MASS MEDIA AND NATION BUILDING: A CASE STUDY OF UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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This dissertation entitled **"Mass Media and Nation-building: A Case Study of United Arab Emirates"**, is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree of this University or any other University and is my original work.

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CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Attempts of social theory to comprehend Arab politics, society, state and institutions through Western intellectual traditions have generally been marked by certain epistemological limitations. In academics as well as popular perceptions there is a misconception that the Middle East and its social institutions are resistant to 'modern' forms of institutional settings. There is usually a common view in the West that Islam plays an obstructive role as a religion in Arab societies. The global media for instance, often characterize Arab societies as resistant to Western models of democracy, gender relations, women's rights etc. Academic debates often attribute the 'closed 'nature of their society to religion and its practices. At times, even the monolithic categorization of the' Arab world 'as one seems to run into certain difficulties. For one it assumes a homogeneous Arab population who follow the religion of Islam. These assumptions of a predominantly Arab, Islamic identity seem to reinforce a comprehension of a 'whole'. Consequently the individual histories, the differences in religious composition of the populations, the different histories of colonialism, political processes and social and economic peculiarities of each state within the 'Arab World 'is generally overlooked.

Consider the media flow between the Arab region and the United States for instance. The flow of information between the Unites States and the Arab region continues to be overwhelmingly one-sided- from the West to the East with generally communication and contents moving from the US to these societies. One reason could be the wide availability of the CNN and Western satellite channels in the Arab regions. In contrast the flow of information about the Arab region to the West is limited. The Arabic press and television pose language barriers and hence, hurdles in communication with non-Arab societies. A Western understanding about the press or media in the Arab regions, thus, continues to be limited. For instance, most studies do not account for the wide non-Arab or expatriate populations in these countries or how this feature has come to reflect different interests in the English and Arab press in the Arab regions (Rugh,2004:Preface;Alterman,2005).

After past events like Operation Desert Storm, (Iraq War I) some authors theorized, in apocalyptic terms, that the Arab world and the West are increasingly poised over a

battle of identities. Broadly speaking, in very general terms it was labeled as a confrontation of sorts involving the 'Arab Muslim East' and the 'Christian democracies of the West'. Samuel Huntington, for instance suggests dichotomies that, by implication, can be attributed broadly to civilizations. His argument is that, if one were to consider civilization as the highest cultural grouping of people then we could perceive it as inspiring the highest level of cultural identity in people. So religion usually becomes the most important element which defines civilizations (Huntington, 1993).This reasoning of an Exclusive/Inclusive dichotomy of cultural dualism when translated into academic debates tends to be read as broad categories of the West /The East, the insider/outsider and the developed /developing terms. For instance Bernard Lewis writes in his book *What Went Wrong?,* that freedom is a distinct attribute of Western civilization. He writes:

> To a Western observer schooled in the theory and practice of Western
> freedom it is precisely the lack of freedom …that underlies so many of the
> troubles of the Muslim world (Mamdani, 2004:23)

Similar discourses in the global media too seems to only have escalated with the recent Arab –Israel conflict, the attacks against the United States on September11,2001, and recent attempt at bringing democracy in Iraq. Griffin says that:

> Numerous journalists and scholars have framed the "post 9-11"problem as a
> "clash of civilizations" and offered competing arguments for the need to
> "democratize," "modernize," "civilize," "transform" or "save" the Islamic
> world. Islamic fundamentalists—and often by extension Muslims in general,
> or Arabs in general, or Middle Easterners in general, or Middle Easterners,
> Southwest Asians and South Asians, in general—have been easily
> demonized in a media system…(Griffin,2002)

The piece of writing above only serves as a representative sample to show the general confusion that marks categorizations of the Arab region, its institutions and people .It also reveals a whole lot of misconceptions that the West seems to carry about the 'Arab region'. One is for instance, familiar with the Edwards Said's work of how 'Arabs' and 'Arabness' have been misrepresented in literature culture, ideas, history and politics in terms of taking the place of the Other in European Western

experiences. Contrasting images, ideas and experiences are drawn out to characterize Arabs as the exotic and the Other (Said, 1979). Some of these images continue to be drawn out in the global press- of sheikhs rolling in oil wealth, the terrorist, of doe-eyed veiled Arabian girls, veiled women in American cars, the harems, belly dancers- and so on.

Some of the confusions I indicated earlier on seem to have come to mark a number of academic works in the field of sociology, economics and political studies concerning the region called as Middle East. Some of these confusions seem to have been also carried over into studies of media systems too. For instance, comparative analyses of global media development consider the Middle Eastern media system as the most closed and controlled in the world (Sinclair, 1996:4). The problem with these kinds of generalizations is that it presupposes some common criteria of comparison of two countries which are in reality very different, in many respects, from each other.

As far as Arab media discourses are concerned, one of the issues that come with this increasing entanglement within an oppositional ideological underpinning is that, it seemingly reproduces and marginalizes the role of media in development and modernization, to discourses characterized by the dichotomous logic of 'Us' Vs 'Them'. In spite of the globalization rhetoric that marks academic works or the global dimension of mass media[1] and the rise of multinational corporations, communication technologies and its institutionalization in individual locale continues to incorporate the social, cultural and political specificity of that locale. In a liberal democratic country the institutional framework of the media is oriented towards democracy and decentralized power informing citizens to act in their capacity as voting citizens. In contrast, the institutional[2] framework within which the Arab media is different as the existing power structures are aligned to other forms of political power. Besides, the social, cultural, historical and even political relations in which the Arab media emanated from or operates points sufficiently to the distinctiveness of Arab media that cannot be analyzed in comparison to Western perspectives of media. Generally such

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[1] The term mass media refers to the 'entire system within which messages are produced, selected ,transmitted ,received and responded to'(Mcquail,1969:2)

[2] A simple sociological definition of social institution is –a set of mores, folkways and patterns of behavior that deals with major social interests like law and family for example. Thus a social institution consists of all the structural components of a society through which main concerns and activities are organized and social needs are met.

readings arrives at a distorted analysis of media in Arab society along the lines of the philosophy or practices that is specific to the West rather than examining the prospects of an indigenous media specific to Arab society. This dissertation proposes to explore a nuanced analysis of Arab media that takes into these wide perspectives into account.

STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

This study attempts a sociological study of mass media (specifically the press) in the United Arab Emirates, a small country in the Gulf part of the Arab region. The central purpose of this research is to arrive at an understanding of Arab press, in terms of its emergence in the Arab context specifically in relation to a particular national history or in the context of nation-building processes and how local political and social arrangements that emerged have in turn come to shape the institution of the press in UAE itself.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCE OF DATA

The study primarily relies on secondary sources, namely significant academic studies and scholarly articles in journals. As sociological works related to UAE are limited and even preliminary, wherever it was considered necessary and relevant the study also referred to studies carried out in Arab countries. Other sources that have been relied upon to gain insights on the UAE include newspaper articles, websites, Policy Reports and official literature of the UAE like the UAE Yearbook and Official Media Laws.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study would specifically focus on the newspaper (press) industry in the UAE. While we would rely on secondary sources to provide us with insights into the Arab press my immediate attention would be focused on the English press in UAE. This study also looks takes into consideration the majority expatriate dominated population of the UAE, an aspect that is specifically absent in most studies of Arab media. The limited nature of this study does not permit an analysis that would account for the role of other media like radio, TV, or satellite or magazines or address the presence of

foreign press in the UAE market. Works by Arab scholars in Arabic are inaccessible because of language barriers. Though there are a lot of works done in the field of Arab media they have been in the field of diplomacy and political studies particularly focusing on Arab countries with a more prominent, 'visible' history like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Another problem that arose during the process of research was that most studies of Arab media present a generalized picture of media in Arab countries and hence studies that specifically focus on the details of each country is significantly very less. Some of the difficulties in the research has risen from the lack of and scattered nature of sociological works on the UAE. This study therefore faced some difficulties in terms of relying on prior academic works of UAE specifically in terms of a sociological reading of media.

Relying on reports in newspaper articles and on websites also poses certain problems. However, my goal was to have a sufficiently broad canvas that would permit a reliable picture of press and society relations in the UAE. As a result I might have had to take some risks in characterization and description in certain areas of the study. This particular research is mainly primary in its field and so any limitations may perhaps be excused. Considering that academic works about the UAE in particular are very few, this study would therefore not only bring in certain sociological insights with respect to the press in UAE, but also contribute to the growing literature of this small country.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The overarching framework of my study concerns a sociological study of the press in UAE. Generally literature covering media systems in the Arab countries tend to revolve around issues of politics and government control. While these studies do contribute to academic discourse they do not seem to address in any systematic way the location of the press as a social institution in the society or systematically address its relationship with other societal institutions. As recent literature in sociology of communication points out communication is a two-way process involving both communicators and senders. The different types of mass media operate alongside existing channels and patterns of communication which are determined by individuals and groups in the social structure. This places constraints over the patterns and

choices over decisions of communicators as well as the receivers. If we see mass media in this light then we could say that media is not only influenced by politics but also by the social context of daily life. The content of media then can also be seen in the light of the 'social circumstances of production'. A focus of this kind brings in some complexity to the questions that one might consider. For instance, how is content shaped by values or societal needs, what factors affect the spread and acceptance of media messages and so on (McQuail, 1969:59). In short, applying a sociological study would illuminate the relationship of the media in relation to economic, political, social and cultural institutions in the society. In this light the present study at hand would aim at a sociological understanding of the press as a social institution in the society of UAE.

This dissertation consists of an Introductory chapter, three main chapters and a conclusion:-

- **Chapter II** titled **Theoretical discourse on Nation, State and Media** reviews literature related to nation-building and literature specially pertaining to the Arab region keeping in mind the specificity of UAE considering the paucity of prior literary material to fall back on. Since the press in the UAE developed after the formation of the nation-state, the intention of the exercise is to systematically examine the socio-political, historical and cultural attributes of what shapes or reshapes politics and society in Arab societies, in order to contextualize the particularities of the situation under which the press operates in UAE. In addition, this chapter would also review selected literature related to certain specific theories of the press to inform analysis of press in the UAE.

- **Chapter IV** tilted as **Press and Society in UAE** would specifically locate the institution of the press in terms of other social institutions broadly divided into the state, religious institutions and the market for the sake of organization and clarity. The focus would be on how the press as an institution is molded by the elements of UAE society as discerned from the insights gained in the previous chapter. This chapter would also take into consideration the implications of the demographic distribution in the UAE for the press.

- **Chapter III** titled **'Imagined Community' and 'Public Sphere': The Role of the Press in UAE** intends to examine the facilitating role of the press in

UAE. The first section of the chapter would examine how a convergence of print and capital seems have fostered a sense of community feeling in everyday life in UAE specifically focusing on notions of nations, national identity and national community. It would be followed by the second section in which a critically informed perspective of Habermas' public sphere would be applied to discern how mass media operates to provide for certain interactive fields of communication alongside traditionally existing channels or traditional patterns of communication in the UAE. While addressing these concerns the analysis would take into account the majority expatriate dominated population of UAE, a consideration that is overlooked in most studies of Arab media.

In the Concluding chapter the first section would briefly attempt to theorize the press in UAE. Keeping in line with my objective I would like to elucidate on how the insights gained in this case study of the role of the media in the UAE is cast in a fresh perspective that seems to question the traditional notions of Arab media.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Considering the context of the study, this section will begin by clarifying some of the confusion that characterizes studies of Arab societies. Generally literature of Arab societies alternatively refers to the 'Middle East' the 'Arab region' and the 'Arab World' in a similar sense. This popular perception of the 'Arab region' or the 'Middle East' as a whole seems to rise from the cultural uniqueness that is attributed to the region as a total as opposed to other non-Arab cultures. The term 'Middle East' was a Western invention that 'defined the Middle East vis a vis the West as a transit zone for ships, railroads and telegraphs. During the time of the British it even included non-Arab countries as Israel, Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan(Kramer,1997).The political issues with the state of Israel and Palestine brought the term into popular usage to mean Arab lands and Israel[3].Today certain scholars see it as composed of four parts- Israel, the Arab lands, Turkey and Iran. The Arab lands are composed of 17 independent countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen,

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[3] The global media also commonly uses another term "New Middle East "as a zone of peace between the Jews and Arabs. This term was coined in 1991 by the then Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres in his book *The New Middle East*

Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon and Palestine[4]. The Gulf Arab region specifically denotes the states that are located in the Arabian Gulf region and include the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Iraq.

