ASHARQ AL-AWSAT:

At first sight, the London-based Arab newspaper, Asharq Al-Awsat, seems to be owned by a Saudi holding company. But a closer examination of the structure of its ownership, reveals a strong connection between the owners and the Saudi royal family. Asharq Al-Awsat is published by the Saudi Research and Publishing company (SRP). The SRP is owned by an international holding company called Saudi Research and Marketing (SRM). The SRM was established in 1972 by Hisham and Mohammed Ali Hafez, who are currently the publishers of the publications of the SRP. The Hafez family are known as the *god-fathers* of the press in Saudi Arabia. Their father and uncle established the oldest and largest newspaper in Saudi Arabia, Al-Madina (The City) in 1937.

The SRM is a holding company, which owns the SRP, as well as *Al-Khalijeha* (The Gulf), an advertising company which handles the advertising task for the publications of the SRP. The SRM further owns a circulation company, the Saudi Distribution Company, which is considered to be the largest circulation company in the Middle East, and *Al-Madina* company, which carries out the publishing work of the SRM publications

(Dabbagh, General Manager, SRM). With these companies, *Al-Khalijeha,* the Saudi Distribution and *Al-Madina*, the SRP has published over the past 20 years a number of pan-Arab dailies, weekly and monthly magazines (see table 6.1). The subjects of the publications vary from politics, women, economy and children to sports and religion[1]. The main concern of this research is to study Asharq Al-Awsat, the flagship of the SRP, which would give an understanding of the ownership and control in other publications of the SRP.

The first issue of Asharq Al-Awsat was published on 4 July 1978. The newspaper describes itself as "The International Daily Newspaper of the Arabs". It is published in London, and printed simultaneously via satellite in Dharhan, Riyadh, Jeddah (Saudi Arabia); Casablanca (Morocco); Cairo (Egypt); Marseilles, Paris (France); Frankfurt (Germany); and New York (USA). The newspaper has a distinctive feature in its green-coloured front and back pages, which is symbolic of the Islamic and Saudi flag (Ragab, 1993). Asharq Al-Awsat was the first daily publication published abroad by the Saudi holding company, SRM. The main decision to launch Asharq Al-Awsat from London was taken after the SRM acquired the British press photo agency, Central Press Photo (CPP)[2]. The take-over of the CPP enables the SRM to have a lease in Fleet Street (Al-Majalla, December, 1979).

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[1] Saudi Research and Marketing Company also produces three bi-weekly subscription-only publications, reporting on economic and political fields of activity. Two of these, Arab News-Saudi Information Services and Arab News-Gulf Information Service, are English-language publications. The third, Asharq Al-Awsat Information Service is in Arabic. In October 1979, the Company also launched Saudi Report, a Washington-based English-language publication aimed at opinion-makers in the United States. The publication specialises in detailed coverage of Saudi political, economic and financial developments together with those of the Arab World at large.

[2] One of the oldest and most prestigious agencies in the world with an archive of a million negative of events and personalities.

Table 6.1: Publications of the Saudi Research and Marketing (1994)

Title	Frequency	Issue	Type
Arab News	Daily	1974	First Saudi English daily
Asharq Al-Awsat (The Middle East)	Daily	1978	Newspaper for Arabs
Al-Majalla (The Magazine)	Weekly	1980	Political Magazine
Sayidaty (My Lady)	Weekly	1981	Family Magazine
Al-Muslimoon[3] (The Muslims)	Weekly	1984	Newspaper for Muslims
Asharq Al-Awsat Magazine	Weekly	1986	Non-political Magazine
Basem	Weekly	1987	Magazine for new generation
Ar-Riyadiyah (The Sports)	Daily	1987	Newspaper for young men
Ad-Dahiraha[4](The Midday)	Daily	1990	Tabloid-size newspaper
As-Sabahiyah[5](The Morning)	Daily	1991	Non-political newspaper
'Alam Al-Riyadih (World of Sports)	Weekly	1992	Sports magazine
Ar-Rajool (The Man)	Monthly	1992	Magazine for men
Hia (She)	Monthly	1992	Magazine for women
Al-Eqtisadiah[6] (The Economist)	Daily	1992	Arab business daily
Al-Sayarat (The Cars)	Monthly	1993	Magazine for Cars
TV Guide	Weekly	1994	TV Programmes
Al-Jamilah (The Beautiful)	Monthly	1994	Health and Beauty Magazine

Who though really owns <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>? The simple answer is the SRM, which was established by the Hafez brothers. This SRM is a:

> Holding company owned by Saudi businessmen who respect the Saudi policy and the religion of Islam. **As a Saudi, I fully support the Saudi policy. This is obvious. The rumours that the SRM is funded from the Saudi state coffers are not true.** We rely on our resources. (Dabbagh, General Manager, SRM; emphasis added)

Yasser Dabbagh's argument about the reliance on their resource is sound, but financial resources alone are not enough to establish a media institution in the Arab World.

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[3] Yasser Dabbagh mentioned that the <u>Al-Muslimoon</u> magazine was launched as a "very expensive formula", but when it started to cause losses for the company, the publishers changed this magazine into a weekly newspaper.

[4] It appeared during the first days of the Gulf War II (11/08/1990). In the first two weeks, <u>Ad-Dahiraha</u> was a supplement to <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> newspaper. After two weeks (25/08/1990), it turned into a separate tabloid-size newspaper which appears around noon everyday. The incentive behind this newspaper was to create an atmosphere of stability and to mobilise the public opinion in the Gulf. <u>Ad-Dahiraha</u> had used the tabloid style (i.e. headlines, cartoons) to propagate against Iraq. Its editorial staff was assigned from <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>'s staff (Homouda, Journalist, <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>). However, it ceased its publication after one year 11/08/1991, as the war ended and Kuwait was liberated, and turned to become <u>As-Sabahiyah</u>.

[5] Ceased its publication in 1992.

[6] Mohammad Al-Tunisi, deputy editor-in-chief of <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>, has become the editor-in-chief of <u>Al-Eqtisadiah</u>.

The media project needs a political *green light* from the authorities of one Arab country or another. It was explained in chapter three how the political patronage of the press in the Arab World, constructed a newspaper as a political project rather than purely a professional one. In this context, Asharq Al-Awsat can be categorised as one such example of the press in the Arab World, the SRP and SRM having acquired such political support in order to work in the Arab World. This political patronage can be explained by examining the structure of this holding. It shows that Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz, King Fahed's brother and governor of Riyadh for the past thirty years, owns shares in the SRM. King Fahed relies on Prince Salman's advice especially in the field of the media. Prince Ahmed, son of Prince Salman, is the London director of the SRM, and "is said to determine the content and the editorial line of Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Majalla" (Marlowe, 1992: 49). This matter was confirmed by one of the journalists in the Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom. In the case of the SRM and its flagship Asharq Al-Awsat, the political support is combined with shares in the capital of the holding. These two aspects were substantiated by the directorship of Prince Ahmed bin Salman. So, the Hafez brothers are just the "professional front" for the Saudi royal family members' domination of the SRM publications.

The Princely domination of the London-based daily Asharq Al-Awsat, through shares in the capital of the SRM and Prince Ahmed's directorship, has led to policies that favour the Saudi royal family. When the editor-in-chief, Othman Al-Omeir[7], was asked whether his paper reflected Saudi foreign policy his diplomatic answer was:

> **There is no specific newspaper that reflects Saudi foreign policy.** All the friendly newspapers and magazines reflect an Arab moderate policy, where Saudi policy is a part of this moderate policy. **The Saudi policy is the most pertinent one, where we agree with such policy in many ambitions or aims.** (Al-Omeir, Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat; emphasis added)

Othman Al-Omeir and Yasser Dabbagh attempt to employ the connection or the "common ambitions" with Saudi policy on matters relating only to the nationalities of the owners and capital. In other words, the above mentioned arguments, concerning support of Saudi foreign policy, are interlocked or interrelated with each other. There is a "two-way-strategy" between the SRM - and its flagship - and the Saudi government. Although, on the one hand, the newspaper is influenced by the Saudi Arabian ministers, acting as an effective platform for Saudi government policies, particularly foreign affairs, - on the other

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[7] Othman Al-Omeir is a Saudi journalist who has worked in most of the Saudi dailies such as Al-Jazirah (The Island), Al-Riyadh, Al-Nadwa (The Symposium) and Al-Yamamah (The Dove). In 1976, he was a London-based correspondent for the Saudi daily Al-Youm (Today) where he later became its editor-in-chief. Then, he worked as deputy editor-in-chief for Al-Jazirah. In 1985, Othman Al-Omeir became the editor-in-chief of the London-based magazine Al-Majalla and in 1987 he became the editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat (Source: Interview with Othman Al-Omeir, 28/01/1992).

hand - it reflects the official Saudi point of view on Arab World current affairs (Voice, 1993, 1989). In this respect, Herman and Chomsky (1988) have noticed that the great media in the United States depend on the government for more general policy support, and they use such diplomatic support to help penetrate foreign cultures with U.S. commercial and value messages and interpretations of current affairs. Applying Herman and Chomsky's model on Asharq Al-Awsat a sort of linkage between the Saudi royal family and this newspaper can be traced in a reciprocal way.

The harmony between the content of Asharq Al-Awsat and Saudi foreign policy has enabled the newspaper to promote the Saudi version of events into other Arab countries. The newspaper favours those Arab regimes which have good relations with the Saudi government. Given the available technology, and the royal support, the newspaper aims to become the premier pan-Arab newspaper in the Arab World and in the Arab communities abroad. The top-editors and managers of Asharq Al-Awsat (Al-Omeir, Al-Tunisi and Dabbagh) openly speak of their intention to become the second newspaper for the national reader in the Arab World. In some countries (the Gulf states and Morocco[8]), the newspaper has achieved noticeable success. It was argued in chapter one that the pan-Arab media in general, and the London-based Arab press in particular, had become a vehicle for mobilising the dominant ideologies (nationalism, conservatism) in the Arab World, and the dominance of individual ideologies has experienced periods of ascendancy and decline. In turn, the media have been variously influenced by such swings in the balance of power. In this respect, Asharq Al-Awsat became a vehicle for transmitting the dominant conservative ideology of the Saudi axis which is currently witnessing a period of ascendancy (see chapter one). This dominance was reflected in a 'Saudi version' or a 'Saudi constructed reality' of Arab affairs, where the newspaper's support of Arab opposition groups obviously parallels that of Saudi authorities. The wide coverage in Asharq Al-Awsat of Iraqi, Sudanese, Yemeni and Somali opposition groups is entirely in line and not entirely coincident with the position of the Saudi government. The analysis of Arab internal affairs as a macro-theme in chapter five, has shown that Asharq Al-Awsat has favourably covered the Arab opposition groups which are supported, sheltered and escorted by the Saudi authorities (see chapter five).

Prince Salman's ownership of the SRM, and his son Ahmed's directorship, has given that company in general, and Asharq Al-Awsat in particular, more links to the Saudi

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[8] The Moroccan government allowed Asharq Al-Awsat to open an office in Casablanca where the national press, already suffering from a lack of resources, had to compete with the highly skilled staff in London, the latest technology and a news-stand price lower than their own. The local press was financially hurt. As a result, all the newspapers stopped publishing for one day in 1983 to protest "unfair competition from Asharq Al-Awsat". The protest was called by the *Syndicat de la Presse Nationale* (Koeppel, 1988).

royal family so enabling its use as a vehicle for mobilising its conservative ideology. It is known that Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz is a member of the most influential inner circles of the Princes, the Sudeiris[9], and "you can't get more elite than that in Saudi Arabia" (Evans, 1992: 16). This connection with the elite circle of the Saudi government and other decision-makers enables Asharq Al-Awsat to rely on the government as a main source of news. The official Saudi news agency, Saudi Press Agency (SPA), is one of the main suppliers of news on the activities of the government officials and Princes. Such news commands a wide coverage in the newspaper. In this regard, Asharq Al-Awsat's copy taster (who selects the material that comes from the news agencies) said that the news on the royal family members and their activities should be given priority in the newspaper, regardless of the nature of the activity or the particular Prince concerned.

Having discussed the structure of ownership in Asharq Al-Awsat, the question which can now be addressed is how such a structure controls the editorial line of the newspaper and the other publications of the SRM? It was argued in chapter two that there are links between the economic ownership and the allocative control, where the largest and best organised voting shareholders determine the composition of the company's executive board, such a board defines the allocative control, which is the power to determine the overall policy and strategy (Murdock, 1988). In this case, the economic ownership is distributed between Saudi businessmen and Prince Salman. This had led to an executive board chaired by Prince Ahmed bin Salman, which defines the allocative control of the holding and its publications. The executive board, however, does not deal with the day-to-day operations. At this stage the role of the publishers can begin. The authority of the publishers is to work on behalf and with the consent of the owners. The publishers have the authority to fire or replace any editor-in-chief of a SRP publication (Dabbagh, General Manager, SRM). They also determine the general policy, supervise the budget of the newspaper and represent the owners (Al-Omeir, Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat). As mentioned earlier, the publishers, Hafez brothers, are media professionals who have succeeded at implementing allocative control of the economic owners and the operational control (control works at lower levels to confine the decisions decided at the allocative control) over the Asharq Al-Awsat, and the other publications of the SRP (see figure 6.1).

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[9] The Sudeiris are one of the leading families in Saudi Arabia. The linkages have been especially strong between the Saudi royal family and the Sudeiris, as four of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud (the founder of modern Saudi Arabia) wives were of the Sudeiri blood and these wives are accounted for 15 sons of Ibn Saud. Also, Ibn Saud's own mother was a Sudeiri, and almost thirty of his sons and grandsons have married Sudeiri girls. These family ties are, of course, markedly political. Today, perhaps the most influential political bloc in Saudi Arabia is the Al-Fahed group, which consists of seven full brothers, the sons of Ibn Saud and Hussa bint Ahmed Al-Sudeiri. These brothers are the present King Fahed, Salman, Sultan, Nayef, Ahmed, Turki and Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud (Bill & Leiden, 1974).

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        │                  │ (Al-Khalejiah)│  │  (Saudi Co.) │  │  Accounting    │
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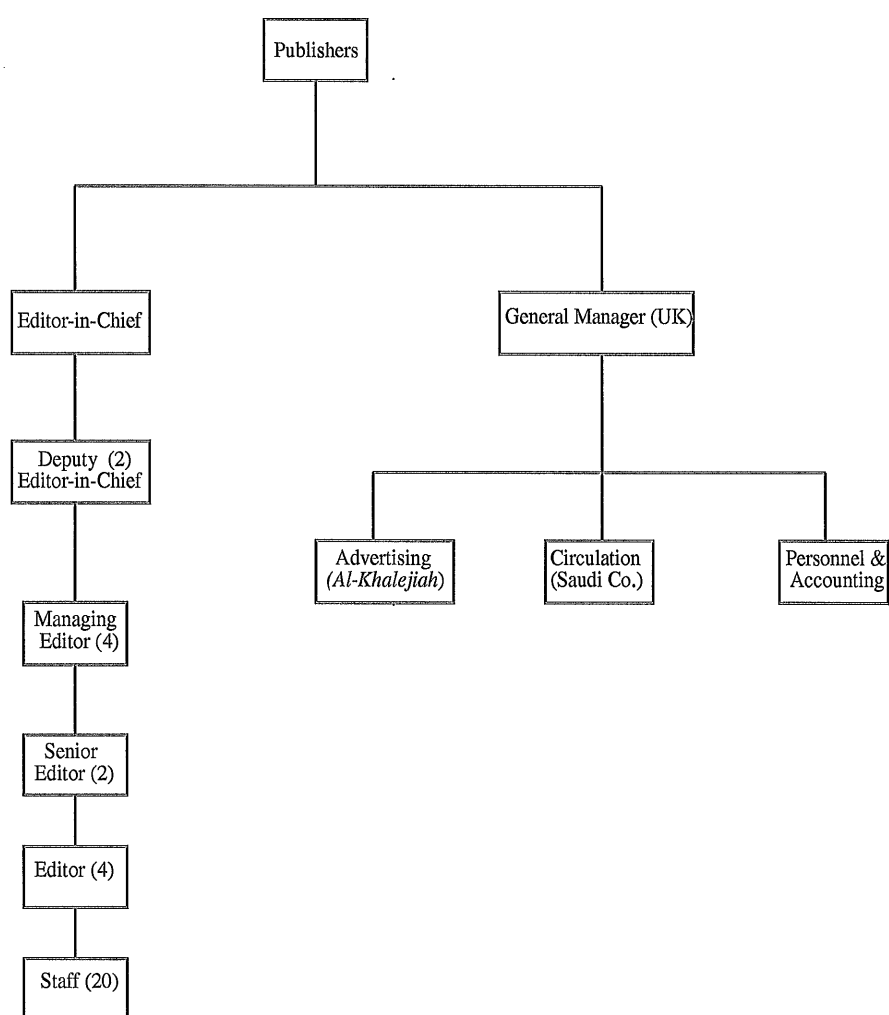
Figure 6.1: News Organisation Chart of Asharq Al-Awsat
(This Chart is based on findings at the time of the research)

A.2. AL-HAYAT:

Another Arab newspaper published in London since 1988 is Al-Hayat. It was originally a Lebanese newspaper, founded in Beirut on 28 January 1946, by a prominent journalist, Kamel Mroue. Al-Hayat was one of the leading papers in Beirut, and achieved some prominence soon after it was founded by being unusually enterprising in its news coverage, rather than in editorial opinion. It was also the first Arab daily to use one of the most modern presses (McFadden, 1953). Kamel Mroue, Al-Hayat's editor-in-chief, was assassinated in May 1966 for his pro-conservative policy and anti-Nasser views of the Arab World (see chapter one). After his death, the newspaper continued its publication - under his wife's management - till 1975, when Al-Hayat ceased publication because of the Civil War. However, on 3 October 1988, it resumed its publication albeit in London and by Mroue's sons: Jamil, Karim and Malek.

Al-Hayat is comparable to an International Herald Tribune size paper, or The Independent of London, or possibly Le Monde of Paris. It describes itself as "A Quality Arabic Newspaper for the Quality Reader" (Voice, 1989). It is published in London, and printed simultaneously via satellite in Beirut (Lebanon), Cairo (Egypt), Bahrain (main edition for the Gulf states), Marseilles (France, during the summer where a large number of Arabs spend their holidays in the resorts of southern France), Frankfurt (Germany), and New York (USA). It had become the first Arab paper to make full use of computerised typesetting and layout. Starting in June 1991, Al-Hayat launched a four-page supplement under a special agreement with The Financial Times of London. This supplement adopts the same pink colour as The Financial Times and specialises in the economy, finance and international stock market. Through this supplement, the newspaper aims to give the Arab reader the news which is published in "the prestigious newspaper: The Financial Times", on the Arab World and matters relating to the world economy (Beshtawi, Business & Finance Editor, Al-Hayat). In June 1993, this supplement was expanded to eight pages. There is a main focus on the Gulf stock market, marketing and finance in the Arab World as well as some international economic features.

Al-Hayat is published by Al-Hayat International for Printing and Publishing Company, which is "An off-shore company owned by the Mroue family: sons of the founder of Al-Hayat in Lebanon" (El-Khazen, Editor-in-chief, Al-Hayat). In the summer of 1990, when Al-Hayat faced some financial problems, and was going to close down its offices in London, it was bought by a Saudi company called Media Communication Group (MCG). This take-over changed the structure of ownership in Al-Hayat. The current

editor-in-chief, Jihad El-Khazen[10], who has very wide contacts with Saudi Arabia, became the publisher succeeding Jamil Kamel Mroue, who first launched Al-Hayat in London in 1988 (see figure 6.2).

The MCG is a holding company that works in the fields of media and marketing. This company also owns Al-Wasat Publishing Limited, which publishes Al-Wasat[11]. The MCG is owned by Prince Khaled bin Sultan[12] (Tassbahji, Administrative Manager, MCG). Prince Khaled's father, Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, is the Saudi deputy prime minister and the defence minister, and - like his brother Prince Salman - is a member of the most influential inner circles of Princes in Saudi Arabia, the Sudeiris. Prince Khaled's brother, Prince Bandar is Saudi Arabia's ambassador in Washington and very close to a former Saudi naval officer, Mohammed Badrawi, who works as chief executive for the US-based Arab Network of America (ANA)[13] (Marlowe, 1992). Talking about the ownership of MCG, Al-Hayat and Al-Wasat Publishing Companies, leads to focus on the ownership of the Al-Hayat newspaper. Although, the top editors and managers of Al-Hayat (e.g. El-Khazen, Sama'an, Tassbahji) admit that the MCG is owned by Prince Khaled bin Sultan, they argue that the take-over by the MCG did not directly affect the newspaper itself. The top-men in Al-Hayat try to keep this connection in the fields of financing and marketing only. Furthermore, they deny that this kind of ownership has resulted in any influence, by the owner, on the editorial line of the newspaper:

> Prince Khaled bin Sultan is the owner of MCG. He didn't buy or intends to buy Al-Hayat. Prince Khaled insists that Al-Hayat should stay with the Mroue family. For this reason, there is a lease contract for 20 years. (El-Khazen, Editor-in-chief, Al-Hayat)

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[10] Jihad El-Khazen is a Christian Palestinian who lived in the Lebanon and worked in Reuters news agency in the 1960s, then with the previous Al-Hayat under Kamel Mroue as editor of the English-language paper, the Daily Star (1969-1975). Before the Civil War, the Daily Star was about the best English-language daily in the Middle East. However, both Al-Hayat and Daily Star ceased their publication with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1975. Jihad El-Khazen later edited Arab News in Jeddah, and was the editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat which he edited for several years (Source: Interview with El-Khazen, 20/02/1992).

[11] Al-Wasat (The Middle) is a glossy magazine launched on 3 February 1992, with the same editorial line of Al-Hayat. Its editor-in-chief, Abdul Karim Abou Al-Nasr, worked for Al-Majalla of the SRM, before joining Al-Hayat. In June 1993, Abdul Karim Abou Al-Nasr was sacked after publishing an interview with a prominent Syrian lady, who lives in Paris, about Arab-Israeli meetings taking place in Paris. George Sama'an, managing editor of Al-Hayat, has become the new editor-in-chief of Al-Wasat.

[12] Prince Khaled bin Sultan is the former commander-in-chief of the Saudi armed forces, and a nephew to King Fahed. He was the commander of Arab and Muslim forces in the Gulf War II.

[13] ANA is another Saudi-financed TV station, which was launched in summer 1992. It offers coast-to-coast TV-news, entertainment and religious programming with 750.000 radio listeners and 500.000 subscription-TV viewers (Marlowe, 1992).

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    │  Editor (7)  │          ┌───────────┐  ┌───────────┐  ┌───────────┐  ┌───────────┐
    └──────────────┘          │Advertising │  │Circulation│  │  Public   │  │Personnel &│
           │                  │(Media Force)│ │           │  │ Relations │  │Accounting │
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    │  Staff (23)  │
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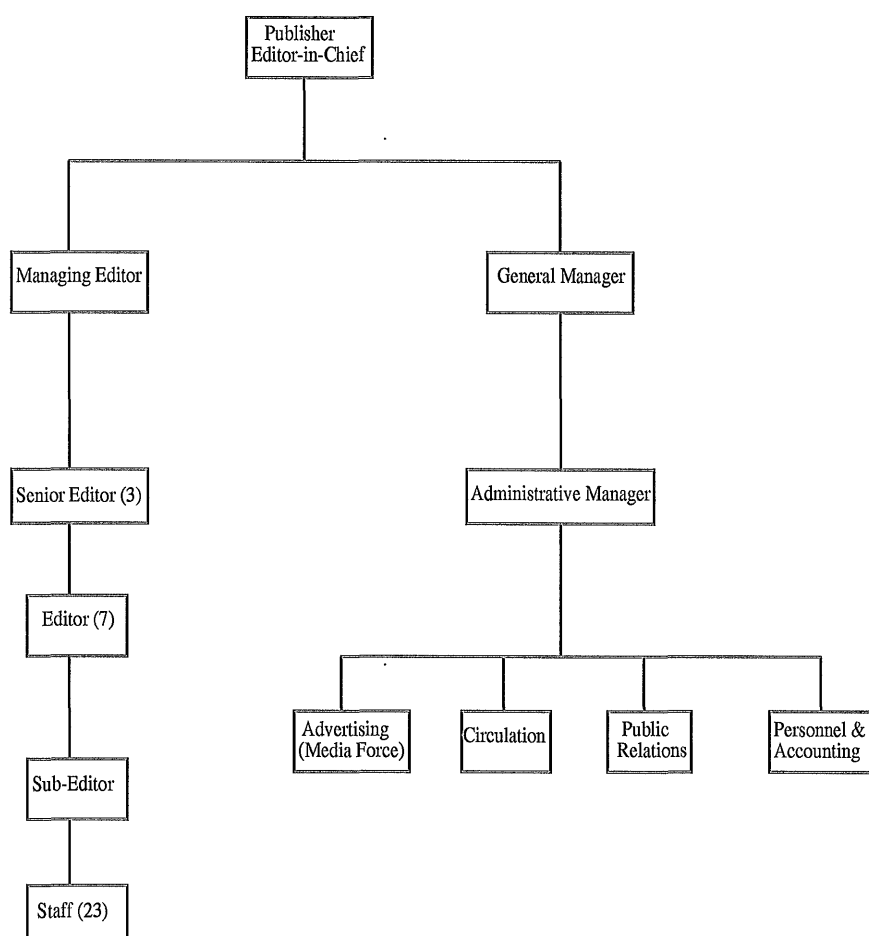
Figure 6.2: News Organisation Chart of Al-Hayat
(The Chart is based of findings at the time of the research)

Jihad El-Khazen's classification of the new kind of ownership as a lease for 20 years is used to emphasise an independence in the editorial line of the newspaper. Talking of a lease, not ownership, and the financial support for the newspaper by Prince Khaled is adopted in an attempt to rebut widespread suspicion among Arabs that Al-Hayat is funded from state coffers in Saudi Arabia. Such a suggestion was denied by the general manager of Al-Hayat: "For Prince Khaled, it is a hobby and business which will eventually make money" (Quoted in Evans, 1992: 16). Arguments that Al-Hayat is to remain independent from any political Saudi-connection, when compared to Asharq Al-Awsat are questioned for various reasons. Firstly, the owner himself as a member of the inner circle of the royal family makes the holding company, and its publications, more and more close to the Saudi policy-makers. Perhaps the argument of Al-Hayat's editors could become true if the owner or the "lease-holder" was a Saudi or an Arab businessman, as opposed to a former Saudi official - and a member of the inner circle of the decision-makers in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, Al-Hayat of London considers itself as an extension or continuity of Al-Hayat in Beirut[14]. As mentioned earlier, the founder and the first editor-in-chief of Al-Hayat was assassinated because of his support of a Saudi policy which was combating with the Nasserites in the 1950s and 1960s (see chapter one). In London, the newspaper continued its editorial line, which was laid down by the founder of Al-Hayat, Kamel Mroue (Rugh, 1987, 1979; McFadden, 1953). In other words, Al-Hayat of London is 'old wine in a new bottle'. Finally, the identity of the newspaper, as a former Lebanese paper, gives this kind of ownership a different dimension which is not the case in Asharq Al-Awsat, where the owners, publishers and the top-editors are Saudi. Al-Hayat looks different, where the owner (or lease-holder) is Saudi, the publisher is Palestinian and the top editors and journalists are mainly Lebanese.

How does this kind of ownership affect the editorial line of Al-Hayat? Jihad El-Khazen - as editor-in-chief and publisher of the newspaper - represents the economic ownership (as a member of the executive board) and (as a publisher) works in consent with the allocative control of the owner. The editor-in-chief relies on his managing editor to comply with general policy on a day-to-day basis. The process of decision-making (or the operational control) in Al-Hayat is arbitrary, which is not the case in Asharq Al-Awsat. This has actually caused several problems for the newspaper with many Arab countries. Some Arab countries banned Al-Hayat because of publishing of some critical editorials on their governments or their officials. In this respect, Jihad El-Khazen avoids many of these

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[14] The editorial of the first issue of Al-Hayat on 3 October 1988 was talking about the return of the newspaper after 12-year severance (or discontinuity). That issue, which carried the number 9477, was considered as continuation to the last issue which was published in Beirut at the beginning of the Civil War.

problems with the Arab officials or governments. Notwithstanding, these problems are becoming fewer as operational control in the newspaper becomes more organised, and the top-editors become more aware of the matters that cause such problems.

This adherence to the Saudi line was criticised by Ghassan Tueni - the publisher of the Lebanese daily, An-Nahar - where he considered Al-Hayat as a "slave press", "financial tools press", and a "press with connections". He argued that Al-Hayat (of Prince Khaled bin Sultan) would not dare to criticise the *Ashura System*[15] in Saudi Arabia or at least could not publish two different Saudi viewpoints about this system. This trend in the policy of Al-Hayat is attributed to three interrelated factors: the ownership of Prince Khaled bin Sultan, advertisements from and to the Saudi market, and the circulation in the Gulf, and more precisely in Saudi Arabia. The latter two factors are discussed later in this chapter.

A.3. AN-NAHAR:

An-Nahar is a relatively moderate right-of-centre paper with the highest circulation and the most prestige in Lebanon. Founded in August 1933, An-Nahar is perhaps the oldest Lebanese daily which has been continuously published by the same family, the Tuenis (Dajani, 1992, 1971). Its founder Gibran Tueni, a former minister and dean of the present generation of Lebanese journalists, worked in Egypt and later in Beirut where he established Al-Ahrar (1924). A few years later, Al-Ahrar was liquidated after a dispute between its owners. This liquidation led Gibran Tueni to establish his newspaper, An-Nahar, where the other two partners continued publishing Al-Ahrar (Abdul Mawla, 1991). At that time Lebanon was under French Mandate and An-Nahar became the instrument and platform of all the liberal causes. As a result, the newspaper was suspended from publication more than 15 times because of its criticism of the French Mandate. During the first years of Independence (1943), An-Nahar fought for and played a major role in leading public opinion and later in the establishment of a constitutional government (Tueni, 1971; Dajani, 1971).

The current publisher-editor of An-Nahar, Ghassan Tueni[16] took over the

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[15]A consultative system was established by King Fahed of Saudi Arabia in February 1992, in order to give more representation in the rule of the kingdom to non-members of the royal family. In other words, it is an Islamic version of the parliament. However, it did not start practising its duty, till August 1993, when King Fahed named the members of the Council and issued decrees that de-regulate the duties of the cabinet and the tasks of the ministers.

[16] Ghassan Tueni: is a former minister of Information and Education and a former MP. At one time, he was a moderate leader of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP). Ghassan Tueni was Lebanon's Ambassador to the United Nations. He worked as an adviser to the former Lebanese President Amin Gemyyal 1982-88. He is considered one of the leading spokesmen of the Greek Orthodox Lebanese (Source: Interview with Ghassan Tueni, 29/04/1992; Dajani, 1971).

newspaper when his father, the founder of the newspaper, died in 1948. The Tueni family owns a portion of the whole institution and the other shares are divided among the church, institutions and individual persons (see table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Ownership of An-Nahar

Owner	Shares	Percent
Tueni Family	4999	28.57%
Orthodox Church	3500	20.00%
An-Nahar Employees	2706	15.46%
Professional Partners[17]	626	3.58%
Other Shareholders[18]	5669	32.39%
Total	17495	100.00%

Source: An-Nahar's General Manager Report (12/08/1983)

Because the newspaper has a combination of different shareholders, Ghassan Tueni takes this as an advantage which should result in a liberal line, which cannot be said for other newspapers in Lebanon. He argues that:

> An-Nahar is more liberal than other newspapers, for two main reasons. First, the number of shareholders leads to a balance in opinion, where all the shareholders feel that they own the newspaper. Second, all the shareholders cannot influence the policy of the newspaper which, under the terms of the by-law, is independent from the shareholders' influence. Thus the policy of the newspaper is independent. (Tueni, Publisher, An-Nahar)

Ghassan Tueni's reasoning based on the "liberal line" and the "number of shareholders" can be accepted if the shareholders come from different backgrounds and attitudes. The Orthodox church, as the main shareholder, is in legal terms a "juristic personality" and thus its influence in the process of deciding the overall strategy and policy of An-Nahar is minimal. In other words, the Tueni family and the Orthodox church constitute 'two sides of the same coin'. The economic ownership is largely composed of these two main shareholders who constitute about half of the ownership structure. This harmony was very obvious in the founder's will which stipulates: "**An-Nahar is entitled to defend the Orthodox cause, if the cause or the sect has been** *attacked*" (An-Nahar's policy, 1973: 11; emphasis added). In this respect, Ghassan Tueni assured that such a line is still the dominant posture of the newspaper.

On the micro-level of ownership structure, the Tueni family is the second main shareholder. Within the Tuenis, Ghassan, his late wife and his sons Gibran and the late

[17] This category includes journalists from other institutions.
[18] This group includes bankers, construction companies, businessmen and politicians.

Makram owned 18.12 per cent of the whole newspaper (see table 6.3). Besides not all the shareholders (like the An-Nahar employees or other shareholders) have influence in the editorial line. The two main actors who decide and influence the policy of An-Nahar are the Orthodox Church and the Tueni family. This could explain why An-Nahar appeals mainly to the Christian Lebanese intelligentsia and its right-of-centre inclination as a newspaper (Dajani, 1992; Rugh, 1987, 1979).

Table 6.3: Tueni clan shares in An-Nahar

Tueni Clan	Shares	Percent
Ghassan Tueni	1221	6.97%
Gibran Ghassan Tueni[19]	1000	5.72%
Walid Tueni	750	4.28%
Makram Ghassan Tueni	650	3.71%
Other Tuenis	550	3.15%
Sami Tueni	528	3.02%
Nadia Ghassan Tueni	300	1.72%
Total	4999	28.57%

Source: An-Nahar's General Manager Report (12/08/1983)

On the operational control level, although Ghassan Tueni denies that An-Nahar is dominated by his influence and editorial constructions, one can notice how the "boss's" instructions affect the top-editors in An-Nahar's newsroom (see figure 6.3). Besides, An-Nahar does have certain standards for recruiting its staff. Despite its appeal to most Lebanese readers, An-Nahar's personnel have come from the same background and religious sect as the family: the Greek Orthodox. During the Civil War, An-Nahar didn't recruit any new journalists despite desperately needing staff (especially for the Foreign Desk where a severe shortage in staff was very evident). The declared reason was that the newspaper was unable to find the appropriate staff because of a decline in the level of journalists who are graduates from the journalism schools in Lebanon. In part this was true but the main reason was that An-Nahar would not make any change in its personnel structure which would have happened if journalists with different backgrounds have been recruited (see chapter eight). In an informal discussion, the managing editor complained about the shortage of staff, and how only a few journalists joined the newspaper from the

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[19] In May 1977, the Tuenis launched a Paris-based weekly magazine, An-Nahar Al-Arabi wa Al-Dowali *(An-Nahar Arabe et Internationale)*. Gibran Ghassan Tueni worked as one of the editors-in-chief for this magazine, which moved later to Beirut. The magazine ceased publication in January 1990, when its circulation figures dramatically slumped due to a U-turn in its policy of being an extreme right-wing magazine when Gibran Tueni became its sole editor-in-chief. Currently, Gibran Tueni lives in a self-exile in Paris after the exile of the former commander-in-chief of the Lebanese army, Michel Aoun, to whom Gibran Tueni was a close aide.

rival, <u>As-Safir</u>.

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                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │ Publisher/Owner │
                        │ General Manager │
                        └─────────────────┘
                                 │
        ┌────────────────────────┼────────────────────────────┐
        │                        │                             │
┌───────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐                      │
│Editor-in-Chief(2)      │ Management   │                      │
└───────────────┘        └──────────────┘                      │
        │                        │                    ┌──────────────┐
  ┌─────┴──────┐                 │                    │  An-Nahar    │
  │            │                 │                    │  Publishing  │
┌──────────────┐ ┌─────────┐     │                    └──────────────┘
│Managing Editor│ │ Archive │     │
│Executive Editor│└─────────┘     │
└──────────────┘      │    ┌───────┴──────────┬──────────────┐
  │                   │    │                  │              │
┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────┐
│Editors(4)│    │Supervisor│ │  Accounting  │ │  Public  │
└──────────┘    └──────────┘ │ & Personnel  │ │Relations │
  │                   │       └──────────────┘ └──────────┘
┌──────────────┐      │    │             │              │
│Sub-Editor (4)│      │ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
└──────────────┘ ┌─────────┐│Statistics│ │ Circulation  │ │ Advertising  │
  │              │ Staff(4)│└──────────┘ │(Lebanese Co.)│ │(Press Media) │
┌──────────┐     └─────────┘             └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
│ Staff(38)│
└──────────┘
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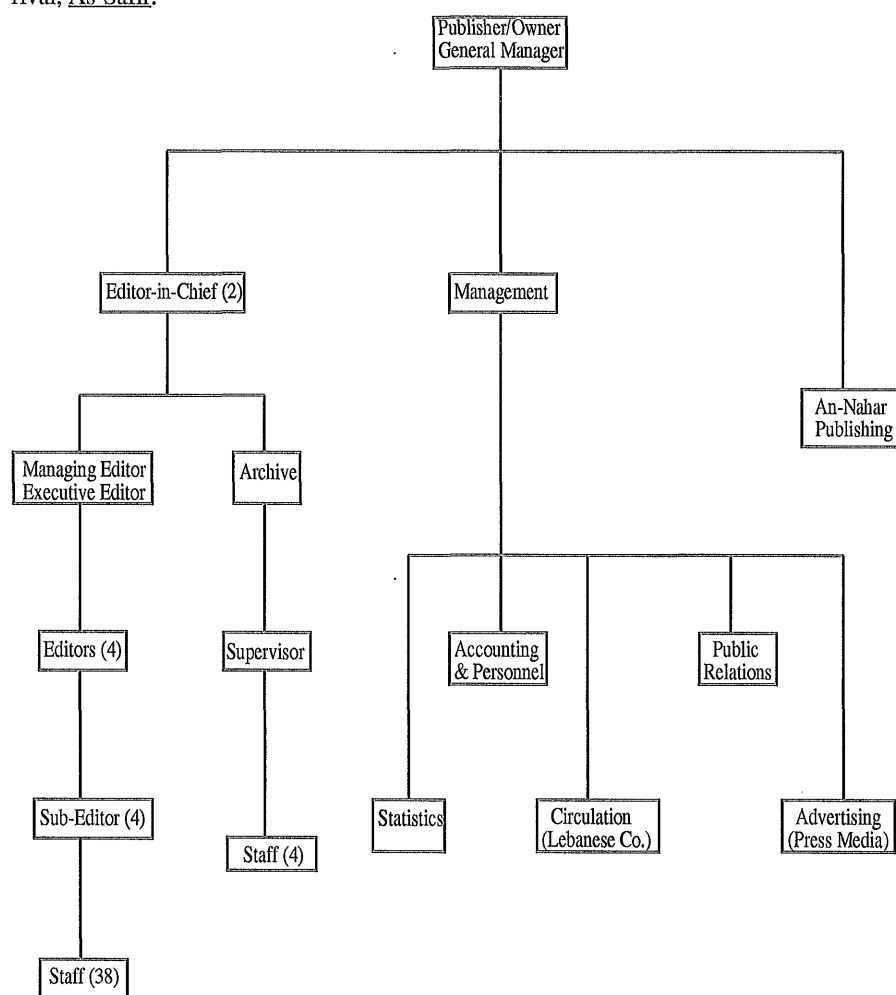
Figure 6.3: News Organisation Chart of An-Nahar
(This Chart is based on findings at the time of the research)

With this structure of ownership, <u>An-Nahar</u> depends on its readership to furnish a portion of revenues, the remaining two portions come from its shares in other institutions and from advertising. <u>An-Nahar</u>'s newspaper owns shares in other companies (see table 6.4) which deal with printing, publishing and the distribution of books, magazines and newspapers.

Table 6.4: An-Nahar's shares in other institutions

Name of Institution	Shares	Percent
An-Nahar Press	15.328	87.59%
Printing Cooperative	7.800	26.00%
Societe Libanaise de Distribution	3.700	37.00%
Press Media	920	92.00%
General Company for Press and Publishing	500	1.66%
Press Cooperative	1.500	6.00%
An-Nahar Press Services	1.000	55.00%
An-Nahar-International Publications (France)	3.000	30.00%
An-Nahar-International Publications (Lebanon)	2.150	43.00%

Source: An-Nahar's General Manager Report (31/12/1982)

The revenues from these shares enabled <u>An-Nahar</u> to survive despite its losses during the Civil War. When the economic infrastructure (e.g. communications, electricity) of the country was severely damaged, the Lebanese newspapers in general, and <u>An-Nahar</u> in particular, established their *de facto* infrastructure to continue publishing.

