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## **The Crossing Roads of Egypt: An Avenue of Participation Crucifies the Stagnation Development.**

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## **Introduction:**

Egypt is currently witnessing a serious of crossing roads stage in its contemporary times. The Egyptian media and political arena are clustered into two categories: the hard-liners, or the old guards refusing to yield change or any restructuring, namely the autocrats on the one hand. And the new wave of development, under the auspices of the Gamal Mubarak, who is more, inclined to compromise on the other hand. The rhetoric function of the news media depicts the events as a confrontation between “the other and us” that emphasize the main claim of the "attribution theory" by Richard Eiser. It denotes that people tend to attribute their own failures to external situational causes, while the failures of others to internal disposition causes (Michael Gurevitch, American Behavioral Scientist, Vol.33, No.2, November /December 1989, p.221-229).

Since 1952 coup de' et'at, the Egyptian progressive community has been deeply divided between anti-interventions and humanitarian interventions. Public opinion is a major source of power in the decision making process and in contributing to the legitimacy of the state, as well as adding to the social capital of the nation by enhancing the communication richness of the public opinion apparatus. In the political process, news discourse is carefully constructed to satisfy both politicians and interest groups in an increasingly provocative approach to amplify their views. It makes news discourse conceived as a socio-cognitive process involving all three players: information sources, media personnel and audience members operating in the universe of shared culture on the basis of socially defined roles.

A new vocabulary has sprung up in media reporting and has accused news reporting to be "impartial" and has magnified the military, economic and political imbalance between the advocates of development and contenders of the old guards. The most dangerous term of all, is the term "economic and security measures" to justify the actions executed against one another. The hard-liners use the pretext of the “state of emergency”, or a "state of war" to justify the current state of conversion that the Middle East and Egypt are experiencing. The official governmental media context avoids discussing its nature and even denies the notion of panic news, or the status of the rebels. Hence, the litmus test of the contemporary Egyptian journalism must consider the independent news media to be free and democratic.

In this context, there is a crucial need to analyze the Egyptian news media, by adopting a critical study to assess its geo-political map. There is also a great urge to conduct both structured and unstructured interviews with foreign and Egyptian news media and political experts to unveil the truth about the content, contest and context. February 27, 2000 marked the

issuance of the Decree 411 that allowed a revolutionary conversion from state-controlled into market-based media. Such bold decision rang a bell on the validity of applying the market mechanism, with all its sociopolitical and economic requirements, within the integrated political economy.

The foci of this paper are to highlight the mutual dependency between this vibrant sector of political communication and the whole national system in realizing the integrated political economy. The Egyptian milieu can only be perceived through the comprehensive assessment of the repercussion of the prevailing socio-political and economic criteria and policies that typically arise when the governments expand disproportionately. It also underlines the confusion and growing complexities associated with substituting a free market for the idle administrative structure based on complete government intervention. At the present times, there is a pressing need for transcending the empty slogans as well as the increasingly unfruitful market-versus-government debate to explore the promising new tools of creating mixed models. Priority should be given to enhancing the two concepts of civil society and civic discourse as a means of description of the Middle Eastern media status and prescription for its deep-rooted illnesses.

It was essential to adopt an interdisciplinary approach so as to assimilate the extensive data relevant to this topic. This approach rests upon the interrelationships between the media, especially broadcasting as we are living in a "TV culture" as Jacques De Laure (1999) asserts, and three main parallel dimensions: politics, culture and economy. Hence, it is impossible to study and analyze the prospects and concerns of redefining the Egyptian media system that indulges private, public, commercial and government-controlled media, without discussing these settings, as they are part and parcel of the new media order, on both the micro and macro levels. It is believed that the Social Responsibility Theory is the best suited for Egypt. For, it is the only way to accommodate this theory, in conjunction with the proposed market-based model, to the Egyptian milieu is through the reassessment of the whole media platform to develop a new cohesive system that adopts transparency and multiplicity, while retaining the local identity.

The Egyptian media is manipulated by the official regimes, and they are still controlled by obvious state intervention in spite of the current development of media strategies and the contemporary extension of the margin of freedom. The media agenda is set in advance. The accomplishments of the governments are favored and placed in the forefront of the news while other important issues are marginalized. This has been experienced under the umbrella of the so-called protocol news phenomenon, which in turn faces a harsh state of recession due to their lack of appropriate managerial strategies and manpower investment policies. They are also characterized with the lack of objectivity and reliability, absence of journalistic skills and reporting potentials as well as distortion of information and self-censorship. Besides, they have

misconceived the technological advances and excessively used political propaganda with no consideration for the needs of the audience.