Historical, Political and Social variations in the Arab Region

This brings us to the question of who are the Arabs? Generally speaking Arabs could be identified as those people who call themselves Arab and speak the Arabic language[5].The Arabic language has a rich history that dates back to many centuries before the founding of Islam[6]. When Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) founded Islam in the 7th Century Arabic became the chosen language of the Holy Qur'an. The founding of the religion of Islam provided a common ground of unification for the different tribes of Arabia. Slowly the religion became a source of identification for the Arabs. Arab societies nevertheless, retained traditional elements like courage bravery and hospitality (murawwa) and some of these principles and traditions came to be reflected in the principles of Islam (Ahmed: 1999). Prior to the 19th and 20th century, before colonialism, most of the Arabs, however, identified themselves primarily as Arabs and in terms of a particular tribe or family. The present form of identification in terms of belonging to a national group or a nation, as Egyptians, Emaratis, Omanis and so on seems to be a product of recent nationalist transformations in the region.

As is typical of any other region, the Arab region varies in its cultural forms, religions, linguistic patterns, political system and other features that characterize a society. There are significant non-Muslim communities in some of these countries to prevent generalizations of any sort. Hence, the Arab lands again do not correspond to an 'Islamic World' in spite of having a close link with the history of Islam. The population in these regions again is not a homogenous community who commonly speak Arabic. For e.g. a section of the population in Algeria speak the Berber language, French and Arabic. Even the colonial histories of the countries in the Arab

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[4]Palestinian considered itself as an independent Arab state despite the Isreali occupation of its lands.

[5] The term Arab has initially referred a nomad inhabitant of the central and northern Arabian Peninsula. The word itself seems to be derived from a Semitic root related to nomadism. It was the Greeks and Romans who extended the term to include people of the whole Arabian peninsula and the geographical portions of Yemen.(Mansfield, Chapter 1)

[6] The perfection of the language and its capacity as the official language of the Holy Qur'an make Muslims consider it as the words of God and hence attribute a 'sacral' quality to the language.

regions are different. For instance, Algeria was considered as a part of France till its liberation in 1962 .Saudi Arabia on the other hand underwent a quieter colonial rule and achieved full independence before The World War II. When we take a closer look we find that within the Islamic community, political and historical factors have shaped certain differences. For e.g. there are numerous sects in Islam. If we were to speak broadly we could divide them into the Shias and the Sunnis. The Shias who make up only 10 percent of the total Muslim population are found in Iran, southern Iraq and South Asia (Ahmed, 1999:42-43). Geographically close states like the UAE and the Saudi Arabia also show some differences in the different schools of Islam that they follow.

Generally the Arabia Gulf area is seen as a part of the larger Arab regions which includes the Middle East and North Africa. Scholars are of the opinion that the Arab Gulf States of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are a distinct part of the larger Arab region constituting 'an exclusive category 'as they have a far greater political and economic significance and similar cultural traits in comparison to the other Arab states. These states produce and provide for oil to many countries, regionally and globally, making them wealthy nations in comparison to other Arab countries[7] (Abdullah 2000:1). There are other commonalities like a similar demographic composition whereby a huge foreign population has resulted in reducing the indigenous population to minorities in their own country.

In the 19th and 20th Century the Gulf Arab States were colonized by Western states just like the Asian and African regions .The British withdrew from this region in 1971 after 150 years of colonial rule. With the discovery of oil in these regions, the withdrawal of Britain and the formation of nation-states in the Gulf there are certain security dilemmas in the Gulf that continue to influence state and society in the Arab region to date (Moller, 1997).Certain Arab authors are of the opinion that the post colonial Arab regions therefore developed as part of the Third World (Zubaida, 2001). Today the Arab States are among some of the wealthiest states in the world largely because of the income from oil revenues. However some of the problems that they face like rising rates of unemployment, vast discrepancies in income, population

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[7] An affirmation of cultural, ideological, political affinity, geographical proximity, common oil resources, common security concerns led to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

imbalance, decreasing oil revenues and others suggest that these states seems to face the common problems that characterize other third World countries.

Press and the Colonial Experience

Similarly when we consider mass media in these regions we see problems that are in some ways common to other Third World countries. These range from technical problems of technological availability, access, participation, representation, education patterns to issues of freedom, journalistic practices etc. A major problem that these countries seems to face is that mass media capacities still seems to be measured in terms of popular Western understandings of the media and the ideal people- society relations. When we consider the origins of mass media we cannot ignore the fact that mass media (and the press in particular) emerged as a social institution in the West .If we were to narrate a broad history we could say that the Industrial Revolution and colonial expansion of territories first led to the introduction of mass media agencies in the colonized territories. Early mass media agencies in the third World were, therefore, mostly developed and maintained by colonial powers to aid colonial rule and to link their political and economic agenda on a global level . With the end of colonial rule in the 20th century, the developing countries seized the challenging opportunities provided by mass media technologies to promote social and economic changes.

For some time after the World War, mass media distribution across the world predisposed an increased dependence of the Third world on the more developed West. With the 1970's the situation of The Third World vis a vis the West underwent a change By 1974, there were demands for a New Information and Communications Order from the Third World countries through UNESCO and NAM (Das,2000: 204). These were some of the collective attempts by the Third World countries to redress, to an extent, the unequal international flow of news which till then was being reproduced and distributed by the Press Agencies in the developed countries. Perhaps it is these attributes that often brings in an element of comparison between the media of the West and those in developing countries along the lines of control, access, ownership, distribution and content.

Media systems operate as links to larger societal systems and social groups tend to influence these relationships. If one were to draw a comparison of sorts between two dissimilar countries one might risk overlooking how different structural and cultural aspects of societies influence mass media systems, create content, or even its development as an institution .A study of media system in a society would therefore have to focus on a relationship with the specific, more immediate historical, cultural, political and economic contexts in which the media systems are located. This makes it important to situate institutions of mass media contextually. A sociological study therefore, would begin with looking into the factors that shaped the growth of mass media in a society, its expansion or and influences in terms of the specific economic, social and political institutions. A perspective of this kind would make a more wholesome comprehension of media in relation to specific national histories, cultural situation, political process as well as changes ushered in with the growth and accumulation of capital. Since my study is specifically concerned with the press in the UAE I would briefly examine the history of the press, its rise as a medium of mass media and how it has come to acquire certain institutional features that is seen to date.

