

Institution: University of Westminster
Unit of Assessment: 36
Title of case study: Arab Media Law and Policy
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Our research on the way Arab media laws and policies translate into multiple layers of censorship and self-censorship in Arab journalism and media production has informed and influenced international policy debate about Arab media development. It has provided evidence and argument for awareness-raising reports issued by UN agencies and a Euro-Mediterranean intergovernmental body, for the international outreach activities of two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and for planning and evaluation at the government-funded Danish body, International Media Support.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research includes work published by Naomi Sakr on the political economy of Arab media. Professor Sakr, formerly Middle East Editor at the Economist Intelligence Unit, joined the University of Westminster as a Visiting Lecturer in 2001, becoming Senior Lecturer in 2004, Reader in 2006 and Professor of Media Policy in 2009. In 2002 she worked with the then CAMRI Director Prof. Colin Sparks (left UoW July 2011) and Dr Tarik Sabry to win ESRC funding for a two year (2003-05) international seminar series on "The Impact of New Media Technologies on Public Life in the Arab World". Launched in 2006, the CAMRI Arab Media Centre, directed by Sakr, grew through HEIF grants for conferences (2007-08), an RCUK Research Fellowship held by Dr Katharina Nötzold (2007-10), Open Society bursaries (2008, 2009, 2011, 2013), a Leverhulme Fellowship (2013-) and AHRC funding for a 3-year project on Pan-Arab Children's TV (2013-15).</p> <p>The qualitative research underpinning Prof. Sakr's impact started in 1997-98, when she worked on Arab censorship for the NGO Article 19, and continued after she joined UoW in 2004, building on her earlier award-winning book, <i>Satellite Realms</i> (2002), and refereed journal articles (1999-2003) on transnational television and the Middle East. Data gathered from Arab media practitioners and human rights defenders, as well as interviews in centres of Arab media production, led to publications such as <i>Arab Television Today</i> (2007), which were accessed by professionals involved in democratisation projects in Arab countries, who were seeking to make sense of Arab media developments. They, in turn, facilitated Sakr's further research access to key players in the rapidly evolving Arab media scene, enabling her to produce work directly relevant to the task of understanding the place of media in the uprisings that started to bring down Arab dictators in 2011. Sakr's work gauges the significance, in terms of political change and human rights observance, of: the rise of Arab-owned satellite channels; changes in media ownership and control; and the breadth and depth of media liberalisation in Arab countries. Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting satellite television enabled Arab regimes to postpone liberalising terrestrial television and avoid it altogether in some cases. • Reciprocal intra-regional controls on satellite television content, transmission and reception minimised the extent to which its spread could herald a new era of free expression. • Contrary to widespread assumptions that satellite television programmes, especially those on Al-Jazeera, were reflecting enhanced forms of political participation in Arab countries, innovations in content merely reflected change among ruling elites who faced acute national policy dilemmas and were internally divided over how to handle them. In the absence of overt political platforms, media outlets played this role. • New forms of patronage emerging in Arab television and policy differences between elites opened up space for a few prominent journalists to move beyond the highly politicised journalism long prevalent in Arab media and apply international norms. • Despite outward appearances of competition among television channels, resource allocation remained the sole prerogative of a small, interconnected group of owners with complete lack of transparency about motives and trade-offs within the group. • Arab governments curb media freedom not only through media laws that contravene their international obligations on civil and political rights but also through laws that restrict freedom of assembly and association and thereby inhibit media freedom advocacy. • Satellite television increased Arab women's visibility but restrictions on women's media activism limited campaigning against women's marginalisation in important areas of decision making in Arab media.