Such flaws are the result of both external and internal factors -- cultural, bureaucratic, educational, legal and political -- besides numerous economic and ideological forces that have created general dissatisfaction among the public (Meyrowitz, 1996). Public broadcasting is certainly losing its grounds due to its financial loss that may have severe repercussions on the whole economic domain, especially with the lack of political democracy. And privatization has become a synonym of the transformation induced by globalization, as a recent study by Earnest and Young ranks countries according to the degree to which their progress correlates with the privatization of their media (Howell, 1994).

To this end, a comprehensive vertical and horizontal study of the situation in Egypt must be developed hand in hand with a micro and macro analysis through a future study approach. Both deductive and inductive approaches are to be used in the assessment in an attempt to offer a description of and prescription for the status and the endemic deficiencies of our systems. It was essential to adopt an interdisciplinary approach so as to assimilate the extensive data relevant to this topic. It is impossible to study and analyze the prospects and concerns of the current crossing roads in Egypt, and whether it is a beginning of an avenue of participation, or a crucifixion of any development? However, there are two major difficulties encountered in this process. One is the absence of extensive literature reviews or any previous sources except for the official studies undertaken by the Ministries of Information. The other is the fact that the data are subject to day-to-day changes and modifications.

## **II. Statement of the Problem & Purpose of the Study:**

The development journalism in Egypt has experienced an un-precedent aggressive coverage of the former intact Government that has marked the news media arena with phenomenal footsteps into transparent journalism. Such coverage contains clues, facts and documents and not just the typical intangible accusations and judgements leading to a collective societal distrust and (hesi-nao: cognitive restructuring) of the media and political, as well as losing identity and political diversion and agitation.

Such negative implications have initiated positive repercussions, by steering up the stagnant public opinion climate, especially among the well-educated strata. Because, this evolving dynamism has affected the long-term social trends and enhanced government criticism of losing transparency, excessive impotency and mal-management and intentional distortion of information as well as monopoly of sourcing. As for the short-term effect, it is clear that there is a growing public awareness concerning the rights and obligations of the individuals.

The Egyptian State has become a stipulating factor in making the public perceive the situation as a real conspiracy theory, by doping news and subduing truth into carefully tailored conclusions. But, the term 'conspiracy' should not be overused, lest confusion prevail, for the international and regional decisions were made on the basis of the need to realize that such “conspiracies” exhaust both the government and the public. The biggest problem with conspiracy theories is that they keep us not only from the truth but also from confronting our faults and problems.

The purpose of this research is not to issue a generalized bill of indictment to the Egyptian media. The basic concern raises the issue about the wholehearted submission of the official media to their governing bodies.

1. It attempts to explore the reciprocal impact between the political and ideological dimensions and the news media coverage that shape the public opinion climate, dynamism and social capital.
2. It aims to highlight the nature of the “Competitive Symbiosis” concept between the old guards and Adventists that not only affects the perception process, but also directs its attitude towards the public opinion formation.
3. It attempts to delve under skin in the mechanism of the intra-attitudinal structuring of the socio-political institutions; namely the government and the socialist guilds that monitors and directs the public opinion in Egypt.

## **The Theoretical Framework of an Avenue of Participation:**

The researcher recommends the implementation of mixed media models after carefully studying their potential interrelationships. Similarly, broadcasting represents one facet of the media systems. Its liberation is basically highlighted on account of the global trends towards its privatization. Moreover, it represents the most reliable and popular medium that is available to almost all-social strata. However, it is meant to symbolize the media in general. Likewise, the media represent just one entity of the societal institutions though they are considered indispensable pillars. Hence, the aspired sound reconstruction of the former, on the micro scale, is to be generalized to the latter, on the macro scale.

The long-standing doctrine of monopolistic public broadcasting has led to some negative consequentialities. A notable one is the lack of reliable material that can be used for analyzing the status quo and considering the potential of any likely change. This created a situation in which any sort of privatization was, for a long time in our communities, somewhat

considered a deviation from the official national solidarity and treason to the principles of nationalization. However, the privatization policy sweeping the world urged attempting a shift of policy. It revealed the compelling need for treading what was considered before taboo areas.

In the light of such current attempts at transformation and reform, what are the prospects of adopting the policy of market-based economy and implementing private broadcasting in Egypt? Should it still be viewed with the concern of what the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1993) described as the "the trepidation of a man approaching a well-planted minefield" (as cited in Sabry, 2002, p. 88)?