Press and its Origins in Europe

The first modern mass media institution began with the development of printing press. Although the history of print in certain societies dates back to many centuries, the first attempts at printing books using modern technologies began in Europe .This technique was first developed by Johann Gutenberg in 1440.Initial attempts at printing were restricted to religious books (Thompson, 1990:54). Later on, commercial development of print techniques led to the expansion of print technologies to other urban cities of Europe.

Despite being commercial in nature, printing industries were also cultural organizations in so far as they brought together and spread cultural and religious ideas. For e.g. in early Europe print brought about the dissemination of Protestantism and the rise of vernacular languages over Latin (Thompson, 1995: 66).According to Anderson it led to a national consciousness that ultimately led to the formation of nation-states (Anderson,1991). Two centuries later, with the Industrial Revolution the

print industries began to expand to include the production of newspapers aided by developments in technology and uniform paper.

The Rise of Print: Origins of Defining Points

The history of the press was never smooth as one may be inclined to think in the above context. As state controls gave way to commercial interest the first commercial paper as we see today began to take shape. To begin with, it offered its service to any of its anonymous readers which marked a turning point in the history of communication. In this sense:

> the newspaper was more of an innovation than the printed book –the
> invention of a new literary, social and cultural form-even if it might not
> have been so perceived at that time(McGuail,1987:9-10).

However the first products of the press were restricted to an audience of literate elites. It was only in the mid-19th Century, with further development in technologies, transportation and literacy that newspapers began to reach out to a mass audience. By the 20th Century newspapers began to play a bigger role as a social institution in society. Journalism became professionalized and newspaper industries became profitable businesses turning into a medium of mass circulation, consequently becoming huge business monopolies heavily dependent on advertising revenues. To summarize the broad primary institutional and cultural features that characterized newspaper industries were as follows:

- An initial development of the press closely tied to the policies of the state.
- Subsequently, print industries becoming commercially based and leading to a sort of independence from state powers.
- Commercialization and expanded audiences bought in increasing specializations of newspapers in terms of politics, culture, entertainment etc.

The Press, Individual Histories and Defining Characteristics- A Brief Overview of Two Countries

These broad characteristics in terms of the state, the market and a reading public generally indicate the development of print media as a social institution. However, as noted earlier newspapers were not merely economic institutions but also cultural in nature. In different societies therefore the press came to differ according to the specific history, economy and cultural features. The specific nature of the press as a social institution seems to vary when the individual national histories of each country and the broad factors of the state, the market, and the public are considered.

The Press in America

Michael Schudson, for example, gives an account of the American press in his book *The Sociology of News*. The first press in colonial America emerged when businessmen began to print four–page weeklies to advertise their printing business. Early American press, from 1690-1760, in colonial America avoided political issues changing only with the American independence movement against Britain in 1765. The rise of anti –Britain sentiments and demands for a federal national government led newspapers to increasingly voice concerns of various political parties leading to increasing state interventions.

Post independence a 'partisan' Press, largely adhering to parties and factions, was restricted to a limited audience. This trend changed when newspapers like The New York Sun (1833) began to commercialize themselves .Soon "penny papers"[8] developed and began to use other technologies like telegraph and steam press to aid the process of communication. The press began to expand to a wide audience of different communities like the Native American Cherokee Phoenix (1828), African–American Freedom's Journal (1827) etc. At this point the notion of news as profit (increasing commercialization) began to influence the American press. By 1870 advertisements became a central source of income and newspapers began distancing themselves from party politics. From 1900 to World War I papers engaged in educative campaigns, journalism became professionalized and established as an

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[8] Papers priced at a penny instead of 60 cents, and sold by "newsboys" .It covered local news, court cases and society news (Schudson,2003:75)

occupation leading to national professional associations like The American Society of Newspaper Editors[9]in1922-23. By the 1950's American press was driven by commercial organizations and autonomous Professionals. In the following decades The Civil Rights Movement of the 60's, the Vietnam War , the subsequent anti-War movement in America brought about a wider inclusion of the diverse people in American society as the press began to focus on previously marginalized groups like women, blacks and other social groups. This brief account reveals the presses engagements with other social institutions like state, market and ethnic groups. To summarize the state, market, national factors and ethnic groups influenced the institution of press in America and vice versa.

The Press in India

Similarly in the case of India, which is a Third World country, the terrain of media history is again different. According to A.R Desai prior to the advent of the British, newspapers and newsletters were mainly hand written for the purposes of carrying commercial information. The press as a modern institution developed in colonial India with the establishment of vernacular press in Bengali (*Sambad–Kaumudi*, 1821), Gujarati (Bombay Samachar, 1822).The early nationalist press developed out of social and religious reform of cultural practices like sati and child marriage. In 1830, as the Indian nationalist movement gained impetus the nationalist press became more political in conduct. A diverse news press developed reflecting the divided political stance in India at that time. For instance *The Times of India* (Bombay, 1861) supported the British policies, *The Pioneer* (Allahabad, 1865) voiced concerns of the commercial landowning class, *The Madras Mail* (1868) backed European commercial interest while *The Statesmen* criticized the nationalist groups and the government.

The British state, in its attempt to safeguard colonial interest, passed certain restrictive legislations like The Vernacular Press act of 1878 which forbade vernacular publications. The growth and expansion of press in India was slow and hindered by repressive Press Laws, mass illiteracy, and poverty. Thus the struggle for freedom of expression by a growing Indian press seems to have also marked the history of struggle for Indian independence. By 1920 growing involvement of the masses

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[9] The "Canons of Journalism" was adopted with an emphasis on" sincerity, truthfulness, accuracy and impartiality".