A.4. AS-SAFIR:

<u>As-Safir</u> is one of the most widely read left-of-centre newspapers in Lebanon. It was established on 26 March 1974, to champion Arab nationalist causes. As a left-of-centre paper, <u>As-Safir</u> gained a considerable prominence during the Civil War due to its strong news coverage and analysis written by noted journalists and Arab intellectuals (Dajani, 1992; Rugh, 1987). The logo of <u>As-Safir</u> describes it as "The Newspaper of the Arab World in Lebanon, and the Newspaper of Lebanon in the Arab World", where the newspaper appeals to the Arab nationalist and Muslim and left-wing masses (see chapter one). This pan-Arab nationalist trend that so labelled the newspaper was, as one would expect clearly, expressed in the editorial of the first issue (on 26/03/1974):

> <u>As-Safir</u>'s mission is to defend the Arab Nation, and to restore the dignity of Arab people... It is a newspaper that says it is not acceptable that the number of poor people in this nation increases, while billions of dollars hail

> from oil revenues. As-Safir aims to become the newspaper of Lebanon in the Arab World, and the newspaper of the Arab World in Lebanon, to emphasise the unity of affiliation, existence and destiny. (T. Salman, Editor-in-chief, As-Safir)

This editorial summarises the main posture which As-Safir would adopt. Talal Salman, the editor-in-chief of As-Safir, considers this editorial as an "outspoken statement" on the identity, mission and banner of the newspaper. This "mission" has led As-Safir to adopt a policy favouring nationalism, left-wing parties in Lebanon and abroad, and on conversely criticising the right-wing parties and their factions in Lebanon and the oil-rich Arab countries. In turn, such a posture has ensured some success offering a clearly "aggressive opposition" to the Lebanese government. Such an opposition led to legal suits with the government, consequent suspension of the paper, and later an assassination attempt (during the Civil War) on its publisher and editor-in-chief. As-Safir's newspaper is published by the *Dar Al-Ourwa Al-Wootheqa* (Strong Bond Publishing House), which is privately owned by the founder and current editor-in-chief Talal Salman[20]:

> The editor-in-chief is the sole owner of the newspaper. He delegates some administrative authorities to the general manager. But, the final say in any decision to be taken comes from the publisher/editor-in-chief. (Nehme, General Manager, As-Safir)

The editor-owner is a commonly known phenomenon in the Arab press. The editor, who happens to be wealthy, or has friends who agree with his literary or political ideas, can establish a newspaper (McFadden, 1953). This type of ownership is typified by As-Safir which was launched by the efforts of friends, colleagues and peers, sharing the same ambitions and attitudes in the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Nevertheless, this structure of ownership did not deny the widespread rumours among the Lebanese and the Arabs (at that time) that As-Safir was launched and funded with the support and money of the pan-Arab nationalists or the Nasserites[21]. In this respect, the editor-in-chief argues that the matter of the Nasserite funding is exaggerated:

> **We are friends of Libya. Consequently, we are sympathetic to Arab nationalism. As-Safir is the newspaper of the Unity and Nationalist trend** ... We didn't fall into the trap of supporting any regime or ruler. We kept respecting our enemies ... We succeeded in expressing a patriotic nationalistic sentiment. (T. Salman, Editor-in-chief, As-Safir:

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[20] Talal Salman is one of the leading Lebanese journalists. He worked as the editor-in-chief of Al-Hawadeth (The Events) in 1958, when its original editor fled the country. In 1961, he was imprisoned because he was a member of the "Arab Nationals" movement. Between 1963-1973, he worked for several magazines such as As-Sayyad (The Hunter), Al-Ahad (The Sunday), Al-Hawadeth, and Al-Horyieh (The Freedom). In 1973, he started working on launching As-Safir with friends who shared with him the same political ideas (Source: Interview with Talal Salman, 01/04/1992).

[21] Followers and supporters of the late Egyptian and Arab Leader Jamal Abdul Nasser (see chapter one).

emphasis added)

The structure of the ownership in As-Safir began to change from that of an editor-owner to a more organisational style (see figure 6.4). In the last few years, As-Safir has established the Arab Centre for Information (ACI): a publishing house which publishes books and documentaries on Lebanese, Arab and international issues. This change which led to more departmental separation (e.g. management, ACI, editorial) enabled the newspaper to survive during the Civil War. In this respect, the newspapers in Lebanon do not really have either an advertising department or a circulation agency. The advertising and circulation are carried out by two big companies; Press Media for advertising, and *Societe Libanaise de Distribution* (Lebanese Company for Distribution). In this manner, the Lebanese newspapers, including An-Nahar and As-Safir, have reduced some of their costs which had become unbearable following earlier inflation (Ajhar, 1988).

Having mentioned the structure of ownership, it is essential to examine the matters of control and state regulations. In other words, to examine the political forces or the determinants that shape the output of the Lebanese newspapers. It was argued in chapter three that the laws and regulations of the Lebanese government had provided the press with a freedom of expression which is comparatively more liberal than other Arab countries. These laws eliminated, to a large extent, the role of censorship. As-Safir adopted an opposition stand against the Lebanese government, which resulted in legal suits with the government[22] (Middle East Watch, 1993; Fisk, 1993). In this context, Dajani (1992) argues that the Lebanese press tends to oppose the government, not to act as a watch-dog press to safeguard the public interest, but rather to support another authority. This argument oversimplifies the fact that the press in Lebanon reflects a multiple of political views ranging from the radical right to the extreme left-wing (see table 3.1), which is a reflection of the political pluralism in Lebanon. In other words, if As-Safir, as a left-wing paper, critically or aggressively opposes the Lebanese government, there are - on the other side - a few right-wing newspapers, which support and are in favour of the government, but which are not necessarily owned or supported by the government at all (see chapters three and nine).

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[22] On 12/05/1993, the Public Prosecution Appellate Court in Beirut closed the publication of As-Safir for one week after the paper had published an Israeli confidential document on the Lebanese-Israeli peace talks in Washington. The Court verified that such information could endanger the national security, according to the articles 12 and 25 of Press Law and articles 281 and 283 of Penal Law. The hearing sessions were conducted on 3 August and 5 November 1993. The verdict was pronounced on 16 February 1994, where As-Safir pleaded not guilty according to the legislative decree 77/104.

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                              ┌──────────────────┐
                              │ Publisher/Owner  │
                              │ Editor-in-Chief  │
                              └──────────────────┘
                                        │
         ┌──────────────────────────────┼──────────────────────────────┐
         │                              │                               │
  ┌─────────────┐            ┌────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
  │   Deputy    │            │ Arab Centre for Information│      │  General     │
  │Editor-in-Chief│          └────────────────────────┘        │  Manager     │
  └─────────────┘                       │                       └──────────────┘
         │                              │                    ┌──────┴───────────┐
  ┌─────────────┐              ┌────────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
  │  Managing   │              │    Manager     │    │ Personnel &  │   │   Public     │
  │ Editor (4)  │              └────────────────┘    │ Accounting   │   │  Relations   │
  └─────────────┘                      │             └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
         │              ┌──────────────┼──────────────┐         │
  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────┐  ┌──────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
  │  Editor (3) │  │ Library │  │ Archive  │ │ Publishing │ │ Advertising  │ │ Circulation  │
  └─────────────┘  └─────────┘  └──────────┘ │   House    │ │(Press Media) │ │(Lebanese Co.)│
         │                                    └────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
  ┌─────────────┐
  │Sub-Editor(4)│
  └─────────────┘
         │
  ┌─────────────┐
  │  Staff (37) │
  └─────────────┘
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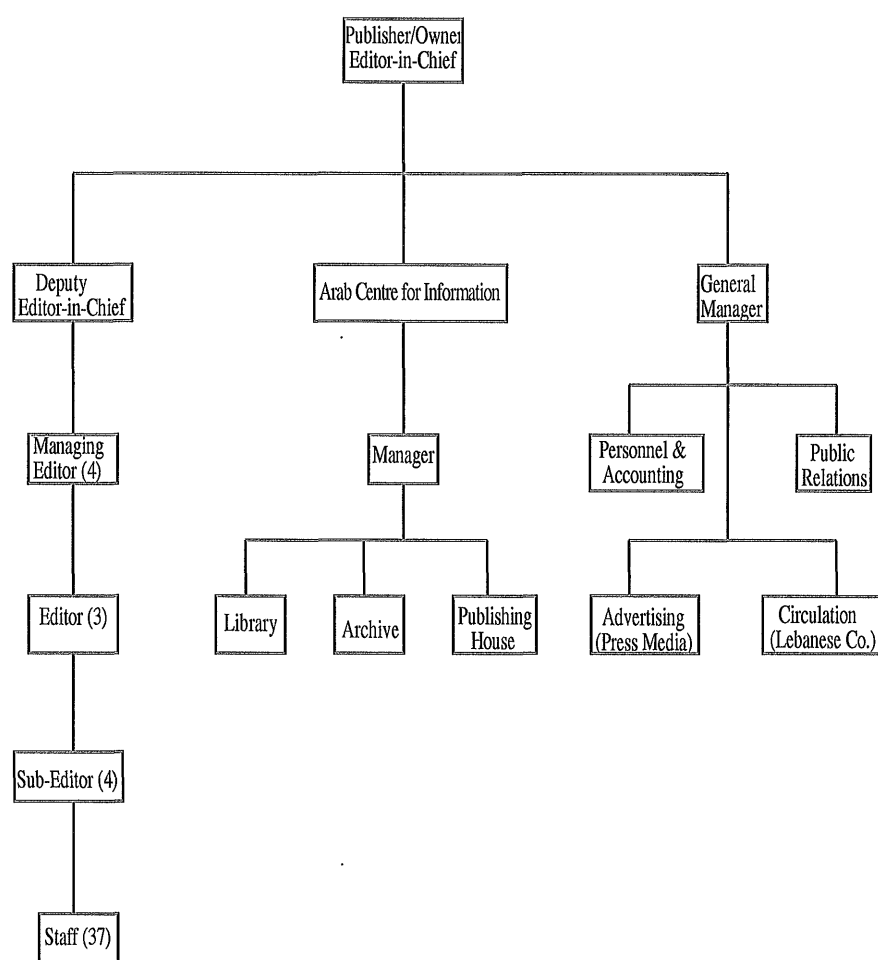
Figure 6.4: News Organisation Chart of As-Safir
(This Chart is based on findings at the time of the research)

B. COMMERCIAL INFLUENCES:
ADVERTISING AND CIRCULATION

In addition to the influence of ownership and control, there are other influences, of a mainly economic or commercial nature. These economic determinants, namely the advertising and circulation, are not the same for the four newspapers. The readership and the market of the London-based Arab newspapers is wider than that of the Lebanese newspapers. Moreover, the advertisements in Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat are different and more numerous than those in As-Safir and An-Nahar. In this section, the commercial influences are discussed in order to examine to what extent these influences affect the newspapers' output, and how such influences differ from one socio-cultural context to another.

B.1. ASHARQ AL-AWSAT:

Asharq Al-Awsat, as a part of the SRP, has its own advertising agency, *Al-Khalijeha*, which processes the advertising work appearing in the newspaper. The advertisements occupy a sizeable space in Asharq Al-Awsat which sometimes reaches 45 per cent of the total space of the 24-page issue (Al-Tunisi, Deputy editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat). The main suppliers of these advertisements are the Saudi government and Saudi business because: "Saudi Arabia is the biggest market in terms of advertising and circulation" (Al-Tunisi, Deputy Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat). This huge amount of Saudi-based advertising in Asharq Al-Awsat comes from Saudi government agencies including petroleum agencies, universities and the royal family members (social announcements such as obituaries and congratulations to the King or other members of the royal family)[23]. The advertising revenue which comes from the government or its agencies is an indirect means of control on the press where: "the general effect of these financial arrangements is to increase their tendency to make their newspapers loyal to the regime" (Rugh, 1979: 80). It was argued in chapter three that legal control and financial support render the press (in the Gulf states) a tool in the hands of the ruling groups. Earlier in this chapter, the relations between Asharq Al-Awsat and the Saudi royal family through political patronage and financial support were discussed, which would make this newspaper similar

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[23] The analysis of the advertisements in Asharq Al-Awsat has shown that they come from different companies. Some of these companies are Airlines (Saudia, Malaysian, Lufthansa), Cars (Toyota, Nissan, Gallant), Electronics (Sharp, JVC, Toshiba, Minolta), Cigarettes (Marlboro, Barclays, Lucky Strike, Hi-Lite, Benson & Hedges), Perfumes, Saudi Companies (SPAC, Riyadh Bank, Saudi House) and some House Advertisements (on the other publications of the SRM). Most of these advertisements are promoted by the Saudi agent of the multinational companies, where the name of the Saudi dealer appears with the advertisement.

to those operating in the Gulf area. In such a situation, the financial support comes indirectly through advertising and subscriptions from government employees (see chapter three).

Do the advertisements affect the content? For the editors of Asharq Al-Awsat, there is no crucial influence on the content itself, except indirectly through the space devoted to the editorial material. The deputy editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat illustrated this control by arguing that the newspaper cancelled an agreement with a Saudi advertiser[24] worth £4 million, because the advertiser wanted to occupy a big space on the front page for a whole year. This cancellation did not affect the newspaper's advertising revenues, and was compensated by other advertisers because in:

> The Arab World there is no big advertiser like Crysler, for instance, in the USA. There are many advertisers. The advertisements cause technical influence on the layout of the editorial material. The newspaper cancelled an offer, because the advertiser decided to control the size and the location of the advertisement. The newspaper is in control, not the advertisers. (Al-Omeir, Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat)

Othman Al-Omeir, Mohammad Al-Tunisi and Yasser Dabbagh pointed out that Asharq Al-Awsat has become a "prestigious newspaper" in the Gulf and other Arab countries, which, in turn, would convince the advertisers of its importance as a medium of promoting and marketing in that area. Moreover, the absence of "advertising cartels" in the Arab World has resulted in a large number of small advertisers, who constitute a continuous revenue for the newspaper. This continuity, in the revenues arriving through a large number of small advertisers, has enabled Asharq Al-Awsat to become selective and to cancel any monopoly by one advertiser. On the international level, the advertising agencies in the Gulf states realised that the publications of the SRP are effective channels for promoting their goods, largely because these publications address such a wide audience in the Gulf region. In this regard, Hackett (1991) noticed that advertisers are interested in audiences of two kinds: the affluent audience, having sufficient disposable income to purchase luxury products, and the mass audience, whose relative lack of purchasing power as individuals was compensated for by its huge size. In the Gulf market, and more particularly the Saudi market, there is an audience of both kinds: a mass-affluent audience. Such an audience is a plump target for international and multinational companies (e.g. cars, cigarettes, perfumes) which use Asharq Al-Awsat as their advertising medium in the Gulf area in general, Saudi Arabia in particular (see footnote 23).

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[24] The same advertiser, Mahmoud Said, is currently co-operating with Al-Hayat, where his advertisements appear on the front page of the newspaper daily.

Regarding the other economic dimension, circulation figures are hard to come by for the four newspapers. The figures given by the newspapers' top-men are not supported by any document as is the case of the press in the West, and need to be questioned. Even though Othman Al-Omeir mentioned that the circulation figures for his newspaper are subject to the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), he didn't provide any document to confirm this claim. Yasser Dabbagh mentioned 260.000 as the daily figure of circulation of Asharq Al-Awsat in the Arab World and abroad. When asked about the percentage of "returned unsold", he mentioned 50-60 per cent in Europe and 20-25 per cent in the Arab World. Nevertheless, these figures and percentages cannot be taken as reliable and the possibility of exaggeration being very real.

B.2. AL-HAYAT:

Unlike Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat publishes only pan-Arab advertisements, whereas the former newspaper publishes mainly Saudi with some pan-Arab advertisements. The pan-Arab advertisements come from big companies, banks and institutions of the Arab World, and from multinational companies (e.g. Omega, Sanyo, Boeing, Toyota, Marlboro) who target Arab audiences[25]. It is generally known that the big banks and companies in the Arab World are mainly Saudi. For Jihad El-Khazen of Al-Hayat, Saudi Arabia is the largest Arab advertising market. So, to cover the losses "which are said to be running at an annual £7 million" (Evans, 1992: 16), Al-Hayat has to depend on the advertisements as a primary revenue with circulation secondary.

The MCG has its advertising agency, Media Force, which promotes and handles the advertising work of Al-Hayat and Al-Wasat. Media Force works in both markets: pan-Arab and international[26]. Al-Hayat aims for a wide readership in the Gulf and in Saudi Arabia in particular. Two objectives are necessary to achieve this: firstly, an editorial line which complies with Saudi rules of censorship, and is in consent with Saudi policy. Secondly, a coverage which addresses the wide audience of Arabs who work and live in Saudi Arabia. A honing, in the tone of the editorial content, is adopted not only to help attract pan-Arab advertisements, but also to adequately penetrate the Saudi market and so provides the advertisers with high persuasive circulation figures:

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[25] The advertisements analysed in Al-Hayat are considerably less than those in Asharq Al-Awsat. Some of these advertisements are companies like Boeing, Renault, Sanyo and Omega. Some Saudi advertisements were found in Al-Hayat during the period of analysis, such as Riyadh Bank, Sage Management and Perfumes (Tiffany, Beethoven) of Mahmoud Said.

[26] In this respect, Al-Hayat Publishing Company has further appointed Tihama Advertising, Public Relations and Marketing as a world-wide exclusive advertising concessionaire for Al-Hayat and Al-Wasat as of July 1, 1994. Tihama's head offices are located in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). This agreement indicates more advertisements from the Saudi and the international market.

> The advertiser, whether American or Japanese, asks you one question: what are your circulation figures in Saudi Arabia? These figures decide the amount of pan-Arab advertisements that you can publish. On the Arab level, the advertising agencies ask about the areas of circulation and the percentage of the Saudi market. (El-Khazen, Editor-in-chief, Al-Hayat; emphasis added)

Al-Hayat's essential strategy rests on sufficient penetration of the Saudi market in order to tempt pan-Arab advertisements. The circulation figures can be increased by avoiding what are taboos and sensitive topics for the Saudi kingdom. In this respect, Al-Hayat's editor-in-chief has argued that advertisements affect the content by setting parameters on what and how to publish certain news. Jihad El-Khazen further argued that the Al-Hayat journalists are "house trained" to avoid any "sensitive topics" or any criticism of the Saudi royal family or Arab allies of the Kingdom (Marlowe, 1992). In this context, a reporter in Al-Hayat said that when a new journalist joins the newsroom, the senior editors give him/her an instruction booklet known as "Do and Do not Write", which tells him/her how to write with appropriate labels and adjectives inoffensive to certain countries or persons.

Al-Hayat also endeavours to appeal to the Arab labour powers in the Gulf states in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular[27]. This can explain the wide coverage (lead stories and editorials) on the Sudanese, Yemeni and Somali groups (see chapter five). In achieving these perspectives, Al-Hayat can 'hit two birds with one stone': covering those groups that work in Saudi Arabia, and becoming the first Arab newspaper for the Arab workers in the Gulf. Furthermore, and most importantly, the newspaper reaches the Saudi and Gulf audience which Hackett (1991) classified such audience as an affluent and mass audience sufficient to provide the multinational advertisers by figures of circulation inside the Gulf states.

This argument leads on to the precise circulation of Al-Hayat. Like other newspapers, the figures given by the editor-in-chief might give an idea, but cannot be taken as reliable. Jihad El-Khazen of Al-Hayat classified the circulation figures of the newspaper into different *historic* periods: before, during and after the Gulf War II. He mentioned that Al-Hayat's figures of circulation before 02/08/1990 (invasion of Kuwait) were 40.000 each day. This number dramatically soared to 160.000 during the first few days of the War. Currently, the circulation figures are not less than 110.000 each day. In this regard, the administrative manager mentioned 120.000 as the current circulation figure, where the "returned unsold" percentage ranges between 30 to 50 per cent. He attributed the decrease

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[27] See for instance the argument of George Sama'an in chapter eight about the reader's interest as criterion for selecting the news.

or increase in circulation figures to the intensity of events and the readers (regular daily reader or merely occasional). Again, these figures cannot be taken as accurate, since they are not endorsed by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), or any official organisation, and there is not any document that supports such claims.

B.3. AN-NAHAR:

As mentioned earlier, the An-Nahar newspaper has shares in other institutions which financially supported the newspaper during the war. The other portion of An-Nahar's revenues comes from its advertising. Before the Civil War, the Lebanese newspapers were channels for the pan-Arab advertising because of their wide pan-Arab readership. During and after the war, the national advertisements (together with a few international advertisements) have been published in the Lebanese press. An-Nahar devotes more space to advertising (e.g. classified, commercial, official) than other dailies (see chapter five)[28]. The large number of national advertisements in An-Nahar is attributed to different aspects. Firstly, An-Nahar is a right-of-centre paper, close to the government and big banks and companies in Lebanon, which are the main providers of advertisements (Dajani, 1992). Secondly, An-Nahar's appeal to the whole Lebanese population, with special emphasis on the Orthodox community, enables the paper to publish the Lebanese advertisements, and not only the sectarian ones as is the case in the left-wing and the right-wing papers. That is to say, a left-wing paper publishes mainly advertisements which come from those who are in favour of its editorial line, and similarly for right-wing papers. As discussed in chapter three, the different political parties prefer to promote their commercial and classified advertisements in papers which orient themselves with their trends. Finally, and most importantly, An-Nahar's newspaper has the main shares in Press Media (see table 6.4), the biggest advertising agency in Lebanon, which distributes advertisements to newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations. In short, Press Media undoubtedly manipulates the advertising market in Lebanon.

B.4. AS-SAFIR:

The economic determinants that influence the As-Safir paper are advertisements and circulation, which have become quite different since the Civil War. The top-men of As-Safir agree that advertising revenues cover a high proportion of the newspaper's costs, probably reaching 80 per cent. Despite this percentage, As-Safir's editor-in-chief confesses that the advertising in Lebanon is politically-oriented because:

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[28] Some of the commercial advertisements are Airlines (Jordanian), Cigarettes (Lucky Strike, Gitanes), Banks (Globe Bank), Drinks (J&B Whisky), Restaurants and Hotels (Coral Beach, Bristol, Cavalier), Job Vacancies in Kuwait and UAE as well as a big number of classified advertisements.

> The advertising agencies in Lebanon are run by Christians with non-Lebanese origins. You have to comply with the advertisers' conditions which (sometimes) contradict with your policy. (T. Salman, Editor-in-chief, As-Safir)

But how does As-Safir achieve this percentage of advertising revenues despite its left-wing and anti-Gulf policy (where the Gulf is the main target for marketing from the international advertisers) without complying with the advertisers' conditions? The general manager of As-Safir argues that the recent political and economic developments, together with the circulation figures of As-Safir as well as the take-over of Press Media as the main advertising supplier have all helped to provide the newspaper with advertisements without alterations in the editorial line[29]. As-Safir is still banned from both circulation and advertising in any Arab Gulf state. The editor-in-chief ironically criticised how the advertisers asked for circulation figures in Saudi Arabia, and considered it as a "political certificate".

The circulation is another economic determinant in both Lebanese papers. It is noticeable that the Arab newspapers (An-Nahar and As-Safir) did not mention their circulation figures[30]. Most of the Arab papers usually exaggerate their circulations and attempt to keep the figures as secret as possible (McFadden, 1953). In all cases, it is an established tradition among most of the Arab editors, not to give accurate figures of circulation, despite their claim that their newspapers are monitored by the ABC. If they provide any figure, it will be very exaggerated:

> **I cannot give you the figures (of circulation). The printed media in Lebanon suffer from a retreat in circulation due to: (1) the huge number of TV and radio stations; and (2) the pan-Arab newspapers which attracted the national reader.** It is said that all the newspapers distributed now equal the same figures as one newspaper before this revolution in media. (Nehme, General Manager, As-Safir; emphasis added)

Yasser Nehme's argument summarises the situation in the other Lebanese daily, An-Nahar, where the editors didn't give any circulation figures. But, how did the daily

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[29] The advertisements in As-Safir are relatively less than in An-Nahar. The two Lebanese newspapers publish the same advertisement because the advertising supplier is the same: Press Media. Some of the advertisements in As-Safir are Airlines (Gulf Air, Egypt Air), Restaurants and Hotels (Coral Beach), Freight and Shipping Companies (DHL), Perfumes (Christian Dior), Drink (Johnnie Walker Whisky) as well as classified advertisements. The main difference between the Beirut papers and the London-based Arab papers is that the former can publish advertisements on Alcoholic drinks where the latter cannot due to the restrictions of such products in the Gulf area in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular.

[30] According to various sources (Rugh, 1987; Europa Book, 1992; Benn's Media Directory, 1990), An-Nahar's circulation figures are 60.000 and As-Safir's figures are 40.000. These figures give an approximate idea, and based on estimated circulation figures during the Civil War (see chapter three: section B).

As-Safir survive the economic strife during the Civil War when the circulation sharply dropped and the advertisements disappeared from the newspaper's pages? In its early years, As-Safir became popular and was widely read in Lebanon and abroad, having high circulation figures. During the Civil War, As-Safir established the ACI, which publishes books, documentaries and chronologies on Arab affairs. Thus ACI provided the newspaper with some resources to help cover the losses incurred during the war.

CONCLUSION:

The London-based newspapers, Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat, are owned, more or less, by Saudi royal family members. In Asharq Al-Awsat, the publishers, the Hafez brothers, are a front for the ownership of the Saudi Princes. Thus authority and policy-making as conducted by the publishers, falls into line with that dictated by the owners who having put down the main guide-lines leave only finer details to the publishers. In Al-Hayat, the editor-in-chief is the publisher and works as a front for the owner, who is a member of Saudi royal family. The degree of Princely-involvement and domination in Al-Hayat is still less obvious than in Asharq Al-Awsat for two reasons. Firstly, the take-over by Prince Khaled bin Sultan is at its earliest stages, whereas in Asharq Al-Awsat it is well-established. Secondly, Al-Hayat is more diverse in terms of its editorial staff and identity. This does not necessarily mean that Al-Hayat can retain this line in future years. The more Al-Hayat complies with Saudi ownership and the Gulf market demands, the more it becomes another version of Asharq Al-Awsat. Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat are competing for increased circulation and advertising in the Gulf. The former newspaper has indeed established and sustained some prominence in the Gulf and some other countries, while the latter paper is competing to have a 'piece of the cake'. Such competition will push Al-Hayat newspaper to become more and more "Saudi-accepted" by both government and advertisers. This inevitably will affect the content. The experience of Asharq Al-Awsat probably foretells how the future of Al-Hayat will become.

There are two kinds of ownership operating in Lebanon: the editor-owner (As-Safir) and the quasi-organisational model (An-Nahar). The editor-owner pattern is found in other Arab countries, where the press is owned by individuals or families, who happen to be wealthy. Some editor-owner newspapers have become an organisation where shareholders have bought shares in an individual project, as with An-Nahar. Even though such newspapers become semi-organisations, they are still dominated by the family of the first owner. For example, An-Nahar's main shareholders are the Tueni family, the Orthodox Church and some small shareholders (who cannot collectively or individually influence in the mainstream of ownership). More interestingly, the change from editor-owner project to an organisation style does not necessarily mean that any shareholder can

buy shares or invest in that company.

The economic determinants differ from one context to another, and from one newspaper to another. Whereas Al-Hayat is trying to please the advertisers by getting increased circulation figures in the Gulf, Asharq Al-Awsat has already achieved some prominence on both: circulation and advertising. A major difference is noticed between Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat. While the top-men of the former admit that the advertising affects the content, the latter's editors argue that the advertising affects only the space and not the content. In Beirut, An-Nahar looks more prominent in advertising and circulation than As-Safir (Dajani, 1992). The impact of the economic factors is not very obvious in the Lebanese press and any Arab national press because such press depends to a large extent on national or domestic advertisements, and the circulation figures are concentrated markedly in the national market. Such factors are more obvious in the London-based Arab press due to the difference in the market and circulation, the market being more open and the circulation figures more dispersed throughout the Arab World and elsewhere.

To conclude, the London-based Arab press, affected by the Western experience, had begun to follow the same path: press barons. The press barons in the Western press are accused of using their newspapers as instruments of political power (Curran & Seaton, 1988). Similarly, the Saudi press barons are using Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat as instruments to convey Saudi foreign policy to the Arabs. Currently, the Arab audience is dominated by the Saudi-backed media: the London-based Arab press, the MBC in London and Radio Orient in Paris: **"The Saudi-backed media feed you a lot of information, but if they become the only source of news, the public will be deprived of a balance of opinion"** (Ghassan Tueni quoted in Marlowe, 1992: 49; emphasis added). This kind of ownership is highly unlikely to experience the Managerial Revolution stage which was the other pattern of ownership and control prevalent in the Western media. The main obstacle is that the Arab press, whether émigré or national, has not made a clear cut distinction between politics and profession. The other problem is that the industrialisation of the Arab press has not given it some independence from being supported or funded from the state coffers. This connection with the state and politics, on the economic level, has viewed the press as a political project rather than a professional one (see chapter three). To understand further dimensions of the interaction between Arab journalists and news sources, the next chapter discusses a micro-level of the news organisation: journalist-news sources interaction in particular and the news gathering process in general.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEWS GATHERING &

SOURCE-COMMUNICATOR INTERACTION

It was argued in chapter two that the internal process of news organisation is central to the studies that focus on the influence of the socio-cultural context. This internal process, or the micro-level of the study of news organisation, deals with the daily journalistic routines which govern the day-to-day activities of the journalists in gathering and writing the news: the processes of news gathering and news selection. While the latter process is discussed in the next chapter, this chapter focuses on the news gathering process in general and on the source-journalist interaction in particular. Before proceeding though, it is essential to present a description of the newsrooms' organisational hierarchy in London and Beirut. Having discussed the macro-level of news production in the previous chapter, a study of the micro-level now beckons. This will identify the differences in the division of labour, the size of organisations and the task of the newsroom personnel. This prepares the way for a discussion of the channels of news gathering used in the newsrooms of: Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat in London, as well as An-Nahar and As-Safir in Beirut. Finally, this chapter focuses on the Arab journalists as news gatherers, and how they view the matter of specialisation. It also studies the kind of relationship that evolves in the interaction between the Arab journalists and their news sources. The conclusion examines the impact of the socio-cultural context on the news gathering process in general, and on the reporter-source relationship in particular.

A. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND HIERARCHY

In chapter six, the four newspaper organisations were discussed (on macro-level) to reveal the structure of ownership and control as well as the economic determinants in the four newsrooms. This section concentrates on the internal structure of the newspapers by looking at the newsroom hierarchy and division of labour. The overview gives an understanding of the matters relating to news gathering and news selection processes. The size and the hierarchical and organisation structure differ from one paper to another. The London-based Arab newspapers have several more office staff than those of Beirut. This is attributed to the fact that the former newspapers operate in London and tend to have a large number of correspondents and bureaux in the Arab World and abroad. The task of London newsroom staff is mainly to gather and edit the incoming news. This is evident when looking at the division of labour in London-based Arab newsrooms. The number of editors and senior editors is relatively greater than found in the newsrooms of Beirut. In the Lebanese papers, the number of personnel is noticeably smaller than those of London,

particularly in the editors and senior editor posts (see table 7.1):

Table 7.1: Journalist Staff of the London-based and Beirut Newspapers[1]

	London-based Newsrooms		Beirut Newsrooms	
Position/Paper	Asharq Al-Awsat	Al-Hayat	As-Safir	An-Nahar
Editor-in-chief	1	1	1	2
Deputy Editor-in-chief	2	-	1	-
Managing Editor	4	1	4	1
Executive Editor	-	-	-	1
Senior Editor	2	3	-	-
Editor	9	7	3	4
Sub-Editor	-	1	4	4
Journalists	20	23	37*	38*
Processors	14	16	11	9
Total	52	52	61	59

Source: Staff lists as provided by the Personnel Departments in the respective newspapers.
* Most of the Beirut-based journalists work on domestic affairs

There are other types of differences between the newsrooms concerning the hierarchy and the allocation of responsibilities. The charts, on the next few pages, show the organisational structure of each newsroom. As mentioned earlier, the number and posts of staff differ between the London and Beirut newspapers, and sometimes from one paper to another either in London or Beirut. Generally speaking though, the London-based newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat is the biggest in size and numbers of personnel (see figure 7.1). On the London-level, Asharq Al-Awsat's newsroom structure shows that the number of managing editors exceeds that of Al-Hayat's newsroom which depends on three senior editors who work under the supervision of a managing editor (see figure 7.2). Furthermore, Asharq Al-Awsat has two deputy editors-in-chief, where other papers have only one (e.g. As-Safir) or none (e.g. Al-Hayat and An-Nahar). In Beirut, As-Safir has a number of staff in different positions to those at An-Nahar (see figure 7.3). The situation of An-Nahar (discussed in chapters six and eight) has the managing editor working as a "One-Man-Show" in the newsroom (see figure 7.4). By contrast to An-Nahar, As-Safir has four managing editors as well as a number of editors and sub-editors. In this respect, the number of staff in the Arab and International Affairs desk in As-Safir's newsroom is distinctly bigger than at An-Nahar's Foreign Desk (see chapter nine).

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[1] This table is based on findings at the time of the research.
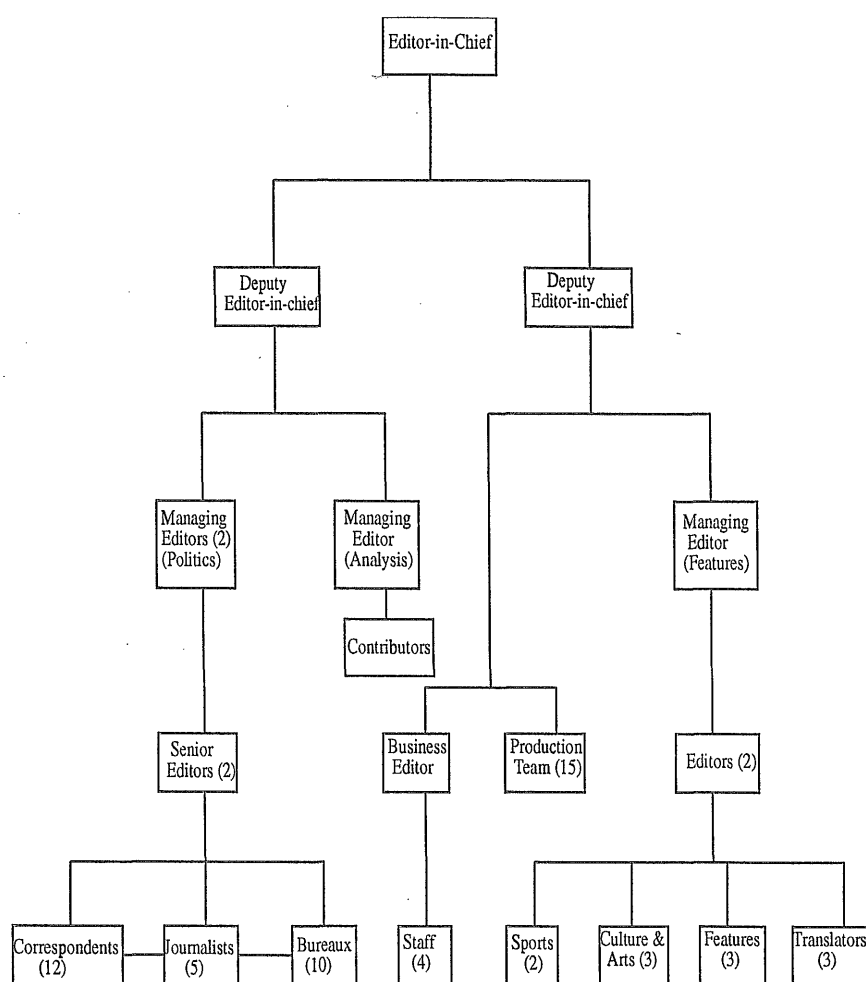
Figure 7.1: Newsroom Organisation Chart of Asharq Al-Awsat
(This Chart is based on findings at the time of the research)

```
                              ┌──────────────┐
                              │Editor-in-Chief│
                              └──────┬───────┘
                                     │
                              ┌──────┴───────┐
                              │Managing Editor│
                              └──────┬───────┘
```
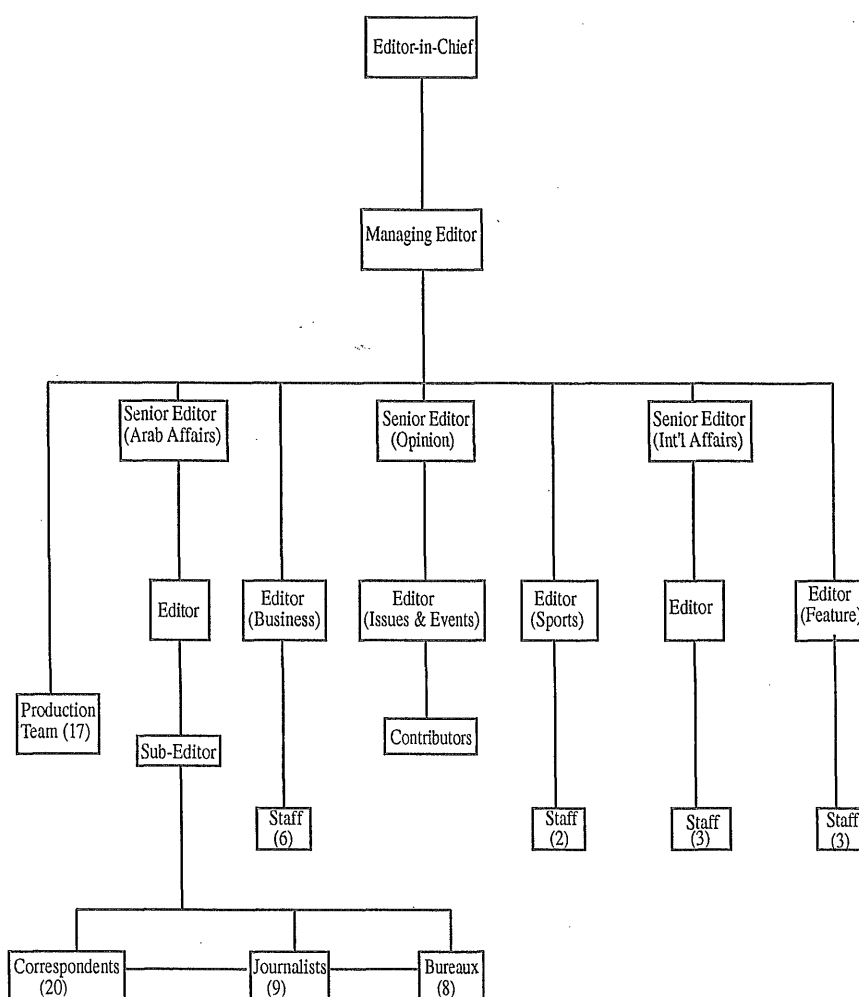
Figure 7.2: Newsroom Organisation Chart of Al-Hayat
(The Chart is based on findings at the time of research)

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                         ┌──────────────┐
                         │Editor-in-Chief│
                         └──────┬───────┘
                                │
                         ┌──────┴───────┐
                         │   Deputy      │
                         │Editor-in-chief│
                         └──────┬───────┘
                                │
   ┌───────────┬────────────────┬──────────────────┬─────────────┐
┌──┴───────┐ ┌─┴──────────┐  ┌──┴──────────┐  ┌────┴──────┐
│Managing  │ │Managing    │  │Managing     │  │Managing   │
│Editor    │ │Editor      │  │Editor       │  │Editor     │
│(Local    │ │(Issues &   │  │(Arab &      │  │(Culture)  │
│Affairs)  │ │Opinion)    │  │Int'l Affairs)│ │           │
└──────────┘ └────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └───────────┘
```

Managing Editor (Local Affairs) — Sub-Editor (2) — Editor (Business) — Staff (5)

Managing Editor (Issues & Opinion) — Sub-Editor — Production Team (12)

Managing Editor (Arab & Int'l Affairs) — Editor

Managing Editor (Culture) — Sub-Editor — Staff (3)

Contributors — Translators (3)

Staff (10) — Correspondents (11)

Correspondents (5) — Journalists (5) — Bureaux (1)

Figure 7.3: Newsroom Organisation Chart of As-Safir
(This Chart is based on findings at the time of the research)

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                                    ┌─────────────┐
                                    │  Publisher  │
                                    └──────┬──────┘
                                           │
                                  ┌────────┴────────┐
                                  │ Editor-in-Chief │
                                  │       (2)       │
                                  └────────┬────────┘
                 ┌─────────────────────────┼─────────────────────────┐
           ┌─────┴─────┐              ┌─────┴─────┐             ┌──────┴──────┐
           │ Managing  │              │  Editor   │             │  Executive  │
           │  Editor   │              │ (Culture) │             │   Editor    │
           └─────┬─────┘              └─────┬─────┘             └──────┬──────┘
```

Sub-Editor (Sports Desk)   Production Team (10)   Sub-Editor (Foreign Desk)   Staff (4)   Editor (Issues Desk)   Editor (Local Affairs)

Correspondents (2)   News Agencies & Radio Monitors (4)   Journalists (2)   Sub-Editor (2)

Staff (3)

Translators (2)   Contributors   Staff (3)   Staff (5)   Correspondents (15)
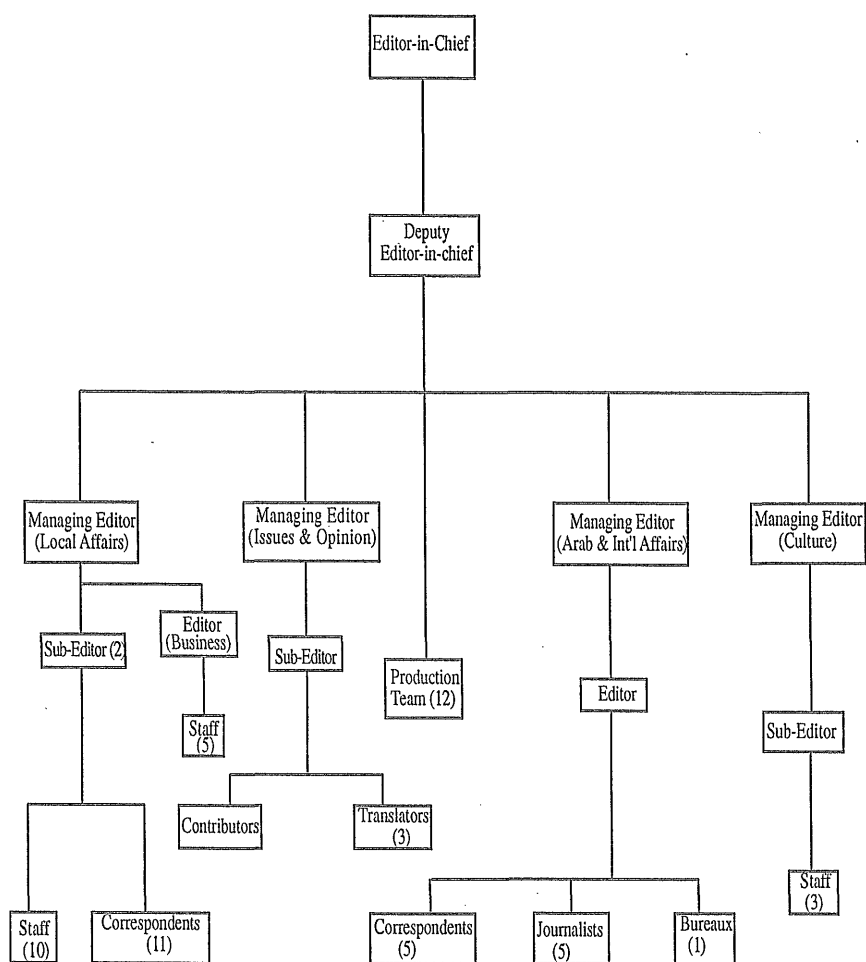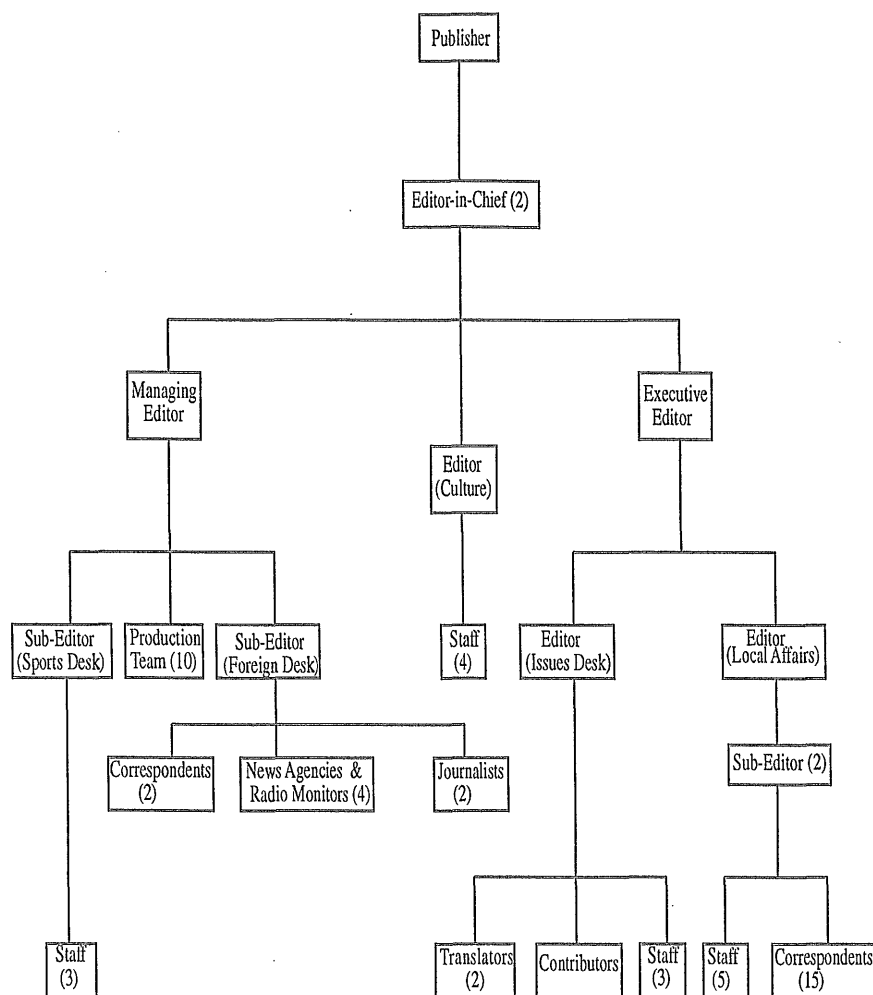

Figure 7.4: Newsroom Organisation Chart of An-Nahar
(The Chart is based on findings at the time of the research)

B. NEWS GATHERING

The site of the ethnographic study was the Arab Affairs Desk (Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat), the Arab and International Desk (As-Safir) and the Foreign Desk (An-Nahar). This covered the gathering and selecting of the news on and of the Arab World, and of Arab affairs. There are differences in the staffing at the Arab affairs desk in the four newsrooms, in terms of number, structure, hierarchy and interests (see chapter nine). There are some differences concerning news gathering channels as well. Primarily these revolve around news agencies, correspondents and news sources. The Arab Affairs Desk in Asharq Al-Awsat, for example, is the backbone of the newsroom being better organised, better equipped and better staffed than the desks of the other newspapers. In Al-Hayat's case, the newsroom is quite different. The Arab Affairs Desk is on much the same par as many of the other desks (e.g. International, Business, Culture Desk). At the Beirut papers, the Foreign Desk of An-Nahar suffers from a shortage of staff and a lack of resources, whereas the Arab and International Desk at As-Safir is well-resourced. Asharq Al-Awsat's Arab Affairs Desk consists of large numbers of staff, bureaux, correspondents, free lance reporters, news agencies and news services. With Al-Hayat, the number of staff and news services is less than that of Asharq Al-Awsat. As-Safir and An-Nahar depend on the news agencies, in the same way, using them as the main source of foreign news. Use of other channels (e.g. bureaux, correspondents) looks distinctly small when compared with the London-based Arab papers:

Table 7.2: News Gathering Channels[2]

Channel/Paper	London-based Newrooms		Beirut Newsroom	
	Asharq Al-Awsat	Al-Hayat	As-Safir	An-Nahar
Bureaux	10	8	1	-
Correspondents	12	20	5	2
News Agencies	7	4	4	4
News Services	4	3	-	-
Specialists	-	-	-	-
Generalists	5	8	5	3

Source: Some relevant documents obtained from the newspapers, and interviews with George Sama'an Managing Editor and Jamal Tassbahji Administrative Manager of Al-Hayat, Mohammad Al-Tunisi Deputy Editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, George Abou Rizk Journalist at An-Nahar and Sati'a Noureddine Managing Editor at As-Safir.