Such questions necessitate the consideration of four important issues: (1) the level of political control and, accordingly, the sociopolitical influence over mobilizing or blocking any potential media structures; (2) the mediating factors that play a decisive role over time, space and circumstances in setting the agenda; (3) the potential success and/or failure of any system with regard to access and meaning (the media frame); (4) the degree of conformity of any suggested media system to the principles of the market-based economy or its deviance from meeting the cultural expectations and the stipulations of the code of ethics?

It is important to consider this state of conversion, or the bottle neck of crossing roads that Egypt is currently experiencing in the light of the different socio-political and economic settings, as well as their associated operating principles. The typical impediments of bureaucracy in Egypt and the lack of market research on the needs of the audiences are to be reconsidered. They should be substituted with notions of democracy and principles of civil society, developed within a globally integrated sociopolitical economy. At the same time, addressing the issues of the emerging simulacra – i.e. the development of non-local identities resembling western models at the expense of the diminishing local identities – and the need for retaining and maintaining our cultural heritage has become a matter of great urgency.

Law 13 of 1979 (modified by Law 223 of 1989) was not cancelled by the issuing of Decree 411 of 2000 allowing private broadcasting. The former enforced the monopoly of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU) over broadcasting; however, the latter does not entail a total conversion from the government-controlled media system to the newly born private ones. Hence, Egypt should deal with private broadcasting restructuring as part of a democratic diversified cultural system that aims to establish civil society and to maintain the transparency needed for public opinion. It is a basic ingredient of the democratic social order that was officially ratified by the Bill of Rights of 1776 in the United States. Hence, the passage of broadcasting from the system of feudal economy to free enterprise capitalism is an absolute necessity for its ultimate survival. It makes Egypt has no option but to begin their task of transforming their economies, enhancing their communication infrastructures and developing their educational systems to meet the demands of the new media structure. Moreover, antiquated government policies such as quasi-socialism must be abandoned.

Deetz (1992) maintains that there is "a connection between [the] concepts of communication and the advancement of participatory democracy" (p. 9). In this global age, communication has the dual goal of promoting further public participation in decision-making and sound effective presentation of the low and middle social classes on the media map. It is an attempt to reflect the vox populi and realize the notion of civic discourse. Communication must be the underlying basis of democracy through the realization of the concept of glasnost (i.e. openness or political diversity and transparency) that was advocated by Michael Gorbachuv in 1985.

### **The 3Cs of the contemporary crossing roads in Egypt:**

This paper attempts to unleash the mechanism of the media apparatus and its causality with democratization to understand what it says when it says things, in an effort to make all of this transparent to our view and understanding. The problem involves the fact that all of society's power centers are, in their essence, producers of media, and all obey some variation on the same dynamics. Ironically, the Egyptian constitution still stipulates that Egypt is a socialist Democratic country, one in which the public sector leads the process of economic development.

Mubarak still rules out any drastic constitutional reform, stating that he was not going to create destabilization gaps in his country and said that any change should be reasonable "to maintain stability." Mubarak associates long overdue political reforms with instability, a view that ultimately fosters stagnation. The Egyptian media must consider adopting a managerial ideology that would further conceal corporate control. Nevertheless, some media experts still feel suspicious about such vast reforms or wide-reaching programs would merely establish a new

hegemony. It is ambiguous to understand why the promotion and execution of the integrated political economy, on the micro or macro levels, gained volatile momentum in Egypt, while being pragmatically behind schedule. Moreover, the socio-economic and political systems do not mature or collapse in a vacuum but rather through a mechanism of profit making and political freedom.

The status of Egyptian media can only be evaluated vis à vis the triangle of the (3cs) of the new media order, namely context, contest and content. It also highlights the associated mediating factors and the repercussions of demolishing the notion of social capital. It foreshadows the pressing need of desegregating the typical government-controlled and private owned systems for creating mixed models.

Firstly, context refers to the whole media system including the sociopolitical and economic dimensions. It denotes the sets of mutually sustained schemas and resources that empower or constrain social action. To put it more clearly, it implies the rules of the game in the media field. Secondly, the concept of contest indicates the competitive symbiosis or the interrelationships between the different media players within a particular society on both the micro and macro levels. This notion comes into play at the structural physical levels of media access and the functional levels of media frames and content. It underlies the inter- and intra-attitudinal perception and realization of the targets and goals of such media while expending the least costs and incurring minimum losses. Lastly, the content aspect implies the logistic and geographic milieu of the available media taken from a transactional standpoint. It designates the relationship between the citizen and society, hence defining the cultural discourse and providing the catalogue elements, packages and symbolic devices as persistent patterns of cognition. In simpler terms, content implies the direct significance of the issue of privatization and its embedded relevance to our context.