3. References to the research

1. Sakr, Naomi. "Women-Media Interaction in the Middle East: An Introductory Overview", 2004, in N. Sakr (ed) *Women and Media in the Middle East*, London: I B Tauris, ISBN 1 85043 545 6 (Pb), pp 1-14. The book was discussed on Al-Jazeera's book programme (27 Nov 2004, with repeat), and Radio Free Europe (17 April 2005). It was widely reviewed and reprinted twice (2007 and 2009). Researched for the book but placed elsewhere for space reasons was Sakr, Naomi "Friend or Foe? Dependency Theory and Women's Media Activism in the Arab Middle East", *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 13/2, 2004, pp153-74 (DOI: 10.1080/1066992042000244308).
2. Sakr, Naomi. "Media Policy in the Middle East: A Reappraisal", 2005, in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds) *Mass Media and Society*, 4th edition, London: Hodder Arnold, ISBN 0-34088-499-1, pp 234-250. Entered for RAE 2008. The book was the 4th edition of a leading international text, described by its endorsers as 'the best collection of current thinking in the field'. Sakr's chapter drew on her own wider research into the making, articulation and legitimation of Arab media policy in: Qatar (see her book chapters on Al-Jazeera in Paterson & Sreberny-Mohammadi eds 2004, Zayani ed 2005, Chalaby ed 2005, Thussu ed 2006); Saudi Arabia (see her March 2005 paper on 'Media Policy as a Litmus Test of Political Change in the GCC' at the 6th Mediterranean Research Meeting of European University Institute, Florence, chapter with same title in Khalaf and Luciani eds 2006, pp 132-157, and article in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35/3 Dec 2008 pp 385-404); and Iraq (see *Mediterranean Politics* article listed below). (Available on Request)
3. Sakr, Naomi. "Foreign Support for Media Freedom Advocacy in the Arab Mediterranean: Globalization from Above or Below?", 2006. *Mediterranean Politics*, 11/1, Mar, pp 1-20. Entered for RAE 2008. DOI: 10.1080/13629390500490361. Based on research entitled 'Media Pluralism, Civic Engagement and Foreign Development Assistance for Arab Media: A Reappraisal', presented at Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) annual conference in Washington on 22 Nov 2005.
4. Sakr, Naomi. *Arab Television Today*, 2007. London: I B Tauris, ISBN 978-1-84511-564-7 (Pb). Entered for RAE 2008. Reviewed in *European Journal of Communication* (Dec 2008, 23, pp 528-30); referenced in *Sociology Compass* 2/5 (2008); covered in *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Quds al-Arabi*. The book drew on six years of interviews, conversations and participant observation in centres of Arab media production, e.g. Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Dubai and Doha, and at gatherings of Arab media practitioners, policy makers and other professionals in Abu Dhabi, Alexandria, Berlin, Cambridge, Copenhagen, Paris, Ramallah, Sharjah, Tangiers and Washington. (Available on Request).
5. Sakr, Naomi. "Diversity and Diaspora: Arab Communities and Satellite Communication in Europe", 2008. *Global Media and Communication*, 4 (3). pp. 277-300. ISSN 1742-7665 (DOI 10.1177/1742766508096082) Presented at the European Satellite Cultures conference hosted by Copenhagen Business School in May 2006, this research underpinned Sakr's participation in Prof. Tristan Mattelart's 2009-12 research network on Media and Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region funded by the French National Research Agency. The article was distributed to network members.
6. Sakr, Naomi. "'Enriching or Impoverishing Discourse on Rights? Talk about Freedom of Expression on Arab Television", *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication (MEJCC)*, 3/1, 2010, pp 108-127 (DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/187398609X12584657078240>). This was a shortened version of a paper presented at a workshop entitled 'Dynamics of Development in Arab Broadcasting, co-directed by Sakr with Prof. M. Ayish of Sharjah University in the UAE as part of the European University Institute's 9th Mediterranean Research Meeting near Florence in March 2008, for which the workshop proposal itself and subsequent workshop papers were selected through a process of peer review and gave rise to a themed issue of *MEJCC*, containing seven articles written or guest-edited by Sakr and Ayish.

4. Details of the impact

4.1 UN agencies (UNDP-RBAS, UNESCO) and Anna Lindh Foundation

Sakr's research has influenced policy debate about Arab media development by informing reports that were designed as tools for raising awareness among policy makers and the public at large, and stimulating new thinking.

- UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP-RBAS) commissioned Sakr in May 2008 to write a 50-page background paper on "The Impact of Media Laws on Arab Digital and Print Content" for the *Arab Knowledge Report 2009*. The report's Chapter 2, on 'Democratic Governance for Human Development', cited Sakr's paper four times (pp 65-66) in relation to

restrictions on internet use, newspaper ownership and self-censorship's detrimental effect on innovation. Ch 2 underpinned the report's 'vision' and 'plan', which urged Arab governments to reform their media as part of political and institutional reform (pp 220-221).

- UNESCO's 2013 *Full Assessment of Media Development in Egypt*, which maps Egypt's media development needs for the benefit of local state, corporate and civil society stakeholders seeking guidance on media sector reform priorities, was revised to incorporate peer review comments commissioned from Sakr, notably in relation to monopoly issues, journalists' safety and the accountability of state bodies. Sakr was invited to comment on the revised report at a 'validation' meeting opened by Egypt's Minister of Information in Cairo on 7 March 2013.
- Sakr was recruited by the Executive Director of the 43-member intergovernmental Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to: sit on the editorial/'scientific' committee for the Foundation's *Report on Euro-Med Intercultural Trends 2010*; coordinate the report's media component; and write an overview chapter on media openness to intercultural dialogue between Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Sakr advised on media questions (July 2009) for the Gallup opinion poll conducted for the report and helped present report findings to the press and public in Madrid (May 2010), Barcelona (July 2010) and London (December 2010). News media covered the report's findings about misperceptions between different groups in the Euro-Med region as pointers for Europe to engage more productively with its southern and eastern neighbours.

4.2 Media Diversity Institute (MDI), London, and Institut Panos Paris (IPP)

Sakr's research has informed overseas outreach and human rights education by two NGOs.