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[2] This table is based on findings at the time of the research, and concerned mainly with the Arab affairs desks in the four newspapers.

B.1. BUREAUX AND CORRESPONDENTS:

Asharq Al-Awsat has a wide network of correspondents, bureaux and stringers as well as its subscription to news services. The newspaper has bureaux in Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Riyadh, Khober), United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Sudan[3], Jordan, Morocco, Washington and Moscow. Each of these bureaux has a number of journalists, as well as those freelance journalists and contributors who write to the newspaper occasionally. In addition, there are correspondents in the following countries: France, Germany, Iraq, Lebanon, Greece, Bahrain, Syria, Mauritania, Kuwait, Qatar and Algeria. The task of the bureaux and correspondents is to provide the Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom in London with more detailed and exclusive news on the Arab World, and so avoid over dependency on news agencies to source news of the Arab World.

Al-Hayat's bureaux are less numerous than those of Asharq Al-Awsat, but actually have more correspondents. Al-Hayat has bureaux in Washington, New York, Moscow, Beirut, Damascus, Bahrain, Jeddah, Cairo (Sama'an, Managing Editor, Al-Hayat), and correspondents in most Arab, some European and some Asian countries (Italy, Belgium, Spain, Greece, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Jerusalem, etc.). In other words, "there is a correspondent working for Al-Hayat in each area where an interest in the Arab World exists" (Tassbahji, Administrative Manager, Al-Hayat). This difference in the number of bureaux and correspondents can be accounted for by the fact that Asharq Al-Awsat has greater access to the Saudi and Gulf countries than does Al-Hayat. This access is evident in the distribution of correspondents and bureaux over the Arab countries. While Asharq Al-Awsat is "Saudi-concentrated" in terms of its news channels, Al-Hayat's network of news channels is more diverse in the Arab World. The accessibility of Asharq Al-Awsat to these countries can be understood through the structure of its ownership and its main connection with the Saudi royal family, which gives the newspaper some prominence (see chapter six). Nonetheless, Al-Hayat's diversity is not actually related to the claim of its top-men on its independence in covering the Arab World, but rests with the argument that the newspaper avoids being overly "Saudi-concentrated" in terms of news channels. In other words, Al-Hayat is targeting the Gulf and Saudi readers and news sources, but achieving this objective depends, to a large extent, on the status of the newspaper in the Gulf and its owners' prominent connections.

For As-Safir and An-Nahar, the situation is quite different from that of their counterparts in London. The number of bureaux and correspondents is distinctly less than

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[3] This bureau was closed by the Sudanese authorities and its chief was arrested in February 1993.

in the London-based Arab press. As-Safir has one bureau in Cairo, which particularly covers news of the Arab World from Egypt because of the political role of Cairo in the pan-Arab politics. As-Safir also has correspondents in Paris, London, Washington, Moscow and Berlin as well as some free lance reporters who write to the newspaper from different countries such as Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan and the Arab Maghreb (Noureddine, Managing Editor, As-Safir). An-Nahar has a correspondent in Paris (who covers western Europe) and another in Washington. The newspaper prefers to dispatch correspondents to the sites of big events as and where they happen. This follows An-Nahar's discouraging experiences with permanent correspondents. In other words, the permanent correspondent "adapts to the beat and becomes like the national journalist of that country" (Akl, Managing Editor, An-Nahar). The limited number of bureaux and correspondents in the Beirut-based press is due to the sizeable costs of bureaux, or permanent correspondents, which the Lebanese newspapers cannot afford. The other reason is that as a consequence of the Civil War there has been a decline in Lebanese readers' interests in Arab affairs, with more concern for domestic affairs. This change in the readership structure changed the newspapers' focus from more widespread coverage of Lebanese and Arab affairs to a predominantly Lebanese focus. This change has eliminated the need for the large number of bureaux and correspondents, which the Lebanese newspapers used to hire before the outbreak of Civil War. In this respect, Ghassan Tueni of An-Nahar, through comparing his newspaper with Al-Hayat of London, argues that:

> I cannot, with my revenues from circulation and advertising, have a bureau in London, Washington, Moscow, New York ... and a building in Kensington[4]. **Besides, it is not convincing that such bureaux (of the London-based Arab newspapers) are funded only by the circulation and advertising revenues.** (Tueni, Publisher, An-Nahar; emphasis added)

The core of Ghassan Tueni's argument attributed the number of correspondents and bureaux to the financial support, which is at the disposal of some London-based Arab papers. This is one side of the argument, where the London-based Arab press has the financial capabilities and resources to cover the news of the Arab World without entirely depending on the news agencies. In the case of the Lebanese press, and most of the Arab national press, a limited number of correspondents are located only in the main capitals of the world leaving a pool of home reporters, who are usually dispatched abroad to cover certain events (e.g. the Arab-Israeli peace conference in Madrid, Spain, November 1991)[5]. The other side of the argument refers to the fact that the London-based Arab newspapers

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[4] Al-Hayat's head offices are in Kensington Centre, Hammersmith, London

[5] During the inauguration of the Arab-Israeli peace conference in Madrid, As-Safir despatched the managing editor of the Arab and International Desk with their correspondent in Paris to cover the conference. An-Nahar also despatched the sub-editor of the Foreign Desk and their correspondent in Paris to Madrid.

are functioning in London far from the site of events (mainly the Arab World). The correspondents and bureaux staff work - in coordination with London-based Arab journalists - to write a comprehensive story. Be that as it may, some correspondents and bureaux have not succeeded in the topical and territorial way to adequately cover news on their beats. Perhaps inevitably there are recurrent problems between the newsrooms of London-based Arab papers and their bureaux and correspondents around the world[6]. Nevertheless, the material of the correspondents and bureaux constitutes the biggest portion of the news story. This accomplishment depends on the staff of London-based Arab newsrooms working on combining correspondents' coverage, news agencies' material and information from their contacts with news sources in different places.

In the absence of such networks of correspondents and bureaux, Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat use mainly the material of the news agencies as does the other London-based Arab daily, Al-Quds Al-Arabi (The Arab Jerusalem). Al-Quds Al-Arabi is not sponsored or supported by any of the Gulf states or royal family members. In fact, the newspaper's editorial line is actually critical of the Gulf states in general, and Saudi policy in particular. This resulted in the authorities banning the newspaper from the Gulf market (see chapter three). Consequently, the lack of sponsors and access to the Gulf market have left the pages of Al-Quds Al-Arabi full of Western agency copy (Evans, 1992). Al-Quds Al-Arabi's reliance on news agencies explains the difference between such a paper and the other London-based Arab papers (e.g. Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat) which can depend on a network of bureaux and correspondents for coverage of Arab affairs.

In the case of the Lebanese press (An-Nahar and As-Safir) the news agencies are the main source of coverage of Arab affairs, with "minor" correspondents' working in very few Arab and western countries. In this respect, the analysis of the author of news in the Lebanese press have revealed that the correspondent/agency is rarely used as a news channel compared to the other two groups of papers (see table 5.7). The situation of the Lebanese press can be extended, to a large extent, to the national press in most Arab countries. Many are similarly constrained by the economic factors and the domination of the domestic concern. In fact, even in countries, where the press is financially strong (e.g. Gulf national press) the newspapers depend on the news agencies as the main source for Arab and foreign news (Rugh, 1987, 1979).

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[6] Some of these problems related to the correspondent himself/herself, others related to the relationship between the London-based Arab newsrooms and the correspondents. These problems are discussed later in this chapter and in chapter eight (see for instance Bishara Sharbel's argument on the "wrong relationship").

B.2. WIRE SERVICES:

The wire service is the other main news gathering channel used by Arab newsrooms both in London and Beirut. The wire service consists of the international news agencies and the news services agencies (mainly US-based news services). In this respect, a difference is identifiable between the newsrooms of London and Beirut. Whereas Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat subscribe to a number of news agencies, An-Nahar and As-Safir, depend totally on only the four international news agencies and a pan-Arab news agency.

The Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom receives material from the news agencies of *Agence France Presse* (AFP), Reuters, Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI)[7] and Dutch Press Agency (DPA), as well as two Arab news agencies: the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) and Qatar's News Agency (QNA). Moreover, the newspaper has an agreement with the news services of The Washington Post (WP), Christian Science Monitor (CSM), The Independent newspaper, and Los Angeles Times (LAT) syndicate[8]. Under the terms of this agreement Asharq Al-Awsat has the right to translate and publish in Arabic any material at the same time as the leading papers in the world (Al-Tunisi, Deputy Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat). For this reason, the newspaper publishes articles written by leading international figures (e.g. Nixon, Gorbachev, Kissinger) as though these articles were exclusively written for Asharq Al-Awsat. This expensive process allows use of the material of the American news services and enables Asharq Al-Awsat to get some international prominence[9].

The Al-Hayat newsroom uses material from the four international news agencies (AFP, Reuters, AP and UPI) and has subscriptions to The New York Times, The Financial Times and Graphics Limited Services[10]. It therefore, unlike Asharq Al-Awsat, does not have a network of wire services. This occurs because Al-Hayat's editors prefer to use the material of the correspondent without first having to refer to the news agencies or news services. In this context, Jihad El-Khazen, George Sama'an and Bishara Sharbel of Al-Hayat emphasised that their newspaper tries to have the news stories of the front page filed, or by-lined, by their correspondents and bureaux, even where it is an international news

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[7] In spite of the MBC owners having bought the UPI news agency and their intention to make it different in terms of coverage or concern, no crucial changes have been made in this news agency.

[8] This includes the publications of US News and World Report, Time Magazine, CSM and Monitor Magazine, LA Times, Global Viewpoint and USA Today.

[9] Mohammad Al-Tunisi, deputy editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, mentioned that his newspaper pays £70.000 as an annual subscription with such news services.

[10] Jamal Tassbahji mentioned that Al-Hayat has subscriptions with ten news services, but he didn't specify which.

story. The analysis of the front page news stories in Al-Hayat has shown that the joint correspondent, as the main author, is considerably appeared. This confirms the intention of Al-Hayat's editors. Despite the fact that the front page news stories are by-lined by the newspapers' correspondents and London-based Arab journalists, most of these news stories originate from the news agencies' agenda of events. As will be discussed in chapter eight, Al-Hayat does not use editorial meetings for establishing its news agenda. This means that the newspaper's agenda of the newsday is mainly that of news agencies. For instance, Al-Hayat's personnel instruct their correspondents and bureaux to elaborate a news story or to investigate certain news coming from their beat through the news agencies. This is quite different from Asharq Al-Awsat, which faithfully relies on both the bureaux and news services' material in filing news stories.

In Beirut, the four global news agencies are the main sources for the coverage of Arab and international affairs, which is a common phenomenon in Third World newsrooms (Golding & Elliott, 1979). But, how do the Arab newsrooms overcome the dominance of these news agencies in the case of Arab affairs? The personnel of the An-Nahar and As-Safir newsrooms argue that the global and pan-Arab radio stations[11] as well as the pan-Arab news agency (the Egyptian Middle East News Agency (MENA)) help to make known sometimes further aspects of Arab affairs which are mainly distributed by the global news agencies. In addition to MENA, there are a few news agencies (Arab and foreign) which are used by the newsroom personnel of An-Nahar and As-Safir. These newsrooms receive the daily bulletins of the news agencies of Syria (SANA), Iran (IRNA and Iran Today), Libya (JANA), Iraq (INA), Kuwait (KUNA), Jordan (Batra), Saudi Arabia (SPA) and the Russian Interfax as well as Palestinian news releases (Abou Rizk, Journalist, An-Nahar; Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir). The content analysis of the two Lebanese newspapers has revealed that the joint agency (as well as other news agencies: AFP, Reuters) is a prominent news channel in the gathering of news (see table 5.7).

These regional news agencies cannot hope to compete with the international ones in their coverage of Arab affairs because of the differences in infrastructure and circulation[12]. The global news agencies are more capable in terms of facilities and personnel of disseminating the news than are the regional or national agencies. But the Arab agencies can add, assure or deny the versions of the AFP, UPI, AP and Reuters. The Arab news agencies help in providing some news on the Arab World that the international news agencies do not include in their service because of time, space or importance. For instance,

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[11] As-Safir and An-Nahar staff monitor the news bulletins of radio stations like: Radio Orient, Voice of Israel, Voice of the Arab (Cairo), RMC, VOA and BBC World Service.

[12] Sahar Ba'asiri of An-Nahar mentioned that the Emirates News Agency (ENA) hires the service of the UPI for three hours every day to send news which is mainly on UAE affairs.

some news stories which come to the An-Nahar and As-Safir newsrooms through the global news agencies as news digest, come in more detail in the Arab news agencies. In the absence of correspondents this would help the newsroom personnel to know more dimensions on the same story. The Beirut journalists consider that the best way to avoid, overcome or face the monopoly of the global news agencies is by using the material of other agencies (Noureddine, Managing Editor, As-Safir), or by re-arranging events in a different way, or referring to MENA for more credibility (Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir). Furthermore, in the case of Arab affairs, the news staff prefer to use the material of the Arab agencies before making use of any foreign ones (Abou Rizk, Journalist, An-Nahar) or at least to compare the news stories of different news agencies with each other (Ba'asiri, Sub-editor, An-Nahar).

In conclusion, the London-based Arab press has the resources and technology to hire, use and subscribe to the main news services in the world, as well as having its network of bureaux, correspondents and stringers. The Lebanese press depends mainly on the four global news agencies with only a minor contribution from the Arab news agencies in general, and MENA in particular. From one context to another the most obvious difference is in the kinds of news gathering channels. The London newsrooms of Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat have a large number of channels when compared with the newsrooms of As-Safir and An-Nahar in Beirut (see table 7.2). On the one hand, the difference in the channels enables the news story of the London-based Arab newspaper to include more exclusive information than those of Beirut. On the other hand, the Beirut newsrooms depend mainly on the four global news agencies, where the news stories on Arab affairs are an AFP filed story or a combination of different agencies (e.g. Reuters, AP) (see chapter five). The common factor between the four newsrooms is that the Arab World is still covered, to a large extent, through the Western news agencies and news services.

Despite the fact that the London-based Arab press (Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat) has a network of bureaux and correspondents in most of the Arab countries, and in many places around the world, this didn't diminish or overcome the dominance of the foreign news agencies in covering the Arab affairs. More interestingly, most of the Arab correspondents are "office-based". They either translate or collect material from the national media and send it to their newspaper as their personal work (Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir), or they send material which is not newsworthy and sometimes misleading as Al-Hayat's Cairo bureau once did[13] (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat). In this context,

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[13] It was on 17/02/1992, when Al-Hayat's bureau in Cairo filed a news story on a meeting between President Mubarak and a Human Rights delegation. The bureau's story mentioned that the meeting discussed the Lockerbie issue, while the news agencies said that the meeting was about the torturing of

Mohammad Al-Tunisi, deputy editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat raised, in an editorial meeting, a matter relating to their correspondent in Syria who had denied that a story on political prisoners in Syria published in Asharq Al-Awsat had come from his beat. The deputy editor-in-chief assured him that the information was obtained from Syrian sources in Damascus. Moreover, some of the correspondents who work for the Al-Hayat or Asharq Al-Awsat newsrooms file stories of the news agency as exclusive material after editing it. In this respect, one of Al-Hayat's journalists told their correspondent in Algiers that Asharq Al-Awsat had published a news story (11/02/1992) from the AFP under the name of their correspondent in Algiers. This occurred in Al-Hayat itself when they rephrased the material of the news agencies and published it as an exclusive material of their correspondent (Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir).

Two points are concluded from the above. First, the Arab correspondent still has to write what the authorities and bureaucracies produce. The correspondents of the London-based Arab newspapers, who are operating in the Arab World, tend to depend on the official sources and their accounts of events. Second, these correspondents do not make much effort to go to the site of events (e.g. the Gulf War[14]), and practice the basic task of any ordinary correspondent (i.e. coverage of the beat). This occurs because: "in the Arab World investigative journalism is very rare", and most of the **"Arab correspondents do no further investigative work on stories they get from news sources treating them as factual and requiring no further investigation"** (Merghani, Managing Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat; emphasis added). However, if investigative journalism was practiced in some countries, whilst being in favour with the official line in some countries, it would inevitably oppose the official line in some other Arab countries. In other words, the London-based Arab papers carried out some investigative news stories and features on certain Arab issues, like the Libyan opposition, the plight of the Kurds, the warring factions in Somalia and the Sudanese opposition. The analysis of the macro-themes (e.g. Arab internal affairs, Iraqi affairs) in the London-based Arab newspapers, has shown that Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat support some Arab opposition groups (see chapter five). This happened because the bureaucracies, in these countries are in a different camp and against Saudi policy (see chapters one and six). To sum up, the Arab

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prisoners in Egypt. When I asked the sub-editor of the Arab affairs desk about which story will be published, his simple answer was none of them. It is because the bureau's news story was misleading, and the newspaper cannot publish the news agencies' material because they will "ban the newspaper in Egypt the next day". The sub-editor criticised the role of such bureaux by emphasizing that the bureaux should send the same news story with a note on its "sensitivity", and the newsroom will decide then what to do, rather than filing such misleading information.

[14] Despite the fact that it was a war between the Arabs, and in the Arab World, the coverage of this war in the Arab media was, to a large extent, a translated version of the global media coverage. An example could explain this matter. During the Gulf War, more than 1500 journalists were based in Saudi Arabia to cover the war, Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat designated one correspondent from their Saudi bureaux to cover the war, whereas other newspapers (e.g. the British newspapers) despatched at least two or three journalists.

correspondents practice investigative journalism in certain countries and on some issues in the Arab World, depending on the relations between these countries and Saudi Arabia (Tueni, Publisher, An-Nahar).

The above arguments lead to two further related issues concerning Arab correspondents as news gatherers in the Arab countries and abroad. Firstly, unlike their foreign colleagues, the Arab correspondents have not become the sole, or even the main, channels in filing the news of and on the Arab World to their newsrooms. This is the case despite of the fact that they have all the necessary facilities at their disposal (e.g. communications, access to sources and events). The wire services take a main role in the filed story of the Arab correspondents in the Arab World. The findings of chapter five have shown that the correspondent/agency, as an author of the news item, in the London-based Arab press, is quite considerable when compared with other press (e.g. the British papers). Such findings have revealed also that the London-based Arab papers use the correspondent/agency, as an author, more than the British and the Lebanese papers (see table 5.7).

Secondly, the case of the Arab correspondents in the West is totally different. The Arab correspondents work in such a way that his/her coverage or analysis is derived mainly from the media outlet of these countries. For instance, the correspondent of any Arab newspaper in Washington sends to his/her newsroom what s/he gets from the US media and news releases. There is not much personal effort or work in the coverage of Arab affairs abroad in countries where there are no restrictions that would limit the work of the correspondent. In other words, the Arab correspondents in most of the Arab countries have to take into consideration the approval of the authorities with regard to the nature of their work. Some countries exercise censorship on the correspondents' material. In the West, the Arab correspondents do not experience, or are not subject to such restrictions while they report the news from one beat or another.

B.3. SPECIALISATION OF THE ARAB JOURNALIST:

It was argued in chapter two that the Western newsrooms are increasingly relying on the specialist journalist as news gatherer, because of "regular supply of material", "quality of information" and "interaction with news sources". However, the matter of specialisation in the Arab press is quite different. Specialisation of the journalists in the Arab newsrooms in London and Beirut is not common yet. In fact, most of the journalists prefer to use the term "interest" or "concern" not "specialisation". While Asharq Al-Awsat's staff supports the specialisation of journalists, Al-Hayat's personnel were reluctant to do so preferring to have journalists with interests in certain areas or issues, and

not acting as a specialised team as such. In Beirut, As-Safir's editors argued that they are in the process of making the specialisation more organised and obvious, whereas An-Nahar's editors argue that journalism in Lebanon failed to create or to have specialised journalists because they cost more money than general journalists. In the wider context, the Arab press, either national or émigré, still lacks specialised journalists when compared with the Western press, such as the British newspapers (see chapter five).

Perhaps the Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom is one which is in the process of establishing specialised journalists on subject and area levels, but this does not apply in the other three newsrooms. The top editors are working on making such specialisation systematic and organised. Othman Al-Omeir, editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, argues that this process first started in the Business and Finance Desk where it was considered successful[15]. Mohammad Al-Tunisi, who agrees with Othman Al-Omeir, considers that the successful experience with the Business and Finance Desk has effected and encouraged the newsroom to apply specialisation to the Arab Affairs Desk in particular, and other desks in general. The newspaper is trying to bring specialisation to the Arab Affairs Desk where there are journalists working mainly on particular areas and subjects including: North Africa, the Arab-Israeli issue, the Gulf and Yemen area and Egypt. In addition, there are two managing editors who work on the Lebanese matters and the Sudanese issues. Although Asharq Al-Awsat's top editors (Atallah, Abou Chakra, G. Sharbel, Awaida, Merghani, Nahhas) argue for the importance of specialisation, stressing that the specialised journalist is able to get exclusive information and better evaluate the information from a news source, they also see a necessity to supplement area/subject specialisation with an alternative. For instance, if a journalist is specialised in coverage of North Africa, s/he must keep an eye on other issues that are related. Other editors think the newspaper should encourage specialisation seeing it as not important but necessary:

> I think it is very necessary ... The newspaper should give the reporter time and resources to follow up in his/her field (e.g. new books, newsletters, clippings, news agencies' material, conferences). In Asharq Al-Awsat, the specialisation is at an average of 40%. It started when the editor-in-chief noticed the interests of the Arab affairs desk reporters, so he classified the staff, according to their areas of interest ... I agree that the journalist should be an expert in the field, but s/he should keep an alternative with his/her main line. (Nahhas, Managing Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat)

On the one hand, Nadim Nahhas, who specialises in matters of science and technology for Asharq Al-Awsat, summarises the viewpoints of the newspaper's editors. On the other hand, how do journalists view this matter? Abdullah Homouda, Ziad

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[15] The staff of the Business and Finance desk has specialised team in the following subjects: the Stock market, Oil, the Saudi economy and a sub-editor who deals with the Arab economy.

Khoza'ai and Hosni Khashaba who are journalists on Asharq Al-Awsat's Arab Affairs Desk argue that the specialisation originated mainly from the interests of the journalists. Apparently, the newspaper did not give much time and resources to enhance the journalists' specialisation. Apart from a few visits to the areas of specialisation, the journalists consider that their specialisation is not "well-planned", and needs "more organising" to become fully effective.

In Al-Hayat, the editors and journalists have a different view from that seen at Asharq Al-Awsat. On the one side, Jihad El-Khazen, editor-in-chief of Al-Hayat, considers that there is already a "sort of specialisation" at the top-editors level: the editor-in-chief works mainly on Saudi and US affairs, the managing editor works on Lebanon and Syria, one senior editor on Yemen and the Palestinians and another senior editor on Kuwait. It is a sort of area specialisation. Although George Sama'an, however, points to Al-Hayat's plan to establish a specialised team of journalists, he considers the *de facto* situation as a kind of "concern" from the journalists' side:

> Our plan is to establish a specialised team of journalists on different areas
> and subjects. In Al-Hayat's newsroom, there are no journalists who have
> academic backgrounds on a particular area or subject. There are, for
> instance, colleagues who have concerns with certain areas, countries and
> issues, where they pursue developments in these areas or issues. (Sama'an,
> Managing Editor, Al-Hayat)

On the other side, the editor of the Arab Affairs Desk and his sub disagree with the points of view of the top editors. Maher Othman, editor in Al-Hayat, considers the existing specialisation on his desk as "arbitrary and random" and thinks it is better to keep the current situation (journalists with changing concerns and interests)[16]. The sub-editor of the desk goes further, however, and actually considers the specialisation of the journalist as a disadvantage to the desk:

> I do not believe in complete specialisation. It is important to know in detail
> about a subject, but not to be specialised in that subject ... There is a
> journalist who is specialised (in certain subject), and it is not possible to
> consider him as a part of the Desk. He does not write any news story or
> analysis on any other area or subject. One of the advantages of a specialised
> journalist that it is most likely to provide the desk with exclusive news. If
> they decide to have a specialisation on the Desk, they should increase the
> number of staff, in order to cover for the frequent absence of the specialised
> journalist, who should travel and visit the area of specialisation to meet
> news sources, to establish contacts and know more about the background of
> the area or subject. (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat)

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[16] Maher Othman prefers that the staff of his desk should stay as they currently work. There is a journalist who works on the African Horn and Somalia, two on Sudan, one on Jordan and the Palestinians, one on Iraq and the Kurds, one on the Algerian situation and the other three work on these subjects during the weekly days off of the their colleagues.

On the level of the journalist, Yousif Khazem, who specialises on the African Horn
and Somalia, compares his experiences as both a generalist and specialist. As a generalist
reporter, he used to write on different subjects without any exclusive information, where
now he tries not to use the news agencies material and is able to write correctly the names
of people and regions, and to evaluate the news in the area of his specialisation. To sum
up, the different arguments in Al-Hayat show that the experience of the specialised
journalists can be enhanced and encouraged. The overall number of staff at Al-Hayat's
Arab Affairs Desk (8 journalists, a sub-editor, an editor and three senior editors) makes it
possible to the newspaper to establish a specialised team. But, despite the relatively big
number of staff at the Desk, Al-Hayat's editors are reluctant to establish a specialised team.
As understood from the argument of Bishara Sharbel, the only specialist journalist at the
desk is "not a part of the desk". The other matter is that the editor his sub are not
specialists. Thus makes the specialist journalist professionally better than his/her editor. In
other words, Maher Othman or Bishara Sharbel do not have the same background or
contacts with sources in the African Horn and Somalia like that of Yousif Khazem. If the
other members of the desk become specialised in different subjects or areas then the editors
have to do more work to cope with their staff's specialisation.

In Beirut, the Foreign Desk at An-Nahar suffers from a shortage of staff, a problem
not encountered on As-Safir's Arab and International Desk. Françios Akl, managing editor
of An-Nahar, actually considers that the newspaper had reached the "peak of specialisation"
among its staff before 1975, when the Foreign Desk used to have a specialised team, that
worked on different Arab and international areas and subjects. Currently, the situation is
totally different, where the desk lacks the sufficient staff (see chapters six, eight and nine)
and there are journalists who work on different subjects in the other desks and "we cannot
claim that they are specialised journalists" (Akl, Managing Editor, An-Nahar). But
Edmond Saab relates the absence of specialised journalists to economic reasons:

> **The press did not practice the talents counting procedure to
> attract those of an academic background to become specialised
> journalists.** Besides, the difference in average salaries between the press
> and other fields was a main reason where it did not encourage such people
> to work in press. For instance, a person who holds an MA in economics
> would get a better job and salary if s/he worked for a bank rather than a
> newspaper. (Saab, Executive Editor, An-Nahar; emphasis added)

In As-Safir, the number of staff at the Arab and International Desk more than that of
An-Nahar, which would affect the specialisation (or the interests) of journalists. As-Safir's
top-editors (Noureddine, F. Salman, Mashmoushi) argue that specialisation is a condition
of the profession, but they admit that experience with specialisation is still "not obvious".

There is an intention to enhance the specialisation of journalists[17]. In this respect, the deputy editor-in-chief of As-Safir claims to be working towards enhancing the specialisation at the Arab and International Desk after having achieved some success at other desks (e.g. Domestic Affairs, Economy, Sports):

> We are in the process of assigning the main issues in the world to the staff of the Arab and International Desk, where each journalist follows up one main issue (see footnote 17). We are trying to activate specialisation of the Desk, but the shortage of staff and the changes at the Desk, where some journalists left, have hampered our attempts. (Mashmoushi, Deputy Editor-in-chief, As-Safir)

The arguments of As-Safir's editors show that the newspaper is in the process of making specialisation at the Arab and International Desk more obvious, because the specialist journalist improves the quality of the work within a limited time and effort (Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir). The experience of An-Nahar and As-Safir in the field of specialisation shows that the two newspapers consider this in terms of interests and concern, not in terms of specialisation. There is a distinct difference between the two newsrooms, because An-Nahar's Foreign Desk does lack staff. In this context, the sub-editor of the Foreign Desk mentioned that she works on different subjects and stories in the newsday (e.g. Libya, Palestinians, Kurds, former Yugoslavia), which causes "mental stress and confusion" as she moves from one subject to another. At the Arab and International Desk of As-Safir, the situation is comparatively better, where the staff is mainly designated to work on specific issues or countries.

It has been found the Arab newsrooms in London and Beirut still lack the specialist journalist as news gatherer. Unlike the Western press, the phenomenon of specialist journalist is not common in the Arab press. In the course of chapter two, it was argued that the specialist journalist has the ability to deal with news sources, attract large audience and a greater advertising. In the absence of such journalists in the newsrooms of Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar and As-Safir, the interaction with news sources remains in the boundaries of generalities, and this inevitably affects the quality of information. Although the editors agree that specialisation is "necessary" and a "condition of the profession", the current situation shows that the four Arab newsroom still depend on the generalist journalists and news agencies as main channels in news gathering (see table 5.5).

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[17] Sati'a Noureddine, managing editor in As-Safir, considers that the staff of the desk are classified into different issues/countries, as he works on the Arab-Israeli issue, so the editor works on Islamic issues, a journalist works on the CIS, another journalist on the Palestinian issue, and two new journalists work on the news digest and some international news stories.

C. SOURCE-JOURNALIST INTERACTION

The third section of this chapter discusses the matter of news sources and their daily interaction with the Arab journalists in London and Beirut. It focuses on how the Arab journalists define news source and on the kinds of relationship which characterise interaction between the journalists and their news sources.

C.1. NEWS SOURCES:

The difference in context and perspective between the London-based Arab press and the Arab national press leads to a difference in concern and coverage. The London-based press deals with most of the Arab issues, whereas the Lebanese press - as a national press - focuses primarily on domestic issues with Arab and international news relegated to a secondary role. The geographical diversity in news coverage means that the news sources of the London-based Arab papers, Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat, are more diverse. In the Lebanese press, As-Safir and An-Nahar, and indeed in other Arab national press, the news sources are mainly national with a few accessible international Arab or foreign sources.

It is a common trend in the Arab press in most countries, whether national or émigré, to depend mainly on official sources in the coverage of Arab affairs (see chapter three). The news about non-official sources in the Arab press is marginalised and usually comes after the viewpoints of the bureaucracy (see chapter five). As with the press in other countries, the dependency on government agencies, as the major sources of news, can be attributed to the fact that the Arab press remains engaged to the hierarchy of authority. This engagement - with the official sources as the primary definers - means that press adopts a "bureaucratic account of events" (see chapter two). Unlike the Western press, the Arab journalists do no further investigative work on stories, accepting them at face value and treating them as factual. Moreover, the lack of specialist journalist, as a news gatherer, makes it is difficult for the Arab newsroom to evaluate the quality of information provided by the official sources. For instance, during the coverage of the on-going conflict between the Algerian government and the Islamic movements, Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat were mainly in consent with the accounts given by Algerian officials, ambassadors and politicians of the Arab World. The non-official sources such as opposition groups or experts were only rarely quoted in the Arab press and where they were quoted they would be marginalised. It was found in the content analysis of the London-based Arab papers that their newsrooms rely mainly on official sources, where they were quoted 18.9% and the opposition groups 1.1%. The same case was found in Beirut papers, where official

sources quoted 15.6% and opposition 1.8% (see table 5.12).

The journalists interviewed in the London and Beirut newsrooms tended to depend principally on officials: the personnel of bureaucracies, as their news sources like ministers, diplomats (Atallah, Deputy editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat) and chiefs of staff (Homouda, Journalist, Asharq Al-Awsat). The main news sources were those close to decision-making circles, or officials in the government agencies in the Arab World or abroad (Khashaba, Khazem, Dou Ena'am, Saab, Ba'asiri, Noureddine, Mukahal). However, before discussing the journalist-news source interaction in the Arab press, it is essential to understand how these journalists define the news source. In this respect, most of the editors and reporters attributed the definition of the news source to its closeness from the decision-makers and bureaucracies:

> A news source could be a member of the decision-making circle, or close to that circle. This source usually gives the journalist some information (and sometimes clues or hints) in order to understand an event, to analyse that event, or to know more about the background of the event itself. (Badrakhan, Senior Editor, Al-Hayat)

The journalists of Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat, agree with such a definition. They classify the news sources as follows: an official in a government or international organisations[18] (Khazem, Journalist, Al-Hayat), or diplomats and politicians who witnessed certain events or participated in them (Khairallah, Senior Editor, Al-Hayat), or an agency in the government (Dou Ena'am, Journalist, Al-Hayat). In Asharq Al-Awsat, the journalists have the same notion of news sources, where they consider news sources are mainly ministers or ambassadors (Atallah, Deputy Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat), officials in government agencies (Homouda, Journalist, Asharq Al-Awsat), officials in the Foreign Office and State Department or even the US White House (Khashaba, Journalist, Asharq Al-Awsat) or an official who knows more about events (Abou Chakra, Senior Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat). These news sources can be classified generally in one category: official sources. Most of the journalists were inclined to rely predominantly on official sources, and to refer to non-official and other kinds of news sources only in a marginal way. The content analysis of the London-based Arab papers has revealed that official sources (e.g. Arab, Israeli, foreign) constitute 69.5% of all sources and 70.3% of all primary sources (see tables 5.11 & 5.12). But, why do the Arab journalists, and in particular the London-based Arab journalists, rely mainly on official sources as primary definers of events?

For these journalists, official sources give the story more credibility (Othman,

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[18] Such organisations as the United Nations, the African Union Organisation or the Arab League.

Editor, Al-Hayat; G. Sharbel, Managing Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat). Official sources have preference because of the quality of information, which enables journalist to know more about events (Khashaba, Journalist, Asharq Al-Awsat). In the matter of quality, Abdullah Homouda of Asharq Al-Awsat considers that the non-official sources are less important because they are "not close to the decision-makers", and thus, the quality of their information is more general and more questionable. This reliance on official sources can be attributed to the argument that officials cannot lie openly, and hence are more credible and trustworthy. They also have the resources to process tailored information (Ericson et al, 1989; Gans, 1979). But, the explanation for official sources in the Western press cannot be applied to the Arab press. As mentioned earlier, the Arab journalists do not scrutinise the validity of the information provided by the official sources, because in the Arab press in general:

> **There is not much work on the verification of the news, because most of the Arab newspapers do not prioritise the matter of verification** when it comes to the background of events or information provided by news sources, whether official or non-official. (Badrakhan, Senior Editor, Al-Hayat; emphasis added)

In the Beirut newspapers, the news sources tend to be similar to those of the London-based Arab papers. The journalists in Beirut tend to rely exclusively on official sources as primary definers of events. It was found that the As-Safir and An-Nahar newsrooms rely mainly on the official sources, where such sources constitute 61.0% of all news sources and 68.2% of all primary sources (see tables 5.11 & 5.12). However, some of these journalists considered the "scarcity of news sources" for the Arab and Foreign Desks of the As-Safir and An-Nahar newsrooms, as an obstacle to contact either official or non-official sources. Faisal Salman, managing editor of Domestic Affairs at As-Safir, argues that official sources are the main sources for the Desk because of the "quality of their information and the nature of their contacts and positions". Edmond Saab, executive editor in An-Nahar, agrees with Faisal Salman's views on the reliance on the official sources in the first place, but he considers that some of the sources' information cannot be taken for granted, and journalists have to take this into account. The journalists on the Arab and International Desk at As-Safir and the Foreign Desk at An-Nahar mentioned that they depend mainly on official sources, such as representatives from the ministry of foreign affairs and Arab and foreign diplomats in Beirut (Noureddine, Managing Editor, Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir; Abou Rizk, Journalist, Ba'asiri, Sub-editor, An-Nahar).

The arguments of the London-based and Beirut journalists show that a paramount reliance on official sources and they act as primary definers of events. The journalists believe that such reliance takes place because bureaucracies can feed the newsrooms with

an amount and quality of information that other sources cannot match. This reliance on official sources' accounts is problematic because, as discussed earlier, the Arab journalists do not scrutinise such information by checking it with other sources. This occurs because the Arab press do not "prioritise the matter of verification" in news provided by bureaucracies (Badrakhan, Senior Editor, Al-Hayat).

C.2. SOURCE-JOURNALIST INTERACTION:

Most of the Arab journalists interviewed, adopted the position that they are in control of their interaction with news sources. The journalist works as a "filter" to the news source information, has the "upper hand" and controls the information of news sources by "way of presentation". The journalist after all has the "final say" (Al-Tunisi, Merghani, Homouda, Asharq Al-Awsat; Badrakhan, Khairallah, Othman, Al-Hayat). Other journalists consider the relationship a "complicated one" in both ways (Khairallah, Senior Editor, Al-Hayat) and journalists have to "avoid troubles or problems with news sources" (G. Sharbel, Managing Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat). Avoiding troubles, or the consequences of the "complicated relationship" with news sources, renders the Arab journalist a "conduit" of the implicit ideology of news sources. As they rely mainly on official sources, the Arab journalists in effect transmit the bureaucratic account of events. This reliance has implications for the interaction between the journalists and their sources:

> **There is a non-objective, non-professional relationship between Arab journalists and their news sources** ... There are no political norms or social values that news sources would respect in their dealing with journalists ... Such journalists have to deal with the sources information in a cautious manner, to avoid the angry response of the source. **This occurs because freedom of information exchange in the Arab World is not widely exercised.** For example, if a journalist gets exclusive news, s/he has to write the story in such a way as to avoid the sources' negative response and thereby not cause the journalist any troubles. (Badrakhan, Senior Editor, Al-Hayat; emphasis added)

This case summarises the interaction between the Arab journalists and news sources in the Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat newsrooms . In this respect, it is worth mentioning that these papers have acquired greater privileges than their national counterparts due to their ownership and wide readership in the Arab World and abroad. Such privileges have impact on these newspapers' interaction with news sources by giving their journalists "upper hand" in their dealings with news sources. Nevertheless, the contradictory viewpoints of journalists give different conclusions, and show a "double standard" in dealing with news sources' accounts. It was argued, in different places in this thesis, that the London-based Arab newspapers adopts a "double standard" in the coverage of Arab affairs. There is a wide coverage to the opposition groups of certain Arab countries (e.g.