The Egyptian presidents have always adopted persistent attempts of resistance to change and to stop any political evolution. However, culture is a dynamic social unity that makes change indispensable, but this totalitarian refusal to dispense with power as this entails giving away the economic resources per se. This regretful stagnation could be dealt with in reference to what the Theorist Mike Cormack suggests that, Ideology is concerned with how we as individuals understand the world in which we live, our individual psychology, and our social structures. Our contemporary systems of mass media are a perfect method of delivery for ideology, as individuals absorb enormous amounts of information, the amount of which is continuously increasing, often oblivious to the underlying messages and consequent effects it has on them. Proverbially, ideology is a good servant, but a bad master. But the scientific renaissance at the beginning of this century de-emphasized the persuasive arts.

Furthermore, Egypt not only lacks a good database of capable public servants due to the lack of political channels and institutions, but rather due to the absence of a "database." The



Egyptian P.M, Dr. Atef Ebeid announced that one of his priorities is to prepare a second and a third line of officials "who would be able to lead later on." As he stated, the criteria are academic qualifications, knowledge of foreign languages, a good grasp of foreign affairs, and ambition! There is no evidence that any of the fired ministers lacked these characteristics. Outgoing Prime Minister Kamal Al-Ganzouri reportedly lost his position due to political infighting within the cabinet and strong criticism from the increasingly influential business elite, who was annoyed by his ambivalent attitude towards privatization.

In addition to the military establishment and the business elite, other legal political forces in Egypt are largely formal and devoid of any influence. Even the majority party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), does not really represent any discernible socio-economic group in Egypt. Most of the new ministers are technocrats who hold no partisan background. The majority of ministers in 10 cabinets formed by Mubarak since 1981 were not initially NDP members. The fact is that almost all of the new ministers, are technocrats reveal the Egyptian holes in the political system, though the country returned to multi-party democracy.

The Egyptian press remains one of the most influential and widely read in the Arab world, and citizens are generally able to speak their views on a wide range of political and social topics. Opposition papers, in particular, often criticize government officials and policies. But the Egyptian media also operate under several formal restrictions. Editors and journalists often censor themselves on certain sensitive issues involving the president, the army, high-level officials, security forces, and human rights abuses. However, Egypt remains under a state of emergency since the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat. This permits authorities to try journalists and others in state security courts and military-style tribunals, where decisions cannot be appealed. Between 1998 and 2000, six journalists were jailed for libel and other criminal offenses related to their work.

This trend continued in 2001 with the arrest and detention of Mamdouh Mahran, editor of the tabloids Al-Nabaa and Akher Khabar, after he published an article and photographs alleging that a Coptic monk was engaging in sexual activity with women in a monastery. Mahran was charged with "propagating false information with the aim of inciting sectarian strife and insulting a heavenly religion," and was sentenced to three years in prison. Both papers lost their licenses. While the Mahran case has received the most coverage both in Egypt and abroad, several other cases were brought against journalists in 2001. On April 29, Mohamed Abu Liwaya of al Shaab was sentenced to one month in prison and a fine for libeling two senior press officials. And in May, Saad-eddin Ibrahim, a well-known Civil rights activist was sentenced to seven years for defaming Egypt in his reports. Both sentences included hard labor.

Although, the Egyptian constitution guarantees freedom of expression and speech, the state continues to employ several laws related to the ongoing state of emergency in the North African country. In addition to criminalizing libel and defamation, according to the International

Press Institute, the Egyptian constitution “terrorizes people who voice opinions perceived as dangerous to the state’s interests.”

The Penal Code, Press Law, and Publications law are the three main pieces of legislation used to govern Egyptian media. The Penal Code stipulates fines and/or imprisonment for criticizing the president, members of the government, and foreign heads of state. Both the Press and Publications law are intended to provide protection against malicious or unsubstantiated reporting, but have been used to charge journalists with libel or defamation. Besides, the media laws have undergone several changes in recent years and financial penalties under the Press and Publications laws were increased in 1996 after certain provisions of the Penal Code were revised. In 1997, the Supreme Constitutional Court declared Article 195 of the Penal Code unconstitutional, which formerly held editors criminally responsible for any libel contained in any portion of the paper.