- Sakr was engaged by the Executive Director of London-based MDI to take part in its 'Reporting Diversity' Curriculum Development programmes, which give Arab academics the opportunity under MDI mentoring to design new modules promoting inclusive and responsible reporting for journalism students. Her template for a human rights module for journalists, first presented at two pilot workshops in Cairo in November 2007, became a fixture from 2009 in MDI workshops in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon, as practical testimony that minorities' and marginalised groups' right to freedom from discriminatory reporting is basic to human rights. Through her mentoring of four academics in Egypt in 2009, three in Morocco in 2010 and three in Egypt 2012-13, Sakr contributed to the introduction of Reporting Diversity modules designed by mentees at Cairo University Faculty of Mass Communication, Al-Azhar University in Egypt and ISIC in Morocco.
- IPP sought and took Sakr's advice on building its project team when setting up its project on Public Service Broadcasting in the MENA Region in 2009. IPP's Director General also asked her in 2011 to write an introductory chapter on public service broadcasting and democratisation for the project's published report, which provides Arab decision-makers, media professionals and NGOs with facts, figures and recommendations conducive to reform of public broadcasting in support of democratisation and freedom of expression. Sakr was one of four panellists in IPP's public debate in Marseille on 25 Nov 2012 (aired live by Radio Gazelle and Gazelle TV) on 'The Possibility of an Arab Media Spring', and addressed a public audience in Beirut on 25 Jan 2013 as part of the Lebanese American University's launch of the IPP report.

4.3 International Media Support (IMS), Copenhagen

Sakr's research fed into two periodic evaluations of IMS projects carried out under the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme and informed its subsequent programmes. IMS, 90% funded by the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian governments, supports free media as part of democratisation.

- In July 2008 the IMS Programme Officer, prompted by a colleague who had read Sakr's book *Arab Television Today*, invited her to join a 4-person team, led by Development Associates of Copenhagen, to evaluate IMS's performance in the Middle East during 2007-09 and present findings to IMS and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen in March 2009. Sakr was assigned to focus on IMS collaborations with journalists' unions and public broadcasters, its gender policy, its strategic choices for targeting assistance, and the impact of IMS projects. In 2012 IMS invited Sakr to join the Evaluation Reference Group, coordinated by the Evaluation Department of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to comment on a further evaluation, including at a meeting in Cairo on 4 Feb 2013.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1.1 UN agencies and Anna Lindh Foundation: REPORTS IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

- UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States and Al Maktoum Foundation, *Arab Knowledge Report 2009: Towards Productive Intercommunication for Knowledge*, Dubai 2009. See page v (under Authors of Background Papers) and p 252 (Annex 1: List of Background Papers). <http://www.undp.org/content/ahdr/en/home/resources/knowledge-reports/akr-2009/>
- UNESCO *Assessment of Media Development in Egypt*, 2013, p.2 and <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002207/220742E.pdf>, and UNESCO press release 30 March 2013 http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/cairo_workshop_discusses_unescos_assessment_of_media_development_in_egyp_t_in_cairo/#.UluqJ1Rwa1t
- Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation (ed) *Euromed Intercultural Trends 2010: The Anna Lindh Report*, Alexandria: ALF International Secretariat, 2010, ISBN 977-17-9378-0, pp. 3 and 90-95; <http://www.euromedalex.org/trends/report/2010/media-intercultural-perceptions-euro-mediterranean-region-naomi-sakr>

5.1.2 CORROBORATION - Letters available on request from HEI

- *Letter of Corroboration* from Founding Director, Access to Knowledge for Development Center, School of Business, AUC, Egypt & member of Core Team behind UNDP *Arab Knowledge Report 2009*.
- *Letter of Corroboration* from Executive Director, Anna Lindh Foundation, Alexandria, Egypt

5.2.1 MDI, London, and IPP, Paris: REPORTS IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

- 'Egyptian academics develop Reporting Diversity curricula with Media Diversity Institute support', 2009, http://www.media-diversity.org/mdi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=891&catid=15:mdi-news&Itemid=33
- 'MDI launches diversity teaching initiative for Egyptian journalism', 2012, http://www.media-diversity.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2092&catid=15:mdi-news&Itemid=33
- IPP and Mediterranean Observatory of Communication, *Public Service Broadcasting in the MENA Region: Potential for Reform*, Paris/ Barcelona 2012. See http://omec.uab.cat/Documentos/PSB_Brochure_160x240_EN-bd.pdf and <http://iwsaw.lau.edu.lb/publications/documents/PSB-Book.pdf> and http://www.panosparis.org/IMG/pdf/Version_synthetique_du_rapport_Fr.pdf
- IPP: 'Un printemps médiatique arabe: est-il possible?' Recording of public debate in Marseille http://www.panosparis.org/spip.php?page=document&id_article=977

5.2.2. CORROBORATION – Letters available on request from HEI

- *Letter of Corroboration* from Executive Director, Media Diversity Institute, London
- *Letter of Corroboration* from Programme Officer, Institut Panos, Paris

5.3.1 IMS, Copenhagen: CONFIDENTIAL INTERNAL REPORT :

- Development Associates, *Review of International Media Support's Media Cooperation Programme with the Arab World and Iran (2007-09)*, Evaluation team identified p 6

5.3.2 CORROBORATION – Letters available on request from HEI

- *Letter of Corroboration* from Executive Director, International Media Support, Copenhagen