Iraq, Sudan), accompanied by undermining the official sources' accounts of these countries. Such a duality in coverage attributed mainly to the influence of the socio-cultural context on the Arab press organisations in London. In the analysis of a few macro-themes in chapter five, it was found that the Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat newspapers are presenting the Arab affairs in a way that resonate with the cultural themes of the conservative dominant ideology. Furthermore, the economic base (through the ownership) of the Saudi royal members and the Gulf market (as a target for circulation and advertising) affect the newspapers' dealing with the news sources' accounts on Arab affairs. Thus creates this discrimination between news sources' accounts. In short, the "upper hand" on the news of Iraq, Libya and the Sudan is exercised by emphasising the non-official sources' accounts, and undermining the official points of views. The "double standard" in dealing with official news sources and their accounts depends, to a large extent, on the nationality of these sources and relations with newspapers' owners (see chapter six).

In contrast, the journalists of the Beirut newspapers (As-Safir and An-Nahar) have a different perspective from that of their colleagues in London. They argue that news sources (mainly official) have control in the interaction with journalists because:

> There is no natural access to the information in Lebanon. All that is published in the newspapers is a sort of leak from news sources, which most of the time are not close to the decision-making process. The journalists (in Lebanon) are not easily able to reach the President or the Prime Minister circles. Despite being an open society, we are facing difficulties in getting information or documents from the bureaucracies. (Saab, Executive Editor, An-Nahar).

Edmond Saab's argument shows that the Lebanese journalists - in dealing with sources - have to rely mainly on official sources, which are sometimes not readily accessible. Although Edmond Saab points to the difficulties in getting information, the access to news sources (official and non-official) differs from most other Arab countries. It was argued in chapter three that the Lebanese press is comparatively more open. This relative "openness" - which is not practiced in other Arab countries - reveals that the Lebanese press has access to a broader account of events, from either or both official and non-official sources. In such countries, the government agencies constitute the main sources for national news, and control the incoming news from news agencies and correspondents through their control on the press organisations. This kind of control, concerning the interaction between news sources and journalists, has implications for the news content itself, by being the government's account (see chapter three). In other words, the reliance on the non-official sources in the Arab national press appears to be minimal, and yet in some countries the non-official sources' account should be used to support the official point of view, not to oppose it or to criticise it (Rugh, 1987). Other

journalists admit that there are limited sources providing the Arab and Foreign Desk with information, because there has been a "decline" in the number of news sources since the 1982 Arab-Israeli war[19]. The very few available news sources remaining (e.g. diplomats or experts) in Beirut are not easily accessible by journalists of the Arab and international news (Ba'asiri, Sub-editor, Abou Rizk, Journalist, An-Nahar; Noureddine, Managing Editor, Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir).

Finally and unlike the Western media, news sources do not impose sanctions on Arab journalists[20] (G. Sharbel, Merghani, Homouda, Khashaba, Asharq Al-Awsat; Othman, Dou Ena'am, Khazem, Al-Hayat; Saab, Ba'asiri, Abou Rizk, An-Nahar; F. Salman, Noureddine, Mukahal, As-Safir). For the London-based Arab journalists the regular news sources do not impose sanctions because they know the journalist, the "newspaper's policy" and the "limits of publishing in the Arab World". The other reason lies in the fact that the journalists tend to "avoid troubles" with the news sources, and consequently keep their relations with such sources on good terms. On the national level, the Arab journalist operates in an interaction where the news sources are "in control". In such a situation, the Arab journalists tend to keep their relationships with their news on good terms by taking their side (e.g. avoid publishing controversial or sensitive matters related to the concerned sources).

CONCLUSION:

This chapter has shown that the news gathering process differs from one newsroom to another depending on the news channels used. Asharq Al-Awsat's large number of bureaux, correspondents and wire services provides its newsroom with an influx of information on the Arab World. Even though Al-Hayat uses the same channels of news gathering, its number of news channels is less that of Asharq Al-Awsat. The similarity between these two newspapers lies in the matters of ownership and funding, where the owners provide financial support, which enables the two newspapers to establish a network of bureaux and correspondents and to hire the service of the main wire services as and when required (see chapter six). Flexibility rests with the infrastructure at their disposal. The Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat newspapers are competing, not only in the market (circulation and advertising), but also in news gathering as well, by trying to get

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[19] During 1982, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) leadership was forced to move from Beirut. This led to a decline in Arab and international interests in the political developments in Lebanon. Consequently, most of the Arab and foreign news sources left Beirut in that period, a decision made easier by the on-going Civil War and the hostage-taking of western diplomats and journalists in Beirut.

[20] Tunstall (1971) has noticed that the news sources have the power to impose sanctions on the journalists. Such sanctions include: elimination from mailing list, prohibition from attending briefings, prohibition from attending press conferences and supplying with false or unreliable information in order to undermine the journalist with his editors (see chapter two).

more exclusive information from and on the Arab World.

The An-Nahar and As-Safir newspapers, as with most Arab national newspapers, use the same channels in gathering the news: the four global news agencies for two reasons. First, the An-Nahar and As-Safir newsrooms cannot financially afford to establish a network of bureaux and correspondents in the Arab World and abroad, because they do not have the same resources (as the London-based Arab papers) derived either from advertising, circulation or ownership. Second, the national papers devote their coverage and analysis mainly to national current affairs with less emphasis on foreign affairs. For instance, the As-Safir and An-Nahar papers devote three pages out of 16 to the coverage of Arab and international affairs. The news on these pages has to fulfil certain news values in order to be included. In this regard, Faisal Salman, managing editor at As-Safir, argues that most of the Lebanese readers show more interest in their issues than in developments in other Arab or foreign countries. The limited resources and the readers' interests make the Lebanese papers limit the location of their correspondents to certain cities (e.g. Paris, Washington, Cairo), and thus they depend on the international and Arab news agencies for the coverage of Arab issues. It was concluded from the argument given by the Beirut journalists that the London-based Arab press is taking over the Arab and international pages in the Arab national press. The national readers (e.g. the Lebanese) are inclined to read Al-Hayat in the fields of Arab and international news (Akl, Managing Editor, An-Nahar; Noureddine, Managing Editor, As-Safir)

Asharq Al-Awsat appeared to be the only newspaper which is working towards specialised journalists for different desks. By contrast, Al-Hayat's editors are not in favour of establishing a specialised team in their newsrooms. These editors preferred the staff to work on different areas or subjects instead of assigning journalists to specific areas or subjects of specialisation. In the Beirut papers, the shortage of staff on An-Nahar's Foreign Desk constitutes the main reason for not establishing specialised beat. The small number of staff work on different news stories at the same time[21]. In the other Lebanese paper, As-Safir, the editors work to establish a specialised team at the Arab and International Desk.

In London, and the bureaux abroad, the personnel of Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat have the communications access to news sources such as officials in the Arab World and abroad, experts on the Middle Eastern affairs and Arab opposition groups (Nahhas, Managing Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat; Khazem, Journalist, Al-Hayat). An-Nahar and As-

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[21] Sahar Ba'asiri, Sub-editor in An-Nahar's Foreign desk works on different news stories on the same day (i.e. Libya, Palestinians, Somalia, former Yugoslavia). The same applies for the other two journalists.

Safir have neither the access (in terms of communication facilities) nor the freedom (despite press laws being comparatively open) to news sources. The physical access to news sources, in turn, influences the content. Such access enables the London-based Arab journalists to get exclusive information from sources close to decision makers or events. This case is not common in the Beirut papers (An-Nahar and As-Safir), which rely mainly on the news agencies' material.

Having discussed the news gathering process, the next chapter focuses on the news selection process. The chapter examines the role of the Arab editors in deciding what news should published and the criteria for newsworthiness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NEWS SELECTION &
THE EDITOR'S ROLE IN SHAPING NEWS

In the previous chapter, the process of news gathering was discussed in such a way as to understand the extra-organisational dimension of the social organisation of news work. The news gathering process includes core aspects of journalistic practices which govern journalists' day-to-day activities. Such a process is complemented with the intra-organisational dimension: namely the news selection process. In order to fully understand the influence of socio-cultural context on news production, this chapter presents a study of the process of news selection in the newsrooms of the London-based Arab papers: Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, and the Lebanese dailies: As-Safir and An-Nahar. Based on the observation, interviews, and the content analysis findings, this chapter explores four concerns: First, how the news selection process is carried out in the four newsrooms? Second, who it is that decides what news should be published and what the role of the gatekeepers (or copy tasters) and the editors is in selecting the news? Third, what are the news values or criteria for newsworthiness. Finally, what kind of relationship, that takes place between the journalist and editor during the editing and writing the news, and how do the Arab editors and journalists view this relationship.

A. NEWS SELECTION

The mechanism of news selection is not the same in all four newsrooms. The Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir newsrooms employ editorial conferences: one in the morning and another in the early evening. The An-Nahar newsroom does not use any kind of editorial meetings, while the Al-Hayat newsroom convenes a semi-editorial meeting twice a week, or when the editor-in-chief is available. In this respect, the degree of access to attend such editorial procedures, varied from one newspaper to another. Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir gave full access to join the editorial meetings. Al-Hayat denied access to the very few meetings held during the period of study. However, an informant explained the mechanism of such meetings. An-Nahar, not having any sort of editorial meetings, relies on continuous discussions and consultations between the managing editor and staff.

A.1. EDITORIAL CONFERENCES: DECIDING WHAT'S NEWS

Golding and Elliott (1979) argue that editorial conferences signify the degree to which news is arranged and selected *a priori*. However, the daily repetitiveness and limited

outcome of such conferences point to the unchanging nature of these *a priori* choices. The situation differs in the four Arab newsrooms. Two newsrooms (Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir) conduct daily editorial meetings, whereas the other two (Al-Hayat and An-Nahar) do not. To understand how the process of arranging and selecting the news takes place, the process of news selection was examined in the four newsrooms.

Asharq Al-Awsat convenes a morning editorial conference at around 10:30 a.m., which is usually chaired by the editor-in-chief and attended by the newsroom staff. The attendants discuss the issue of the newspaper with comments on each section, and instructions from the editor-in-chief to the concerned staff about published work. The attendants, then, start discussing issues of the day: political, economic, sports, etc. After half an hour, the general meeting adjourns, and the political meeting starts. This meeting, or "the cabinet" (Al-Omeir, Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat), is attended by the deputies of the editor-in-chief, the managing editors, the senior editors and the journalists of the Arab Affairs Desk. The "political meeting" discusses the political issues of the day, with suggestions from the staff on how to follow up some news stories (e.g. contacting the correspondents, news sources).

During the period of study, the situation in Algeria was on top of the agenda. The discussions, of the general meeting, were about how to cover the issues of President Bin Jadid's resignation and the elections in Algeria[1]. The editor-in-chief instructed a managing editor to ask their correspondents in Tunis, Rabat, Cairo, Paris and Algiers to send in their stories. Then discussions and suggestions came from the editors and reporters, with an editor suggesting writing a story about the role of the Arab masses and a reporter suggesting a news story on the Islamic movements and parties in the Arab World. The editor-in-chief did not agree with this, instead he asked for a story on religious parties in Israel, Turkey and Pakistan, and the role of such parties in the political arena. The attendants went through the other subjects of the newspaper's issue. The editor-in-chief commented on each of the subjects, either praising a section or reporter or criticising another section or journalist. Typical of the editor-in-chief's comments were: the layout of the front page is bad, the layout of page four is not good, the international affairs page is excellent, the economy and sports pages are good, the back page is not good and so on. They also spoke of how other papers, and more precisely Al-Hayat, had covered the same issues. This was evident during one meeting, as they were discussing how the other newspapers covered Algeria's situation, a managing editor mentioned that Al-Hayat is their main target.

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[1] Following the cancellation of general elections in Algeria, which gave majority to the *Front Islamique de Salute* (FIS), violence erupted in different parts of the country. As a consequence, the Algerian President Chadli Bin Jadid resigned in an attempt to have political and economic reforms.

The political meeting continued with further discussions on Algeria's situation, where the comments and suggestions became more focused. After several suggestions (e.g. a reporter suggested more coverage of the peace talks; another suggested an interview with the former Yemeni president, where the editor-in-chief examined the questions and added some more; other suggested special supplement on the anniversary of the Gulf war) from the attendants on the news stories, analyses and studies about the general elections in Algeria, the editor-in-chief asked an editor to contact a law expert in Paris to write a legal study on the legitimacy of the Algerian general elections.

Asharq Al-Awsat conducts an evening editorial meeting at around 5:00 p.m., headed by the editor-in-chief and attended by his deputies, the managing editors, the senior editors and the production editor. They call it the "Front Page Meeting", where they discuss the issues which are professionally and politically appropriate to be published on the front page. A managing editor draws the layout of the front page. The editor-in-chief writes the headlines of the lead story, and the stories of the front page upon suggestions from the attendants. The attendants select the best caption to appear on the front page. The meeting adjourns after 15-20 minutes, and a senior or managing editor moves to the production room to supervise the production of the front page.

The main subject concerning that particular meeting was how to present the Algerian events (on 6 or 8 columns, which caption should appear and so on). Several suggestions were put forward by the attendants with regard to the lead, headline and caption. Afterwards they went through the other issues: the Saudi cabinet meeting, Yemen, peace talks, etc., and they agreed on the layout of the front page. As usual, a managing editor drew the layout and the editor-in-chief wrote the headlines. The meeting adjourned after 30 minutes with an instruction by the editor-in-chief to keep in touch with their correspondent in Algiers. Later, that correspondent sent some material which led to a modification in the front page. As a result, the editor-in-chief asked the production editor for a 15-minute delay in finalising the production of the front page layout.

Unlike Asharq Al-Awsat, the other London-based Arab paper, Al-Hayat, chooses not to apply the mechanism of daily editorial meetings. Al-Hayat's editors argue that there are three main reasons behind the absence of editorial meetings. Firstly, Abdul Wahhab Badrakhan, senior editor in Al-Hayat, argues the editors and journalists should ideally come to such meetings with ideas, problems and issues in order to be discussed. In the Al-Hayat newsroom "there are no such practical standards for editorial meetings as with the big newspapers. The important matter is the outcome and decisions of such meetings, and not simply the protocol of convening a daily editorial meeting". Secondly and in a similar

argument, Khairallah Khairallah of <u>Al-Hayat</u> points to the uselessness of editorial meetings:

> **There is no benefit from such (editorial) meetings, because there is a big distinction between newsroom personnel.** There are, for instance, few editors with long experience, and most of the personnel are incompetent. You cannot expect any fruitful or productive meetings with such staff. There is no way to exchange ideas or suggestions with such people ... **The editor-in-chief and a small team can easily reach an understanding on what to do ... If this team becomes bigger, it would become useless.** (Khairallah, Senior Editor, <u>Al-Hayat</u>; emphasis added)

Thirdly, the sub-editor of the Arab Affairs Desk considers that the mechanism of editorial meetings is a "Waste of time for the staff ... Everyone knows exactly what to do, and how to do it" (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, <u>Al-Hayat</u>). These arguments, which undermine the importance of the editorial meetings, stem from the fact that the <u>Al-Hayat</u> hierarchy is fairly strictly governed by senior editors, an up-down communication is dominant, and the few senior editors that Khairallah Khairallah referred to are a small team of decision-makers in the <u>Al-Hayat</u> newsroom. This team is deeply influenced by the experience and opinions of <u>An-Nahar</u> with "strict centralisation in decision-making" and the authority held by only a few senior editors (Sama'an, Managing Editor, <u>Al-Hayat</u>). Furthermore, unlike <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>, <u>Al-Hayat</u> does not conduct general meetings for the whole staff (Dou Ena'am, Journalist, <u>Al-Hayat</u>). In this respect, Jihad El-Khazen, editor-in-chief of <u>Al-Hayat</u>, argues that frequent meetings with the staff of different desks replace the need for general meetings. The centralisation of decision-making and the absence of general meetings reflect the hierarchical structure in <u>Al-Hayat</u> working only in an up-down direction (see figure 7.2).

In the absence of editorial conferences how does the newspaper meet deadlines? Jihad El-Khazen, editor-in-chief of <u>Al-Hayat</u>, depends on the managing editor to supervise the daily editorial process. The intensive consultations between the managing editor and the senior editors, or the inner circle in <u>Al-Hayat</u>, replace the mechanism of editorial conferences. This inner circle decides what news should be published. Despite this apparently vague manner of decision-making was praised by <u>Al-Hayat</u>'s editors, some news stories and editorials caused 'strong and angry feedback' from some countries and resulted in a ban on the newspaper in these countries for a few days. This banning took place due to an "arbitrary dual coordination" between the heads of desks (Badrakhan, Senior Editor, <u>Al-Hayat</u>). This in fact, <u>Al-Hayat</u>'s procedure of decision-making is a contradiction in terms. Some senior editors argue that this small team is capable of making decisions about what to publish, whereas other editors consider that dual coordination is still predominant in the <u>Al-Hayat</u> newsroom. It was noticed that the frequent absence of <u>Al-Hayat</u>'s editor-in-chief (due to his frequent travel), has resulted in a dichotomy (duality)

on the senior editors' level. There are three senior editors and a managing editor who constitute "the inner circle"[2]. The lack of "coherence" within the inner circle has created a sort of dual coordination instead of centrality in the decision making process. In this respect, the managing editor can exercise the authority of an editor-in-chief, and the senior editors "give the impression" that they are capable of running their respective desks without the supervision of the managing editor. It was realised - through informal discussions - that there is a sort of "clash" in responsibilities and duties at the top editor level.

In February 1992, whilst observing operations in Al-Hayat's newsroom, various events took place which were significantly more important and had more coverage than others. These events included the medical treatment of the Palestinian figure George Habash in a Paris hospital. The Habash issue precipitated a political crisis in France which forced the French Premier Mme Cresson to sack a few figures in the French administration. Another event was the seizing of a Czech ship loaded with tanks destined for Syria by the German navy. A third event was the row between Egypt and Sudan over a disputed border area of Halayeb, and a fourth event was the assassination of Hizbollah leader, Abbass Mousawi. This was carried out by the Israelis in Southern Lebanon and violence erupted in the aftermath. Selecting from these events, the issue of Halayeb is discussed here to reveal how the newsroom takes decisions concerning big events. The rationale behind taking the Halayeb issue in preference to other events, lies with Al-Hayat significantly covering this issue, far more so than the other newspapers.

Halayeb is an area on the border between Sudan and Egypt, and there is a territorial dispute between the two countries over its sovereignty. On 04/02/1992, a news story, about a Canadian petroleum company in Sudan which started drilling for oil in Hayaleb, came through to the news agencies. This work led to a resurgence of the dispute between the two countries. Al-Hayat gave this event significant importance. In the absence of editorial conferences in Al-Hayat, the decision to deal with this event was taken by the inner circle. As a result of these discussions, the managing editor asked one reporter, to start collecting material on this event by contacting: the bureaux and correspondents in Cairo and Khartoum, the Canadian Embassy in Cairo, and other available news sources. At the end of the day, the managing editor decided to publish the story as a lead story where it appeared occupying 6 columns the next morning. This news story was mentioned as an example in interviews and informal discussions, with the editors when they were asked about their criteria for selecting the news. This will be referred to later in this chapter

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[2] George Sama'an, managing editor of Al-Hayat, believes that "the pillars of Al-Hayat" came from the Lebanese daily An-Nahar, from which it had adopted its style. These senior editors are ex-editors who worked for the Lebanese daily An-Nahar: George Sama'an, Khairallah Khairallah, Abdul Wahhab Badrakhan and Nadim Ziadeh.

in the news values section.

Unlike other newspapers, the inner circle of Al-Hayat, which decides what to publish, could not replace successfully the mechanism of an editorial meeting. The Al-Hayat newsroom lacks some "discipline" in the field of decision-making, because the experience of the very few editors who run the newspaper has left the mechanism of news selection resting on the whims of two or three editors without taking into consideration feedback from other editors, sub-editors and journalists. This policy has produced an editorial line that has resulted in the newspaper being banned from several Arab countries on different occasions.

As with Asharq Al-Awsat, As-Safir convenes a morning editorial conference at 11.30 a.m., chaired by the editor-in-chief and attended by his deputy, the managing editors and the editors of the desks. The meeting runs for an hour, all those in attendance go through the issues of day. Most of the editors usually come to the meeting after having read the other newspapers (Lebanese and pan-Arab), and after having listened to the various news bulletins on radio and television stations. The editor of the Arab and International Desk comes to the meeting after he has gone through the news agencies' stories, which have come in overnight or in the early morning. These procedures enable the participants to evaluate their newspaper for the day in terms of coverage, and to put forward the agenda for the coming news day. Mohammad Mashmoushi, deputy editor-in-chief of As-Safir, refers to the meeting as "yesterday and tomorrow newspaper issues". Yesterday's issue: because the meeting examines where the newspaper failed, in comparison with other newspapers and where it achieved a "scoop and exclusivity". Tomorrow's issue: because the meeting puts forward an agenda for the scheduled events and assigns the appropriate editors, reporters and correspondents to follow up the news stories. The agenda is mainly built on the on-going events and what the news agencies have so far proffered. In evaluating the newspaper's issue, the editor-in-chief asked an editor why they had not published a U.S. official's speech from Washington on the Middle East. The editor's reply was that the same news story was published one day before in Al-Hayat and Ad-Diyar, and As-Safir's correspondent in Washington was late in filing the same news story.

As-Safir holds its evening editorial conference at 7:30 p.m. The meeting is chaired by the editor-in-chief and attended by his deputy, managing editor and the editor of the Arab and International Affairs Desk, the editor of the Domestic Affairs Desk, and two sub-editors (or the night-shift sub-editors). As with Asharq Al-Awsat, this meeting is called the "Front Page Meeting". The attendants go through the topics of the day with comments on each story, and evaluate the national and Arab news stories by discussing their journalistic

and political consequences. The meeting adjourns at 8:00 p.m. with preliminary decisions on the layout of front page (headlines, photograph, news stories' sequence). The evening editorial meeting can be regarded as a mini editorial board (editor-in-chief, his deputy, managing editors (domestic and Arab), editor of Arab desk). This editorial board decides the news of the next day upon recommendations of the editor of the Arab desk, who gets the news agenda from the news agencies material. The topics are discussed, and a preliminary agreement is reached. However, most final decisions remain as flexible as they can to allow for changes to the front page make-up later in the night. Sati'a Noureddine, managing editor in As-Safir, considers the evening meeting "vital and basic", where news stories are discussed and distributed on pages (lead story for the back page) in line with a list prepared by the editor of the Arab desk. This mechanism is adhered to for normal days, where for the most part the agenda of events follows that expected by staff vigilant of news agency activity. In the case of unexpected news, however the process of selection becomes slightly different.

During field work observations in the As-Safir newsroom, the news agenda followed established routines. However, the most significant event that happened was the destruction of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina. This happened on 17/03/1992, after the newsroom staff finished their evening editorial meeting. The news agencies filed an urgent news story (8.30 p.m.) from Buenos Aires on a huge explosion near the Israeli Embassy. Not surprisingly, this news story attracted the attention of the desk. The details, which came later, led to a revision of decisions taken earlier in the evening editorial meeting. The news which had already come in from the Southern Lebanon concerning Israeli moves along the borders as well as developments with the on-going Arab-Israeli peace talks in Washington, continued to push the Embassy explosion to the front page, where it commanded three columns the next morning.

How was the later decision made to embrace this news story? As mentioned earlier, the event had not been on the agenda of the evening meeting. As the editor of the Arab and International Desk received the news from the agencies, he passed it to the managing editor. After brief discussion, he asked him to follow up the story through the news agencies and to monitor radio and television stations. Later, the deputy editor-in-chief chaired another evening meeting, where they decided to publish the story on the front page since there was still enough time to gather more details from Argentina, Israel and the Southern Lebanon.

The other Lebanese daily, An-Nahar, does not hold daily editorial meetings. Françios Akl, managing editor of An-Nahar, sees the Civil War as the cause of the absence of editorial meetings:

> During the war, the newspaper has to publish... We did not have much time
> to spend in meetings and decision-making... In that period, the concept of a
> *One-Man-Show* enabled An-Nahar to survive editorially. (Akl, Managing
> Editor, An-Nahar)

Edmond Saab, executive editor in An-Nahar, describes the concept of "One-Man-Show" as an editor who coordinates between the editors of different sections. Such an editor needs the professional qualifications and personal qualities which enable him to lead a small team, in contrast to conducting editorial conferences. Edmond Saab considers that such a procedure was adopted because of the *de facto* situation during the Civil War. How then do they work in the absence of such meetings? Françios Akl explains that he puts forward the outline of the newspaper and consults with the Domestic Affairs editor and the sub-editor of the Foreign Desk. These discussions help him to decide what to publish and where. In the case of foreign news, the sub-editor and journalists of the Foreign Desk, through monitoring the news agencies, give him an idea on the agenda of foreign news. With important issues, the managing editor has the final say, after consultation with the staff. With other news stories, however, the sub-editor and the staff can decide their size and location. This follows their own dealings on particular events through news agencies.

Why did Françios Akl, the managing editor of An-Nahar, become the key-editor with the final say in deciding what news to cover? An-Nahar has two editors-in-chief: one for domestic affairs, and the other for Arab and foreign affairs (see figure 7.4). During the Civil War, An-Nahar was more affected - by the repercussions of the war - than other newspapers due to two main reasons. First, the drain of An-Nahar's editors and senior journalists to the London and Paris-based Arab media, where they were offered high salaries and good posts. Second, the existence of a "green-line" which divided Beirut into two sectors: eastern and western. An-Nahar's organisation is located in the Muslim-dominated western sector of Beirut, and yet the vast majority of the newspaper's staff are Christians, who live in the Christian-dominated eastern part of the city. The deterioration in the security situation, and the frequent closure of crossing points along the "green-line" forced An-Nahar to depend on a *skeleton* staff. This skeleton, which comprised the managing editor together with a few editors and journalists who were staying in West Beirut, was a small percentage of An-Nahar's staff before the Civil War. For instance, the Foreign Desk was staffed by more than ten editors and journalists as well as a number of correspondents. Currently, the Desk's staff comprises a sub-editor, two journalists and two correspondents. Moreover, the political involvement of An-Nahar's publisher, Ghassan Tueni (who worked as a Presidential adviser 1982-88), rendered his professional concerns somewhat less important (see chapter six: footnote 16). In this situation, Françios Akl was the only senior editor who remained in An-Nahar and who devoted most

of his time to the newspaper. Thus Françios Akl became "the monk of An-Nahar" (Tueni, Publisher, An-Nahar). However, the current situation at An-Nahar is improving as the newspaper adjusts to the new period of peace enabling what Ghassan Tueni calls a "peace press" to re-emerge.

After midnight on 07/04/1992, an urgent news story came through MENA on the loss of communication with the plane of the Palestinian President Yassar Arafat, during its flight over the Libyan desert. The details which followed later through the other news agencies (AP, UPI, AFP and Reuters) clarified that the plane had crashed in a sandstorm and the fate of Arafat was as yet unknown. As the sub-editor of An-Nahar's Foreign Desk received the story, she discussed with the managing editor alterations to the front page. Since, it was very late in terms of the news day, most of the news stories having been allocated an appropriate location and size, the alternative was to modify the layout of the front page. The managing editor moved some news stories from the front page to the inside pages and re-sized the rest. The headline of the story on Arafat was prominently displayed covering a whole six columns to whet the interest of the readers. What was available to the reader the next morning was the result of the decision of the managing editor and his sub.

The process of news selection, through editorial conferences, in the Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir newsrooms appears to have some similarities. The decision-making process in both newsrooms seems to be better organised than in the An-Nahar and Al-Hayat papers. On the London-based level, Asharq Al-Awsat is more editorially organised than Al-Hayat. In Beirut, As-Safir proved to be operating (on an editorial basis) better than An-Nahar, despite both newspapers facing the same obstacles from the war. The hierarchy of authority in the four newsrooms differs from one newspaper to another. Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir are bound to the central authority of the editor-in-chief, with suggestions from the newsroom personnel. The inner circle of Al-Hayat has the authority to decide what to publish, under the control of the managing editor, even without consulting the staff, whereas in An-Nahar, the managing editor is the sole decision-maker.

B. NEWS SELECTORS

B.1. GATEKEEPERS: SELECTING THE NEWS

The senior editors set the frame of reference from which are measured the basis for selecting and deciding what news should be published on the front page. In each newsroom there are two main channels for providing news: wire agencies and correspondents. The four newsrooms assign some staff to make cuttings of news agency

material and to classify such material under certain topics/issues or subjects (e.g. politics, economy, sports, culture, miscellany). The Beirut newsrooms rely mainly on material from news agencies with some contribution from correspondents and freelance reporters. The London-based Arab newsrooms depend on correspondents in the first place, and news services in the second place. To find the kind of news the gatekeepers discard, the process of classifying news agencies material was examined and informal discussions with the gatekeepers took place as they conducted their work.

In the Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom, the gatekeeper goes through the material from the news agencies during the news day, where he has made available all the material that comes to his desk. The discarded material usually includes that which comes overnight and becomes out-of-date, together with news on domestic affairs or Arab local[3] issues. In particular, the gatekeeper of Asharq Al-Awsat has been instructed (by the senior editors) not to disregard news of Saudi Arabia, especially when it concerns activities of royal family members and other Saudi domestic activities. This explains why Asharq Al-Awsat publishes the material of the SPA[4] on the activities of Saudi royal family members frequently in detail and sometimes on the front page. A senior editor in Al-Hayat considers publishing such material without editing renders Asharq Al-Awsat a "Public Sector" newspaper, effectively an extension of the press that is owned by the government. The gatekeeper classifies the material and forwards it to the managing editor (who is in charge of the front page). In turn, the managing editor distributes the material among the staff of the Arab Affairs Desk in accordance with their respective areas and subjects of interest. During the process, the managing editor instructs the staff briefly on where to put any emphasis, which correspondents to contact and who are appropriate news sources. When the journalists finish writing the news stories, they forward them to another managing editor (who is in charge of pages 2, 3 and 4: current Arab affairs pages). He either approves the stories, or returns them to the reporters for further work. The approved news stories go forward to production with any appropriate photographs.

At Al-Hayat, the procedure adopted for selecting news agencies material is similar. The gatekeeper, who is a journalist on the International Desk, classifies the news agencies as: Arab politics, foreign affairs, economy, sports or miscellany, and distributes each to the appropriate desks. Unlike Asharq Al-Awsat, however the gatekeeper at Al-Hayat does not

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[3] By local news we mean the news items which deal with the domestic affairs of Arab countries, such as meetings of the cabinet, or any national political activity that does not have an impact on the overall situation in the Arab World. However, there is an exception at Asharq Al-Awsat, the domestic Saudi news is published.

[4] As discussed in chapter seven, the SPA is one of the few Arab news agencies which provides Asharq Al-Awsat's newsroom with Arab news. This agency is an official one, and the newspaper publishes its material without editing when the issue is related to the Saudi government.

have the authority to disregard any material. The sub-editor of the Arab Affairs Desk distributes the news stories to the staff according to their interests[5]. These news stories are incorporated with correspondents' material in order to write a comprehensive news story (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat). Even though, for example the Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat newsrooms are equipped with personal computers connected to the network of wire services, not all news stories coming from news agencies come through the computer screens. The editor or reporter needs to monitor the flow of news to include not only news agencies' material, but also computer correspondence and correspondents own input on stories.

The An-Nahar and As-Safir newsrooms rely, to a large extent, on the four global news agencies material for their Arab and international news. Consequently compared to the papers of London, the gatekeeper in Beirut demands more journalistic experience in order to decide what to keep and what to discard. In the London newsrooms, such agencies take only a small part in the coverage, other material coming from the newspaper's own correspondents or bureaux. On the one hand, the correspondents or bureaux usually file news stories which comply with the newspaper's policy, operating as they do under the instruction of editors. On the other hand, the agencies stories need more work in order to *smoothen the tone* adequately to become consistent with the organisational characteristics. The editor of the Arab and International Desk at As-Safir conducts the process of selecting, and decides what news should be kept. He makes two main cuttings to news agencies' material: one at 10:30 a.m. and the other at around 5:30 p.m. Then follows hourly cutting until they close the newspaper at 1.00 a.m. In An-Nahar, the sub-editor of the Foreign Desk and a journalist work alternatively on sorting news agencies material. There is only one main cutting and classification which happens at 2.30 p.m. Hourly cutting follows until close of the front page at around 2.00 a.m. In the As-Safir and An-Nahar newsrooms the influx of news agencies material peaks between the early evening hours and just after midnight. This happens because of the time difference between Beirut and the other Arab and European countries, and partly because of the established working day for the bureaucracies in these countries.

Ghassan Mukahal, As-Safir's gatekeeper, sends the news agency stories to the desk concerned (e.g. domestic, culture, sports, economy). He retains any of these stories that relate to the Arab and International Desk. The material discarded in the As-Safir newsroom during the main cutting is usually the news on the Arab World that comes in after closing time and/or is considered to be out-of-date. However, there is an exception

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[5] There is no specialised team in Al-Hayat newsroom. It is a matter of journalist's interest and the needs of the newsroom (see chapter seven).

with material which contains some background information on a particular issue or country:

> The news agencies bring all kinds of news into the newsroom: politics, economy, sports ... The newspaper cannot publish all the incoming news because of the space consideration. The aspects that decide which news should be kept concern its importance to the key issues related to Lebanon, the Arab-Israeli conflict, any changes in countries (e.g. CIS), and any Arab or international event that we think it is in the reader's interest to know about. (Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir)

Sahar Ba'asiri and George Abou Rizk, who work as gatekeepers in the An-Nahar newsroom, consider that the news which is discarded most often concerns Far East countries, some African countries, Arab domestic news in the Gulf states (e.g. Saudi treasury bonds), political meetings on a national level (in the Gulf states and Maghreb countries). George Abou Rizk, a journalist at An-Nahar, adds that news of Latin and Central America, economic news on international markets, relief and famine news (famine in Sudan is taken as a political issue not a humanitarian one) and certain sports (cricket, golf) have little chance of being published on the Arab and foreign pages. Apart from these categories, all stories from the Arab World have their way of being published with differences in size and location. In this respect, Françios Akl, managing editor of An-Nahar, considers the Arab and foreign news stories which are published as a combination between domestic news and international news. He argues that the Foreign Desk publishes material or information that the reader needs to know on Arab and international affairs[6], having a desire to present a "balanced whole". This is one of Galtung and Ruge's (1965) factors regarding the selection of news. To sum up, An-Nahar and As-Safir have common aspects when it comes to the selecting of news agency material. Such aspects particularly concern cultural and geographical proximity and the interests of their readers.

Some useful points are evident from observing the role of the gatekeeper in each of the four Arab newsrooms. Firstly, the gatekeepers are subject to the instructions and influence of senior editors, who of course reflect the organisation's policy. Most of the gatekeepers are either editors or sub-editors, who have considerable experience in the newsroom. Secondly, the London-based Arab newsrooms depend on the correspondent's material which is not the case for the Beirut papers. This reliance on the correspondent makes the work of the gatekeeper, in such newsrooms, less demanding, the top editors having the final say in deciding what to publish from such material. Thirdly, and in accordance with several studies (McQuail & Windahl, 1993, 1982; Shoemaker, 1991; Hirsch, 1977; Donohue, 1972; White, 1950), the gatekeepers in these newsrooms seem to

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[6] An-Nahar devotes three pages (out of 14 or 16) to Arab and international news, which is comparatively more than any other Lebanese newspaper. Françios Akl, managing editor in An-Nahar, considers this was adopted to balance between the readers' national interests and international concerns.

be affected by several aspects. For instance, the gatekeepers in the Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat newsrooms are required to represent their organisation's interests, or what Shoemaker (1991) defines as "organisational rules"[7]. Such interests lie in representing the organisational goals of pleasing the audience but serve at the same time the ends of the dominant ideology in which the newspaper operates. Such rules are less required to be applied by the gatekeeper of smaller newspapers, as found in the Beirut newsrooms, because of the differences in the audience, social systems and the organisations' size. Finally, the gatekeepers are the first "gate" of several in the newsroom. In practice, many news stories, which were selected by the gatekeepers of the Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar and As-Safir newsrooms during the newsday, were edited, or even discarded, by another editor during the newsmaking process. This editing of the editors and the senior editors is to ensure the news selected by gatekeepers complies with the dominant ideology and organisational goals.

B.2. EDITORS: SHAPING THE NEWS

As the news stories pass the "gate" of the copy taster, they reach the editor's desk. This "gate" - has a second and important aspect - namely the editors' role in shaping what news should be published. In this respect, both editing and selecting the size and location of the news stories should be discussed. Ericson *et al* (1987) define editing as a part of newsmaking where the editors ensure that the filed stories achieve a degree of uniformity, accuracy, clarity and consistency. **Editors are to ensure that the "working cultures" of the newsroom and the "dominant cultures" of society unite together in the final product** (Ericson *et al*, 1987: 311-312; emphasis added). Their task is policing the common sense. A large component of maintaining a reputation is simply a matter of grammar, style and interpretive flair.

Al-Hayat's editor or sub-editor receives the news stories from the gatekeeper. The sub-editor's first task is to sort out news stories and then distribute them - with instructions - to the journalists of the desk. This process starts in the Al-Hayat newsroom at around 12:00 p.m. It is at that time, that the journalists, who are writing the stories, start contacting the bureaux and correspondents to get exclusive material on the same story. As the journalist finishes writing, s/he forwards the story to the sub-editor or the editor. The editor's second task is to read the news story and edit it on various levels, including content, style (e.g. where the main theme should appear in the lead) and so on. The sub-editor or the editor also edits phrases or words that carry an ambiguity or message that the

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[7] These organisational rules can be summarized under the following headings: (1) Filtering and preselection systems; (2) Organisational characteristics; (3) Organisational boundary roles; and (4) Organisational socialisation. (for a detailed account see Shoemaker, 1991: 53-60)

reporter may not fully have appreciated during the writing of the story. Such reading is known as "political editing" (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat). In this respect, the same sub-editor said that some words and phrases had been changed to avoid any problems with censorship officials in some Arab countries. If there is a major change, the editor asks the journalist to rewrite part or perhaps even the whole news story (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor; Othman, Editor, Al-Hayat).

The editor and the sub-editor of Al-Hayat are the "first readers" of copy from the reporters on the Arab desk. The reporters of the London-based Arab papers are effectively the editors (and "first readers") of the correspondents' and bureaux material. The London-based Arab newspapermen are known as "office-reporters", not site-reporters as is the case with the national newspaper personnel. In other words, the Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat newsrooms are the "kitchen" for material which comes from different channels. This happens because London is distant from the site of events in the Arab World. In this case, the news personnel of the London-based Arab newspapers receive what their correspondents send, and consequently these correspondents work under the instructions of their head office. Most of the editors' suggestions originate from the agenda of news agencies. This relationship between the newsroom and the correspondents was described by an editor as a "remote relationship" (Abou Chakra, Senior Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat). By the remote instructions the editors are not entirely able to know the situation in that country or another.

The London-based Arab press operates outside the Arab World, the environment where the events that concern its readers take place. Being far from the site of the events, the Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat newspapers interact indirectly with the surrounding events and news actors. In such a situation, the correspondents and news agencies are the channels which connect the London-based Arab newsrooms with the site of events (see chapter seven). This reliance means a newspaper's judgement on the on-going events rests mainly with a correspondent's point of view, which cannot alone be sufficient as an overall basis to write a story. It was argued in chapters seven and eight that some of the correspondents of the London-based Arab newsrooms are considered by their editors to be incompetent. Where there is an on-going disagreement between the bureaux and the head office this is most evident. Such incompetence of the bureau or correspondent can place the coverage of Arab affairs under suspicion. In such a situation, the newsroom's judgement on the on-going events become subject to various explanations. In other words, an incompetent coverage to the beat, by the bureau or correspondent, prevents the newsroom from achieving "topical or territorial ways of coverage". It was discussed in the previous chapter that some correspondents used to miss some important information which comes through news agencies. This missing of information creates a sort of tension and

disagreement between the newsroom and such bureau. The on-going disagreement is somewhat evident in the newsroom of London-based Arab papers. During the editorial conferences in Asharq Al-Awsat, the coverage of Arab affairs by the bureaux and correspondents was raised top-editors who noticed a sort of incompetence in such coverage. The same can be said of Al-Hayat where the informal discussions in the newsroom brought up such incompetence in the coverage of the Arab World. In this respect, Bishara Sharbel, sub-editor at Al-Hayat argues that the remote relation has resulted in:

> A wrong relationship between the administration on the one side, and the bureaux and correspondents on the other side. Even though, there is a decline in correspondent's standard, s/he stays as correspondent. It is difficult to change a correspondent. (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat)

Bishara Sharbel's definition of the "wrong relationship" refers to the relationship being a "remote one" (Abou Chakra, Senior Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat). The location of the newspapers in London has its implications for journalists as well. The newsroom personnel in London are "office-journalists", unlike national journalists who work at the site of events. The work of the London-based Arab journalists has for the most part come to mean editing news stories provided by correspondents and news agencies. In other words, the London-based newsrooms have become the "kitchen" for the news coming from the Arab World (Khoza'ai, Journalist, Asharq Al-Awsat).

To ensure that the final product resonates with the newspaper's policy and the dominant culture, the first editing may include changes in words and phrases to ensure a good fit. Sometimes, the reporters carry out severe editing to the text getting rid of redundancy (e.g. superfluous rhetoric). In this respect, the Al-Hayat newsroom circulates a fortnightly newsletter, "News Watch", showing correct news vocabulary and structure for the benefit of the staff:

> The object of this newsletter is to achieve linguistic unity as much as possible. This can be achieved through all procedures contributing to a an on-going debate on translation issue. Please raise linguistic issues that concern you, so that they can best be dealt with in future editions. (Al-Hayat, News Watch, January 1992)

To conclude some of Al-Hayat's journalists and correspondents are under-qualified in filing their news stories. Thus supports the senior editors' viewpoints (e.g. Khairallah, Badrakhan) on the uselessness of conducting editorial conferences. However, the situation at Al-Hayat is not repeated in the other newsrooms.