The Egyptian law also gives the Public Prosecutor the authority to issue a temporary ban on the publication of news pertaining to cases involving national security. The law also stipulates penalties for individuals who disclose information about the state during emergencies, which include war and natural disasters. The Ministry of the Interior also has the authority, which it occasionally invokes, to prevent specific issues of foreign-published newspapers from entering the country on the grounds of protecting public order. The Ministry of Defense can ban works on sensitive security issues, and the Council of Ministers can ban works it deems offensive to public morals, detrimental to religion, or likely to cause a breach of peace.

In March 2001, Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni sent a bill to Parliament in an attempt to amend the Public Records Law. If it was passed, anyone caught publishing or photocopying a government document without prior written consent from the Cabinet could be sentenced to five years in prison and a fine of 10, 000 Egyptian pounds. Fortunately, it did not, but the threat of implementing these new restrictions remains.

The Egyptian president is entitled to appoint the editors-in-chief for the state-controlled papers, who generally follow the government line, and only occasionally criticizing government policies. The government also holds a monopoly on the printing and distribution of newspapers, including those produced by opposition parties, which it has used to control the output of newsprint to certain publications. The opposition parties publish their own newspapers, but also receive a direct subsidy from the government and in some cases, from foreign interests. Most opposition papers are published weekly, except al-Wafd and al-Ahrar, which have small daily circulation. All party papers are required by law to reflect the party platform, but they provide greater coverage of human rights abuses than their state-run counterparts.

Government restrictions make it very difficult for privately owned newspapers to obtain licenses. Some journalists register their papers as foreign publications in countries like Cyprus, and then print them inside Egypt, in the “Free Investment Zone” in Nasser City, or abroad. Unlike the state or opposition press, these publications are subject to advance censorship, and the information minister can seize any particular issue, even withdrawing its authorization to be printed or distributed. Several topics are prohibited from being published, including relations between Copts and Muslims, the spread of terrorist doctrines, and the presentation of modern interpretations of Islam.

The situation is cloned in the broadcasting business because the government rigidly controls and censors the broadcast media in Egypt. The Ministry of Information owns and operates all domestic television and radio stations in the country through the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), while Egypt allowed private transnational channels with the issuance of Decree 411 on February 27<sup>th</sup> 2000. Besides, the government does not block reception of foreign channels via satellite, but the percentage of the Egyptian citizens who own satellite receivers is very small not exceeding 6-8%. The Egyptian government estimates that there are approximately 1 million Internet subscribers and 50 Internet service providers in the country. The state does not restrict Internet use and does not monitor Internet activity, although the United States Department of State believes there may be some monitoring by local law enforcement officials.

The last few years have brought some startling concepts and far-fetched ideologies into being and implementation with the third world countries, especially within the Middle East. The immediacy of the events has certainly raised queries about the actual role of the media in stipulating democracy.

Most of us have in our minds vague association between democracy and the extent of media development and the available margin of freedom. Hence, the development of the communication media and access to them, has been a highly uneven process, not only between the third world nations but also within them between affluent and poor, urban and rural. But the question remains concerning its implication on the democratization process.

It is important to note that democratization as a process has begun within regimes that are not undemocratic but often extremely repressive. It is most unlikely that independent media have flourished, without presuming the impact of the Noelle-Neumann’s “Spiral of Silence” that depicts media as an instrument for the virtual elimination. One explanation to this approach is the realization that severity of repression might suggest that authoritarian governments recognized the subversive potential of the media. However, it would appear that despite the state repression’s some sections of the indigenous media have helped to maintain a critical tradition, to posit alternative values and thus to call into question the omniscience and the legitimacy of the incumbent regime.

Undoubtedly, the mass media are the motive force in the so called “revolution of rising expectations” in fighting and confronting what the third world leaders attempts to impose their own “political imaginary” upon their people through a monopolistic control of the mass media. Hence, mass media have played a triggering role, in a situation in which popular protest or opposition demands were already to mount and widen awareness of issues and help some kind of frame or events. It could even accelerate public opinion in initiating democratization by deepening political communication.

International media assumes that the greatest relevance to this process of democratization that influences what Samuel Huntington called as “third wave of democracy”. It includes a number of mediating factors such as the increased regime legitimacy problems, economic difficulties, expansion of the urban middle class and changing in the policies of the external players that took the mechanism of snow balling. This simulacrum motto of mass media creates forms of fiction and nonfiction, through the manipulation of the psychological acts of identification and "misidentification" in the cognitive state of our audiences. The forms of evoked identification are primal responses that we all have to each other all the time, based on the characteristics we would like to have and perceive as like ourselves that manifests our behaviors. These acts of identification take a basic form: we react as they react or as we think they will react, in our emotions and many of our thoughts.