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furthered press diversity as press supportive of British Government, the liberal school of nationalism, vernacular issues, student issues and workers issues evolved. By 1941, 4000 printed newspapers and magazines were published in the country in seventeen languages (vide O'Malley in A R Desai,1982: 229)

India's communication policy after independence shows how the form of governmental power of the state, cultural, political and economic aims has affected communication institutions, the content and media practices. Prior to 1984 communication policies in India was influenced by concerns to build a strong independent nationalism, identity and self reliance setting technological and communication services in relation to its overall developmental goals. By the mid 80's a state led planned development gave way to an incipient economic liberalization bringing in issues of regulating information, new communication production industries like software and the role of state in electronic communication. With the economy further opening up in the 1990's the government attitude toward communication sector began to operate with vision of 'communications without frontier'. In doing so it opened up the market to competition and private sectors (thus making it regulatory). In the present situation the media institutions have been mostly influenced by profits, market share, multinational, multimedia group, competition, and economies of scale (Das, 2000: 209-211).

The Press in the Arab Regions

To summarize, the intention of this comparative perspective is to illustrate the point that the press is part of an institutional framework evolving in tandem with development in various institutions including politics, economics, culture and law. In sharp contrast to the press in India or America, the regions of the Lower Gulf had a relatively late media history. The Gulf areas which included the UAE were colonized primarily to ensure a free passage for colonial ships and goods. The absolutely minimal means of communication that was established in the late 60's were mainly intended as a communication tool for the colonizers. However the situation changed with the discovery of oil in the 1970's (and the rise of oil prices) that generated huge wealth in the region. By 1973, the oil receipts of seven oil producing countries (Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE) arose eight fold raising

the GDP of these states. The wealth that accrued to these countries set in massive development drives to raise the economic and social standards of these countries also including state-led developmental efforts to establish mass media. Hence in the initial decades of post colonial rule, the development of communication technologies (mainly press) and its function came to be largely determined by the state:

> In fact throughout the first decades of its existence, the press of the Middle East was restricted to official journals, the sole purpose of which was to communicate government announcements and proclamations and to provide certain technical information for the ruling class. Thus the autocratic nature of the states of the region was instrumental in laying the basis for governmental media controls. (Kamalipour and Mowlana, 1994)

However we cannot take this generalization merely at face value. Historical, religious, political and cultural specificities in each of the Arab regions seem to have led to different press institutions in each of the Arab states. A scholarly analysis of mass media in the Gulf Arab States therefore cannot be made, purely in the light of Western theoretical models. An attempt of this kind would be at the risk of ignoring the specific features of culture and society and their unique histories.

Social Research and Press in the Arab Regions

Social Science research, in general in the Arab regions has generally faced constraints. At times the constraint arose from language barriers or widely scattered works and at other times from the political constrictions (Waterbury, 1988). In the recent years some Arab states have begun systematic efforts to publish contemporary social and political works through regional and local centers dedicated to academic research. These publications have increased academic access to data and studies that were previously unavailable or even non-existent.

Recent international events has resulted in Arab news agencies being the focus of a growing academic interest in the region and its institutions of mass media studies advanced by the change in communication relations in a changing political context. For instance, with the Gulf War in 1991 communication relations undertook a turning point when Arab communications, more importantly satellite broadcasting, gradually

took over the space that had been long occupied by Western media. For example, Al-Jezeera in 1996 marked a milestone in the media history of the Middle East(Zayani,2005). It has been observed that:

> As the BBC Arabic TV network collapsed in the 1990s, al-Jezeera filled
>
> the gap, offering news but also a previously seldom-seen venue for
>
> discourse and debate in the Arab world. (Selber and Ghanem, 2004)

Today, one cannot help but note the immense changes in communication technologies in the Gulf States along the lines of an information revolution. The launching of Arab satellite systems like THURAYYA in the UAE and NILESAT in Egypt has provided Arab government and private organizations with telecommunication facilities and direct broadcasting. There are also new experiments like the opening of Media Cities in three Arab states that encourage a return of the migrant Arab press[10]from the West to Arab lands (Quinn, Walters and Whiteoak, 2004). Whatever may be the case, the above discussion only seems to illustrate a growing complication of terrain of communication studies of the Arab region and the need for studies that incorporate other elements of society in the studies.

Kamalipour and Mowlana say that there is a lack of information on aspects of communication and information flow in the Middle East. This has led to "individual and collective efforts of the writers of this geographical area remaining sporadic and unsystematic"(Kamalipour and Mowlana, 1994).While there have been works on mass media in the Gulf Arab States, they have generally been confined within the scope of international relations, political science or media studies. Besides academic works about the press or other media has not covered the UAE, as generally the focus has been on larger and more prominent states like Saudi Arabia or states that have had a comparatively longer media history. So, studies involving the media were often confined to issues of control and access or international relations. An explanation that is restricted to political governance generally adopts a top-down relationship between the state and media. Consequently the roles of the public or traditional communicative channels are often ignored by these studies due to their preoccupation with the

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[10] The migrant press refers to Arab press that began operations in European countries in 1970's to escape political repression in home countries or after moving out from war stricken zones like Lebanon and other countries in order to avail of technological sophistication, freedom of expression, etc. See Rugh 1987 and 2004

regimes. It also ignores state and media relations in the newly formed Arab states that were faced with huge nation-building task or other peculiarities of population structure. Consequently, it missed out on an explanatory frame that would take into account other factors like cultural issues and local practices that influence media.

.It is in this light that the present study at hand would seem to contribute-namely, towards a sociological understanding of the press as a social institution in the society of the UAE. In the next section we attempt to provide historical as well as recent background information on the UAE with regards to its culture and society and follow the account with a brief chronological account of the press in the UAE.

A Brief Overview of the UAE

The UAE being a young country [11]has a political set up of a federation of seven emirates which, in reality, exercise a considerable amount of individual authority when it comes to governance. Prior to its independence in 1971, the seven Emirates that now form the Union, was marked by separate settlements of tribes that inhabited them[12]. With the discovery of oil and the establishment of the nation-state the country set itself onto an astonishing rate of developments that have brought lasting changes in the region. Jon Duke Anthony[13], a British historian is of the opinion that:

> One of the most important reasons that the establishment and
> maintenance of the UAE has been so extraordinary is that it represents
> the Arab and Islamic world's longest and most successful experiment in
> regional integration in modern history .The other reason being that the
> Union is one that has achieved a level of stability and success on the
> economic, social and political front that is second to none among the
> world's 140 developing nation (Anthony: 2002:7)

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[11] It has only been 35 years since its formation as a nation-state.