In Asharq Al-Awsat, the staff of the Arab Affairs Desk is more highly trained, than

in Al-Hayat, and the editors do not spend much time in reading news stories. Most of the journalists' stories go to the production team with small comments from the editors (i.e. minor change in headlines, or in a photograph's caption). This phenomenon in Asharq Al-Awsat is attributed to two factors: the daily general meetings which instruct the journalists on a day-to-day basis, and the journalists who are more professionally trained than those of Al-Hayat (see table 9.4).

In the Beirut newspapers, the process of editing is mainly carried out on material coming from news agencies. This includes translation and corrections to grammar and style. The Arabic raw material from the news agencies often lacks the basic rules pertaining to Arabic discourse and grammar, as well as incorrect naming and inherent promotion of a news agency's own policy. In this respect, Sahar Ba'asiri, sub-editor of An-Nahar's Foreign Desk, mentioned that some Lebanese newspapers (e.g. Ad-Diyar) publish the Arabic raw material from news agencies without any editing.

In An-Nahar, all news stories (national, Arab and foreign) go to the managing editor's desk, for final editing: reading the stories, correcting mistakes, changing headlines (if there is a need), selecting appropriate captions, and adding instructions about the size and location of edited stories. As he finishes such comments, the material is passed to the production team. The red-ink corrections of the managing editor, which were more extensive than in other newsrooms, included punctuations and even changes to some news agency names, to fit with the Arabic translations[8]. Some news stories were almost re-written by the managing editor. In this context, Edmond Saab, executive editor of An-Nahar, emphasised that the newspaper is keen and concerned to have its news stories carefully edited and re-written. An-Nahar has achieved some success in having its distinguishable style as its "trademark" among the Lebanese papers, and to some extent even with Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat of London. At As-Safir, the editor of the Arab desk edits news stories and forwards them to the deputy editor-in-chief with suggestions. The deputy editor-in-chief does the final editing. To accomplish linguistic consistency, the As-Safir newsroom circulates a daily memorandum containing corrections on either grammar, discourse or protocol (e.g. how to write certain names, some rules of grammar).

To sum up, the process of editing in the four newsrooms is aimed at achieving some consistency in grammar and style. The editors' task in policing this style, which varies from one newspaper to another, is carried out to ensure that the "working cultures" of newsroom resonate with "dominant culture" of society. The resonance with a dominant

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[8] For instance, the name of *Agence France Presse* (AFP) appears as WSF *(Wekalat Sahafah Franciyieh)*, which is not the case for the other Lebanese newspapers.

culture is attached to the concept of news values, where some news values dominate others. It was found, in the analysis of the macro-themes in chapter five, that the news produced by the four Arab newsrooms resonate with the "cultural themes" of a "dominant ideology". In discussing the news values as criteria for newsworthiness, the research investigates the other dimension of news selection (news values), and how such a dimensions varies from one social context to another.

C. SELECTING THE NEWS:
CRITERIA FOR NEWSWORTHINESS

C.1. NEWS VALUES

As pointed out earlier, four events were discussed in detail in order to establish how the decision-making process is carried out when reporting major events. However, normal days were also studied to scrutinise the internal process of the newsroom in general, and the interaction between newsroom personnel in particular. To ascertain the criteria for newsworthiness, editors were asked about news stories and why some appear on the front page, while others get buried on the inside pages. Their viewpoints are stated to reveal what news values dominate the editors' perception. In fact, the editors interviewed emphasised different aspects that affect their decisions about news stories' size and location. To know which news values are most commonly used, and how the Arab editors interpret such values, the editors' arguments are classified in a way that relates to news values.

C.1.1. READER'S INTERESTS

Significantly, most of the editors mentioned the reader as a main aspect in deciding what news should be published. Othman Al-Omeir, editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, considers that the "pan-Arabism" of his newspaper demands an address to the whole Arab World and not only one country or region in particular. Mohammad Al-Tunisi agrees with his editor about the reader's preference as being one of two: the editor and the reader preference:

> We cannot deal in detail with every news story (on the Arab World). There is a priority given to the hot issues, which cannot be ignored. We take into account the diverse readers, and their different affiliations and backgrounds, which are the basis to decide which news to cover. (Al-Tunisi, Deputy Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat)

Othman Merghani, managing editor at Asharq Al-Awsat also emphasises the reader in deciding what news to select, arguing that the newspaper should know the "quality of its

readers", in order to know how to address them, and making sure that the "interests of readers should be taken into account when it comes to news selection" (Atallah, deputy editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat). Such arguments pointing to the interests of readers are subject to questioning. As discussed in chapter six, Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat know their readers as figures of circulation, and the interest and quality of the reader are still not entirely clear for the London-based Arab press. The research of marketing agencies - while promoting the newspaper - does not look in detail at the political, ideological and cultural backgrounds of the readers. Such analysis is still considered taboo in some countries, and the marketing agencies prefer to 'stay on the safe side'. It was argued in chapter two that market research is mainly done in the wealthier and more influential Arab states (e.g. the Gulf states), where the media are loyal to the regimes (see chapter three). In such countries, the researchers do not investigate the audience's political or ideological attitude because of the restricted nature of the political systems wherein the media and audience exist. This lack of political pluralism and absence of elections do not encourage researchers to study the political trends of the audience. In other words, the London-based Arab newspapers know about the geographical distribution of their readers, but not much about their attitude and political characteristics. In relying only on market research, the Arab press in general, and in London in particular, must be speculative about the "identity", "quality" and "interests" of the reader.

The above claim, which takes the reader as one of the main actors in selecting the news, lacks some precision. Othman Al-Omeir's "pan-Arab reader" is a notion which has not been clearly defined, either in terms of attitudes or interests. The Asharq Al-Awsat owners and top-editors stress that the main market and circulation figures are concentrated in the Gulf with small token readership in Morocco and the Arab communities abroad. They know that their predominant readership is not really pan-Arab but quasi-pan-Arab, and thus any diversity of the readers chiefly rests with whatever Saudi-Gulf diversity exists. Thus, if this "quality" of the readers is the "decisive-factor" or "determinant" in selecting news stories, the predominant-identity of an Asharq Al-Awsat reader can explain what kind of news stories make their way to publishing.

The other London-based Arab newspaper, Al-Hayat, is not far removed from the Asharq Al-Awsat editors' views on readers. However, Al-Hayat's editors were more outspoken in revealing the identity of their readers, and their role in selecting news. George Sama'an, managing editor of Al-Hayat, claims that both the economic dimension and the political factors are essential:

> On the economic level, the newspaper is a commercial commodity. Where is the reader? Al-Hayat is not a national paper able to devote 3-4 pages to domestic issues. It is a pan-Arab newspaper, and our frame of reference is

> the Arab World. We have to focus on 22 countries. As an economic commodity, the newspaper should take into account the export of your news story. **There are 3 million Sudanese living in Saudi Arabia. There should be an interest in these readers as well as in the Yemeni, Maghreb and Lebanese readers.** (Sama'an, Managing Editor, Al-Hayat; emphasis added)

Bishara Sharbel and Khairallah Khairallah also stress the "considerations that attract the reader" and "the Gulf as our main market". George Sama'an, Bishara Sharbel and Khairallah Khairallah, by concentrating on the economic determinants (through the reader in the Gulf), indirectly point to the favoured kind of stories. The argument for Asharq Al-Awsat's readership extended to Al-Hayat. Having considered the Sudanese, Yemeni and other Arab readers in the Gulf as their main target, Al-Hayat's top editors, as with other editors work to please their audience (see chapter two: White, 1950). A tripartite argument can be seen in the viewpoints of Al-Hayat's editors. To maintain a high circulation in the Gulf and more particularly among the Arab labour power there (Yemeni and Sudanese in particular), Al-Hayat has to focus on their interests in order to please them. In this respect, Jihad El-Khazen, editor-in-chief of Al-Hayat, considers that serving this portion is a main objective for the newspaper. Thirdly, to get access to these readers, Al-Hayat has to take care not to be banned in the Gulf (its essential backbone of readership): "We try not to be banned from the Gulf market. The ban affects the advertising and consequently the newspaper. The original and basic concern is to avoid being banned, and to stay away from sensitive matters" (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat). To sum up, the identity and geo-political location of the target audience indicate the kind of news stories that make their way to the front page. Al-Hayat, significantly, devoted a big space (and over several days) to cover the issue of Halayeb (discussed earlier). Al-Hayat's wide coverage of this issue is attributed to various reasons, mainly the Sudanese readers in the Gulf states.

The editors in Beirut view readers' interests in a different way. Sati'a Noureddine at As-Safir considers that the issues that most touch the readers such as coverage of the *Intifada* (Palestinian Uprising), Libya and Iraq, have a big chance of being published, because "it is in the reader's interest to know about these issues in the Arab World". The same justification was raised by François Akl of An-Nahar when he referred to the interests of the readers: "We publish, in the Arab and international pages, the material that would satisfy the readers' need to know about current affairs in the Arab World and abroad". In short, the dominance of economic factors in selecting news stories is not as obvious as it is in the Arab papers of London largely because of one key reason. Whereas the London-based Arab papers aim for a "pan-Arab audience" (with an emphasis on certain wealthy areas), the Beirut papers' audience for Arab and international news is not as economically dominant as it is for the London ones. Despite the fact that the Lebanese newspapers

addressed in the first place a national reader, and only in the second place the Arab reader, the economic factor came second to the reader's interests.

The editors' views on the interests of Arab readers as a criteria for selecting news, constitute an essential introduction to the other two dimensions: letters to the editor, and journalistic perception to the reader. In discussing these two aspects, the research studies the readership issue from editorial perspectives.

I. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

As discussed in chapter five, the "letter to the editor" is not a common phenomenon in the Arab press, compared to the British press. The very few letters - which appear in some of the Arab newspapers - are praising certain political systems or leaders, as well as the newspaper itself and its policy. In general, the letters to the editors rarely contain criticism, or two opposite viewpoints on same subject. Al-Hayat, for instance, publishes an average of 2-3 letters a day, written mainly by the Iraqi, Libyan and Sudanese opposition groups attacking the regimes of these countries. While attacking the regimes of their countries, the Arab political opposition groups praise the political correctness of the other Arab countries (see chapter one). For example, a letter published in Al-Hayat's letter-to-the-editor section written by the Opposing Democratic Sudanese Gathering. This letter "attacks the regime of Sudan" and "condemns its oppression on the Sudanese people". This is in line with the findings of chapter five, where the London-based Arab papers widely cover the activities of the Sudanese opposition because the tension between the Sudan and the other Arab countries (e.g. the Gulf states). This approach similarly applies to the other London-based Arab paper, Asharq Al-Awsat. An example of the letters published in Asharq Al-Awsat gives an idea. Asharq Al-Awsat published a letter from a reader (Riyadh) attacking the former Secretary General of the Arab League, Chadli Qualybi, for being reluctant to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and his "hidden support" of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War II. Such a letter was published because it resonates with the "dominant ideological system" and is consistent with the newspaper's policy. In both newspapers, criticising certain regimes either editorially or through the readers' letters is taboo.

In Beirut, As-Safir and An-Nahar publish relatively fewer letters to the editor than do the London papers. The Lebanese reader's concern is mainly on the political and economic ramifications of the Civil War with some limited interest in foreign news (Noureddine, Managing Editor, As-Safir). Table 8.1 summarises the points relating to the

letters to the editor in the five newspapers[9].

Table 8.1: The "Letters to the editor" section in the newspapers shows the subject of each letter and the organisational affiliation of the reader (as an author) during the period of analysis

Newspaper	Subject	Reader's Affiliation
The Guardian	Somaliland in desperate need of aid	Director: Save the Children
	Passion and Democracy	Reading University
	Kurds in Crisis	Director: London
The Times	Britain and the PLO	Fact-finding Committee
	Shoot to Kill in Ulster and Israel	Attorney General's Chamber
	Shoot to Kill in Ulster and Israel	House of Lords
	Shoot to Kill in Ulster and Israel	Reader: Northern Ireland
Al-Hayat	Colonel and People of Sudan	Opposing Democratic Sudanese Gathering
	Lebanon and War	Reader: Switzerland
Asharq Al-Awsat	Qualybi's negligence in his duty	Reader: Riyadh
	Greeting and Pride	Reader: Jeddah
	The Jewish Presence in Palestine	Islamic Centre: Achen (Germany)
	Israeli Elections and Peace Process	Reader: Not specified
As-Safir	What is a Peace Conference?!	Reader: Beirut

None of the four newspapers has a letters-to-the-editor desk, or even a particular reporter or editor who deals with the readers' letters. The editors argue that the number of letters is not as big as other newspapers (such as in the Western press) and insufficient for establishing a separate desk, or designating an editor to. Furthermore, there is a difference between the reader's affiliation with the Arab press and the Western press. In this context, Gans (1979) and Ericson *et al* (1989) have noticed that news sources seek remedy by writing letters to the editor, in situations where the published news stories caused some damage. In the Arab press, news sources do not write back to the newspaper as a response or reaction to a published story. The editors prefer to publish a denial or a clarification, or the comments of news sources in the current affairs section, and not in the letter-to-the-editor section. Looking at the reader's affiliation a considerable difference is observable between the Arab press and the British press. Whereas leading politicians or academics write to The Guardian and The Times, the reader's affiliation in the London-based Arab and Beirut papers is considerably different (see table 8.1). Furthermore, the letters to the editor, in the British press, usually referred to published material, whereas in the Arab papers they mainly "elaborate" a new subject. A further point in this regard is worth mentioning. During the field work in Al-Hayat, the managing editor received a fax from a

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[9] The An-Nahar newspaper was excluded because there is no section for the letters on the Arab affairs pages. It publishes a few letters on the domestic affairs pages, which deal only with domestic affairs.

leading Sudanese opposition figure, concerning published material on Sudan. The managing editor decided to publish the letter in the current affairs pages not in the letters to the editor section. This shows how the newspaper "differentiates" between the reader's affiliation and their letters.

Having shown the differences in content of letters to the editor, one further point concerns the editor's perception demands discussion. Are the journalists and editors producing news for an accurately perceived actual audience, or are they producing news according to their own professional intuitions?

II. EDITOR'S PERCEPTION OF THE READERSHIP:

For Jihad El-Khazen of Al-Hayat, the Arab reader is a good one but the interests of readers clearly differ from one country to another: "We have Arab readers, not one (homogeneous) reader". The Sudanese and Yemeni labour power in the Gulf need coverage of their countries and Al-Hayat has achieved such an objective. However, Jihad El-Khazen's concern for coverage of the Arab issues, is not entirely to serve the causes of these masses, but also to get an increased circulation. This is because they constitute the backbone of circulation and consequently Al-Hayat needs to take them into consideration (see chapter six). Jihad El-Khazen further claims that his newspaper receives around forty letters a day, of which only a few are suitable for publishing. The Arab reader does not sign his/her letter, and "s/he is responsible for himself/herself only". For instance, Al-Hayat receives unsigned letters against Qaddafi (the ruler of Libya), but such letters cannot be published because of legal suits in the British courts (e.g. suits for libel or defamation). On the other hand, he blames the reader because:

> The readers don't have the cultural standing of the foreign readers. In The Times (Letter to the editor Section), the Prime Minister publishes a letter, but in our case some letters are written by unemployed people, who lack the cultural or educational level to write a balanced letter. Rarely does the newspaper receive letters from well-known figures. The newspaper publishes all that can be published. (El-Khazen, Editor-in-chief, Al-Hayat)

Jihad El-Khazen's claim is a contradiction in terms. The good reader contrasting with his criticism of the educational level of the letters' authors. This reveals that Al-Hayat, and the other newspapers, categorise their readers as good or elite when the reader reacts and writes back commenting and criticising certain published material. By way of contrast, Nadim Nahhas, managing editor in Asharq Al-Awsat, argues that the Arabs - as newspapers readers - read less than other people: "Most of the readers are careless, and they read the newspaper before the television". Nadim Nahhas critically mentioned that, during and after the Gulf War II, none of the Arab readers wrote to the newspapers (in this

case, <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>) about the environmental catastrophes (burning the oil wells in Kuwait and the oil spill in the Arabian Gulf, and their danger to the environment and sea life: a problem that was affecting directly the daily life of the Arab reader/citizen). He noticed that the media and the readers around the world had commented on this issue, while the Arab readers didn't bother to write letters, which proves to what extent the reader does not care.

Nadim Nahhas' rather critical view, on the one hand, ignores the fact that the Arab reader lacks the social awareness to write a letter to his/her daily newspaper (T. Salman, Editor-in-chief, <u>As-Safir</u>), and the newspaper, on the other hand, does not encourage readers to participate in debate over its pages (Tueni, Publisher, <u>An-Nahar</u>). This lack of awareness - which is an inevitable outcome of the socio-cultural circumstances stated in Talal Salman's quotation below - has made the Arab reader a "passive reader" in a way that s/he does not respond in writing to what his/her daily paper publishes, or "lazy reader" as Ghassan Tueni put it. In this respect, the editor-in-chief of <u>As-Safir</u> refers the reader's absence to:

> (1) The oppression practised by most of the Arab regimes (on their people), where there are no elections take place: the Arab citizen does not know what the ballot box is; (2) the decline in cultural level and the downturn in awareness (are enormous); (3) the reader's concern for public affairs is marginal; and, (4) the reader has a predisposition that neither himself/herself nor his/her newspaper can affect (or influence) the decision-making process (of public affairs). These causes result in a reader, who does not believe in the newspaper as a forum for expression and debate. However, the main reason is the absence of dialogue as a means to listen to and argue with the others. (T. Salman, Editor-in-chief, <u>As-Safir</u>)

The awareness of the Arab reader seems to be the focal point in editors' perceptions of their readers. This decline in the reader's awareness has affected the letters to the editor section, where the editors differentiate between two main kinds of readers. Mohammad Al-Tunisi of <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> and Jamal Tassbahji of <u>Al-Hayat</u> classify the Arab readers into two types: occasional and permanent. The occasional reader sends a letter if the issue relates to and affects his/her interests. Talal Salman of <u>As-Safir</u> mentioned the same kind of reader who writes when his/her personal or national interests are under scrutiny and receive coverage by the newspaper. The permanent reader knows how (on a style level only) to write a reply to published material. Having presented various accounts on the Arab reader in both London-based and Beirut papers, it is important to focus - at this stage - on the editors' perspective of the content of the letters to the editor.

Jihad El-Khazen of <u>Al-Hayat</u> and Mohammad Mashmoushi (deputy editor in chief at <u>As-Safir</u>), with a similar perspective, argue that the educational level of the reader is very

obvious in the content of the letters to the editors. They consider that most of the readers, who write to the newspaper, think that their letters should be published without editing. In other words, such readers "would feel angry" if their letters are edited, because they are not aware of the language and tone implications of their letters. For instance, many editors consider that most of the letters, which are written in strong language, need some editing in order to become appropriate for publishing. Such readers, who are unaware of the editorial demands of the newspapers, are looking to have their names published and are mostly "semi-intellectuals and students". Mohammad Mashmoushi also points to the reader's "educational and cultural level". He argues:

> We have not reached the educational level that makes the reader active in his/her newspaper as is the case in the developed countries... This does not mean that the case is *hopeless*. The experience with the reader is not encouraging... I think we are still far away from the experience of the Western press. (Mashmoushi, Deputy editor-in-chief, As-Safir)

The observations of As-Safir's editors on Arab readers went beyond those of editors of the London-based Arab papers. For the majority of the Arab editors in London, the reader is a figure of circulation, the reader's feedback is measured through market research. This is one of the disadvantages in the Arab press in London, where there is no interaction between the newspaper staff and their readers. In other words, the newspaper staff write for readers, whom they hardly know (Sama'an, Managing Editor, Al-Hayat). Whereas in the case of Beirut papers, the journalist gets feedback from the readers sometimes through personal encounter. In this context, Sahar Ba'asiri, sub-editor in An-Nahar's Foreign Desk, said - in an informal discussion - that the readers discuss with her the issues written in the newspaper in many kinds of social encounter. George Sama'an agrees with Sahar Ba'asiri's view about the feedback of the readers, where he thinks that the Arab journalist in London hardly knows the reader's feedback because s/he is dealing with a "diverse and pan-Arab reader", which is not the case for the national press (e.g. Beirut press). Ghassan Tueni of An-Nahar insists that daily interaction with readers is one of the best means of getting their feedback (in the absence of letters to the editor). This daily interaction gives the newsroom personnel the comments on what was written. He takes this interaction as an advantage, which is not available to the London-based Arab journalists and their readers.

The arguments of Sahar Ba'asiri, George Sama'an and Ghassan Tueni on the readers' feedback are subject to criticism. The "social contact" with the editors in Beirut papers cannot be taken as an extensive representation of the reader's feedback. Such a social contact remains exclusively limited to a cultural, geographical and social differentiation. An-Nahar's reader in Beirut is more accessible, or has a chance to socially

contact the An-Nahar or As-Safir editors more than a reader in the Southern or Northern Lebanon. This geographical and social limitation can easily be avoided by the letters, when a reader from Scotland, for instance, writes to The Times or The Guardian, or a reader from Morocco writes to Al-Hayat or Asharq Al-Awsat. To conclude, the social contact with the reader is a limited feedback which can be taken as an "advantage". George Sama'an's view on the feedback rests with the "lack of communication" between the newspaper and its reader (either in London or Beirut). The reasons behind such "lack" rest with both the reader and the newspaper's editors (as discussed earlier).

C.1.2. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The second aspect in deciding the size and location of the news stories in the four newsrooms is "political considerations". This term is open to different interpretations. The notion refers to the connection between the editor and owners on one side, and the editor's perception of the prevailing political circumstances[10] on the other side. Mohammad Al-Tunisi of Asharq Al-Awsat argues that an editor's preference is a main factor in news selection. The editor's preference is a reflection of, and a front for, the owners' policy. As mentioned in chapter six, the publishers of the SRM which publishes Asharq Al-Awsat have the authority to fire and change any editor. In such a situation, the editor is a link between the owner/publisher and the staff, making sure that the editorial line is in consent with the owners' policy on a day-to-day basis. In the hierarchical structure of Asharq Al-Awsat, Othman Al-Omeir and a few senior editors are perhaps too close to the publishers' supervision. This closeness assures that the newspaper conveys the political message of the owners, and takes this political consideration into account in deciding what constitutes the news (Merghani, Managing Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat). In the case of Al-Hayat sometimes political considerations dominate over professional aspects in selecting news stories:

> **There are certain political considerations that impose on us not to publish an important news story on the front page, despite it being professionally appropriate to appear on the front page.** Such considerations relate to the newspaper's policy. (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat; emphasis added)

As with Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat's political consideration leads to the selecting of news stories that convey in one way or another the owners' political views. The subject of Al-Hayat's political trend and ownership was discussed in chapter six, where the Saudi-connection is much evident through the ownership of Prince Khaled bin Sultan. Jihad El-

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[10] For instance, any *rapprochement* in Saudi-Iranian relations is reflected on the pages of Asharq Al-Awsat, and vice versa.

Khazen, who is the publisher, relies editorially on the managing editor to implement the political considerations of news stories as they relate to the newspaper's policy.

The Beirut editors' understanding of "political consideration" largely relates to the political position of the newspaper. Mohammad Mashmoushi of As-Safir considers that this decides, to an extent, the news stories and their appearance or otherwise: "Such a political position (of the newspaper) has an impact on journalism as a profession. The good professional is the person who can successfully mix between the demands of both profession and political position" (Mashmoushi, Deputy Editor-in-chief, As-Safir).

In the London-based Arab newspapers, political considerations in selecting news stories relate, for the most past, to the owners (and the publishers) and the newspaper's fear of being banned in the Arab World. The political considerations, which the editors define, constitute practically the "cultural resonances" of the "media packages". The editors of Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat emphasise that certain news stories have more chances because they "resonate" with the "dominant cultural themes". The preference between news stories satisfies the criterion of political consideration: the connection between media and the political arena wherein the newspapers operate. In Beirut, the political identity of the newspaper sometimes dominates professional considerations in selecting news stories. With the As-Safir and An-Nahar newspapers belonging to two different political ideologies (see chapters three and six), this inevitably affects the type of coverage and the way of presentation of news stories. In chapter five, the analysis of the macro-themes revealed that the two papers in Beirut distinctly differ in their coverage. For instance, the coverage of the Arab-Israeli issue had markedly different treatment. An-Nahar, as a right-of-centre paper, covered the issue with an apparent support to the peace process, where As-Safir, as a left-of-centre paper, critically covered the same process. The difference, in the political identity of the two papers, has influenced (and dominates) the professional dimensions in presenting certain news stories. To conclude, both the London and the Beirut Arab papers give preference to political dimensions over professional ones. This close interaction with, and sometimes influence on, journalism as a profession is attributed to the fact that the reliance of the Arab media on business is not as strong as is the case in the Western media. In other words, the Arab press (either in London or in the Arab World) is first and foremost a "political project", rather than a professional medium, used to serve both governments and public (see chapter three).

C.1.3. PROXIMITY AND DIVERSITY:

Proximity and diversity are other related news values concluded from editors' perspectives in dealing with news stories. Nadim Nahhas, managing editor in Asharq Al-

Awsat, focuses on diversity as a criterion in selecting news, where: "we have to diversify
in presenting the news of the Arab regions, e.g. the Gulf, Maghreb". In the Al-Hayat
newsroom much the same point of view is held. During one newsday at Al-Hayat, the
managing editor, as he instructed the reporters to finalise their news stories, told the editor
of the Arab Affairs Desk that he cannot publish three news stories on the Middle East on
the front page. He had to avoid concentrating on one state, or region too much, and so
wanted to balance news of the Arab World with some diversity. Furthermore, George
Sama'an stresses that the more the news story seems to be in contact with the Arab World,
the more chance it has of being published. In this respect, Adel Beshtawi, Business and
Finance Editor in Al-Hayat, sees the economic news stories as falling into three categories:
the Arab news story, the international news story related to the Arab World, and the
international news which has an impact on the Arab reader (e.g. international stock market,
oil, tax, tariff).

In other words, the cultural and geographical proximity of events is a news value in
selecting news stories in both the newsrooms of London and Beirut. In this respect,
Beirut's editors agree on the matter of diversity and proximity. Sati'a Noureddine, a
managing editor at As-Safir, argues that the geographical and cultural proximity of news
stories to the Arab reader in general, and the Lebanese reader in particular, influence the
editor's choice when selecting of news stories. For Sati'a Noureddine, geographical
proximity is a key factor in selecting the news, where news on:

> Occupied territories, Iraq and Libya undoubtedly has more appeal to the
> reader than news from the CIS and former Yugoslavia. In practice, the
> story from the nearest cultural and geographical proximity has the greater
> chance of the story being included. (Noureddine, Managing Editor, As-
> Safir)

In the other Lebanese daily, Françios Akl, managing editor of An-Nahar, considers
diversity as an aspect when distributing the stories: "On the front page, we publish
national, Arab and international news stories in order to have a variety of composition from
domestic and foreign affairs. As a national newspaper, we have to present a balance, for
instance, the Easter festivals in Lebanon, the Lockerbie issue and the current developments
in Afghanistan" (Akl, Managing Editor, An-Nahar).

A major difference exists between the London and Beirut papers in viewing
proximity and diversity as news values. In London diversity is emphasised in an
endeavour to cover most of the Arab countries and issues. In Beirut, the editors
emphasised the cultural and geographical proximity. The reasons behind this difference lie
in the fact that the London-based Arab newspapers address a wider and more diverse

audience, whereas the Beirut papers, like any national papers, have to care about the cultural and geographical proximity of the national reader. In fact, the national newspapers devote only two or three pages to Arab and foreign news and the rest to domestic affairs. The London-based Arab papers publish news which appeals to the "pan-Arab reader".

C.1.4. ELITE

Elite countries and persons are also a criterion for newsworthiness. Ghassan Sharbel, managing editor at Asharq Al-Awsat, considers that persons and countries involved in the news story can decide the size and location of the news story. Beirut editors share the viewpoints of the London editors. Ghassan Mukahal, editor at As-Safir, considers that the elite persons or countries are a main factor in deciding what news should be published, and with what emphasis. In this respect, Sahar Ba'asiri, sub-editor at An-Nahar, gives an example on the crash of Yasser Arafat's plane. She thinks that the "person himself, the threshold and negativity of the event and the consequences of Arafat's disappearance were aspects behind devoting an important space to the news story" (Ba'asiri, Sub-editor, An-Nahar).

The above mentioned criteria for newsworthiness in the Arab papers in London and Beirut have shown slight differences from the news values of the Western press. It was argued in chapter two that there are common news values across all newsrooms in the world. Nevertheless, the understanding of the news values varies from one newsroom to another. For instance, an editor in a Third World newsroom has the same editorial standards in selecting the news (e.g. elite, size, drama, etc.) as his/her counterpart in the West, but the difference lies in the interpretation of these news values in accordance with their cultural context. The Arab editors in Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar and As-Safir share a commonsense knowledge between them and their audience, and this differs between London and Beirut. The sequence or priority of these news values depends on the audience, political consideration and the newspaper's policy, as well as some news values related to the production of news such as recency, elite, importance, proximity, etc.

D. EDITOR-REPORTER INTERACTION

D.1. INTERACTION BETWEEN REPORTER AND EDITOR:

The interaction between the editor and the reporter is described as a "permanent conflict" (Golding & Elliott, 1979), or conflict on a stylistic not a substantive basis, when the editor suggests a different lead, proposes reorganisation or edits out a conclusion that could result in angry feedback from news sources (Gans, 1979). While Ericson *et al*

(1987) have noticed that most of the reporters write news stories that please their editors, Gans has found it difficult to please the editors because of a lack of sufficient background to develop judgement on editing a news story. To understand the kind of interaction that occurs between Arab editors and their reporters, it is essential to present both sides of the argument. This allows us to define the nature of such interaction, and to see whether it differs from one context to another, and/or from one newsroom to another. However, before proceeding in presenting the journalists' points of view, some points on the role of the researcher as ethnographer in the four Arab newsrooms are worth mentioning.

Studies on the participant observation have argued that the researcher, on becoming a member in the *inside* world, should seek the best means whereby s/he can participate and sustain relationships with the insiders, that of trying to avoid being a complete participant. The ethnographer is also advised to be as "unobtrusive" as possible and to avoid anything which is liable to call attention to him or herself (Jorgensen, 1989; Gold, 1969). Through my daily presence in the newspapers, I was able to gain the trust and the confidence of the newsrooms personnel. Although the relations with the journalists in the <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>, <u>Al-Hayat</u>, <u>As-Safir</u> and <u>An-Nahar</u> were good, I was aware of the need to remain "impartial" in my presentation the arguments of both sides: reporters and editors on their daily interaction. The different viewpoints were presented without taking a part in the "power game".

The participant observation has contributed to this aspect of the news selection process by a number of points. Firstly, the viewpoints of editors and reporters on their daily interaction have been further scrutinised by observing the actual interaction in the newsroom. For instance, some reporters and editors were trying to *hide* that there is "conflict" between them during the process of news production In other words, the observation has sometimes supported the arguments of the journalists and on other occasions has shown the opposite -- that there is a "permanent conflict". Secondly, the journalists were interviewed after a period of observation in their respective newsroom. Through the one-to-one interviews with the newsrooms personnel, I became aware of some other problems and tensions in the newsroom, and consequently the interviewees had to address these issues in their conversations with me. Thirdly, the two sides of the arguments were presented in an impartial way, allowing everyone involved in the process of news production to express his/her viewpoints. Finally, as an observer, the researcher was the third party in the "interaction" between the editors and reporters. The observations on the *de facto* situation, in the four newsrooms, are discussed below to present an overall view on the process of news production.

Some Arab journalists spoke of "no-conflict" with their editors, others argued that

their editors consult them when editing, but some journalists were critical of the relationship and the "discrimination amongst staff". Hosni Khashaba, journalist at Asharq Al-Awsat, says that he agrees with his editors on the frame that the story should be included in, there being an "implicit agreement" on how to write the story, and what should be emphasised. Yousif Khazem, a journalist at Al-Hayat, considers there to be no conflict between the reporters and editors: "There is a semi-agreement on the size and developments of news stories, arising out of continuous consultations between reporters and editors". In this respect, Ghassan Mukahal, editor at As-Safir, argues that continuous consultation with the reporter on the news story saves time (for the editor when it comes to editing) and avoids conflict with him/her. He emphasised that there should be a degree of discussion with the reporters:

> I don't make the reporter feel that s/he is chained to restrictions. Some flexibility and freedom should be given to the reporter. This is the case for the newly recruited reporters. But, the senior journalists do not need much orientation. (Mukahal, Editor, As-Safir)

Françios Akl, managing editor at An-Nahar, agrees with As-Safir's editor about giving a margin of freedom to journalists. On the one hand, he thinks that reporters should be given some flexibility through consulting and having the opportunity to take the initiative. On the other hand, the journalist should cope with the initiative and be able to evaluate news stories. Françios Akl, however, considers that the experience has not been encouraging because most journalists repeat the same mistake every time: "It is difficult to change the mentality of the reporter" (Akl, Managing Editor, An-Nahar).

This is the situation in the Beirut newsrooms, where editors emphasise giving the reporter a chance to take the initiative and avoid conflict between them. In the London-based Arab papers, some journalists critically referred to the "semi-agreement". This is an individual case where the relationship between journalist and his/her editor depends, to a large extent, on personal considerations rather than professional ones. In fact three main types of relationship between the London-based Arab editors and reporters can be seen. Firstly, some journalists argue that reporters' backgrounds play a role in deciding the kind of relationship:

> **In the Arab press, there is not much respect for the reporter's opinion. The kind of relationship between the reporters and editors plays a big role in authority, and dominates one viewpoint over another.** Most of the reporters read (the next morning) what they did not write exactly. **The smart reporter should have judgement to know how to please the editors.** I write in Asharq Al-Awsat in a different way than I do in The Times or Arab News[11]. I

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[11] The same reporter works free lance for the JEANS, Arab News (English daily published by the SRM),

> **know the style of the paper, and exactly what they want.**
> (Homouda, Journalist, Asharq Al-Awsat; emphasis added)

Secondly, another reporter considers that some reporters and editors do have autonomy in their work, while others do not. This leads to an interplay in authorities in the newsroom, and consequently confusion and mess in the work. The above argument can be illustrated. It was noticed that there is an intention to give the Saudi journalists at Asharq Al-Awsat managerial and editorial posts over other Arab journalists regardless of their qualifications[12]. The same was noticed at the Al-Hayat newsroom, where *some* Lebanese journalists enjoyed more editorial privilege than other journalists, in the Lebanese-dominated newsroom (see chapter nine).

Thirdly, some journalists contradict the argument (of the semi-agreement), seeing no agreement but considering that there is only conflict between the editors and reporters as well as between the editors and correspondents. On the editor-reporter level, the conflict is not as obvious as with the correspondent one. In the former case, the daily consultations and instructions did not *hide* the complaints from editors about their reporters' work. Bishara Sharbel and Abdul Wahhab Badrakhan frequently complained - during informal conversations - about the qualifications of the reporters (and correspondents). Some reporters were recruited to Al-Hayat because they held valid "British visas and had personal relations or connections with some editors, quite regardless of their professional qualifications" (Badrakhan, Senior Editor, Al-Hayat). The sub-editor complained about the work done by the reporters and correspondents, arguing that they are "under-qualified", and that the newsroom could not trust the reporter to send his/her story directly to the production, even when the news story is short. The editors work "more than they are expected to do, and sometimes they rewrite the whole of a story from a reporter or correspondent" (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat). Although the journalists in the London-based Arab newspapers preferred to deny such conflict, bilateral conversations between the reporters themselves, and the verbal complaints of the senior editors showed that there is indeed a "daily conflict".

On the reporter-level, Nizar Dou Ena'am, a journalist at Al-Hayat, argues that there is a "permanent conflict" between the correspondents and the newsroom. This conflict took place many times in the Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat newsrooms. The editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat asked about a complaint by the Moscow correspondent[13],

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InterAvion and The Times.

[12] In this respect, it was noticed that a Saudi journalist at the Business and Economy Desk of Asharq Al-Awsat was promoted to become an editor for the opinion and analysis pages, despite his not being professionally qualified. The managing editor of the same desk works as a "consultant" to the newspaper.

[13] The correspondent had complained to the editor-in-chief that he had filed a news story which was not

involving a reporter on the International Desk who said the reason for not publishing a news story was due to limitation in space because of advertisements. The editor-in-chief had given instructions to publish as much as possible rather than not to publish it. Sometimes, the conflict occurs because the correspondents do not respect the deadlines. One example at Asharq Al-Awsat, concerned a reporter who complained to the managing editor about receiving material just before the deadline. The rush in revising the material put him/her (the reporter) under pressure and this resulted in the missing out of some facts or dimensions of the story. The same kind of situation happened in Al-Hayat, when a correspondent complained about her story not being published. The sub-editor told her that the material reached the desk after 6.30 p.m., and that it was too late to publish it saying: "besides the material was not sufficiently important to replace another story: it can wait" (B. Sharbel, Sub-editor, Al-Hayat). Moreover, a reporter told Al-Hayat's correspondent in Algiers about complaints from the managing editor. This correspondent filed news stories that needed a lot of editing, and frequently missed news that came through the news agencies. The correspondent's defence was to say that the situation needed more staff or a bureau to cover it.

In the situation of the "semi-agreement" and "conflict" between the reporters and editors in the Arab newsrooms, the newsday goes through the continuous discussions mechanism. This happens when the editors instruct and answer correspondents and reporters' enquiries verbally, with regard to where to emphasise and what to include, or exclude from the information they are writing. These discussions take place on a frequent basis and in various forms. At Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat, editors and reporters exchange comments and discussions on the news stories of the current affairs. In the Beirut newspapers, the process of continuous discussion is not as intensive as in the London-based Arab papers. At As-Safir's Arab and International Desk, the deputy editor-in-chief comes to the desk to follow the developments of news stories. The same applies at An-Nahar, where the managing editor and the executive editor come to the Foreign Desk to discuss current affairs developments with the staff.

These various arguments allow us to draw two concluding points. Firstly, there is the editor's impression that the reporters are not sufficiently well-trained to be left alone to write news stories. In other words, to avoid "severe editing" of the reporter's work, the editor prefers to "edit" the news story during the writing process. Secondly, the editors do manage to edit on a frequent basis but cannot feel overloaded in reading news stories. At Asharq Al-Awsat, the editors do not spend much time in reading reporter's story. At Al-Hayat, the large number of the staff makes the work much easier. At An-Nahar, the

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published in the newspaper the next day.

managing editor did not complain about the editing, or about reading, nine pages out of the 14 or 16 pages that comprise the newspaper every night. At As-Safir, Ghassan Mukahal argues that he does not feel overloaded with reading because of various reasons: first, the news day in the newsroom is relatively long. Second, the amount of the foreign news is manageable. Third, the experience of the senior journalists saves the editor's time in reading their news stories.

D.2. REPORTER'S FEEDBACK ON THE EDITED STORIES:

The reporters see the editor's role in shaping their news stories as mainly technical and stylistic. Most of the reporters emphasised that the changes in the story happen for space considerations only, and that they accept the editor's decision (e.g. Homouda, Khoza'ai, Khashaba, Khazem, Dou Ena'am). However, other journalists did not find any change at all the next morning in their news stories (e.g. Ba'asiri, Mukahal). In this respect, the case of a story in the Al-Hayat newsroom and another at Asharq Al-Awsat give an idea of the reporter's feedback to a story that was not published, or severely edited, the next morning.

A reporter at Al-Hayat contacted the information office of the Human Rights Association in London asking for details on the scheduled meeting of the Human Rights group on Sudan (18/02/1992). The reporter got some information which he added to the material of bureaux and news agencies. The managing editor instructed him on what to emphasise mentioning that it would appear on the front page. The next morning, the news story was not published either on the front page or inside. When the particular reporter was asked about the reason for this, he referred to the problem of space, which he readily accepted without any resentment.

At Asharq Al-Awsat, a journalist received a news story from The New York Times service (09/01/1992) about a deal between a British company and Israel to export hi-tech computers for military use. The journalist informed his editors, who instructed him to follow up the story. The journalist contacted the Foreign Office (FO), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the manufacturing company in Bristol as well as an expert, who understood about such technology. After the long time that the journalist had spent in contacting the sources and writing the news story, the story was published the next morning but only in a reduced size. This happened because other news stories which came through that day were considered more important. The journalist's reaction was that he had been half expecting that this would happen.

Two conclusions follow from these examples. First, the Arab journalists in

general, and the Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat reporters in particular, accept the editor's final decision about deleting or editing their news story, which is not the case in the Western media. Ericson *et al* (1987) have noticed that the reporters used to sue their editors if their stories were not published, or the editor's editing led to an angry response from news sources. Second, the example shows that the decision-making process in Al-Hayat is not well-planned, in contrast to that of the other daily, Asharq Al-Awsat. This kind of decision-making is mainly affected by what the news agencies bring in later in the news day, where the "inverted pyramid" model applies in this newsroom. However, Al-Hayat is different from the other newsrooms. In this context, some reporters argue that the style of the newspaper became "second nature" (Khashaba, Journalist, Asharq Al-Awsat). This occurs when the journalist (after years of work in the same newsroom) becomes familiar to the changes of the "last minute" on a written news story. Such familiarity with the editors' decision to re-size or not to publish a news story, enables the reporter to accept any editorial decision without resentment. Other reporters and editors point to the fact that the managing editor has only the right to correct the factual errors if any, otherwise there should be no change in the news story (Ba'asiri, Sub-editor, An-Nahar).

CONCLUSION:

The mechanism of the editorial meetings, in Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir, operates on a similar basis, where both papers conduct two editorial meetings a day to discuss the news agenda and other related matters. In contrast, the An-Nahar and Al-Hayat newsrooms do not use editorial meetings. Instead, the managing editor works as a key-editor. At Al-Hayat, the editors prefer not to have the mechanism of daily meetings for various reasons relating mainly to the "distinction" between newsroom personnel. At An-Nahar, the shortage of staff and consequences of the Civil War have made the newspaper operate as an one-man-show newspaper, where the managing editor works as a key-editor in the newsroom.