These primal acts of identification and misidentification are also bound up with acts of credit and discredit. We tend to credit those we identify with and identify with those we credit. And those who trespass on the rights of those we identify with evoke our hate, our misidentification and are discredited in our eyes.

Indeed, the very act of perceiving a person or character (or groups of person or characters) to be trespassing on another's rights can cause us to identify with the victim. Much of this is based on primal, narcissistic, perceptions of the boundaries of the self, as these perceptions are shaped by culture. Political influentials and news media communicators intuitively understand that all of this is based on the emotionally and drive saturated cognitive schemas that make up their own minds. They use this, often tacit, knowledge to manipulate and influence their audiences. Storytellers and politicians want us to be drawn into their worldview, to see the world through the eyes of the story. In a sense, they become parents we identify with; and, in a sense, we internalize their view of things by seeing events through their stories. Politicians give speeches that "demonize" opponents, to accomplish the same thing. All are busy creating a world full of "us" and them" in which "we" are good and they are bad.

It is ironic that journalists, who place so much emphasis on the ethical lapses of those they cover, are themselves so prone to sadism, insensitivity and feelings of grandiosity. Journalists are spectators by profession, who usually stand off to the side, at a remove from the hope and suffering that makes up the events they cover. From their unique perch, they are expected to

capture the essence of things in news stories, so the audience can view the world from the same perspective. Inevitably, they end up exploiting those they cover. The world and all its suffering become the raw material for their creations.

Every catastrophe and every victory for someone else provides an equal opportunity for them to succeed and win acclaim. However, they process and filter real events, creating a distorted reflection that condenses the drama and pain of life into a form of entertainment or at least a product that is entertaining. This unreality then has a profound impact on real events. It changes reality and, in its distorted way, records the change.

The ability to affect events without being affected and, in particular, the ability to cause pain without being touched by it, creates conditions that can encourage sadism, insensitivity and grandiosity. Reporters make and break politicians. They portray their subjects as heroes and scoundrels, and remain unaffected. But these may feel like life and death issues to the politician, who never knows when he will suffer profound damage and humiliation, and when he will wake up to discover that his opponent has been savaged and he, through no grace of his own, has won a battle. An air of unreality can pervade their work, as if they are playing a game with words and images and ideas. They lose touch with the fact that real people are fighting for real stakes, particularly when they withdraw from face-to-face encounters, back to the newsroom or studio, where they must create a news story.

These pathological behaviors are counterbalanced by moral desires experienced by the journalist and by conflicts and constraints created by society and the job in complex ways. News media is forced to stand on the sidelines, as he or she covers events. The actions of the politician are the raw material for his narratives.

But the same politician often controls and withholds the very information the reporter needs to create his product. Unlike fiction, real characters resist the author's intentions and try to control how they are portrayed. The moment that the news media wrests some of this commodity - information - and publicizes it, the game changes and the center of action suddenly moves to the journalist's sidelines. Suddenly, the news organization, is a player, a worthy adversary respected not only by other journalists, but also by other political players and the public. In their perch at the top of the decision-making chain, politicians are able to make decisions that alter the lives of people they may never meet, creating a breeding ground for sensational media. However, political leaders in power and on stage, develop a feeling of grandiose. Their position encourages them to feel invulnerable and it brings out a desire to exhibit themselves to an admiring public. And yet the politician is excluded from what he needs most to achieve his ends – the news media.

The audience sees the world through the eyes of news media, at a remove, allowing it to mock and take pleasure from, or be insensitive to, the suffering of others. The packaging of news stories may, by its very nature, encourage these reactions because it captures an essence and yet

robs events of their reality. It makes everything neat when it isn't. It summarizes events that are sprawled out in time and space, reduces suffering and danger to bite-sized moments and then swoops over to another scene, allowing the audience to glide effortlessly over events that really have great weight. Audiences can sit impassively watching scenes of war and devastation, because the events in question are far away (unobtrusive), the portrayal is safely contained and censored, and so well packaged that it often seems not quite real.

However, the public discontent with the already established structures stipulated a reformist convergence to initiate a restructuring development for the attainment of societal, economic and political welfare. Improvements and restructuring in the Egyptian media arena must go hand in hand with the removal of the old idle public systems that have been immobilized by censorship and bureaucratic administration. Liberalizing broadcasting regulations would be a good point to start with. Ensuring autonomous media management should be given top priority in public broadcasting networks, which should be associated with new private media entities to allow future private sector manipulation.