[12] The principle institution implementing the Rulers politics and instructions was an *amiri diwan* of appointed members. The members of the *diwan* represented a cross section of interests and representatives of princely households, leading tribes, prominent commoner families, merchants and religious leaders(Butani,1977:105)

[13] He was formally invited by the British Government to be an observer to the formation process of the United Arab Emirates. His anecdotal account takes into consideration international events, extensive personal accounts and interviews with officials, knowledge, recollection and impressions of key events leading to the formation of UAE .

By 1998, the UAE achieved one of the highest per capita GDP in the world, considered at par with some of the most developed countries of the world. Today, The United Arab Emirates is a federation composed of seven different emirates with an estimated population of 4.041 million (UAE Yearbook2005). UAE citizens constitute less than 20 percent of the population (Appendix 1). The majority are expatriates are from South and Southeast Asia (approximately 50 percent of the population .It also includes a significant number of other Arabs—Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians, Yemenis, and Omanis— and Iranians, Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis, Afghanis, Filipinos, and West Europeans. The official religion is Islam but other religions like Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism are practiced among the expatriates.

Within a short time frame of 35 years, after its formation as a federation of Emirates in 1971, the UAE has undergone rapid massive changes which are too fast considering the short time span. In this country there are too many variables which have yet to be comprehensibly accounted for in academic debates. For instance, if we were to rely solely on modernist school of theories it would not explain why certain traditions persist despite the high rate of modernization that is visible in the UAE. In the UAE one can see the existence of *Majlis[14]* along with modern government, traditional channels of communication in the mosques and café's to the Internet, rapid urbanization of the economy, a large expatriate workforce and minority national population, higher education that is based on European models and instruction in Arabic, a distinct political set up that has been stable since the conception of the nation, modern architecture coupled with the use of Arab –Islamic architecture in construction of buildings and malls....so on and so forth .The UAE Yearbook 2005 aptly captures the vast changes:

> Life for the people of the UAE has changed beyond recognition since oil
> replaced pearls as the primary economic income. For most of the
> country's inhabitants a traditional lifestyle is but a distant memory.

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[14] Traditionally the word Majlis refers to council .It denotes a Bedouin tradition of people having free access to their sheikh where fellow 'tribesmen can freely voice their opinion(Yearbook 2006).In the larger Emirates the Ruler and senior members in his family hold open majlises .Participants in the majlises talk of issues ranging from requests for resources to the policies of the government .Till date the citizens often prefer this form of interaction rather than approaching government offices .However a growing population has somewhat made it a bit difficult to carry on the tradition. Nevertheless it is a tradition that carries on despite the sophistication of the government administration.

Nevertheless, despite the social transformation that has taken place in the UAE, with all its positive and negative implications, the very essence of traditional society, religion, language, family and tribal affiliations, remains constant (UAE Yearbook: 2005:55).

How does one start a sociological enquiry in such a scenario? What are the variables that have to be considered while researching press as an institution in the UAE? The existence of multiple dimensions to life in the UAE and the short span of its modern history makes it all the more significant to understand the historical formation of the UAE especially to understand how the institutions in UAE society has come to acquire certain characteristics today.

History of the UAE

Very little is known about the people[15] in the Southern tip of the Gulf region prior to the coming of Islam, except that the people were idol worshippers. The tribes of the southern region of the Gulf converted to Islam around 630AD.The tribes who inhabited these land were of two types- the *hadar* or settled people and the *bedu* or nomadic people of the desert. The people who lived in the areas near the beaches were adept fishermen, pearl fishers and traders. In the 19th century the British brought these areas under colonial rule.

This region called by the British as the Trucial States, consisted of nine sheikhdoms over a geographical area which now constitutes the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain. Historically the political and social structure was more or less the same with all nine sheikhdoms having 'their own strata of ruling families, the merchants , heads of prominent tribes, sub –tribes ,other important families and an assemblage of religious leaders ,soldiers, technocrats and bureaucrats' (Anthony,2002:1).

To briefly summarize Jon Duke Anthony's historical account of the immediate history and the formation of the UAE, Great Britain announced that it would abrogate the mid-19th century special treaty obligations in the Eastern reaches of Arabia in 1967. The task of unifying the separate sheikhdoms into what is now called the United Arab

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[15] These tribes seem to trace their history on the basis of oral historical accounts. Some accounts even reach as far as the time of the Prophet (PBUH).One implication of this point is it already suggests the reason for the importance of oral communications in Arab societies. See also Ahmed,1999

Emirates was undertaken by its founding President and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, H.H Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The formation of the states of Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE set a unique precedent in modern Arab history as it was unaccompanied by violence of any sort. The absence of an Egyptian threat, colonial withdrawal all over the world with nation-states asserting their influence etc all served as an impetus to the leaders of the UAE. (Ibid:52-53).Despite geographical proximity and structural similarities the other sheikhdoms of Bahrain and Qatar opted for independent nationhood with the two states believing that it was 'as different from the emirates as it was similar'. Abu Dhabi and its fraternal sheikhdoms nor any of the other Trucial States had developed trade unions, professional associations, agricultural cooperatives or any other organized special interest groups. So, the formation of the Union came about on December 2, 1971 following 'the time honored and religiously recommended process of consultation as a means to consensus." A co federal form of government was set up between the two sheikhdoms of Abu Dhabi and Dubai after discussing provisions for an effective internal security and external defense with the US and Britain[16](ibid, 52-53).

Parochial considerations, local interests and strategic political maneuvering went into the formation of the Union as each emirate determined to protect their respective interests while negotiating the most favorable status possible within the UAE. The economic and political ambition of the larger sheikhdom of Dubai was accommodated with a Vice-Presidency post, right of absolute veto, sharing of political power and exemption from financial obligations to the Union. The other emirates of Ajman, Fujairah, Sharjah and Ras Al-Khaimah and Umm Al-Qaiwain joined the Union on the condition that Sheikh Zayed would provide for their citizens' financial and developmental needs.