The Beirut newspapers are more dependent on news agencies material than the London-based Arab papers. This makes the role of the gatekeepers more demanding and requires more journalistic experience. The London-based Arab newsrooms depend on bureaux and correspondents as their main channels in news gathering. Thus the work of the gatekeepers in these newsrooms is less demanding because their main task is to deal with the news agencies' material, where the editors deal with both the bureaux and news agencies' material. The Arab affairs desks in London are more staffed with different hierarchical posts than those of Beirut. This affects the role of the gatekeeper and the editors making it more complicated because of the organisational and editorial constraints. This though is not the case for small and less complicated Arab or foreign affairs desk in a

national newspaper, such as <u>As-Safir</u> or <u>An-Nahar</u>.

The Arab editors have a different definition of news values than Western journalists. Reader's interests and political considerations are considered as the first two criteria for newsworthiness. These two criteria which were exclusively emphasised by the Arab editors have been taken as figures of circulation. The political considerations, as a news value, has shown how the editors produce "media packages" that "resonate" with "dominant culture". Whereas the editors of the London-based Arab papers emphasise such considerations as a precondition for selection and presentation of news, the different ideological trends of the Beirut papers have shown how the identity of a paper influences the coverage and presentation of news. The other news values (e.g. proximity, elite) are understood by the Arab editors from a cultural point of view. For instance, cultural proximity for the Arab editor is inevitably not the same as it is for a Western editor. In the field of editor-reporter interaction, the Beirut newsrooms witness less conflict than those of London. In the London newsrooms, there is less conflict in <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> than in <u>Al-Hayat</u>. Nevertheless some "semi-agreement" and some "conflict" exist in each of the four newsrooms, though reporters tend to accept the editor's decision without resentment, which is not the case in the other press (e.g. Canadian press).

Having discussed the micro-level of news production in this and the previous chapter, the next chapter looks at another macro-level or the wider context of the news production process. It examines the impact of the context on the internal process of newsrooms in both London and Beirut.

CHAPTER NINE

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT:
A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

As argued in chapter two, there are numerous social forces that influence the media organisation. These influences, which are illustrated in figure 2.1, have been mostly discussed in the previous three chapters. In order to have an overall understanding of the other macro-level (the socio-cultural context), it is important to discuss the matters relating to the media-society linkage. This chapter examines the relationship between media institutions and their social context, and the impact of the media-society link on the Arab papers in London and Beirut. In studying the socio-cultural context a number of points are central: The first of these is the government and law system: censorship. The second aspect concerns the considerable growth of the London-based Arab press in the last two decades, and raises several detailed points including: the Arab journalists' view of London as an ideological environment, occupational roles of the newsrooms personnel and the impact of media technology. Finally, the overall consequence of the foregoing is considered with regard to the future prospects of the Arab national press, the London-based Arab papers having become its major competitor.

A. CENSORSHIP

Chapters one and three discussed how the press in the Arab World is subject to different kinds of state regulation and control, and how the state control or involvement variously decides the degree of censorship practiced. For instance, in countries such as Syria or Libya, the control of the press by the state is direct and thus censorship is very strict. In other countries, there is less control and the press enjoys a considerable freedom of expression albeit within the limits of the media laws. The Arab press which operates outside the Arab World, is subject to other kinds of censorship deriving from market regulations, and from some Arab countries which financially and/or politically support the owners of the London or Paris-based Arab media.

To understand how the Arab editors in both London and Beirut define the concept of censorship, and how the Arab press in London enjoys the freedom of not being directly subject to state regulation, the editors were asked about their experience with censorship inside (Beirut) and outside (London) the Arab World. However, it is important to mention that the press laws in Lebanon are significantly more open than those in other Arab countries, and although affected by the Civil War, this relative freedom continues. Thus, Ghassan Tueni, publisher of An-Nahar, argues that the press in Lebanon still enjoys its

freedom:

> Of course, the press is still free in Lebanon, because the definition of a press freedom concept stemmed from the journalists' own intention to define this freedom. Most of the newspapers in Lebanon represent ideologies, parties or countries. The expression free press applies only to An-Nahar, and less so other newspaper. It cannot be applied to party press. The party press everywhere in the world is not free. The same situation applies to press which affiliates to countries. (Tueni, Publisher, An-Nahar)

By comparing An-Nahar to other ideological papers in Lebanon, Ghassan Tueni ignores the fact that the diversity in the newspapers' attitudes is itself another dimension of press freedom. As mentioned in chapter three, the papers in Lebanon span from the left to right-wing ideological schools. This broad spectrum of political thought is undoubtedly one of its advantages. On the one hand, for example An-Nahar is classified by Dajani (1992) as a right-of-centre newspaper closely connected to political decision-making bodies (see chapter six). These aspects enhance the role of An-Nahar in being one of the most influential papers in Lebanon. On the other hand, Dajani categorised As-Safir as a left-of-centre paper. As such, As-Safir has suffered more from the state intervention and the *de facto* situation during the Civil War than other papers (see chapters three and six). In this respect, Talal Salman, editor-in-chief of As-Safir, stresses that censorship in Lebanon is almost non-existent despite attempts by the government and other Arab authorities, to curb the freedom which the Lebanese press enjoys:

> Censorship in Lebanon is ridiculous. With a little professional rhetoric you can play tricks with the censors ... The police regime does not succeed in this country. It deprives you of the honour of political encounter. 'Ugly censorship' is practiced through tools and allies (e.g. Palestinians, Iraq, Libya, Syria). Saudi Arabia is the paymaster, and other parties implement her instructions. There is a direct clash with the Arab countries, because this country is an open arena. (T. Salman, Editor-in-chief, As-Safir)

The above arguments indicate that the censorship in Lebanon is practiced only in a narrow margin and is relatively ineffectual. This is not the case for other Arab countries. The only danger that the Lebanese press faces is the intervention by other Arab regimes. This limited censorship stems from the socio-political map of the Lebanese society. As discussed in chapters one, three and six, the present situation in Lebanon is that the press still enjoys some freedom despite government intention to de-regulate the illegal broadcast media, which have flourished since the Civil War. Furthermore, Ghassan Tueni thinks that the press enjoyed a partial freedom despite the militias' sway even during the Civil War:

> Despite the militias' control, An-Nahar remained free to express its opinion in the frame of the law, and the limits of what it was previously committed to: not to provoke, nor agree with the war. We enjoyed during the war an amount of freedom that most prestigious newspapers in similar

circumstances did not. (Tueni, Publisher, An-Nahar)

This point of view is contradicted by the editor-in-chief of As-Safir, who considers the war was a "real crisis" for the Lebanese press, and the *de facto* situation was an obstacle to enjoying any real freedom. The two newspapers, operating in the same social context, were subject to different kinds of militia domination. An-Nahar was regarded by the *de facto* forces in Lebanon as an "independent paper", while As-Safir was classified as a left-wing newspaper. This classification had its consequences on the newspapers themselves, in terms of the circulation and the freedom of expression. As-Safir's dilemma during the war was greater than An-Nahar's:

> The circumstances were stronger than us. The war was a real crisis for the press. The resistance (of the newspaper) was stronger and tougher than we could bear or afford. During each lull we gave assurances that we were not a party in the war ...We were dragged into the war ... We became tools of war. In 1978, 1980 and 1984 there was a promise of peace, and As-Safir worked for peace periods. The newspaper waged war against war ... As-Safir was banned by all *de facto* forces[1]. Amid these circumstances, As-Safir was trying to be a paper of cause, opinion and position. (T. Salman, Editor-in-chief, As-Safir)

Ghassan Tueni and Talal Salman do share certain opinions regarding the impact of the war on their newspapers. Both of them considered that the press in Lebanon was dragged into the conflict and classified by *de facto* forces (the militias) as in favour of or against certain issues and causes. However, the consequences of the war were not the same for An-Nahar as As-Safir (see chapter six). Ghassan Tueni considers the dilemma at As-Safir occurred because of the newspaper's identity as a left-wing newspaper. He sees Talal Salman as a left-wing journalist committed to ideas of Arab nationalism who had "to move between red-tapes" as the era of nationalism became overwhelmed by the other camp: Saudi-led conservatism (see chapter one).

It needs to be borne in mind that this is censorship operating inside an Arab country. The situation in the London-based Arab press is quite different. The senior editors in the Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat newspapers agree that censorship is practiced in London as well, but they hinted that the journalists feel safer than they would in the Arab countries, where the physical reaction against the paper or staff can be fatally damaging. While Othman Al-Omeir of Asharq Al-Awsat argues that there is a censorship in central London on the Arab press, Jihad El-Khazen of Al-Hayat stresses that the newspaper in London subjects itself to a prior censorship. In this context, it is essential to mention that

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[1] The *de facto* forces, which were in control of the western sector of Beirut during the Civil War, where As-Safir operates were: *Amal,* the Shi'ite militia, Progressive Socialist Party of the Druze, the PLO factions and the Syrian army.

the various editions of <u>Al-Hayat</u> and <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> help them to overcome problems with the censorship officials. For example, the London-edition of <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> or <u>Al-Hayat</u> is different from editions in the Arab World. Jihad El-Khazen, editor-in-chief of <u>Al-Hayat</u>, emphasised that this difference occurs in the advertisements only. Certainly, there are some national advertisements which are addressed only to a certain Arab country where they indeed appear in <u>Al-Hayat</u>'s edition for that area. Such national advertisements are replaced by "house advertisements", such as the ones on the newspaper's printing centres for other areas. The different editions were explained by the Sports Editor at <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> who said that the newspaper publishes different editions in case of national occasions in countries such as Morocco. Moreover, Mohammad Al-Tunisi of <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> mentioned that the edition for Saudi Arabia has more pages because of the surge in Saudi advertisements. In <u>Al-Hayat</u>'s case, a reader wrote to the newspaper asking about two different editions of <u>Al-Hayat</u> in two different countries: London and Saudi Arabia. In other words, the different editions of the papers enable the editor not only to substitute advertising but also to modify the content (e.g. some critical issues)[2] in accordance with the country concerned. Despite the fact that the top editors (El-Khazen, Al-Omeir, Sama'an, Al-Tunisi) denied such modification, informal conversation with the newsroom personnel during the transmission of material from the London office to the Arab printing centres abroad show the opposite.

In the field of censorship in the Arab World, Jihad El-Khazen of <u>Al-Hayat</u> classifies censorship into many types. These various types are related to the nature of political regimes and government involvement:

> The censorship differs from one Arab country to another. Bahrain[3] is like Lebanon before the war. We were banned in the United Arab Emirates because of the BCCI[4]. Saudi Arabia is very strict on the censorship issue. Either strict or flexible, it depends on the situation in the country. Egypt is a democratic country, but if we transcribed material from <u>Al-Wafd</u>[5], they will ban <u>Al-Hayat</u>. In all cases, the Egyptians negotiate with us about the banning of material. In Jordan and Morocco, we avoid the King himself. In Lebanon, there is the press law by which they can sue you in the courts. **There is not one censorship but censorships. <u>Al-Hayat</u> anticipates being banned once or twice each month in the Arab World. If it were banned more than that, it would become a problem.** (El-Khazen, Editor-in-chief, <u>Al-Hayat</u>; emphasis added)

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[2] An example can explain this point. In the first week of August 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, most of the London-based Arab papers did not publish the story in the Gulf editions in the first few days of the invasion.

[3] In Bahrain, <u>Al-Hayat</u> publishes the main and basic edition for the Gulf states (Sama'an, Managing Editor, <u>Al-Hayat</u>).

[4] The bankruptcy of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. The UAE ruler, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan was frequently mentioned because he had some connections to the issue (as the main shareholder in the BCCI capital).

[5] The organ of the Egyptian Opposition party *Al-Wafd* (The Delegation).

Jihad El-Khazen draws a map of the "kinds" of censorship in the Arab World. To put this in perspective, Al-Hayat's journalists are "house trained" to avoid any sensitive topics and to practice a prior censorship by working on *how* to present the news story, not *what* to publish. He argues that the editor-in-chief does not apply the journalism which s/he studied in school, when it comes to the Arab censors. This compliance with the situation of specific countries had enabled the newspaper to publish news stories in such a way as not to be banned in these countries. For instance, Al-Hayat or Asharq Al-Awsat do not pay much attention to being banned in countries like Libya, Sudan or Somalia for two reasons. Firstly, these countries do not provide a high percentage of the circulation, and because as Jihad El-Khazen put it: "if we send 3000 issues to Libya, we would not get the revenues back". Secondly, and most importantly, the London-based Arab papers consider the Gulf market as the locus for circulation and advertising, thus, they comply mainly with the conditions of the Gulf censors (see chapter six). In this respect, Ghassan Tueni of An-Nahar, critically argues that such a press is not "pan-Arab" because of its engagement to the political system and to the owners' nationalities. Furthermore, he emphasises that the relationship between the Arab regime that publishes the newspaper, and the other Arab regimes decides what is to be published. Ghassan Tueni's viewpoint shows what kind of censorship the London-based Arab editors must talk about. Another editor-in-chief in London argued that censorship is practiced in London much as it is in any Arab state:

> Censorship exists in central London. Each editor-in-chief censors more than any censorship officer in the Arab World. You don't have to be like Kalim Siddiqui[6] or Che Guevara[7]. The newspaper is not a hot-bed for change in the Arab countries and hence for risking toppling any Arab regime. It is a 'Cat-and-Mouse Game'. Even though we face problems with the regimes in matters of censorship, we manage to pass on the information to the Arab World. (Al-Omeir, Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat)

Othman Al-Omeir's view of 'strict censorship' in central London, stems from the fact that he sees Asharq Al-Awsat, - the flagship of the SRM - as under strict control, restrained from violating the Saudi rules of censorship. As discussed in chapter six, the Arab editors in London try to avoid particular taboos in dealing with Arab affairs. However, the most 'idealistic approach' to censorship comes from the managing editor of Al-Hayat:

> Al-Hayat publishes as much as Arab regimes permit it to without risking closure of entry to most countries, and thus being read by a large proportion of readers. If you carry the banner of opposition (facing the regimes), to the end, you will reach nowhere. Which is better: to have a wide margin of

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[6] A British Muslim figure known for his radical views
[7] A Latin American revolutionary leader.

> freedom and not to reach the reader, or to have a limited margin and to reach the reader? The latter is the best in my opinion. **Some sort of compliance with the censorship is needed. With big events, we do not respect any censorship. We write and we know in advance that the newspaper might be banned in one country or another.** But, we decide to publish a story and maintain credibility with the reader. You cannot hide obvious and fundamental truths from the reader. (Sama'an, Managing editor, <u>Al-Hayat</u>; emphasis added)

<u>Al-Hayat</u> is trying to establish a broad audience with circulation figures and advertising revenues in many parts of the Arab World. In doing so, the newspaper adopts a "double standard" in dealing with the Arab countries. As discussed in several parts of this thesis, <u>Al-Hayat</u> is an opposition newspaper in certain Arab countries, whilst being loyal to the official line in other countries. What constitutes a "big event" for one country may not for another. The issue of Halayeb, discussed in chapter eight, was widely and importantly covered because it complied with the censorship regulations of the <u>Al-Hayat</u> owners, while some other events were treated in a marginal way and buried in the inside pages despite having adequate newsworthiness, to be published on the front page and/or in an important position[8].

The viewpoints of the Arab editors in London and Beirut show different approaches to the matter of censorship. For the Beirut editors, censorship is barely practiced by the government, and the problems come mainly from the other Arab countries because of the "openness of the Lebanese press". This argument applies to a Lebanese press that is widely read in the Arab World as has been the case in the last two decades. Thus the press which is more able to bring troubles to the Arab regimes is the one operating outside the Arab World. Knowing this, the Arab authorities allow such a press to be distributed when such countries are on good terms with the owners' political patronage. The London-based Arab press, which is recognised as pan-Arab, tries to comply with the censorship of the various countries. As explained in the previous chapters, the London-based Arab newspapers (<u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> and <u>Al-Hayat</u>) whilst respecting the official line in a few countries inevitably support the opposition in other countries.

B. LONDON AS AN "IDEOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT"

The second factor which relates to the study of the socio-cultural context is the impact of the "real world" or "ideological environment". The London-based Arab press has been affected by its environment in a number a ways including: diversity of staff, easy

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[8] See chapter eight, where the political consideration is discussed as criterion for selecting the news to be published.

access to information and sources and media technology[9]. Before discussing the factors relating to London regarding the Arab press, it is essential to remind the reader of the early years of the phenomenon of the "pan-Arab press". In the 1950s, the Egyptian press was pan-Arab, being widely read in the Arab World. However, a number of changes led to a reduced role. Nasser's initiative to nationalise the press in the late 1950s, and the increase in the intervention of the state in press freedom, were the main reasons. Moreover, the political ties with Israel in the late 1970s (the Camp David Agreement)[10] further isolated Egypt and its press in the Arab World. In this situation, Beirut became the cradle for the second pan-Arab press. Lebanon's role as a place for such a press was enhanced by political changes in some Arab countries and by having established press laws, which other countries lacked (for more details see chapters one and three). For nearly two decades, Beirut was the capital of the second pan-Arab press. The Arab governments and parties realised the importance of the Lebanese press in promoting their ideologies and political discourse. Most of the Arab regimes established or supported the press to promote their policies outside their home countries. The Lebanese experience lasted for two decades, until the Civil War erupted in 1975. The phenomenon of the pan-Arab press had sufficient momentum to continue, several newspapers, magazines and journalists moved from Lebanon to other countries. Kuwait, Cyprus, London and Paris became the main new capitals of the pan-Arab press. However, London and Paris started to gain a particular prominence when:

> The phenomenon started with the eruption of the Civil War in Lebanon. A sudden and huge presence of a large number of newspaper owners and journalists was noticed in London. Al-Hawadeth[11] was the first, then all the other magazines. The Arabs, in general, got used to London as a safe *haven* and information centre. London started to become familiar to these people with the beginning of the Civil War in Lebanon. The Lebanese magazines' selection of London as a base, shed light (on the importance of London) and opened the door for establishing more and larger press houses. (Othman, Editor, Al-Hayat)

In the 1980s, the London-based Arab media established a network of dailies, weeklies and recently a pan-Arab television station (see chapter three, sections C & D). The flourishing of the Arab media in London, has made London the second home for the

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[9] The influence of the ideological environment on the Arab national press has been discussed in chapter three. This section, by focusing mainly on the London-based Arab press, points also to the Lebanese press as an example of the Arab national media.

[10] Following the Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel, most of the Arab countries terminated their diplomatic relations with Egypt. This step has had its repercussions on the status of the Egyptian press and its role in the Arab World.

[11] Al-Hawadeth (The Events): One of the most prestigious weekly magazines in the Arab World. It was forced to move from Beirut in 1975-76. Al-Hawadeth's editor-in-chief, Salim Al-Louzi, was kidnapped and assassinated in Beirut in late 1970s for his pro-conservative Arab policy and critical views of the regimes of Libya and Syria.

Arab editors. To usefully understand the matters relating to the influence of London (as a socio-cultural context) on the Arab papers and their staff, it is important to grasp the editors' views on this ideological environment, by studying aspects such as: diversity of staff, occupational roles of the newsrooms personnel and media technology.

B.1. DIVERSITY OF STAFF:

Othman Al-Omeir, editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, emphasises that London (as a social context) has provided his newspapers with "unique features, spontaneity and humanity", which cannot be found in the newspapers operating in the Arab World. The difficulty in transferring such diversity, which currently exists (available) in the London-based Arab papers, to one of the Arab cities (e.g. Beirut, Cairo, Amman, Kuwait) rests with two factors. First, Othman Al-Omeir points to the freedom of expression, which simply is not practiced in most Arab countries, not even in countries like Kuwait[12]. Second, the difficulty of travel between the Arab countries for the Arabs themselves. For the Arab editors, it is far easier to assemble the Arab journalists in London or Paris than in any Arab country because:

> It is more difficult for an Arab to obtain a visa and to travel to, and have access in, an Arab country, than it is for a Western journalist. And how much more pampered and protected is that Western journalist compared to his Arab counterpart. (El-Rayyes, 1991: 94)

This differentiation (or discrimination) in treatment, between the Arab and the Western journalist by the Arab authorities, has made the Arab editors establish their press organisations in countries with a *laissez-faire* economy and political pluralism. The matters relating to the economy and freedom affect the emigration and settlement of Arab journalist. Most of the Arab countries lack these facilities - which are easily accessible in the West. In this respect, Othman Al-Omeir further argues:

> The character of the newspaper is the diversity in its staff, which you cannot assemble in one Arab country. There are several successful experiences in the European-based Arab press like Al-Mustaqbal[13], Al-Watan Al-Arabi[14], Al-Dowalieh[15], Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat which have the same feature. (Al-Omeir, Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat)

Othman Al-Omeir's views on the diversity in the Asharq Al-Awsat staff can be

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[12] See chapter three for more details on the Kuwaiti press in the Gulf region.

[13] Al-Mustaqbal (The Future) is a Paris-based weekly magazine which was bought by the current Lebanese PM, Rafic Al-Hariri, when it faced some financial problems and ceased publication in the late 1980s.

[14] Al-Watan Al-Arabi (The Arab World) is a Paris-based weekly magazine that was supported by the Iraqis, after the Gulf War it turned to the Gulf market for support.

[15] Al-Dowalieh (The International) is a Paris-based weekly magazine launched in the late 1980s.

better understood by looking at the nationalities of the newsroom's personnel, who are a combination of different Arab nationalities. Nevertheless, there is differentiation in the hierarchy between such nationalities, where for instance the Saudi journalists occupy the editor-in-chief post as well as some managerial and administrative posts (see chapter six). After the Saudi personnel come other Arab nationalities in the newsroom's hierarchy including the Lebanese and Egyptian but with notable differences in quantity and authority (see table 9.1). Despite the fact that the Saudi personnel constitute only a small percentage compared to the Egyptian or the Lebanese staff, they are disproportionately influential when it comes to the decision making process. In this respect, it was noticed that Asharq Al-Awsat (and the other SRM publications) operate in such a way as to elevate the Saudi personnel for (either management or editorial) higher position in the hierarchy of the news organisation. In short, there is an intention to "Saudize" the SRM publications by bringing Saudi editors and managers to the top hierarchical structure.

Table 9.1: The nationalities, number and occupation of Asharq Al-Awsat's personnel[16]

Nationality	No	Occupation	%
Egyptian	7	Deputy Editor-in-chief (1) Editor (1) Journalists (5)	20.6
Lebanese	7	Managing Editor (1) Senior Editor (2) Editor (2) Journalist (1) Photographer (1)	20.6
Iraqi	5	Editor (1) Journalist (1) Translator (2) Graphic Designer (1)	15.3
Palestinian	5	Managing Editor (2) Editor (1) Journalist (1) Translator (1)	15.3
Saudi	4	Editor-in-chief (1) Deputy Editor-in-chief (1) Editor (2)	12.8
Sudanese	3	Managing Editor (1) Journalist (2)	8.8
Algerian	1	Editor	2.9
Syrian	1	Editor	2.9
Total	33	Editor-in-chief (1) Deputy Editor-in-chief (2) Managing Editor (4) Senior Editor (2) Editor (9) Journalist (10) Translators (3) Graphic Designer (1) Photographer (1)	99.2

Source: Personnel Department, Saudi Research & Marketing, January 1992

It was felt by the editors interviewed that the mix of journalists who came from different backgrounds had enriched the experience of the newspaper, by bringing together several nationalities, cultures and backgrounds. This could be viewed as one advantage of the London-based Arab press. The first two epochs of the pan-Arab presses in Cairo and then Beirut have been, not surprisingly, dominated by Egyptian and Lebanese personnel. In this respect, the London-based Arab press has brought a new era of "pan-Arab" staff diversity. Whereas the former two experiences, were carried out mainly by the citizens of those countries and, were "closed" to other Arab nationalities, the experience of the London-based Arab press in general, and Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Majalla in particular, has "shown a different trend in the pan-Arab press by bringing together the Lebanese,

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[16] This table is based on findings at the time of the research.

Iraqi, Saudi and Palestinian journalists, and not being dominated by one single nationality" (Al-Rashed, 1992). Furthermore, the diversity in the nationalities and backgrounds has its impact on the different aspects of journalistic work. For example, during the editorial conferences, the editors and journalists suggested or discussed in detail ideas on news stories or features relating to their home countries or their regions. In this respect, an Algerian editor in the Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom worked as an expert for the period of major events in Algeria. The newsroom relied on this editor to correct certain information on Algeria (e.g. names of persons, places or organisations) as well as providing essential background on the situation there. What applies to the Algerian editor can apply to the Lebanese, Sudanese and other members of staff. The staff of the Al-Hayat newsroom is less diverse than that of Asharq Al-Awsat.

Table 9.2: The nationalities, number and occupation of Al-Hayat's personnel[17]

Nationality	No	Occupation	%
Lebanese	29	Managing Editor (1) Senior Editor (3) Editor (6) Sub-Editor (1) Journalist (18)	70.7
Palestinian	3	Editor-in-chief (1) Editor (1) Journalist (1)	7.3
Iraqi	2	Editor (1) Journalist (1)	4.8
Syrian	2	Translator (1) Journalist (1)	4.8
Sudanese	3	Editor (1) Journalist (2)	7.3
British	2	Journalist (2)	4.8
Total	41	Editor-in-chief (1) Managing Editor (1) Senior Editor (3) Editor (9) Sub-Editor (1) Journalist (25) Translator (1)	99.7

Source: Personnel Department, Al-Hayat International for Publishing, February 1992

As table 9.2 shows, the vast majority of the staff came from one country: Lebanon. In Al-Hayat, the Lebanese background and culture dominate the journalistic work[18]. Such restricted diversity renders Al-Hayat's judgement on the Arab events vulnerable to a tendentious Lebanese perspective. Having shown that the Lebanese personnel constitute 70 percent of the whole, and occupy influential positions in the newspaper, the diversity of staff cannot be considered as effective as it is in Asharq Al-Awsat. As discussed in chapter six, Al-Hayat has not succeeded in becoming a pan-Arab newspaper in terms of the identity and perspective. In this context, Jihad El-Khazen emphasises that Al-Hayat is essentially a Lebanese newspaper before stretching secondarily to a pan-Arab perspective. Furthermore, he stresses that the current owner, Prince Khaled bin Sultan, had insisted that the newspaper should be kept under the name of the Mroue family (the founder of the newspaper). The domination of the Lebanese factors makes Al-Hayat a "Lebanese-labelled" newspaper, not a diverse one like that of Asharq Al-Awsat.

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[17] This table is based on findings at the time of the research.
[18] See Appendix D, section 4, about the concept of "Lebanese Elitism" in Al-Hayat.

In the Beirut newsrooms, the diversity amongst staff is not enormous. Nevertheless, a sort of diversity in coverage and concern of Arab affairs is achieved. This diversity started to decline in the early years of the Civil War, when the newspapers' concern became more focused on the domestic Lebanese issues than Arab and international affairs. The war had had major consequences on the "comprehensiveness" of the Lebanese media, which was one of the main characteristics of that media (and the press in particular). The result was a reduction in the space devoted to Arab affairs due to the prominence of national concerns. Such a reduction had led to "Lebanisation" of concern at the second pan-Arab press (Hamadeh, 1976).

B.2. OCCUPATIONAL ROLES OF THE NEWSROOMS PERSONNEL:

Having discussed the diversity in nationalities, it is essential to complement this aspect by studying the occupational roles of the editors and journalists, who work on Arab current affairs. The study of the occupation, education and experience of news personnel in the Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, As-Safir and An-Nahar newsrooms contribute to the study of the impact of socio-cultural context in a number of ways. Several studies (e.g. McQuail, 1994; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991) have found that the personal characteristics of those who are most directly responsible for media production will influence the content. These characteristics relate to the background, education and political attitudes[19]. Secondly, and most importantly, the study of the media professionals' background and experience allows us to examine the influence of the "dominant ideology system" on the newspapers personnel in general, and in the London-based press in particular. As mentioned in chapter seven, the London-based Arab newsrooms have more staff than those of Beirut. Most of the Arab affairs editors and reporters in London-based Arab newsrooms came originally from the Arab national press, and in particular from Lebanese news desks. For instance, Al-Hayat Arab affairs staff came mainly from a Lebanese background and experience (see table 9.3), unlike that of Asharq Al-Awsat.

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[19] For a detailed account, see Shoemaker & Reese, 1991: 53-84.

Table 9.3: Background of Al-Hayat's Arab Affairs Desk personnel[20]

Occupation & Age	Education	Experience
Editor-in-chief 50's	BA, MA in Political Science	see chapter six
Managing Editor 40's	BA, MA in Arabic Literature	*An-Nahar*
Senior Editor 40's	BA in Political Science	*An-Nahar*
Senior Editor 40's	BA, MA in Journalism	*An-Nahar*
Editor 40's	BA in Journalism	*Asharq Al-Awsat*, BBC
Sub-editor 30's	Ph.D. linguistics	AFP, *An-Nahar*
Journalist 30's	MA in Mass Communication	*As-Safir*
Journalist 30's	MA in Political Science	*As-Safir*
Journalist 30's	BA in Journalism	*As-Safir*
Journalist 30's	BA in Education	Gulf newspapers
Journalist 30's	BA in Journalism	*Ad-Diyar*
Journalist 30's	Diploma in Journalism	Sudan and London newspapers
Journalist 20's	BA in Law	Sudan, Saudi Arabia, BBC
Journalist 20's	BA in Linguistics	BBC, West Bank

Looking at table 9.3, a number of points can be made regarding the journalist-context relationship. Firstly, most of the journalists at the Al-Hayat Arab Affairs Desk are young persons (30 years old on average). Secondly, the level of education is considerably high, most of the staff being holders of university degrees. This reinforces the status of journalists. Thirdly, and most importantly, the experience of most of the journalists shows that most of them came from the two leading Lebanese papers As-Safir and An-Nahar. It has been argued in several places in this thesis, that An-Nahar is critical of Saudi policy[21], and As-Safir is an Arab nationalist paper, which stands in the opposing camp to the Saudi-led conservative one. These journalists are working now in a newspaper which is owned by a Saudi royal family member, and promotes, a different ideology. This clearly shows how the influence of the socio-cultural context has made a 180-degree change in the occupational roles of the media professionals at Al-Hayat's Arab Affairs Desk. In the other London-based Arab daily, the staff on the Arab Affairs Desk in Asharq Al-Awsat came from different backgrounds and their experiences are more diverse than those of the Al-Hayat staff (see table 9.4), coming as they do, from mixed journalistic experiences in the Arab World.

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[20] This table is based on findings at the time of the research.
[21] See Ghassan Tueni's (of An-Nahar) critical views on Saudi media in chapters three, six and seven.

Table 9.4: Background of Asharq Al-Awsat's Arab Affairs Desk personnel[22]

Occupation & Age	Education	Experience
Editor-in-chief 50's	BA in Journalism	see chapter six
Deputy Editor-in-chief 50's	BA in Political Science	*Al-Ahram* for 20 years
Deputy Editor-in-chief 40's	MA in Mass Communication	Lecturer, Press Officer
Managing Editor 40's	MA in Education	*An-Nahar*, AFP
Managing Editor 40's	BA in Journalism	Sudan, *Al-Arab, Al-Tadamon*
Senior Editor 40's	MA in Political Science	*An-Nahar*
Senior Editor 50's	BA in Economics	*Al-Eqtisad wa Al-'Amal*
Journalist 50's	MA in International Relations	MENA, Press Officer
Journalist 40's	BA, MA in Political Theory	*Al-Ahram, Al-Tadamon*
Journalist 30's	BA in Journalism	*Al-Ahram*
Journalist 30's	BA in Drama and Theatre	*Awerak, Al-Azmenieh Al-Arabieh*

The same argument discussed above on the educational background of Al-Hayat can be applied to Asharq Al-Awsat. Regarding age, the Asharq Al-Awsat personnel are somewhat older than those of Al-Hayat, which affects the journalistic work. This was evident in the process of news gathering and news writing, where Asharq Al-Awsat's personnel are highly trained and more experienced than those of Al-Hayat. On the experience level, the staff of Asharq Al-Awsat's Arab Affairs Desk came from newspapers and magazines which contradict the current dominant ideological system. For instance, Al-Arab, Al-Tadamon, Al-Ahram and An-Nahar are publications which either support Arab nationalism and/or oppose the Saudi-led conservative camp (see chapter three and six). Like Al-Hayat, Asharq Al-Awsat has ideologically contained the Arab journalists who came from the opposing schools of thought. These journalists are working on reproducing content which contradicts their (once) ideological affiliations and backgrounds. This occurs because such personnel have either to work in the papers of the present dominant system or not work at all. The former alternative is adopted by most of the Arab journalists in London, mainly because of the economic reasons (see Marlowe, 1992).

The Lebanese papers differ from those of London, in terms of experience, education and background. For example, on the national level, As-Safir's Arab and International Desk is better staffed than An-Nahar's Foreign Desk (see tables 9.5 & 9.6). The reasons behind the shortage of staff in the latter, discussed in chapter six, concern the recruiting policy that An-Nahar applied during the Civil War.

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[22] This table is based on findings at the time of the research.

Table 9.5: Background of An-Nahar's Foreign Desk personnel[23]

Occupation & Age	Education	Experience
Managing Editor 60's	BA in Literature	*An-Nahar* for 31 years
Sub-Editor 30's	BA, MA in Journalism	*An-Nahar*, UPI, AP
Journalist 40's	BA, MA in Education	*An-Nahar*
Journalist 30's	BA in Political Science	*An-Nahar*

Furthermore, each of the staff on either As-Safir's Arab and International Desk or An-Nahar's Foreign Desk have much the same experience in their respective newspapers. For instance, the managing editor, editor and the senior journalists on As-Safir's Arab affairs desk have been working in the same newsroom for a considerable time. The same can be said for An-Nahar's Foreign Desk personnel. It was explained in chapter six that the two newspapers (An-Nahar and As-Safir) pursue different political perspectives. The journalists on these papers can be classified accordingly. After the Civil War, a number of As-Safir's journalists joined the Issue Desk at An-Nahar. Such an ideological incursion into the structure of An-Nahar's staff was not welcomed by its managing editor. Françios Akl considered that this might affect the newspaper's outlook on domestic, Arab and international affairs.

Table 9.6: Background of As-Safir's Arab & International Desk personnel[24]

Occupation & Age	Education	Experience
Editor-in-chief 50's	BA in Political Science	see chapter six
Deputy Editor-in-chief 50's	BA in Political Science	Various Lebanese papers
Managing Editor 40's	BA in Journalism	13 years in *As-Safir*
Editor 30's	BSc in Science	13 years in *As-Safir*
Journalist 30's	BA in Journalism	13 years in *As-Safir*
Journalist 30's	BA in Journalism	13 years in *As-Safir*
Journalist 30's	BA in Political Science	*Al-Nida'* and other magazines
Journalist 30's	BA in Literature	*Al-Hadaf* and other magazines
Journalist 20's	BA in Journalism	*Orient Le Jour*

When looking at the Arab affairs staff, the differences between the newsrooms of London-based and Beirut papers raise two points. First, Al-Hayat's homogeneous staff is younger than that of Asharq Al-Awsat. This difference has some impact on the journalistic work with Al-Hayat's young staff suffering a parallel lack of experience in journalistic work when compared to the other newsrooms. Second, the London-based Arab

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[23] This table is based on findings at the time of the research.
[24] This table is based on findings at the time of the research.

newsrooms have recruited the cream of experienced journalists from the Lebanese, Sudanese, Palestinian and Egyptian press. This is not the case in the national papers and has an impact on the quality of news content. To sum up, the London-based Arab press is considered to be more able and experienced than the Arab national press. Such experienced journalists were attracted and motivated by the good conditions of work and the high salaries that such a press was able to offer. These were possible because of the financial support which is at the disposal of such a press. Combined with the political and economic circumstances in the home countries of the Arab editors, this temptation was hard to resist.

B.3. LONDON: EASY ACCESS TO SOURCES AND INFORMATION

Most of the Arab editors and journalists in London, say the easy access to news sources and data banks is a major reason behind the success of their newspapers. Nadim Nahhas, managing editor at Asharq Al-Awsat, thinks that London is a good place for practicing journalism because of "the access to news sources, experts (in different fields) and databases". The telecommunication infrastructure, which is available for London-based Arab papers, has implications for the journalistic work and indeed for the journalists as well. It was mentioned in chapter seven that the London-based Arab journalists have easy access to decision-making circles, opposition groups and experts. It is the available technology in London that facilitates such access. Comparable technology is not available in most of the Arab countries, and where such technology is available it is under the surveillance of security agencies. Nadim Nahhas is not the only editor to emphasise the advantages of exposure to the Western media. Ghassan Sharbel, managing editor at Asharq Al-Awsat, thinks that daily contact with the Western media together with the broader outlook of the expatriate Arab media on the Arab situation have enriched his journalistic experience far more than would have been possible in the national press (e.g. An-Nahar): "In the pan-Arab press, the journalist broadens his/her horizon, and increases his/her concern for the whole of the Arab World. Perception and accuracy increasing with distance" (G. Sharbel, Managing Editor, Asharq Al-Awsat). Yousif Khazem, journalist at Al-Hayat, in a similar view, considers that the available communication facilities and networks of information (Paris, London, Washington) as well as the existence of the Somali and Ethiopian opposition groups 'on their doorsteps' in London and Paris, further assist the work of the Arab press in London. The other dimension of the technological boom on the London Arab papers, that is to say the use of such technology in production and communication, is discussed later in this chapter.

The second key advantage for the London-based Arab papers is the existence of the opposition groups in Europe, mainly in London and Paris. Yousif Khazem, journalist at Al-Hayat, who is mainly working on issues related to the African Horn and Eastern Africa,

draws a comparison with the opposition groups in Beirut before the Civil War[25] and those currently in London and Paris. He considers London not dissimilar to a "large pre Civil War Beirut", where such groups feel safe enough to be contacted, and journalists can publish viewpoints on the current situation in their countries without "angry feedback" from the regimes concerned. Yousif Khazem's argument shows that the London-based Arab press feels that it can indeed publish viewpoints of both governments and opposition groups. Such an advantage is not at all common in the Arab national press. The London-based Arab papers thus present a mixture of arguments, some of governments and some of opposition groups, thereby providing a forum for different viewpoints in the Arab political landscape. Nevertheless, some opposition groups get more prominence and coverage than other groups because of the nationality of opposition groups and the concerned regimes. The findings of chapter five show the kinds of Arab opposition groups which were widely covered in Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat. Looking at the coverage of the Arab-London press on such opposition groups, two points are observed. First, the news on the Arab political opposition varies in emphasis and *angle* from one Arab country to another. There is considerable emphasis on the opposition in Sudan, Iraq and Yemen because of the *rapprochement* between these groups and the officials of some Gulf states (see chapter six). Second, the wide coverage of the political opposition groups result from an economic objective. The readers, who are the supporters of these groups, constitute the main slice of the readership of Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat.

C. IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, the editors in London consider the technology used in their newsrooms to be an advantage not available to most of the Arab national press. This technology is well established in the London-based Arab papers, but still only at its earliest stages in the Lebanese press. Thus, the process of using such technology in the Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, As-Safir and An-Nahar newsrooms warrants closed investigation.

The Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat newsrooms are equipped with the most advanced technology available for the production and transmission of news material, and they have installed one of the world's most advanced newspaper production systems with a screen page make-up (New Horizon, 1989). They use various electronic networks and satellite transmission systems connected to the printing centres around the world. This technology directly affects the work, and to some extent, indirectly affects the staff. For instance, each reporter has a personal computer on his/her desk connected to one network

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[25] Some of these groups were escorted by the PLO, and they left Beirut in summer 1982, after an agreement between the Israelis, the Palestinians and the Lebanese authorities on the withdrawal of the PLO forces. An outcome of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

inside the newsroom and to the other news agencies and services via the News Net File Server[26]. Inherent in introducing the technology is a particular working methodology. The reporter should file his/her story through the computer terminal to the editor, who then decides whether to forward it to the producers or to return it to the reporter concerned, in cases where it needs some further work. In the Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat newsrooms, the reporters do not use the computer for the filing of stories to the editors. Instead, they simply monitor the stories which come from the news agencies. They, for instance, do not combine the news agencies story with a correspondent's material in the computer. The journalists re-write or edit the story by hand. Although the top editors in both newsrooms insisted that the journalists should use the new technology fully, the staff still feel *technology-alienated*. Such a feeling of alienation has led some reporters and editors not to work on computers even though they have attended courses on the use of computers in news production. In such a situation, how do the Arab editors and journalists view the technology introduced to their newsrooms in London?

Most of the editors and reporters, who use such technology daily, emphasised that it saved effort and time (e.g. Dou Ena'am, Khazem, Khoza'ai). In other words, the newsroom can receive material from the bureaux through a computer network instead of using telephone and facsimile machines (Othman, Editor, Al-Hayat). Moreover, a managing editor at Asharq Al-Awsat considered that the introduction of computer technology had caused a *radical* change in the work of the journalists, by virtue of the ability to store and retrieve large amounts of information in a very short time. Asharq Al-Awsat thus subscribes to The New York Times and The Washington Post's news services. The SRM pays the American news services in return for use of their material in Arabic. This information comes through the computer network, and the staff store it for just 48 hours. The same situation is found at Al-Hayat in terms of receiving information.

For the transmission of the newspapers' material from the main office in London to the printing centres around the world, Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat use a space satellite transmission system. That of Asharq Al-Awsat is used by other papers, including The Guardian and Al-Ahram International (New Horizon, 1989). The two newspapers have established a network of printing centres which would be "the envy of The Financial Times or International Herald Tribune" (Evans, 1992: 16). This kind of transmission enables the two papers to publish more than one edition each day. Thus Asharq Al-Awsat publishes two daily editions: one at 6.30 p.m. (GMT) for Saudi Arabia and Europe and the second at

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[26] News Net File Server: It is a storage file server where the journalist can get the incoming news as they stored (or assigned) under news agency's name or country/issue's name. For example, if a journalist wants some information came through the AFP on Iraq, s/he can create a folder which contains such command (AFP-Iraq), then the material gets into that folder.

around 11.00 p.m. In the event of exceptional news or unconventional occurrences, the newspaper publishes more than two editions[27]. This happened in 1988 when Asharq Al-Awsat published four successive editions during the US presidential elections, the last edition being printed at around 6.00 a.m. the next morning (Al-Tunisi, Deputy Editor-in-chief, Asharq Al-Awsat). Asharq Al-Awsat publishes several international editions in the following cities: Dhrahan, Riyadh and Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Casablanca (Morocco), Cairo (Egypt), Frankfurt (Germany), Marseilles (France), New York (USA and Canada) and London (the main edition). In this context, Yasser Dabbagh, general manager of the SRM (UK), explains that the printing centres have reduced the costs of freight and distribution: "the operating policy is to establish a printing centre in each area where the circulation increases sufficiently". As with Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat publishes in Bahrain (the main edition for the Gulf), Cairo (for Africa and Sudan), Frankfurt (North Europe), Beirut (Lebanon and Syria), London (North Africa and South Europe), New York (for USA and Canada) and Nice (for south France during the summer) (Tassbahji, Administrative Manager; Sama'an, Managing Editor, Al-Hayat).