Jackson and Mosco (1999) maintain that commerce is inherently an information-based progressive activity. Hence, in recent years, broadcasting investment has been initiated due to its high financial returns. It cannot attain its utmost potential, however, unless it is freed from both the economic and political constraints. Accordingly, broadcasting must undergo a transition into transparency and promotion of public participation. This requires adequate financing to attain independence besides removing censorship as well as all the barriers impeding the freedom of expression (Downing, Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 1995).

The Egyptian rules of the political communication game are still kept hidden and undeclared for a long period of time. However, they are always centered on treating government officials and businesses with cautious deference. This entails a form of self-censorship and creates a sort of subjective media supportive of the social and political norms. The transnational broadcasting race has no place for detached countries or limited strategies since profit, economic revenue and political freedom are the unwritten rules of the game. Certainly, it broke the long established link between the concepts of "where we are" and "what we can see". Instead, it stimulated the notion of "who knows what compared to whom" (Merowitz, 1996).

The process of internationalization promoted an everlasting contest residing in the combat and struggle between the different media players within the new integrated political economy with a clear devastating western impact. The context of the Egyptian media in such emerging world involves close interrelationships between media and politics. The challenge that still faces up any development is the invasion of the western neo-imperialistic trends, i.e. the excessive global orientation schemes and the implementation of the matrix indoctrination. William James remarks that we are living in a phase characterized by friction. He adds that human culture is largely the selection, rearrangement and tracing of patterns and their stylization.

The audiences become ready for the matrix when a triangular relationship between the scene of action, human picture of the scene and human response to such scene works itself out and develops (as cited in Lippmann, 1997).

Under these conditions, people in Egypt like the rest of the Middle Eastern region assimilate cognitive biases that distort their conclusions about the world. Hence, they unconsciously jump to conclusions and engage in wishful thinking about the western ideology. Accordingly, they detach themselves from their reality and become subject to manipulation by the western media messages, thus turning into lazy processors misperceiving the messages and adopting irrational reactions. The required "convergence of modes" puts the different communication laws into conflict (Brand, 1988). There should be an actual transformation from the former authoritarian patterns to more democratic ones and from the centrally planned economies to market-oriented forms.

Hamilton (1969) asserts, "states must provide the basic levels of public services in order to facilitate participation in the liberal economic project, which is reborn in virtual space with the promise of a new nirvana" (p. 333). This nirvana refers to private broadcasting which is associated, to a large extent, with the power of pleasure, entertainment as well as profit-based time sold through the media and stored in distinguished forms or packages of media frames (Mascaro, 1995).

The rise of privatization in Egypt marks the decline of the former nation-state concept. It represents a return of the city-state notion -- the latest creation of the capitalist market expansion and the liberal fantasies of "beneficent" capitalism. Therefore, Egypt as an emerging market can gain momentum only with the improvement of the means of communication, as there is no virtual aspect of economic and social development that is not interacting with private broadcasting. In his article in Rosal Youssef, A. Kamal (2000, February 11) states that this vertical growth has not been accompanied with deep regional cooperation. There is a basic need for a balanced mixed system incorporating both centralized and decentralized elements. However, free markets and liberal democratic systems must remain under the ultimate control of the community rationale while considering the cost-effective policies of the individuals' interests.

The early organizers, change agents, influentials and decision-makers in Egypt, or the government should act as active policemen in providing "positive liberty", as suggested by Paul Murphy (1972). Through being mutually supportive, they should endeavor establishing and preserving a well-structured media system that enhances civic discourse while respecting culture expectations and conforming to the code of ethics. In fact, Jones (1995) asserts that there is an

interrelationship of mutual dependency between culture, the laissez-faire strategy and the liberal democratic policy. This makes the survival of one dependent on the other two and underscores the interrelationships between the political democracy, cultural upholding and economic development. This is the framework that should underlie any attempt to analyze the validity and reliability of implementing market-based economies. Privatization urges optimizing the margin of freedom and political openness to the end of the continuum. It is intended to orchestrate an active participation of the private sector and to realize a balance of power between the rivals in the media arena for realizing the ultimate goal of establishing civil society.

Considering the conflict between the policy of market-based economies and privatization, on the one hand, and the firmly established ideology of nationalism and the autocratic media system have held sway for the last fifty years. On the other, the following question is raised: would Egypt properly follow the policy of market-based economy and implement broadcasting privatization offering true hope and a means of development or shall we remain chained within our monocular distorted rooms sedated by a dope?

The question remains on how to follow an avenue of participation to end this crucifixion of development. Moreover, how to regain this lost entrust, by realizing the concept of uses and gratification. This seems far-fetched, especially with the absence of audience studies of both the rating and non-rating types of research. This has made the media commodities available on the scene range from the typical info-tainment and new news (violence, sex, and bloodshed) to the sensational media without overcoming the knowledge gap hypothesis.