Apart from bringing these sheikhdoms together the founding President also negotiated local competing forces for power and influence within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi thus strengthening its domestic base of support. This information of accommodating ruling tribes in the government system is vital to understand the enduring character of the

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[16] Theses security concerns of the country continue to dominate as important issues to the country. See also Moller:1997

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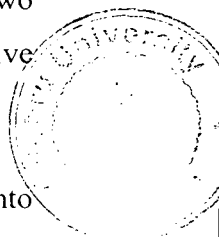
Union. Large sub- tribes who were also kinsmen, like the *Bani Khalifa* clan of *Abu Falah* who belonged to the ruling *Bani Yas* tribe were won over and accommodated within the Union's political frame. They were given important posts in the Unions public affairs and also an important say in the governing affairs. Political incentives and practical concessions to the tribes and clan leaders was further strengthened by 'a joint decision to increase the number of marriages between their respective branches' resulting in an 'interlocking network of reciprocal interests' and mutuality of interests (Anthony: 2002: 111).

Political Relations in the UAE

At present, the state is governed by a constitution that was adopted provisionally in 1971 and made permanent in 1996. Each emirate provides one representative to the Supreme Council of Rulers, which governs the state. The Supreme Council of Rulers elects the UAE president and vice president. In practice, the President is always the ruler of Abu Dhabi and the vice president is the Ruler of Dubai. The Supreme Council elects the Council of Ministers, which acts as the cabinet and is headed by the prime minister. The Federal National Council, with 40 members appointed by the ruling bodies of the emirates, acts as a quasi-legislative body, reviewing legislation referred to it by the Council of Ministers.

While it provides an account of the formal political organization of the UAE, it this misses out the lesser known details of the political structure of the UAE. To understand this we need to look into the tribes[17] and the relations that they shared with one another. As observed in Anthony's account, each of the Emirates were ruled by a sheikh who belonged to a ruling tribe. Traditionally tribes[18] constituted the most important source of local political support for the ruling family. A tribe usually traces its lineage to a particular ancestor. The standard Arabic reference to tribe is *bani fulan*, or "the sons (*bani*) of so-and- so."

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[17] A tribe usually denotes a social group bound together by kin and duty and associated with a particular territory.

[18] Although some tribes may trace their lineage to some heroic figure, the real identity of the tribe lies in the people that currently compose it. In the tribe, an individual bases his or her sense of self-esteem on the honor of the tribe as a whole. The tribe worked to restrict membership in order to preserve its sense of solidarity. As a result, birth into the right family tended to be the only way to become a member of a tribe. Marriage sometimes extended the tribal line beyond blood lines, but, in general, people tended to marry within the tribe and only went outside to establish alliances with other tribes.

The Federal Division of Research of the Library of congress gives the following information about the nature of tribes in the Southern Peninsula of the Gulf:

> Tribal leadership is often described as "the first among equals," suggesting a collective leadership in which one among a number of leaders is recognized as the most authoritative. This principal leader must continue to consult with his lesser colleagues and so rules by consensus. An extension of this pattern of leadership is the concept of leading families within the tribe. Although tribalism tends to discourage inherited authority, traditions of leadership are nevertheless passed down, and tribes expect that certain families will furnish them with leaders generation after generation. This pattern occurred when tribes that were previously nomadic settled down in oases or coastal areas. It then became more likely that certain families would accumulate wealth, whether in food or in goods, and with this wealth would increase their authority. In this way, the individual families that controlled the Gulf states in the 1990s established themselves around 1800. The existence of these ruling families is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of Arab tribalism in gulf society .... Another manifestation is the collective manner in which these families rule. In most of these states, the position of Emir is not passed from father to son but alternates among different parallel patrilineal lines. This makes the appointment of the next Emir an open issue and something on which the entire family must agree. The family also participates in the various consultative bodies that exist to advise the leader. Such bodies, which include figures outside the ruling family, help to institutionalize the first among equals system in these states. (The Federal Division of Research of the Library of Congress)[19]

The way that government officials are appointed in the UAE reflects the continuing importance of tribal connections. Members of the ruling family are accommodated first, followed by families and tribes with whom the rulers have been traditionally allied. Similarly during the time of formation tribes provided support and loyalty to the rulers of the Emirates. The *Bani Yas* which includes the ruling family is the most important tribe[20]. It is through this tribe that the Rulers of Abu Dhabi have extended

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[19] Also see for tribes in Anthony, Jon Duke, 2002:14; Bhutani, 1980

[20] For long period of time this particular tribe had exercised control over the regions of Abu Dhabi, Liwa and Al Ain. In reality the Bani Yas were a loose union of some fifteen tribes that have developed

their influence throughout the Emirate. Balance in political interest has been maintained as we saw before through the traditional practices of marriage bonds both with important tribes as well as select commoners. Tribal loyalties have been further cemented through bureaucratic accommodation and a generous sharing of wealth and economic incentives in the country. The next chapter would examine the allocation of oil revenues and its interlinkages amongst the major sections of the population in a more systematic fashion.

A Brief Overview of Press in the UAE

In 1960's, the few newspapers that were available in the UAE were dated one from India and Europe. Demands for papers were low and so was the incentive for the press. The first weeklies and monthlies like *Akhbar Dubai ,Ras al khaimah, Alshuruq, Al Kahalij, Al ithihaad,* and *Abu Dhabi News* appeared just before independence(Rugh,1987:72).*Al Itthihad* (Union or Federation) was the first Arabic weekly and it began publishing in 1969. It was the emergence of the UAE as a nation-state that provided press and broadcast industries with the much needed push to expand its operations and functions. (Babbili and Hussain, 1994:298; Appendix 2) It is an important fact considering the near simultaneous growth of the UAE press along with other process of institutional building in the UAE.

Post independence a number of newspapers and weeklies emerged that were in private hands including papers like *Gulf News, Al Khalij* and *Khaleej times* . Government funded newspapers like *Al Bayaan* in Dubai and government owned English newspaper, *Emirates News*, began publication in 1971. The initial conditions affecting the mass media were weak advertising revenues, low mass circulation sales, political factors like the international Israel conflict, cultural factors, low prestige of journalism and importance of oral communication. However is the decade that followed some of these issues has been addressed. Rugh notes that between 1976-86, newspapers circulations grew in the UAE from 8000 to 198000, with the total number of dailies growing from two to eight (Rugh, 1987:72-3). Presently there are 13 newspapers, including both Arabic and English in the UAE.