Looking at the Beirut dailies, As-Safir and An-Nahar, have introduced technology to their organisations, but it is still at its earliest stages (e.g. only the production stage of newspaper). As-Safir started introducing computer systems for production, archive and management as a first stage. Yasser Nehme, general manager of As-Safir, considers that within one year As-Safir will "become the first fully computerised newspaper in Lebanon". However, the editor-in-chief of As-Safir regarded such a goal as an "ambitious and long-term project". Like the London-based Arab editors, Yasser Nehme, Talal Salman and Sati'a Noureddine agree that the staff are still, by and large, technology-alienated. Yasser Nehme considers this is because reporters and editors are not used to a keyboard, and "most of them are habituated to pen and paper". In this regard, Othman Merghani of Asharq Al-Awsat considers this a very real obstacle to accepting the technology. This is a common phenomenon among the vast majority of the Arab journalists in London and Beirut. Although Yasser Nehme is aware of the difficulties at the early stages, Talal Salman and Sati'a Noureddine think that overcoming such difficulties is only a matter of time as long as there are attempts to train and encourage staff to use such technology.

An-Nahar, the other Lebanese daily, is also introducing the computer technology to its newsroom. Edmond Saab, executive editor of An-Nahar, - who is working on this project - considers the current period as transitional. The newspaper is currently evaluating the use of Media Publisher: a Macintosh computer system for newspaper production. In

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[27] During the Gulf War, Asharq Al-Awsat published a midday newspaper (Ad-Dahiraha) in addition to the daily editions (see chapter six, footnote 4).

the second stage, the newsroom envisages establishing an electronic network connecting the editorial staff with the production room and the world. Edmond Saab expects that with such technology the newspaper will be able to print anywhere in the world[28], having use of one of the transmission computer systems known as the Digital System Di-Modem (DSD). In contrast, Françios Akl, managing editor of An-Nahar, thinks that the training of staff on such technology takes a long time and so the introduction of computer technology at An-Nahar is viewed as a "long-term project".

Computer technology is widely used in the production and transmission of the London-based Arab papers, but it is still in its earliest stages in the Beirut newsrooms. A major difference was observed between the London and Beirut newsrooms. The economic factors (financial resources) as well as the available telecommunications infrastructure in London were an incentive for the London-based Arab newspapers to introduce such computer technology and to establish a network of printing centres around the world. In contrast, the lack of economic resources and infrastructure in the Beirut-based papers is a barrier to the introduction of such technology. Finally, it was found that the personnel of the Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, As-Safir and An-Nahar newsrooms have not yet entirely coped with the introduced computer technology.

D. PROSPECTS OF THE ARAB NATIONAL PRESS

As argued in chapter two, the London-based Arab papers are the main competitor to the national Arab press. Such competition, between these kinds of press organisations, is another dimension in studying the influence of the socio-cultural context. In this situation where the London-based Arab press has the infrastructure and capabilities to compete with the national press, what are the prospects of the Arab national press? Is the London-based Arab press going to wholly or partially take over the role of the national one? How do the editors in Beirut view the future of their papers, in the light of the boom in the London-based Arab press? As a starting point, it is worth mentioning that the Lebanese press, as an Arab national press, should not be over generalised, there being so many differences in the Arab media systems.

The top editors of As-Safir and An-Nahar draw a gloomy picture for the future of the Lebanese press. Several reasons stand behind this impression: the competition from the pan-Arab media, the economic situation for media organisations, and the drain of trained journalists to the European-based Arab media organisations. An-Nahar's managing editor

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[28] An-Nahar is conducting negotiations to publish an international edition in Montreal (Canada) for North America (Saab, Executive Editor, An-Nahar).

explains the prospects for the future:

> The future of the press in Lebanon is gloomy because of the economic
> factor which is the basic one. There is no wide horizon, the press has to
> struggle to survive. Everything has been changed in the last 16 years. You
> cannot assume that the situation in 1992 is the same as in 1975. The
> journalist has to recognise such difference and cope with it. The huge
> influx of money (millions of pounds) is the only reason to publish Al-
> Hayat. Without such money, Al-Hayat would not be published. Al-Hayat
> is quantity press, not quality. Regrettably, you have to deal with such a
> newspaper as a competitor. (Akl, Managing Editor, An-Nahar)

Françios Akl's argument raises two main points concerning the future of the
Lebanese papers. These points concern the consequences of the Civil War on the economy
and in particular the press, and the competition of Al-Hayat with Lebanon's national press.
Regarding the former, the Civil War which came to an end in 1990 still has implications
for, and repercussions on, the various economic, social and cultural fields of Lebanese
society. The Lebanese press (and more precisely An-Nahar and As-Safir) as with other
institutions was affected by the war. These effects led to a decline in circulation figures, a
decrease in advertising revenues and, most importantly, the drain of its trained staff to the
Arab media in Europe. As the war came to an end, another factor was added to the list of
obstacles: the London-based Arab press. As mentioned earlier, Al-Hayat has established a
printing centre in Beirut. This enables the newspaper to be circulated before the Lebanese
newspapers and at less cost. In other words, Al-Hayat finishes printing in Beirut before
midnight, while other newspapers finish around dawn. Price is another factor. Al-Hayat's
and Asharq Al-Awsat's news-stand price is half that of any Lebanese newspaper. The
other areas of competition (such as technology and the news production process) between
the London-based and the Lebanese papers were discussed in the previous chapters.

At As-Safir, the editor-in-chief shares the view of Françios Akl of An-Nahar on the
future of the national press, but he goes further in attributing the crisis in the Lebanese
press to various national and Arab factors:

> There is no Lebanese press... It is almost impossible to have an influential,
> successful and strong press in the prevailing Arab situation. Saudi Arabia is
> now buying the newspapers, the journalists and authors. There is not a role
> whatsoever for the Lebanese press in the foreseeable future ... It is
> important to survive. The press is passing through a real crisis. The war
> destroyed the press... The evacuation of the Lebanese press
> through the drain of qualified persons to London and Gulf
> papers is another dimension of the crisis.   The objective
> behind launching Al-Hayat was to drain the Lebanese press.
> The experience of Al-Hayat and Al-Wasat[29] was a vigilant
> Saudi decision to eliminate the press in Lebanon. (T. Salman,

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[29] More details on the Al-Wasat magazine are mentioned in chapter six (footnote 11).

Editor-in-chief, As-Safir; emphasis added)

Common to Françios Akl's and Talal Salman's arguments is that they view Al-Hayat as their main competitor. Al-Hayat's staff are predominantly Lebanese journalists who came from the As-Safir and An-Nahar newsrooms (see table 9.2). Al-Hayat is trying to compete with the Lebanese dailies on the coverage of Lebanese affairs. In this context, Yasser Nehme, general manager of As-Safir, puts the retreat of the Lebanese press, from a "pan-Arab" to a national, down to various national and international factors. Yasser Nehme includes in these the world revolution in communication technology, the international editions of the Arab newspapers which reach the reader at any place, the departure of the PLO and Arab political opposition groups from Beirut after the 1982 Israeli invasion[30] and the development of communication technology in the Arab national press. Moreover, Faisal Salman, the managing editor of Domestic Affairs at As-Safir, attributed the decline of the national press in Lebanon to an increase in regionalism in the Arab World. He argues that the reader in Morocco does not have much interest in the news of Yemen or Sudan and so on. Overall, this had increased the isolation within the Arab World[31].

In these circumstances the Arab national press is heading towards an uncertain future. This uncertainty should encourage the national press to become more and more concerned with domestic affairs, leaving the coverage of pan-Arab affairs to the London-based Arab press. Like other places in the world (e.g. Norway), the international media organisations have challenged the national media (Peterson, 1993). Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat pose a threat to the Arab national press. The arguments of the top editors and managers of the national press in Lebanon reveal a decline in the role of such media, not only on the regional or Arab level but on the national level as well. An extreme prediction foresees the national press in the Arab World becoming similar to local press in the world's major cities, and the pan-Arab papers becoming the national papers of the Arab World. The situation for printed media also applies to national television and radio stations where the pan-Arab and global media are gaining prominence over national stations (see chapter three).

CONCLUSION:

There are some points relating to socio-cultural context which can be concluded

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[30] Yousif Khazem of Al-Hayat mentioned the same point about the existence of opposition groups in Lebanon. But, Yasser Nehme looks to these groups as pan-Arab readers and figures of circulation to As-Safir.

[31] See chapter one in general, and the arguments about the end of the era of nationalism in the Arab World in particular.

from the comparative study on the London-based and Beirut papers. For the London-based Arab editors censorship is indirectly-exercised by the Arab regimes in central London. There is a sort of self censorship practiced by London's top Arab editors to avoid being banned by or getting into trouble with the Arab regimes. In the national press in Lebanon, censorship is not as strict as it is in the majority of Arab countries. Despite the Civil War, the press still enjoys *some* freedom. The London-based Arab papers, Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat, are comparatively more liberal than the press in other Arab countries. London as an ideological environment has an influence on Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat including diversity of staff, the occupational roles of the news personnel, easy access to news sources and information networks. The access is an outcome of the most advanced technology now at the disposal of the London-based Arab newspapers. The Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom has more diverse staff than those of Al-Hayat. Moreover, the personnel of the former are more qualified and better experienced than those of the latter. These benefits are not wholly available to the Arab national press. The London-based Arab press is the main competitor to the national press, in this case the Lebanese press. The editors of the national press draw a gloomy picture for the future of their papers. As realised from their arguments, the future of the national Lebanese press would appear to be most uncertain.

CHAPTER TEN
CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The research has demonstrated the external and internal influences on the news production process in the newsrooms of the Arab papers, Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat, in London, and the Lebanese papers, As-Safir and An-Nahar. It has been argued in the previous chapters that such influences can be usefully investigated by adopting a combination of theoretical approaches to the study of mass media organisation on both macro and micro-levels. On the macro-level of study, two theoretical approaches were applied. First, the political economy approach was employed to understand matters relating to ownership and control as well as the economic determinants in the Arab press organisations. Second, the culturological approach was adopted to understand the matters relating to the relationship between the media and their wider socio-cultural context. On the micro-level, the social organisation of news work was taken as an approach to understand the internal process of news production. Two distinct processes of news production were studied: news gathering and news selection. The study of each process embraced the study of the journalistic practices on the extra-organisational (source-communicator interaction) and the intra-organisational (reporter-editor relationship) levels and was conducted in the two different socio-cultural contexts: London and Beirut, thereby allowing us to firmly grasp the internal mechanisms.

A. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NEWS:

Classical Marxism argues that media serve the views of the powerful elite, who through the ownership of the means of production are able to dominate other groups. The neo-Marxist analysis of media content has given a redefinition of the power of media, where the media are viewed as hegemonic rather than coercive. The Pluralist school asserts that power has been progressively dispersed, producing a plurality of independent elites and interest groups all competing to strengthen their position and extend their influence. Studies on ownership and control (e.g. Murdock, 1990, 1988, 1980; Curran & Seaton, 1988; Murdock & Golding, 1986; Altschull, 1984; Bagdikian, 1983; Compaine et al, 1982) have argued about the connection between the economic ownership and the allocative control. One of the weaknesses of the political economy approach, in the study of media ownership and control, is that its salient patterns were based on studies carried out in the Western capitalist societies, and therefore, may not entirely apply to other societies. Given the existing difference between the Western and Arab societies, and the media, one might think that the patterns of such ownership and control do not entirely apply to the Arab media organisations. To an extent, this is a sound argument. This research has examined

the current patterns of ownership and control of the Arab press to determine its type using the framework of Western classification of media ownership.

It is worth summarising the types of evidence that have been presented in this thesis concerning the political economy approach in the Arab press. The study is based on four kinds of data: (1) observation in the newsrooms; (2) interviews with journalists; (3) analysis of the newspapers' content; and, (4) other related documents (e.g. staff lists, organisation structure, and relevant articles and books[1]. Each type of data provided and supported an aspect of the relevant argument. For example, it was concluded from the interviews with the top-editors and managers and from the analysis of related documents that the Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat newspapers are owned by the Saudi royal family members and such ownership impinges on the editorial line as supervised through the publishers. At Asharq Al-Awsat, the publishers (the Hafez brothers) are a professional front for the ownership by Saudi princes. The publishers exercise allocative control over the publications on a day-to-day basis, and the editors implement the operational control, which serves the interests of the owners. At Al-Hayat, the editor-in-chief is the publisher and works as a front for the owner (a member of the Saudi royal family). The allocative and operational control is exercised through the editor-in-chief, where the details of the operational control on a day-to-day basis are left to the managing editor. How does such control permeate into the editorial line? The analysis of the macro-themes in the four newspapers indicated the policy of each newspaper. It was found in chapter six that the London-based Arab papers tend to favour Saudi foreign policy when covering Arab affairs. The analysis of the macro-themes (e.g. internal Arab affairs, the Iraqi issues) shows how Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat have supported the Saudi perspective in the Arab World. Chapter one presents a view on the shift in the balance of power in the Arab World since the Gulf War II. A kind of Saudi era emerged to dominate the Arab political landscape. The investigation of the ownership in the London-based Arab press has clearly shown that this is principally owned by members of the Saudi royal family, and that this press serves to further a type of Saudi hegemony. This dominance has echoes in the other economic determinants. The Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat papers are competing for greater circulation and increased advertising in the Gulf. Such competition entices Al-Hayat to become more and more "Saudi-accepted" by the government and the advertisers. Where Asharq Al-Awsat has already achieved some prominence in the fields of circulation and advertising, Al-Hayat is still in the process to model that success by trying hard to please advertisers by getting a higher circulation in the Gulf,

In the Lebanese press, the patterns of ownership and control are different from

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[1] See appendix D, section 5.4

those of the papers operating in London. Two main kinds of ownership prevail in Lebanon: namely the editor-owner (As-Safir) and the quasi-organisational type of ownership (An-Nahar). The editor-owner is the phenomenon where the press is owned and edited by wealthy individuals or families. Some editor-owner papers, like An-Nahar, have changed from being owned by single individuals/families and become shareholder organisations. Although this newspaper is now a semi-organisation, it remains dominated by the Tueni family. An-Nahar's main shareholders are: the family of the founder, the Orthodox Church and some small shareholders (who cannot collectively or individually affect the two dominant shareholders). In this respect, Murdock's (1988) argument applies to the An-Nahar ownership. He argues that the economic ownership in corporations is typically structured like a pyramid with the largest and best organised voting shareholders "determining the composition of the executive board", who formulate policy on behalf of the small investors who make up the company's capital base. More interestingly, the change from editor-owner project to an organisation style does not necessarily mean that any shareholder can buy shares or invest in that company. Overall then, there are three kinds of ownership found in the Arab press - editor-owner, semi-organisation and government-owned press (see chapter three). Be that as it may, the economic determinants differ from one newspaper to another. An-Nahar appears to be more prominent in advertising and circulation than As-Safir (Dajani, 1992). Here the impact of economic factors is not as obvious as it is in the Lebanese press because such a press depends, to a large extent, on the domestic advertisements and the circulation figures are concentrated in the national market. Economic factors are more evident in the London-based Arab press due to the scale of the market and circulation, both being dispersed throughout the Arab World and elsewhere.

The London-based Arab press - seemingly influenced by the Western trends of ownership, has begun to go the same way in the direction of press barons. In the Western press, the press barons are accused of using their newspapers as instruments of political power (Curran & Seaton, 1988). Similarly, the Saudi press barons are using Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat as an instrument for conveying Saudi foreign policy to the Arabs. This kind of ownership is highly unlikely to experience the Managerial Revolution. The main obstacle is that the Arab press, whether émigré or national, has not made a clear cut distinction between politics and profession. Furthermore, the industrialisation of the Arab press has not given any effective independence from being supported or funded through state coffers. This economic connection with state and politics renders the press at least as much a political project as a professional one.

What lessons can be learnt from this? Or, to what extent does such a theoretical approach apply to the Arab press organisations? Chapter six presents different types of

ownership and control in the Arab press organisations. Applying a political economy approach to the national press (e.g. the Lebanese press) shows that this press has not experienced political, economic and social developments comparable to those of the West. For instance, An-Nahar's ownership is distributed among the Tueni family, the Orthodox Church, and several other shareholders, but the newspaper still remains largely dominated by the Tueni clan, leaving the organisation subject to the *familialisation* and *clannishness* of the Tuenis.

It was mentioned in chapter three that the Lebanese press operates in a society of various political, social, economic and religious multiplicity. Each of the various religious sects comprises a number of powerful/feudal families. These families constitute the 'representatives' of the respective sects in the socio-political arena in Lebanon. The Tueni family is one of the main representatives of the Greek Orthodox community in Lebanon. What can be said about the Orthodox community also applies to the Maronite, Sunnite, Shi'ite and similar religious communities. This intersection between the family (or clan) and its respective religious sect was most obvious in the An-Nahar newspaper. The dominance of the Tueni family and the Orthodox Church on the ownership of An-Nahar is a model of newspaper ownership that does not fit well with the political economy approach. The same applies in relation to the Salman family ownership of the As-Safir newspaper. The Salmans are Shi'ite and reflect a different political trend than that of An-Nahar.

The émigré Arab press in general, and the London-based Arab newspapers in particular, are passing through incipient stages of typical press baron ownership patterns. Such a press is not subject to the whims of the direct owner, but serves the ideology of the political supporters of the owners, which could effectively be one Arab country or another (see chapter one). The overlap of journalism as a profession with politics has its impact on the patterns of ownership and control in Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat, in the sense that the London-based Arab press has become a political project rather than a professional one. The politicization of Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat has resulted in an organic relationship between these papers and members of the Saudi royal family. Again, this is not a pattern of ownership usually described in a political economy approach.

To sum up, the patterns of ownership in the Arab press, whether national or émigré, are not a pattern usually described in a political economy approach. These patterns of ownership would allow us to discuss the possibility of a political economy approach on the Arab press. The influence of politics (through the connection with one Arab regime or another) and the clan (as the case for the Lebanese press, and some Arab national press) means that this approach is applicable only with some qualifications. The qualifications are

necessary for a better understanding of ownership and control in the Arab press. Such qualifications must include an emphasis on the "political" aspect of the political economy, where such an aspect is more obvious and dominates the "economic" one. For example, the role of the Saudi royal family members as the "political patronage" of the London-based Arab press has dominated the economic factors. The same applies to the Lebanese press where the family or the clan of the owner overcomes other aspects of the political economy of such a press. In short, the Western political economy approach is capable of explaining the nature of the Arab press only up to a point. It requires further qualifications in order to take into account the influence of the "political patronage" and the clan system on the workings of the Arab press. It must also take into consideration the political, social and cultural context in which the Arab press, national or émigré, operates.

How exactly does impact of the context appear? The London-based Arab press presents an unprecedented type of ownership and control of the Arab press. It is neither purely Western, nor a model of the different press systems that operate in the Arab World[2]. The London-based Arab papers have embarked on an era of press barons or tycoons, but this is quite unlike the press barons era in the West. London's impact, as the capital of the Arab press empires, has furnished an experience that would not be possible from most Arab countries, if any at all. It is an extraordinary phenomenon for the Arab governments to have established media organisations outside their own countries in order to address their own people in unison with those in other Arab countries. The collapse of the Beirut experience in the mid 1970s, which would otherwise have become what London now is to the Arabs, has shown that the Arab governments actually prefer to establish the press empires outside their home countries. Then they can mobilise their ideologies toward other countries, in an apparently untendentious way[3]. Despite the very reasonable argument that the establishment of the London-based Arab media facilitates a pan-Arab perspective, different *national* policies are so much in evidence that in practice only a semi-pan-Arab perspective is achieved. The strong bond between the Arab governments and the London-based Arab press has labelled such press as émigré national (e.g. Iraqi, Saudi, Kuwaiti, Libyan) press in the first place with a minor pan-Arab trend. The various national trends in the London-based Arab press, which have failed to fill the void created following the demise of Lebanese press: the once Arab press, have become more homogenous after the Gulf War II. One of the direct repercussions of the War was that the London-based Arab press has begun to reflect a predominant Saudi policy.

B. THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF NEWSWORK

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[2] See chapter three for detailed accounts on the different press systems in the Arab World.
[3] See chapter one about the ideological schools that are dominant in the Arab political arena.

B.1. NEWS GATHERING:

On the micro-level of this study, the social organisation of newswork has been taken as a theoretical approach in order to examine the internal process of news production. The two main dimensions of the social organisation of newswork are: news gathering and news selection. Each of these has particular aspects which contribute to the process. For instance, a study of the news gathering process also demands the study of communicator-sources interaction and the specialisation of journalists.

Different interpretations of source-communicator interaction lead to various conclusions: some giving the upper hand to journalists, others dealing with "source-domination" and "symbiotic dependence". It is argued that the journalists and news sources interact within a particular hegemonic ideology of a given society, and the sources are able to suggest the frame they prefer by "tuning the ears of journalists" to events. Media researchers, who have studied the nature of this relationship, have found that the most powerful institutions and groups have privileged access to the media because they are regarded, by media professionals, as more credible and trustworthy and because they have the resources to process the information (e.g. Ericson *et al*, 1989; Curran *et al*, 1988).

What types of evidence are presented in this thesis concerning this process? In the field of news gathering, Asharq Al-Awsat has a larger number of bureaux, correspondents and news services than the other newsrooms. Al-Hayat is similar to Asharq Al-Awsat, it adopts the same channels of news gathering, but not to the same extent as Asharq Al-Awsat's network. The underlying similarity between these two newspapers primarily concerns their ownership and finance. The owners provide the financial support, that enables the two newspapers to maintain a network of bureaux and correspondents at their disposal. The press in Beirut, however, must depend on news agencies as the main suppliers of Arab and international news. An-Nahar and As-Safir's dependency on the four main global news agencies is for two reasons. First, An-Nahar and As-Safir cannot financially afford to establish a network of bureaux and correspondents in the Arab World and abroad. Second, the space devoted to foreign news is small compared with that of domestic current affairs. The London-based Arab papers have a network of correspondents and news services that are not available to any national Arab press. Instead, Beirut papers rely heavily on news agencies as main sources for Arab and foreign news. This difference has come about, at least in part, because of the contrast in socio-cultural context with only London being able to offer the necessary communications infrastructure and financial resources.

It has been pointed out that the study of news gathering demands the study of

journalist specialisation as well. The differentiation between generalist and specialist journalist is increasingly becoming a phenomenon in the newsroom. For instance, several studies (e.g. Negrine, 1993, 1989; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Gans, 1979; Tunstall, 1971) have found that newsrooms are increasingly relying on the specialist journalists as news gatherers because the specialism ensures a regular supply of material, and the specialisation in an area or subject furthers the ability to attract a large audience and greater advertising. In the Arab press in general such reliance on the specialist reporter is as yet uncommon. Whilst some Arab editors were in favour of specialisation, others showed a disapproval of establishing a specialised team in their newsrooms. Asharq Al-Awsat does support and work towards establishing a specialised team on the newsroom's desks, but Al-Hayat prefers to contain any specialisation within the frame of staff's interests and concerns. Much the same difference of attitude can be perceived in Beirut, between As-Safir and An-Nahar. In the wider context, there is a gulf between Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir on the matter of specialisation and its impact on the work of their newsrooms, and similarly between the viewpoints of the editors of Al-Hayat and An-Nahar.

The London-based Arab press has the technological facilities and freedom to communicate with news sources. In London and through the bureaux abroad, the staff of Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat have access to a wide range of news sources including officials, experts on Middle East affairs, and opposition groups. The An-Nahar and As-Safir newsrooms lack such easy access to news sources. Chapter five reveals major differences in the number and kind of news sources employed by the four newspapers. They show that the London-based Arab papers have access to a large number of diverse news sources, which is not the case for the Lebanese papers. Access to news sources derives from the communications infrastructure and the freedom of journalists to contact sources. The London-based Arab newsrooms have the most sophisticated communications systems at their disposal. London also constitutes a safe haven for the Arab journalist, who feels that s/he is far from the angry or physical reaction of offended news sources, quite unlike the interaction in the Arab national press. The editors and journalists in all four newsrooms describe the relationship with their sources as non-professional and complex. There would seem to be no significant difference between London and Beirut when it comes to interaction with Arab news sources. Moreover, neither the journalists in the London newsrooms nor the journalists in the Beirut newsrooms have generally found the Arab news sources easy to deal with. The Arab journalists in London did mention, however, that they are less affected by any *feedback* from news sources.

What lessons can usefully be learnt from this aspect? Various mass communication studies (e.g. Hackett, 1991; Ericson *et al*, 1989, 1987; Gans, 1979; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Sigal, 1973; Tunstall, 1971) have discussed how the news gathering process takes

place, the significance of specialisation and the relationship between the news sources and journalists. In applying the findings of these studies, the research finds that there are certain similarities across the newsrooms. For instance, the findings of chapters five and seven show that media professionals predominantly rely on official sources. In addition to this, the newsrooms of the Third World press depend, to a large extent, on the news wire as main news suppliers (see Golding & Elliott, 1979) as is the case in the Lebanese press. Unlike in the Western press (see for instance Ericson *et al*, 1989; Gans, 1979), news sources in the Arab press appear to be noticeably more powerful than media professionals in the Arab press. This powerfulness of sources in their relations with journalists furthers the argument that the Arab press, either national or émigré, has failed to become a Fourth Estate (see chapter three).

B.2. NEWS SELECTION:

The news selection process constitutes the other dimension of the second approach applied in this thesis. Some of the factors underlying the news selection process are the mechanism of news selection, the news selectors, the editor-reporter interaction, news values and audience. The study of the news selection process highlights the contrast between the two different contexts (e.g. London and Beirut). Chapter eight includes a description of the mechanism of news selection so enabling an understanding of how the news on, and of the Arab World, is actually put together. This research studies the perception of the Arab World held by those involved in the news production in London and Beirut. The importance of the editor-reporter relationship in the newsroom is not overlooked and its impact on the process of news selection is examined. The research has investigated through observation, interviews and informal conversations, what kind of relationship prevails between the Arab editor and the Arab journalist, as they work together on the production of news, and how such relationships vary between London and Beirut.

What types of evidence have been presented? Studies on the news selection process in general, and on the gatekeepers, the editor-reporter interaction, and news values in particular (e.g. McQuail & Windahl, 1993, 1982; Shoemaker, 1991; Van Dijk; 1988; Ericson *et al*, 1987; Hartley, 1982; Chibnall, 1977; Sigal, 1973; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; White, 1950) have argued how, for instance, the gatekeepers are bound to organisational rules and affected by the ideology of the social system. These studies have shown how the editors' work results in a policing of common sense. Such studies took place mainly in the Western media and over different periods of time. In the Arab press, being part of the Third World press, these concepts are quite different from the Western press. News selection (through the editorial conferences) is the same in any newsroom, but what differs from one newsroom to another is the organisational and occupational aspects that affect the

work of the gatekeepers, editors and reporters. In terms of editorial meetings, for example, Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir operate on much the same basis, conducting two editorial meetings to discuss the news agenda and other related matters. In contrast, Al-Hayat's editors do not use daily meetings, while in An-Nahar, the shortage of staff, and the consequences of the Civil War, has made the managing editor the key-editor.

Some useful points are evident from observing the role of the gatekeeper in each of the four Arab newsrooms. First, the gatekeepers are subject to the instructions and influence of senior editors, who in turn reflect the organisation's policy. Most of the gatekeepers are either editors or sub-editors, who have considerable experience in the newsroom. Second, the London-based Arab newsrooms depend on correspondents' material which is not typically the case for Beirut papers. This reliance on the correspondent makes the work of the gatekeeper in such newsrooms less demanding, the top editors having the final say in deciding what to publish from such material. Third, and in accordance with several studies (McQuail & Windahl, 1993, 1982; Shoemaker, 1991; Hirsch, 1977; Donohue, 1972; White, 1950), the gatekeepers in these newsrooms seem to be affected by several aspects. For instance, the gatekeepers in the Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat newsrooms are required to represent their organisation's interests. Such interests lie in representing the organisational goals of pleasing the audience, but serve at the same time the ends of the dominant ideology. Such rules are less necessary at the smaller newspapers, as found in the Beirut newsrooms, because of the differences in audience, social systems and organisational size. Finally, the gatekeepers are in fact only the first gate of several in the newsroom. In practice, many news stories, which were selected by the gatekeepers of Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar or As-Safir during the newsday were edited, or even discarded, by another editor during the newsmaking process. This editing of the editors, and the senior editors, is largely to ensure that the news selected by gatekeepers complies with the dominant ideology and organisational goals. This has echoes in the argument that the gatekeeping process can also be affected by the ideology of the social system in which the gatekeeper exists (Shoemaker, 1991; Gitlin, 1980). It was noticed that the gatekeepers in the London-based Arab newsrooms select the news which reinforces the prevailing ideology with particular benefit of course to those individuals and organisations wielding the most power (see chapter eight).

The Arab editors consider the reader as the primary criterion for newsworthiness in news selection. The editors' perceptions focus more on marketing rather than on attitudes or political aspects. Across the four newsrooms, the editors use the same news values (e.g. reader's interest, political considerations, elite, drama). However, what differs between London and Beirut is the diversity of readers and economic factors. The Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat papers, unlike national newspapers, address a wide and

heterogeneous Arab audience. Such a diverse audience demands that the newspapers'
editors put great emphasis on pleasing their readers, in order to attract more readers (for
circulation and advertising: see chapter six). As argued in chapter two, there are common
news values across all newsrooms in the world. Nevertheless, an editor in a Third World
newsroom, for example, interprets these news values (e.g. elite, size, drama) in accordance
with a cultural context that differs from say London and Paris. The editors of Asharq Al-
Awsat, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar and As-Safir share a commonsense knowledge between them
and their audience, which differs between London and Beirut. The priority given to news
values depends on the audience, political considerations and a newspaper's policy, as well
as the practical matters relating to production such as recency, elite and proximity.

       With regard to the editor-reporter interaction, the Beirut newsrooms witness less
conflict than those of London, and in the London-based newsrooms, the conflict in Asharq
Al-Awsat is less evident than that in Al-Hayat. Despite having only a semi-agreement or
even open conflict, the reporters are ready to accept an editor's decision without
resentment. Studies on editor-reporter interaction in the Western media show how the
reporter and editor are in "permanent conflict" and how some reporters attempt to "please
their editor" by filing certain stories (See chapter two). The editor-reporter interaction,
among the Arab newsrooms in London and Beirut, shares many similarities regardless of
the surrounding socio-cultural context. The interaction between the Arab editors and their
reporters has been characterised in the following ways: "no conflict", "discrimination
amongst staff", "implicit agreement", "semi agreement", "not much respect for the
reporter's opinion" and "permanent conflict". The reporters and editors interact in a way
that is different to a typical Western press, and cultural and traditional aspects affect such
interaction. These chiefly concern the Arab social relations and the hierarchical
classifications which overlap in the newsroom.

       What lessons can be learnt? In applying the findings of the various studies on news
selection, news selectors, news values and the editor-reporter relationship, this research
has found some common aspects in the newsrooms. The role of the gatekeepers in the
newsrooms of Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat is broadly similar to that found in the big
newspapers in the West, where it is affected by the organisational rules and the dominant
ideology. This situation differs in the As-Safir and An-Nahar newsrooms, where the
gatekeepers are less required to apply such rules due to difference in the organisation's
size, social context and the audience. In addition, the editor-reporter relationship in the
Arab newsrooms differs somewhat from the parallel relationship in the Western
newsrooms. The editor-reporter interaction in the Arab newsrooms, which is overlapped
by the social relations and the divisions of labour, differs from the various above-
mentioned classifications in the Western newsrooms. The overlapping mixes between the

professional demands and the personal and/or social relations between the Arab news personnel. Such interaction is consequently dominated by social relations rather than by professional demands. With regard to the effect of the socio-cultural context, it is evident that the London-based Arab newsrooms exhibit a mixture of features of Western newsrooms and Third World newsrooms.

D. SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT:

Media researchers, who have compared media, vary in the extent to which they identify the difference. This difference was very often marginal because the media were studied in the same context. Such studies include (Hackett, 1991; Ericson *et al*, 1987; Hetherington, 1985; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978; Schlesinger, 1978; Tracey, 1977; Epstein, 1973; Tunstall, 1971) the American, British and Canadian media respectively. The news production process was studied in societies where the media operate under similar conditions of ownership, control and journalistic practices. An important exception is Golding and Elliott's study, *Making the news*, on the production of broadcast news in Sweden, Ireland and Nigeria. This is one of the few comparative studies of news production in different socio-cultural contexts. These contexts differ markedly in their socio-economic conditions, variety of traditions and philosophies. Golding and Elliott (1979) found that the comparative study usefully allowed examination of not only the universals, but also the differences of news production, revealing alternative solutions which arise in different situations to the various problems of journalism. Like Golding and Elliott's study, this thesis has examined the relationship between media institutions and their wider socio-cultural context. Some of these aspects relate directly to this work including censorship, the occupational roles of the newsrooms personnel, media technology and a concern about prospects for the Arab national press.

What types of evidence are presented concerning the socio-cultural dimension? The viewpoints of the Arab editors in London and Beirut show different approaches to censorship concerns. For the Beirut editors, censorship is barely practiced by the government, and problems come mainly from the other Arab countries because of the perceived "openness of the Lebanese press". This argument applies to the Lebanese press where it was marketed widely across the Arab World, as was the case up until the mid 1970s. Thus the press which is better able to trouble Arab regimes is the one operating outside the Arab World. Knowing this, the Arab authorities only allow such a press to be distributed when they agree with the ideological line of the newspaper owners. Thus the London-based Arab press, which is recognised as "pan-Arab", tries to comply with the censorship of the various countries. Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Hayat in respecting the official line of some countries, by inference, inevitably support a political opposition in

other countries. <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> and <u>Al-Hayat</u> do have some advantages over <u>As-Safir</u> and <u>An-Nahar</u>. These include diversity of staff, easy access to news sources and information and media technology.

As can be seen from the arguments of the Lebanese editors, the Arab national press in Lebanon has an uncertain future. Consequently, the Arab national press will likely become more and more concerned with domestic affairs leaving the coverage of pan-Arab affairs to the London-based Arab press. The national press in Lebanon has been in the decline, not only on the Arab level, but also nationally. An extreme prediction would be that the national press in the Arab World will become like the local press in the major cities of the world, and the London-based Arab press will become the 'national' press of the Arab World. The situation also applies to the national electronic media where the London-based Arab and global media are swamping the national stations.

The connection between the economic base and superstructure, discussed earlier, constitutes an essential introduction to discussion of matters relating to the socio-cultural context of the media organisations. The culturological approach addresses the relationship between the news production and the wider cultural environment. Several studies (Gamson, 1992; Schudson 1991b; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Grossberg, 1984; Gitlin, 1980) have found that some packages in media discourse have a natural advantage because their ideas *resonate* with larger cultural themes, whereby such resonances make the media packages appear natural and familiar. This research reveals a cultural resonance that is not yet as evident in the Arab media as it is in the Western media. To put this in perspective, the analysis of the macro-themes in chapter five has revealed that the media discourse is slightly affected by the "public arena". This resonance of the media discourse with the larger cultural themes was far more obvious in the London-based Arab papers than those of Lebanon. For instance, the coverage of certain macro-themes (e.g. internal Arab affairs, Iraqi issues, Islamic fundamentalism) resonate with the dominant cultural themes of the Saudi hegemonic system. Chapter one presents the core conservative ideology of the Saudi era. It also mentions that this dominant ideology in the Arab political landscape opposes the alternative ideas of nationalism and fundamentalism. Thus the coverage of issues relating to the Arab nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism resonate with the Saudi moderate outlook on Islam.

The influence of the "public arena" was also evident in the contradiction between the original ideological background of the London-based Arab journalists and the ideological slant of current writing. These journalists mainly seemed to be contained in the dominant ideology. Chapter nine presents a discussion on the occupational roles of the London-based Arab journalists. The study of the occupation, education and experience of

news personnel in the <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u>, <u>Al-Hayat</u>, <u>As-Safir</u> and <u>An-Nahar</u> newsrooms contribute to the study of the impact of socio-cultural context in a number of ways. Several studies (e.g. McQuail, 1994; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991) have found that the personal characteristics of those who are most directly responsible for media production will influence the content. These characteristics relate to background, education and political attitudes[4]. Most of these journalists came from countries and ideological schools that contradict the Saudi ideological school of thought. Currently, these journalists are working on reproducing content which contradicts their (once) ideological affiliations and backgrounds (see tables 9.3 & 9.4).

What lessons can be learnt from this? Studies on the social context of news production have been, by and large, conducted in the same national context, with only a few cross-national comparative studies. This study, of the same media in different contexts, places itself between comparative cross-national studies and those studies carried out in the same socio-cultural context. The <u>Asharq Al-Awsat</u> and <u>Al-Hayat</u> newspapers would seem to have some similarities with both the Western media and Third World media. The matters relating to state-media interaction (censorship and control) were more evident in the press in Lebanon than in London. The London-based Arab press reveals the role of the state as a minor one of many influences, whereas in Lebanon, this state found to be a main influence on the media institution. Furthermore, the cultural resonance in the Arab media was not as evident as it is in the Western press. Nevertheless, it was noticed that the London-based Arab press is more affected by certain cultural themes than the Beirut press. It was also revealed that the production of media discourse which resonates with the dominant cultural themes in the Arab World is not as evident as it is in the Western media. This can be usefully understood by the fact that the two dominant cultural themes that influence the public arena are not as stable as in the West. As argued in chapter one, the balance of power in the Arab World is *swinging* between the two schools of thoughts: Nationalism and Conservatism. The rapidly changing nature from one "dominant cultural theme" to another requires a period of time for the media to adjust with the dominant and deviant ideologies. The unstable situation, in shifting from the (once) dominant to the deviant or vice versa, has made the influence of the cultural resonances on the media discourse in the Arab media less distinguishable. Maybe the influence of the cultural resonances become more obvious if the dominant ideology (that of the conservatives) has been dominant for a long time. The stability makes it easier for the media to define clearly the dominant ideology in the Arab public arena. With regard to the internal process of news production, it was found that the London-based Arab press presents one of the most highly developed models of press in the Arab World. The London-based Arab newsrooms

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[4] For a detailed account, see Shoemaker & Reese, 1991: 53-84.

also exhibit aspects common to the Western newsrooms in the field of news production. There are, however, a few problems in the London-based Arab newsrooms which render them much as a Third World newsroom. These matters concern the personnel and their journalistic practices, which are discussed in chapters seven and eight.

This research makes some important and unique contributions. Firstly, it studies the media institutions in the Arab World in two different contexts, London and Beirut, addressing the internal process of press organisation by studying both the external and internal influences on these organisations from a broad context. The studies on media organisations have either been carried out in the same national context (e.g. in the USA or in the UK) or in cross-national ones (e.g. a comparison of Sweden, Ireland and Nigeria). This research is a combination of national and cross-national studies on media organisations. It examines the same media in different social contexts and enables us to examine both the production process and the influence of the context.

Secondly, the study explores, empirically, the theoretical arguments about the external and internal influences on the news production process. These theoretical arguments are the three approaches employed in this study: the political economy of news, the social organisation of newswork and the culturological approach. The use of three approaches allows for an overall examination of the influence of the context. Each of the approaches was employed to examine the influence of context on the macro and micro levels of news production. The synthesis or integration of theories, by bringing three theories together, also serves as a "critical test, by virtue of its comprehensiveness, for competing theories" (Jick, 1983: 145).

The first of these theoretical approaches is the political economy of news. Despite various criticisms, this approach constitutes the basis for studying the matters related to the ownership and control in the news media organisations. This approach has been applied in a large number of studies in the West. In the Arab World, the use of the political economy approach as a basis for the study of ownership and control demands some qualifications. As argued earlier, the London-based Arab press is defined as a "baron-owned press". However, it is not a pure pattern of the press baron ownership as it is known from the West. The Arab press barons are working as a front for one Arab country or policy. The experience of Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat has shown that the press barons are members of the Saudi royal family. The connection between this kind of ownership and the Saudi royal family place a type of ownership not experienced in the historical developments of the Western press. In Beirut, the dominance of the owner's family, religious and political affiliations means that the newspaper is effectively the *property* of the family or the religious sect. To put this argument in other words, the An-Nahar ownership is

predominantly shared between the Tueni family and the Orthodox Church, and the other daily <u>As-Safir</u> is owned by its editor-in-chief. This type of dominance renders the newspaper subject to the whims of the owners. The patterns of ownership in the Arab press are characterised by a close connection with the Arab regimes and by the family affiliations. These pattern of ownership and control are a modified version of the patterns normally described in a political economy approach.

The second approach was the social organisation of newswork. This approach, with its two main aspects (news gathering and news selection) has revealed the internal process of the newswork in the Arab press. This approach has enabled us to fully examine the matters of: news gathering, news sources, specialisation of journalist, news selection, news values and the audience. This detailed grasp has shown that the mechanisms of newswork are the same in the newsrooms, and has also enabled us to study the inside world of the Arab newsrooms in London and Beirut. This approach constitutes a good basis for the study of the internal process of news production.

The culturological approach is the third theoretical framework employed in this study. This approach was employed to understand the influence of the cultural context on the Arab press organisations, and their personnel. This approach also traces the impact of the dominant ideology on the media discourse of the Arab media. With regard to the former point, the culturological approach has revealed that the London-based Arab press is largely affected by the cultural context. Such an influence is less obvious in the Lebanese press, and other Arab national presses. Regarding the latter point, the impact of dominant ideology on the discourse of the Arab press is slightly resonating with the dominant cultural themes in the Arab public arena. One main reason stands behind this failure. The continuous shift in the balance of power in the Arab World would make it quite difficult to trace the larger cultural themes on the media discourse.