### **Accelerating an avenue of participation in Egypt:**

Structural reform is difficult to fully realize and implement due to political and economic considerations, yet possible. Politically, Egypt was not intellectually or ideologically prepared to perform drastic changes, i.e. glasnost (openness) and perestroika (economic restructuring). Besides, the media business does not have an insightful futuristic vision to redraw the map of the media. The political constituency or those with an eager interest in reform, such as the business class, have remained weak and depending heavily on the state. Economically, the intra-attitudinal structure of the private sector was divided between the old guards of the public administration, favoring the patron state, and the small weak entrepreneurs who seek to exploit the fragile system rather than face up to its impediments.

Such media have ignored the affective factor (liking and preference) of the communication model that was suggested by Lavidge and Steiner (1961). This resulted in a complete dichotomy between what the early organizers and influentials want as senders and what the audiences or consumers expect or need as receivers. The suggested process of redefining the state depends mainly on efforts to accommodate new media players and entities and to enable a gradual desegregation of the former distinct government-controlled and private structures into a



more complementary mixed system that contains state-owned, private, commercial and public (independent) entities.

The list was endless including syndromes of inefficiency, debt, huge deficits, low productivity, shortages, noncompetitive products, low investment rates, slow to negative economic growth and general poverty. It was then realized that finding the way out of the patron state trap could only be realized through a complete change in the political regime as well as a bold revolutionary media strategy. At that time, some important factors that helped in this regard were the prompts from international pressures and boosts obtained through the World Bank and the IMF.

Advocates of development must keep abreast of the experiences of the countries where serious shortcomings revealed the need of mixing the two institutions. It is capable of bringing the long years of government-state media failure, the defects of bankruptcy, the lack of freedom and diversity into the limelight by restructuring, redefining and reordering the collective life of Egypt. Hence, the only path into a cohesive fiber of participation is by eluding the excessive protocol news. Hence, the role of the government must be changed. The government must enhance its efforts for realizing the audience's welfare by ensuring proper information access and a high standard of education and entertainment. It must also mobilize its full powers for establishing civil societies. Any successful private broadcasting must be constructed on diversified sources of revenue while serving the public interests of the audience.

The political and capital potentials constitute an inseparable bond of mutual dependency. Media liberalization is the crux of any restructuring, yet it can only be realized under the umbrella of democracy so as to embark on the realization of an integrated political economy, through a bilateral regulation between the governance and democracy and their interrelationships with the economic and political developments. The second impediment is how to deal with the transformation from a centrally planned economy to a free-oriented form. was focused on the expansion of media infrastructure. The third impediment is human resources. One issue in this regard, is the increasing rate of unemployment and disguised employment. On the macro level, priority must be given to the development of a full-employment strategy that fits the economic requirements.

Policies should include further legislative amendments to attract domestic and foreign investors and support the privatization efforts. It is a must to support these policies through the improvement of the governance. This process involves the introduction of five key elements: transparency in policies, predictability in macroeconomics, securing civic discourse, establishing democratic regulatory systems. It is crucial to mention that the condition for realizing a market-based economy in Egypt relies on enhancing the citizens' education.

After acknowledging the impediments that must be surmounted, the researcher undoubtedly admits some attempts for rectification and reform are being made. Nevertheless, the typical symptoms have remained present throughout time and the prescription has been always available. The absence real motivation to cure is the key to this endless treasure hunt. Hence, it has become an obligation of the government and a commitment of President Mubarak to take action and develop the political arena to grip this far-fetched dream of an avenue of participation, through setting mutually compatible and reinforcing policies. However, it would be misleading to dwell for too long on the shortcomings of the privatization program at the expense of its more successful aspects.

It should be noted that, the researcher concludes the paper with emphasizing a hierarchy of influences that include five levels: ideology, extra-media, media ownership, media routines and the theory of uses and gratification. But, he asserts that the most influential force and prescription to the concurrent syndrome are the current governmental policies under the Egyptian Prime Minister Dr. Atef Ebied. Certainly, it is more practical to consider the know-how of surmounting the impediments and dealing with the crossing roads that Egypt currently faces. The suggested avenue of participation aims to end the current crucifixion of development, by contemplation and analysis to promote competence and guarantee success. At the end, one can never attain any steps without giving way to the new emerging waves of change on one hand, and eluding the old guards with their idle stagnant ideology on the other to full realize this avenue of participation on the other hand.

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