Thirdly, the study encourages the use of more than one technique to tackle the complexity of studying the media organisations on both macro and micro levels. Three methods, observation, interviews and content analysis, were employed to analyse how journalists carry out the news production process. Each of these methods has provided the research with the relevant kind of data. Despite the limited access in some newsrooms, the ethnographic data have provided this research with detailed accounts on the inside world of the Arab newsrooms. The period of observation in each newsroom was sufficient to establish an understanding on the journalistic work of the newsrooms personnel. Although the access to the "social setting" (e.g. newsroom) impedes the validity of the data subsequently collected, I was able to compensate through confidential information from various informants. This occurred because I was able to gain the trust and the confidence

of some informants in each newsroom. Such a confidence was an important aspect in the establishing of fruitful and good relations with the members of the social setting. The informal conversations and the semi structured interviews conducted with the persons involved in the news production process have revealed such information. The content analysis, which was the third method employed in this research, has revealed matters related to the news production process (e.g. news sources, news gathering channels). Such matters cannot be understood or revealed through the observation or interviews only. To sum up, the shortcomings of one method were compensated by the use of another supplementary method. In this research, the use of three methods has shown that the complexities of the studying of media organisations on the macro and micro-levels can be usefully tackled by the use of more than one method.

Fourthly, this research raises concerns about the Arab audience, and how exactly the editors speculate about their audience by using the studies carried out by the marketing agencies or media habit groups. This research has presented the editors perceptions about the Arab audience. Such perceptions have pointed to the necessity of looking at the Arab audience, and their perceptions to the national and London-based Arab press. The audience feedback is one of the main areas that needs more focus and analysis in future studies on the Arab media

Finally, the available studies by Western media scholars have provided some understanding on the Arab media. However, the Arab media, whether émigré or national, need more research which would contribute to our understanding on such media. This study may be justly considered as one of the very few available comparative studies on the Arab press, and it opens the door for further research on this under-researched field.

APPENDIX A: CODING SCHEDULE

1- Item No   [ ] 1
                                                                             [ ] 2
                                            [ ] 3

2- **Paper** (code one)   [ ] 4

      1- The Guardian
      2- The Tines
      3- Al-Hayat
      4- Asharq Al-Awsat
      5- An-Nahar
      6- As-Safir

3- **Year** (code one)   [ ] 5
                                                                [ ] 6

4- **Month** (code one)   [ ] 7
                                                                 [ ] 8

5- **Date**   [ ] 9
                                                              [ ] 10

6- **Day**   [ ] 11

7- **Page**   [ ] 12
                                                               [ ] 13

8- **Total Page Number**   [ ] 14
                                                               [ ] 15

9- **Position in Pages** (code one)   [ ] 16

      1- Front page
      2- Inside page
      3- Back page

10- **Page Classification** (code one)

      01- Home/Domestic News   [ ] 17
      02- Parliament/Politics/European News   [ ] 18
      03- Overseas/International News
      04- Editorial
      05- Analysis
      06- Comment
      07- Opinion
      08- Leader
      09- Issues/Events
      10- Letters to the Editor
      11- Review/Ideas
      12- Business/Finance/Economy

13- Features
14- Culture/Arts/Classic
15- Sports
16- Family
17- Miscellany
18- Science/Health/Environment
19- Cinema
20- Technology/Computers
21- Others

11- Type of Item (code one)

01- Lead story   [ ] 19
02- News story   [ ] 20
03- Editorial
04- Feature
05- Comment/Leader Comment/Leading Article
06- Letter to the Editor
07- Separate Photograph/Cartoon
08- Interview
09- Advertisement
10- Diary/Notebook
11- Others

12- Number of Visuals (code number of each type)

1- Photograph   [ ] 21
                                                                      [ ] 22
2- Cartoon   [ ] 23
                                                                      [ ] 24
3- Others (Map, Diagram, Drawing...)   [ ] 25
                                                                      [ ] 26

13- Author of the Item (code one)

1- Specialist   [ ] 27
2- Generalist
3- Others

14- Source/Author (code one)

01- Political Correspondent   [ ] 28
02- Diplomatic Correspondent   [ ] 29
03- Military Correspondent
04- Correspondent/Reporter
05- Foreign Editor/Editor
06- Joint Correspondents
07- Foreign Staff/Staff
08- Joint Correspondent/News Agencies
09- Local News Agency
10- Arab News Agency
11- Reuters
12- UPI
13- AP

14- AFP
15- TASS/Interfax
16- Joint News Agencies
17- News Services
18- Official
19- Non-Official
20- Not Specified
21- Diplomats
22- Reader
23- Other News Agencies
24- Others

15- Location of the Correspondent (code one)

01- London   [ ] 30
02- Washington/New York   [ ] 31
03- Paris
04- Beirut
05- Cairo
06- Riyadh
07- Iraq
08- Other Arab Countries
09- Jerusalem
10- Nicosia
11- Ankara
12- Other Countries
13- Two or More Different Countries
14- Not Known
15- Others

16- Subject of the Item (code one)

Primary
01- International- Arab Politics   [ ] 1
02- Arab-Politics/Internal   [ ] 2
03- Diplomatic/Political Activity   Secondary
04- Other Politics   [ ] 3
05- Armed Conflict/Threat   [ ] 4
06- Other Military/Defence
07- Peace Moves/Mediation
08- Economics/Trade/Industry
09- Disaster/Famine/Relief
10- Health/Family Planning/Social Service
11- Culture/Education/Arts
12- Religion/Classic
13- Crime/Legal/Law
14- Science/Medicine/Computer
15- International/Domestic Sports
16- Entertainment
17- Personalities
18- Human Interest
19- Environment/Ecology
20- Others

17- News Sources/Actors quoted, interviewed, or referred to:

01- Arab Figures (Presidents, PMs...)	**Primary**
02- Arab Officials (Ministers, VIPs...)	[ ] 1
03- Arab Parties/Groups/Unions	[ ] 2
04- Arab Governments/Organisations	**Secondary**
05- Opposition Groups (Dissidents...)	[ ] 3
06- Foreign Figures (Presidents, PMs...)	[ ] 4
07- Foreign Officials (Ministers, VIPs...)	**Tertiary**
08- Foreign Organisations/Institutions	[ ] 5
09- Israeli Figures (PM, Opposition...)	[ ] 6
10- Israeli Officials/Organisations	**Fourth**
11- United Nations Agencies/Officials	[ ] 7
12- Arab Masses/Public	[ ] 8
13- Political Experts	**Fifth**
14- Military Experts	[ ] 9
15- Diplomatic Experts	[ ] 10
16- Economic Experts	
17- Other Experts	
18- Arab Newspapers/News Agencies	
19- Foreign Newspapers/News Agencies	
20- Arab Sources (Not Specified)	
21- Foreign Sources (Not Specified)	
22- Arab Spokespersons	
23- Foreign Spokespersons	
24- Commentators/Analysts	
25- Working Papers/Reports/Books	
26- Researches/Studies	
27- Foreign Governments	
29- Statement/Letter	
80- Others	

18- Themes of the Item

01- Arab Internal Affairs
02- Political Inter-Arab Relations
03- Military Inter-Arab Relations
04- Diplomatic Inter-Arab Relations
05- Economic Inter-Arab Relations
06- Arab-West Relations
07- Other Relations (UN, NAM...)
08- Arab-Israeli Conflict
09- Palestinian-Israeli Conflict
10- Arab-Israeli Peace Process
11- Western Hostages (in Lebanon)
12- Arab Detainees (in Israel)
13- Iraqi Issue/Internal Affairs
14- Kurds (Turkey & Iran)
15- Islamic Fundamentalism
16- Famine/Economic Problems
17- BCCI/Arab Dimension
18- Riots/Demonstrations
19- Terrorism/Violence
20- Israeli Affairs
21- Military Actions
22- Lockerbie
23- Scandals
24- Legal Suits/Courts
25- Elections/Democracy
26- Government Change/Reshuffle/Resignation
27- Arms & Weaponary
28- Gulf War
29- Sanctions
30- Opposition to Arab Regimes
31- Loans/Debts/Aids
32- Civil War
33- Cease-fire/Truce
34- Detention/Prison
35- Dialogue/Talks
36- Treaty/Protocol
37- Environmental Issues
38- Political/Economic Reforms
39- Development
80- Others

Primary
[ ] 1
[ ] 2
Secondary
[ ] 3
[ ] 4
Tertiary
[ ] 5
[ ] 6
Fourth
[ ] 7
[ ] 8

19- Main Country Concerned

01- Egypt
02- Syria
03- Saudi Arabia
04- Kuwait
05- Iraq
06- Other Gulf States
07- Lebanon
08- Algeria
09- Libya

Primary
[ ] 1
[ ] 2
Secondary
[ ] 3
[ ] 4
Tertiary
[ ] 5
[ ] 6

10- Morocco   Fourth
11- Tunisia   [ ] 7
12- Sudan   [ ] 8
13- Other African Arab States
14- Palestine
15- Israel
16- Jordan
17- Others

20- Dimension/Tone of the Item

Pro-West	1	2	3	4	5	Anti-West	
							[ ] 9
Pro-Saudi Axis	1	2	3	4	5	Anti-Saudi Axis	
							[ ] 10
Pro-Fundamentalism	1	2	3	4	5	Anti-Fundamentalism	
							[ ] 11
Pro-Arab Nationalism	1	2	3	4	5	Anti-Arab Nationalism	
							[ ] 12
Pro-Peace Process	1	2	3	4	5	Anti-Peace Process	
							[ ] 13
Pro-Arab Opposition	1	2	3	4	5	Anti-Arab Opposition	
							[ ] 14
Pro-Arab Government(s)	1	2	3	4	5	Anti-Arab Government(s)	
							[ ] 15

Coding of Labels

Item No   [ ] 1
                                                                           [ ] 2
                                                                           [ ] 3

Adjectives/Labels used:

Coding of Visuals

Item No   [ ] 1
[ ] 2
[ ] 3

1- Photograph Caption (specify)

2- Description of Photograph (specify)

3- Cartoon Comment (specify)

4- Description of Cartoon (specify)

Editorial Coding

Item No   [ ] 1
                                                     [ ] 2
                                                     [ ] 3

1- Editorial Title

2- Editorial Main Points

Coding of Headline, Sub-Headline,
Lead and Reporter

Item No

[ ] 1
[ ] 2
[ ] 3

1- Headline

2- Sub-Headline(s)

3- Lead (First Sentence)

4- Reporter's Name

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

EDITOR-REPORTER INTERACTION

1- Media researchers noticed that editors and reporters are in permanent conflict over the style of news items. What kind of relationship exists, between you and your reporters? is such a relationship a tug of war? does the reporter try to please you by filing a certain type of news stories?

2- How does reporter-editor interplay bear on the fundamental aspect of reporting-source selection and utilization?

3- How do editors influence reporting of news as they perform their role (professionalism, journalistic autonomy, hierarchy of authority inside the newsroom)?

4- Did the reporter involve the editor in the developments of a story? If so, in what way was he involved? and at what stage of the story?

5- To what extent, if at all, was the editor involved in the preliminary researching/shaping of stories?

6- A media researcher noticed that a reporter had the habit of filing three news stories on some days to test what the news editor would select. Do you agree with adopting such a technique to please your editor?

7- It is known that changes in the news story will lead to the resentment of the reporter. Was there a difference between a story as you wrote it and the story that was published? If yes, did the editor ask for or make cuts in length? Did the editor ask for a shift of emphasis?

8- How usually do you react to the editorial task of the editor? (i.e. discuss it or try to avoid it in the next news story).

SPECIALISATION OF JOURNALISTS

1- The specialisation of journalist has come to occur at the highest level of differentiation in

the newsroom and attracts the highest prestige both to the correspondent and to the newsroom. Can you explain the affect of specialisation on your staff?

2- What is the percentage of specialists in your newsroom as a proportion of the overall number of journalists? What about their background? their education?

3- Is the specialisation of a particular journalist because of his interest or the need for a specialised team?

4- Does the news organisation differentiate between the generalist and the specialist journalist in the field of salaries, promotion, work assignments?

GENERAL POLICY

1- The general policy is the main themes that put in advance the guide-lines for the newsmen; what is the source of such themes?

2- Some papers are classified as having particular views whilst, others are independent and so on. What is your understanding of the term "policy"?

3- Do you think that newspapers should have a 'clear policy' towards coverage and reporting of events or should they have a 'flexible policy' to manage between the journalistic work and prevailing circumstances in a changing situation?

4- Who furnished the policy of your paper? was it the board of editors?

5- What about the role of owners in putting the general policy?

6- Does the government have a role in deciding the policy of a newspaper through laws and regulations? If yes, how and to what extent?

7- Do you think that such laws and regulations influence the content of a newspaper (i.e. for the paper to continue, it has to abide by these laws)?

SELECTION OF NEWS

1- How many editorial meetings do you hold each day? and who usually preside and attend these meetings?

2- How do the journalists know the decisions of editorial meetings? (i.e. through their head of departments, circulated memoranda).

3- How do the journalists know about comments on yesterday's (today's) issue? Do you phone the reporter to discuss with him/her, send a memorandum to his/her department? discuss it in the editorial conferences?

4- What kind of problems face you in the newsroom as you work to deadlines (i.e. limited space and time)?

5- Which factors usually affect the selection of news? (i.e. political, governmental, economic, cultural).

6- News values are seen as criteria for newsworthiness. How do these values affect your choice? and to what extent?

7- At what level does the editor's role operate when selecting news? Can you explain the hierarchy of authority in the news organisation? general policy? what about the instructions of power holders? how exactly does the owners' role appear in determining content?

8- What was it about stories that made them newsworthy to journalists disseminating them to the public arena?

9- What was it about this particular story which made it newsworthy at that time?

NEWS SOURCES

1- News sources are known as 'primary definers' of events and, the journalists as 'secondary definers', from your experience can you define this term?

2- What do you think about variety in news sources? do you contact different news sources before publishing any controversial news story?

3- What about the credibility of certain sources? how do you test the validity of certain obtained information from one source? do you contact other sources? if not, do you take your source's information as for granted?

4- Regarding the relationship between newsgatherer and source, what kind of a relationship is it? is it a two-way strategy? There is a concept saying that a news source needs journalists for publicity, and reporters need news sources for information; in your case, do you have such interaction with your news sources?

CHALLENGING NEWS SOURCES

5- Concerning another dimension of the reporter-source relationship; do you think the journalist with certain factual information is able to challenge the source denial about a story after it has been published? does a similar situation happen in your news room, and if so what were the consequences?

6- There is a two-fold notion about journalist-source interaction: the first says that the journalist has the upper hand as the last editor of a source's text. In contrast, the second says the source has the power to provide the journalist with information, thus a source has the upper hand. Which of them has the control over news?

7- In an open society, the journalist may have alternative news sources in cases of dispute with one source. Do you have alternative news sources for your newsroom?

8- The news source has the power to impose sanctions on journalists. Have any of your staff been sanctioned by a news source (i.e. prohibition from press briefings and conferences, elimination from mailing list, supplying with false or unreliable information in order to involve the journalist in trouble with his editor)? If yes, what was the reason(s)? and, what was the result?.

OWNERSHIP

1- The funding of any newspaper is a question of hard debate in the Arab press. Would

you like to comment on this issue?

2- Many rumours circulate about the financial support of one newspaper or another. What could you say in this context?

3- To what extent does the financial support influence (or appear) in the content of your newspaper?

ADVERTISEMENTS AND CIRCULATION

1- To what extent, do advertisements contribute to the budget of your news organisation?

2- There is a concept that believes advertisements influence in the content of newspapers. What do you think about this matter?

3- What percentage does the figures of circulation contribute to the revenues of your newspaper?

READERSHIP

1- How do you usually get the feedback of your audience on the newspaper content?

2- It is known that the letters to the editor are another dimension of newspaper-reader interaction. Do you have a reporter assigned to this desk (or do you actually have a desk for the readers' reactions)? If not, why not?

3- Does your newspaper carry out any research on readership, in order to share the reader in promotion of news production process? If yes, on what basis and when? If not, why not?

4- Do the journalists, producing news for an audience, actually know their audience? or are they producing news according to their own professional intuitions?

5- There is a belief that Arab reader feedback is under-represented in the Arab press. What do you think are the reasons behind this gap?

JOURNALISTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Name:
- Age:
- Education:
- Nationality:

- How many years have you been covering Arab news?

- Do you think journalists should be politically committed? If you do, would it affect their profession?

- How many times have you visited the Arab world?

APPENDIX C: JOURNALISTS INTERVIEWED

A. LONDON

A.1. ASHARQ AL-AWSAT:

Yasser Dabbagh, General Manager (SRM Ltd), 17.02.1992
Othman Al-Omeir, Editor-in-chief, 28.01.1992
Mahmoud Atallah, Deputy Editor-in-chief, 27.01.1992
Mohammed Al-Tunisi, Deputy Editor-in-chief, 28.01.1992
Nadim Nahhas, Managing Editor (Features), 24.01.1992
Bakr Awaida, Managing Editor (Analysis), 20.01.1992
Othman Merghani, Managing Editor (Front Page), 22.01.1992
Ghassan Sharbel, Managing Editor (Arab Affairs), 21.01.1992
Ayad Abou Chakra, Senior Editor, 24.01.1992
Hosni Khashaba, Journalist (Arab-Israeli Conflict), 20.01.1992
Ziad Khoza'ai, Journalist (North Africa), 22.01.1992
Abdullah Homouda, Journalist (Gulf & Yemen), 23.01.1992

A.2. AL-HAYAT:

Jamal Tassbahji, Administrative Manager (MCG Ltd.), 17.02.1992.
Jihad El-Khazen, Editor-in-chief, 20.02.1992
George Sama'an, Managing Editor, 21.02.1992
Khairallah Khaiarallah, Senior Editor, 10.02.1992
Abdul Wahhab Badrakhan, Senior Editor, 11.02.1992
Maher Othman, Arab Affairs Editor, 19.02.1992
Bishara Sharbel, Arab Affairs Sub-editor, 18.02.1992
Adel Beshtawi, Business & Finance Editor, 18.02.1992
Nizar Dou Ena'am, Journalist, 21.02.1992
Yousif Khazem, Journalist, 14.02.1992

B. BEIRUT

B.1. AS-SAFIR:

Yasser Nehme, General Manager, 27.03.1992
Talal Salman, Editor-in-chief, 01.04.1992
Mohammed Mashmoushi, Deputy editor-in-chief, 26.03.1992
Faisal Salman, Managing Editor (Local Affairs), 30.03.1992
Sati'a Noureddine, Managing Editor (Arab & International Affairs), 30.03.1992
Ghassan Mukahal, Editor, (Arab & International Affairs), 26.03.1992

B.2. AN-NAHAR:

Ghassan Tueni, Publisher/General Manager, 29.04.1992.
Françios Akl, Managing Editor, 21.04.1992
Edmond Saab, Executive Editor, 24.04.1992
Sahar Ba'asiri, Sub-editor (Foreign Desk), 16.04.1992
George Abou Rizk, Journalist (Foreign Desk), 14.04.1992

APPENDIX D: OBSERVATIONAL NOTES

PHASES OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION
1. GAINING ACCESS

To gain an entree is a crucial step in carrying out participant observation for two reasons: firstly, it is a precondition for conducting field work, where simply no entree means no research. Secondly, there is a relationship between the initial entree and the validity of the data subsequently collected (Jorgensen, 1989). We wrote to the people in control (the editor-in-chief), because, other studies have shown, the endorsement of those who hold status in the power hierarchy can be critical and they can serve in a useful liaison capacity (Cicourel, 1964). In this context, the approval of the top men in the newsrooms had facilitated the work to a large extent. When I faced problems in getting access to the archive in Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir[1], the instructions of the top-editors enabled me to overcome several problems. Furthermore, I noticed that the approval, or the endorsement, of those who have control gave the project some respect among the newsrooms personnel.

To gain access to the setting, the researcher should present the appropriate authority of the organisation (board, editor-in-chief, director) with a letter of introduction or a copy of a proposal for participant observation research. The proposal should outline the basic plan of the research, the basic goals and purposes, and provide good reasons why it is in the interest of the authority to permit the research, addressing any issue likely to be used as grounds for denying the request, such as matters of a "politically or ethically sensitive nature, or any apprehensions about the dissemination of findings" (Jorgensen, 1989: 46). I approached the appropriate authorities (editor-in-chief) in the four newspapers with a letter summarising the outline of the participant observation research. I stressed that the study is the subject of scholarly research on a comparative study of news production in the Arab press in Britain and Lebanon:

> I should like to take this opportunity to assure you that the observational data and any interview information collected will be used only for academic research. The results of this research will be a valuable contribution to understanding the processes of news production in different social setting ... I also assure you that your organisation has the right of acquaintance and taking advantage of the recommendations and findings of this study. (Letter to the newspapers)

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[1] The Archive supervisors in Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir denied access to their documents in the first instance. When I discussed the matter with the editor-in-chief and his deputy in both newspapers, the staff of the archive became very helpful and provided me with the available documents.

As the quotation from the letter points out, many aspects were taken into account. Firstly, the letter discusses the nature and the aim of the study. The academic nature of the study being clearly stated was undoubtedly an advantage to gaining access. I realised later, when I started the fieldwork, that some of the newsroom personnel were more relaxed when they knew about the nature of the study. Secondly, the letter explained why it would be in the interests of the newspapers to permit the research, the contribution to understanding the process of news production which would be gained and the right of the organisation to benefit from the study. In this context, most of the editor-in-chiefs, or the managing editors, expressed their interests in the study itself and in its results. That the editor-in-chief of As-Safir was interested in the study became evident[2], when he repeatedly asked about the progress of the field work. It was the same with the managing editors of Al-Hayat and An-Nahar as well as the deputy editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat.

Initially the permission for access to the four newspapers were granted without questions. The deputy editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat wrote in reply to my request showing his newspaper's acceptance and was willing to give any assistance possible "bearing in mind the heavy schedule of a daily newspaper". In Al-Hayat, the editor-in-chief welcomed the idea and showed the personnel support of his newspaper. In Beirut, the editor-in-chief of both An-Nahar and As-Safir wrote in reply to my request showing their will to co-operate with me.

2. PHASE ONE

LONDON: JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1992

I started the fieldwork, in the Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom, in the first week of January 1992. The newsday in Asharq Al-Awsat begins at 10.00 in the morning when the journalists start arriving at the newsroom. The journalists go through other newspapers, and check the latest news through their terminals. At the same time, the copy taster goes through the material which came overnight through the news agencies. Around 10.30 a.m., the morning editorial conference starts (see chapter eight). In this context, Asharq Al-Awsat gave me full access to attend the morning and evening editorial meetings. This enabled me to observe and listen to the discussions among the staff on various matters: editorial and administrative. After the meeting the newsday starts by contacting the correspondents, bureaux and news sources. Around 4.30 p.m., the evening editorial meeting takes place, when those who attend evaluate the news stories for the front page. As the meeting finishes, the work intensifies in the production room. Around 6.00 p.m.,

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[2] When I finished his fieldwork in the As-Safir newsroom, the editor-in-chief asked me to write a small report on his findings and what can be done to develop the newsroom. The report was discussed in a meeting with the top editors of the newspaper.

the staff leave the newsroom except for one editor or journalist who usually works late into the night in order to up-date the news stories for the further editions of the newspaper. During January 1992, I observed, attended and sometimes participated in discussions with the staff on matters related to the newswork. The newsroom offered me a desk next to the Arab Affairs Desk, where I was close to the journalists and editors as they were writing the news stories and talking to the correspondents. The process of the newswork heavily routinised, but during some days it was disrupted when some unexpected events happened. My daily observation included taking notes about the discussions, informal conversation with the reporters and editors, looking in the archive for materials or documents, attending the editorial meetings and conducting semi-structured interviews with newsroom personnel.

In the first week of February 1992, I moved to the Al-Hayat newsroom to conduct the second part of the empirical work including the London-based papers. Before discussing this section of my research, one point is worth mentioning, this is that when I started my field work in Al-Hayat, I was at the stage where I had already gained some *experience* from Asharq Al-Awsat such as surveying the setting, the people and the tactics employed when dealing with insiders. The newsday in Al-Hayat starts at 10.00 a.m. when the staff arrive at the newsroom. The first task of the Arab Affairs journalists (and other desks) is to read through the English and London-based Arab dailies. Unlike Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat does not employ the mechanism of editorial meetings (see chapter eight). The newsroom holds an occasional meeting around 12.30 p.m. to discuss some administrative and editorial matters. I was denied access to these meetings, but an informant told me about the matters discussed. The newsday finishes around 6.30 p.m. when the newspaper starts sending the material to its printing centres around the world (mainly Bahrain's edition: the chief edition for the Gulf). Unlike Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat does not print any other edition so, there is no need for a night shift editor or reporter. By 7.30 p.m., the managing editor closes the front page and the newsday ends in the production room. Regarding access to the archive, the newspapers' editors arranged with the archive supervisor, so he provided me with documents, articles and material related to the newspaper.

3. PHASE TWO

BEIRUT MARCH - APRIL 1992

At the end of February, I moved to Beirut to complete the second part of the empirical research. I started the fieldwork in As-Safir's Arab and International Desk in the first week of March 1992. It is necessary to mention that the timing and duration of the newsday varies between the London and Beirut newspapers. In Beirut, the newsday starts

around 5.00 p.m. and ends after midnight, whereas in London it starts in the mid morning and ends around early evening. To observe the process of editorial meeting and the newsmaking process, I had to come to the newspaper building at intervals of time. The newspaper staff holds a morning editorial conference at around 11.00 a.m., where they discuss the issues of the day before and the agenda. As the managing editor told me, in an informal conversation, the meeting is held after the national and the available Arab and international newspapers have been read. They discuss other administrative matters. The meeting ends at around 12.30 p.m. when the editors go for lunch, returning at around 4.00 p.m. In the Arab and International Desk, the editor returns at around 5.00 p.m., when he takes the cuttings from the news agencies material. The staff arrive after 6.00 p.m., when the newsday actually starts. There is a further editorial meeting that takes place at the Arab and International Desk at around 7.30 p.m. (see chapters seven and eight). Around 11.00 p.m., the staff leave and a journalist or an editor works the night shift till 1.00 a.m., monitoring the news agencies to change or update news which become available early in the evening. Around midnight, work starts in the production room, where the deputy editor-in-chief supervises the production of the front page. He writes the headline and the lead story of that page. Finally, the newspaper goes to print after 2.00 a.m.

Towards the end of March 1992, I moved to An-Nahar's Foreign Desk to conduct the study on the other Lebanese daily. Unlike As-Safir, An-Nahar does not have the mechanism of the editorial meetings (see chapters seven and eight). The newsday starts at around 2.30 p.m. when the sub-editor, or one of the journalists, comes to the Desk to make the first classification of news stories of the day. S/he then makes a list of the proposed news stories. After 30-45 minutes s/he leaves the desk, returning at around 6.00 p.m. In the early evening, the staff start working on the preliminary news agenda which was put down in the afternoon. Continuous discussions with, and visits by, (sometimes) the publisher, the managing editor, and the executive editor occur at current affairs desk. Around 10.00 p.m., the intensity of work increases and continues until midnight. The sub-editor and the managing editor finalise the front page at around 3.00 a.m., when it goes to print. The managing editor writes the headline and the lead story (either domestic, Arab or international) for the front page.

During the day, I would come to the newspaper for many reasons. Firstly to collect documents or any relevant materials from the archive. In this regard, I was assisted by the staff of An-Nahar's archive, who were eager to help and provided me with the material needed. Some other books and articles were given to me by the publisher of An-Nahar. Secondly, I would come to arrange interviews or to conduct interviews with An-Nahar's personnel. They preferred to conduct the interviews during day, because the intensity of work would be less. It was the same in the case of As-Safir's staff. Thirdly, I was able to

have informal discussions with the personnel of different desks on matters relating to their work. This could not be easily done in the evening because they would be occupied or engaged in their work and, also at this time, I had to do my observation at the Foreign Desk.

4. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INSIDERS

On becoming a member in the *inside* world, the researcher should seek the best means whereby s/he can participate and sustain relationships with the insiders, that of trying to avoid being a total member of the setting, or a "complete participant"[3]. The solution is two fold: the researcher needs "cooling off" periods to look back on his/her field behaviour "dispassionately and sociologically". Secondly, the field worker is advised to be as "unobtrusive" as possible and to avoid anything which is liable to call attention to him or herself (Jorgensen, 1989; Gold, 1969).

The daily presence of the researcher in the newsrooms of the four newspapers created a particular sort of relationship with the newsrooms personnel. It was in the first few days that I had to answer questions from the insiders about the nature and aim of my research. In the Al-Hayat and As-Safir newsrooms , some journalists thought that I was a *new colleague*, who had joined the Arab Affairs Desk. My position had to be clarified in order to make clear the purpose of my presence, and so as not to conduct a "covert strategy"[4]. In this context, I was introduced to the sections (Arab Affairs and other desks) by the editor-in-chief (As-Safir), deputy editor-in-chief (Asharq Al-Awsat) or the managing editor (Al-Hayat and An-Nahar). This stage was the kick-off for the fieldwork. As the time went by in the newsroom, I became familiar with the setting and people. I avoided becoming a "complete participant" because it would reduce the possibility of accurate observation, and consequently affect the quality of the collected data. This helped in keeping a distance between me and the newsroom personnel, in matters of their work and my work. However, this distance made me unobtrusive and did not call attention to myself. I was able to gain the trust and the confidence of the insiders, which is an important aspect in the establishing of fruitful and good relations with the people in authority as well as the members of the setting. A central objective of gaining trust is to gain some degree of acceptance at the first encounter.

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[3] As a complete participant, the field worker becomes less able to observe and reduces the possibility of accurate observation, because s/he gains through subjective involvement direct access to the way the people think, do, and feel (Gold, 1969). This, in return, would influence the validity of the observational data obtained.

[4] Covert strategy happens when the researcher assumes some participant role without informing people within the setting.

Getting acceptance requires that the researcher dresses and behaves in such a way as not to call attention to himself or herself, and requires moral neutrality regarding members' beliefs, values and activities (Jorgensen, 1989). As s/he becomes accepted, the field worker should seek to gain the trust and co-operation of the members, because the quality of data improves if s/he establishes and sustains such kinds of field relationships. During my fieldwork, I met and talked to tens of journalists, whose beliefs and values I did not entirely agree with. This however did not make me exclude them from my study or *underestimate* their arguments when such discussions dealt with the newsmaking process. For instance, I did not totally agree with Ghassan Tueni's, publisher of An-Nahar, argument, about the pre-Civil war press in Lebanon, but I have to take into consideration many points that he considers as postulates[5]. Moreover, I kept a moral neutrality towards the *Lebanese Elitism*, which is dominant in the Al-Hayat newsroom. I did not agree with what Khairallah Khairallah, senior editor, and George Sama'an, managing editor of Al-Hayat, were talking about concerning the *superiority* of the Lebanese factor in the London-based Arab press. I maintained however, a sort of neutrality and dealt with these arguments from an academic point of view.

Ericson *et al* (1987) noticed that the field worker can hardly expect a high degree of co-operation without complying to requests for assistance, and eventually offering assistance as a gesture of reciprocity. The background of Ericson and his colleagues was an important aspect in developing and sustaining field relations[6]. Elliott (1972a) adopted a rule of not speaking until spoken to, and then saying as little as possible consistent with not appearing rude or completely vacant. Unlike Ericson *et al*'s experience in the Canadian media organisations, I got the co-operation of the newsroom personnel without "offering assistance". This occurred because the number of staff of the newsrooms was more than sufficient relative to the amount of work they had to do. Even then when I attended the editorial meetings in the Asharq Al-Awsat and As-Safir newsrooms, I adopted Elliott's strategy of not speaking until spoken to. However, I passed comments on lead stories in Al-Hayat to the managing editor in order that he would explain to me the reasons behind publishing the stories in that way. Furthermore, I offered my assistance to the newsrooms personnel, and once I received a message from Al-Hayat's correspondent in Damascus. Later, I realised that the editors were reluctant or hesitant to ask for any assistance because they did not want to distract my attention or take up any of my time. In Asharq Al-Awsat, I

[5] Ghassan Tueni argues that despite of the Civil War, An-Nahar is "free" and the Lebanese press is still the *best* in the Arab world. This argument led me to disagree with him by emphasising that the ramifications of war effected the structure of the press and the *freedom* of press. He thinks that post-war press in Lebanon is going to be like the pre-war press in terms of freedom and pan-Arab circulation.

[6] Johnson (1975) argues that establishing, developing and sustaining trust and co-operation with the insiders, depends on the researcher's interpersonal skills, background and experience or the "researcher's biography".

answered the queries of a managing editors about certain matters relating to his news story and participated in discussions between the reporters of the Arab Affairs Desk. In Beirut, the newsroom personnel of An-Nahar and As-Safir were more flexible and open in dealing with the researcher ideas.

Ericson *et al* (1987) noticed that several journalists expressed concern about how the findings of the research would be used, and others wanted extra assurance that confidentiality would be maintained. Elliott (1972a) noticed that the ethical problem implicit in publishing fieldwork looms particularly large in a case such as when those studied during the research, their colleagues and friends may be expected to read the published work. Unlike Elliott or Ericson *et al*'s cases, most of the newsroom personnel expressed their opinions and never expressed concern about the disclosure of their identity. The staff were more relaxed and co-operative when they realised that the information they were to provide was for academic purposes, and it would take sometime before it would be ready for publishing. The other interesting matter is that, the newspapers' personnel were curious to know about the preliminary findings on the other newspapers. One editor in a newspaper asked me about the differences and similarities between his newsroom and another newsrooms. I only disclosed the matters of access and co-operation which had varied from one newspaper to another. When I was looking for some information on the staff and the division of labour in Al-Hayat's management, and the gaining of access to the editorial meetings I faced some problems. I discussed the matter with the managing editor of Al-Hayat telling him that I acquired easily the same information from Asharq Al-Awsat. The managing editor was surprised by the degree of access and co-operation, and tended to be more willing to help. This strategy was an incentive for some editors to co-operate and provide more information about their institution by comparing it to competitive organisation[7].

5. COLLECTING DATA

5.1. DIRECT OBSERVATION:

When I started the observation in the newsrooms, the first habit I acquired was to write down a description or a surveying of the setting itself, and ask about certain people or features if I was not sure about their tasks. The repetitiveness over the days and weeks in the same setting enabled me to know every single detail, and to notice any changes. Moreover, the direct observation enabled me to know how the newsday starts and how each of the newsroom personnel behaves, and I came to know about their weekly days off

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[7] In London Al-Hayat is the main competitor to Asharq Al-Awsat and vice versa. In Beirut, An-Nahar is the main competitor to As-Safir and vice versa.

and their work assignments - if they were not coming in the next day for example. The direct observation also gives more information on the feelings and behaviour of the staff in different parts of the newsday, and whether there was any particular intensity of work or some urgent and unexpected news.

5.2. INTERVIEWS:

In the context of the interviews, it is worth mentioning that some interviewees were open and talkative about their newspapers, whereas some of the journalists who were *critical* of their institutions preferred to speak off-the-record about certain issues. Other interviewees were *cautious* and their answers were too short despite my insistence upon certain matters. In all cases, the material obtained from interviews provided additional information to be added to the observational data. I used the observational data to add more questions or to modify the existing questions which I had formulated before starting the fieldwork. For instance, when discussing the subject of news selection, I would ask about the news stories of that time in order to substantiate the matters relating to the news selection process.

By asking the same questions to the editors or journalists in the same newsroom, the researcher is able to check the information provided on the same subject but by different informants, and to know about the setting during his/her absence. In the wider context, the same questions addressed to the editors and journalists in London and in Beirut provided me with an understanding of the matters relating to the Arab news organisations either in London or Beirut. To sum up, the data obtained from the interviews was incorporated together with the other data (observational, documents and content analysis) to check the strengths and weaknesses of each method, and its respective data, This strategy is generally known as the "triangulation of methods" (see chapter four).

5.3. OFF-THE-RECORD DISCUSSIONS:

These informal conversations with the members of the setting are another essential source of observational data. In the Asharq Al-Awsat newsroom, I had informal conversations with most of the newsroom personnel. In this context, I had informal discussions with the Business and Economy editor and Sports editor in Asharq Al-Awsat about some issues relating to their desks. On finishing these discussions, I used to note down the important points raised. In Al-Hayat, I conducted informal conversations with many editors and journalists during their breaks in the newspaper canteen. In Beirut, long conversations took place with the editors and the journalists of An-Nahar and As-Safir on different aspects relating to the study. The field notes taken from these conversations and

discussions were written, classified and added to the observational data. Not surprisingly, the off-the-record conversation is more *spontaneous* and the insiders talk more freely than the on-the-record interviews. In addition, informal discussions have the advantage of including more than one journalist and from different desks and different positions in the hierarchy.

5.4. DOCUMENTS:

They comprise journalistic accounts, archives, official statistics, diaries, letters, etc., which may be used as informants to establish facts and events which the researcher is unable to observe directly, and they provide secondary, and in some cases, primary research material (Jorgensen, 1989). Epstein (1973) was given full access to the news memoranda, scripts, logs and assignments records of the three news networks. In all four newspapers under review, I gained access to the archives and obtained copies of reports, memoranda, articles and figures concerning the newspapers. In Asharq Al-Awsat, I was given access to the archive, where I went through the first issues of the newspapers and other publications by the Saudi Research and Marketing (SRM). Despite the archive supervisor being *cautious* at the beginning, and unco-operative, he became - following the interjection of the deputy editor-in-chief - more helpful, and provided me with the available material. In Al-Hayat, the archive personnel were very helpful, where the supervisor gave me full access to the archive material on the newspaper. Moreover, they provided me with use of a Xerox machine where I made copies of the available material. In Beirut, the staff of An-Nahar's archive[8] was extremely co-operative, and provided me with the relevant material on An-Nahar, As-Safir and the Lebanese press in general. Besides, the An-Nahar newspaper has a good library which contains a variety of books on media, politics and other subjects. I managed to obtain documents related to the An-Nahar institution (see chapter six. Moreover, the publisher of the newspaper gave me some published work about the newspaper and the press in Lebanon in general. When I discussed the issues of hierarchical structure and division of labour with the executive editor of An-Nahar, he provided me with various charts and figures from his own collection. To sum up, the documents which I obtained from An-Nahar's archive, provided additional information to the observational data and the interviews. In As-Safir, I faced problems with the archive supervisor, but this matter was sorted out when the editor-in-chief requested her co-operation with me. After that, I was given full access to the As-Safir Arab Centre for Information (ACI)[9]. As with An-Nahar, I got material on the newspaper itself and the other papers in Lebanon. Furthermore, I acquired a few academic studies and articles on

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[8] An-Nahar's archive is one of the oldest and biggest archives of the Lebanese press.
[9] ACI is an archive, library and publishing house. It is one of the best documentation centres in Lebanon.

the Lebanese press in the Libraries of the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese University and the archives of other Lebanese newspapers.

6. RECORDING DATA

6.1. DETAILED ETHNOGRAPHIC RECORD:

As the participant observer leaves the field work s/he should make an accurate and detailed record of daily observations, casual conversations, and formal and informal interviews. This full recording should be carried out as soon as possible, and it is good rule to complete the recording at least before retiring for the night (Dean *et al*, 1969a). Elliott (1972a), who would always take notes as the production team was working, noticed that - despite the team being always puzzled and occasionally suspicious about note-taking - this technique was important as it gave the researcher something to do. For each newspaper, I made an ethnographic record of the events and comments of each day. The record is classified by date where each date describes the observations of that day such as the newsroom events (e.g. editorial meetings, informal conversations, comments on recorded interviews). Each newspaper has its own ethnographic record which contains my observations. Later, these records were typed and classified under specific subjects relating to the framework of the study (e.g. news gathering, editorial meeting, news selection, news production, staff behaviour). These detailed records enabled me to enhance the data and to add more information. I also took take notes as the newsday progressed. Most of the newsrooms' personnel were not unduly puzzled or suspicious while I was taking notes.

6.2. TAPE-RECORDER:

The main use of the tape-recorder in my fieldwork was to record interviews with the newsroom personnel. Even though, some interviewees considered the tape-recorder obtrusive and many times they asked me to switch it off in order that they would feel more able to talk openly and frankly. During my interview with Talal Salman, the editor-in-chief of As-Safir, he disclosed many issues relating to the Lebanese press. When I indicated my intention to switch off the tape-recorder as a gesture of reciprocity, he told me to use whatever I thought appropriate to my research. As a result, this interview was one of the richest interviews that I conducted during my fieldwork. Other journalists asked me to switch off the tape-recorder because they wanted to disclose some information. However, this information is mentioned in the relevant sections and a concealment was adopted with regard to the names of those who had disclosed the information (see chapter four).

As I finished my fieldwork and came back to Leicester in May 1992, the first stage was for me to transcribe the texts of the interviews in Arabic. Later, I translated the main themes and classified these under subjects/headings. For instance, I listed the answers of the various journalists of the different papers. Furthermore, I made another classification under each journalist's name. When I started writing the thesis, I returned back to the Arab texts of the interviews and in most of the cases I listened to the interviews once again. I tried through the verbatim translation to be as *accurate* as I could be in transcribing the quotations of the Arab journalists into English[10] bearing in mind an attempt to explain some expressions which cannot be translated through using one single word. In this context, I did not ask the London-based Arab journalists to speak in English for one main reason, that is that the flow of speech would be much better in their mother-tongue despite the fact that most of them have lived in London for more than a decade, and their everyday working language is Arabic, not English.

7. THE RESEARCH ROLE

At the outset of the field work my role was explained to the senior editors and journalists present at the newsrooms and the editorial meetings I attended by the editor-in-chief, the deputy editor-in-chief or the managing editor. The usual formula was "This is Mahmoud Tarabay of the CMCR, Leicester University who's doing Ph.D. research on the work of our newspaper". Any instructions concerning my activities (such as daily access through the security procedure, archive material, meetings, use of the Xerox machine, etc.) were addressed in such general terms and co-operation asked for. While the editors and the journalists of the Arab Affairs desk in Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar and As-Safir eventually knew who I was, there were always journalists (from other desks) who did not. My usual introductory formula to these journalists was that, I was a student writing a Ph.D. thesis on the news production process in their newspaper. Later, I realised that some editors and reporters were curious and asked the journalists of the Arab affairs desk about the nature of my work. However, it must be said that hardly anyone refused to give their co-operation, and many of them were *positively enthusiastic*. In general the newsroom personnel who did not at first know what I was doing underlined the similarities between observation and journalism. Frequently, I was seen as a new journalist having just joined the newsroom and under training.

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[10] I referred to the translation of *Al-Mawrid* Dictionary: a modern Arabic-English dictionary by Rohi Ba'albaki, Dar *El-Ilm Lilmalayin*, Beirut, 3rd edition, 1991.

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