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allegiance to the Al-Nahyan ruling family over a period spanning many decades (Bhutani, 1980). Also see further. Anthony, Jon Duke, 2002:14; Finlow,2000

The UAE constitution "allows the publication of any material, as long as publication does not breach the bounds of responsibility that goes with such freedom". The Publishing Law of 1980 in the UAE explicitly states that the press cannot criticize the ruling family or friendly countries. It cannot carry names of crime victims, propagate religion, and promote liquor, sex or pornography. Furthermore the Federal Law 15 of 1988 subjects all published materials that to censorship. However in practice laws of the press are not applied stringently (Rugh, 2004). The present situation indicates certain attempts at professionalizing the newspaper industries in the state. For instance, in 1999, the Emirates Multimedia Inc was set up under Federal Law No. 5 by the government to replace the Emirates Broadcasting Corporation and the Al Ittihad for Press, Publishing and Distribution. In the recent years there have been attempts to form associations of journalists a feature that was markedly absent in the early decades. For instance, the Dubai Press Club (DPC) was launched in 1999 to provide a forum for discussion of media issues in the Arab world with the objective of promoting communication and liaison with the international press.(UAE Yearbook: 2004).

The purpose of this exercise was to familiarize the features and the norms that mark the present UAE society. The UAE, for most part of its existence as a nation-state, in the modern sense of the term, has known the rule of its founding President H.H Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan who passed away in 2004. The ruling family enjoys a marked degree of support in comparison to other neighboring states. A small indigenous population, the intimate personalized relationship that the ruling family shares with its people and the generous sharing of wealth and power seems to have resulted in wide support for the national government. As noted above the members of important tribes as well as members of the ruling families are integrated into the system of governance. To call a political system of this kind out rightly autocratic would lead to overlooking the subtle political processes that underlie the political systems in the Gulf Arab states and its relationships with other institutions in society. Further on, in the coming chapters, the interaction with common citizens as facilitated by incorporating the traditional system of *majlis* into a modern form of governance would be examined along with its implications for the press. These areas have been specifically explored to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of press and society relationship in the UAE.

CHAPTER – II

THEOTERICAL DISCOURSE ON NATION, STATE AND MEDIA

As the previous chapter indicated, the vast body of literature has somehow not addressed in any systematic fashion the question of press and its relation with society in Arab countries. The dominant literature about the region also seems to present vague monolithic or generalized picture of the nation states in the Arab region. When we are faced with a dominant literature that associate "authoritative" governments and "a restricted press" where do we begin analysis of the institution of the press in Arab countries? There seems to be little in-depth analysis of the socio-political, historical and cultural attributes of that shape or reshape politics and society in Arab societies and its influence on media. A 'Society' which social science refers to can be simply said to suggest a mode of organizing social life (without implying any homogeneity). Many times what scholars refer to as nation-state could also be taken to mean society or social life in a political and cultural context. It is to systematically address the question of press in social life of UAE that we begin with taking the nation-state in UAE as a unit of analysis.

The concept of the press is closely tied to the process of nation-building in many countries as seen in the previous chapter. Similarly, speaking in structural terms the media in Arab countries not only seems to have been influenced by traditional channels of communication but also by the local political, economic and social arrangements in the post-independence era. It is an important element that has a bearing on this study considering that the press as a mass media seems to have developed in its scope and capacity only after the formation of UAE in 1971, along with other process of institutional building in the UAE (Babbili and Hussain, 1994:298). Since there is a paucity of prior literature that systematically covers the social institutions in the UAE the process of nation-building in the UAE would have to be addressed first to arrive at certain distinguishing features and how it affects the press. In this chapter we would address how the formation of nation-state in UAE influenced by, colonial domination, resources of oil and socio-cultural specificities among other factors has resulted in specific pattern of institutional building. The review of literature of nationalism identifies certain key concepts and offers an explanation of how these concepts are dealt with. The first section of this chapter, therefore attempts to look at these various explanations in terms of objective and

subjective criteria and specifically locate the case of UAE. While some theorists prioritize the nation other theorist prioritize the state as determining the formation of nationhood. This section would also undertake an informed reading of literature specifically related to the state in Arab countries. The Third Section, that follows, would elaborate on a review of communication theories with an immediate focus of certain selected works that locate the press in the context of social theory followed by a brief overview of the major studies of Arab media.

I

THE PROCESS OF NATION-BUILDING

To begin the discussion we will assume a working definition of nation and state. Generally speaking the state is a sovereign, political unit occupying certain geographical territory under a single jurisdiction. By contrast the nation denotes unity among people on some shared criteria that may include language, history, culture and heritage. In this case the cultural question of being a nation becomes a subjective question of belonging. Nation-building is a process and it is to understand this process in the UAE that we have begun analysis with a study of theories that provide certain explanations.

Industrialization

Ernest Gellner taking on a modernist angle says that nationalism and hence the nation was an inevitable consequence of capitalism and industrialization. A 'state' is sociologically defined by Gellner as 'that institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order'. It is nationalism that brings in a requirement that the ethnic and state boundaries overlap (1983:7). For Gellner, then, 'nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent' (ibid: 1). As a society moves from agro literate society to an industrial one[1], it undergoes a 'complex persistently cumulatively changing 'kind of division of labor (Gellner, 1983:24). Industrialization is sustained by the state attempts at a universal literacy through a standardized state education,

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[1] In simpler terms it meant transition from an agrarian society to a modern one

communication in a standardized linguistic medium work to produce a 'literate high culture' (ibid: 27-38). Nationalism, therefore, sociologically speaking is an expression arising out of industrial social reorganization and homogeneity of the population where men are willing to identify with an 'educationally unified culture.'

Gellner's account relies on a theoretical connection between modernity and nationalism .More specifically it is difficult to argue for a causal link between industrialization and development of mass education in the UAE considering that his theory is based on these criteria. His articulation of nationalism from the processes of social change, modernization and growing class awareness that alienate sectors of society from traditional culture and create a new cultural homogeneity does not seem to apply to UAE.

Race

There seems to be a tendency in studies of Arab nationalism to incorrectly assume a sense of 'essence' in the sense of 'Islamic or Arab affiliations' (Zubaida, 2001). Primordialists tend to treat ethnicity as the given of human condition[2] (Smith, 1986:9). If one were to look at race and the perennial nature of nation-states as naturally occurring phenomenon it would seem that it does not indicate any importance to the UAE. This is because the UAE came into existence out of specific political-economic conditions and the political will of its founding leader apart from other factors. Clifford Geertz gives an anthropological perspective and says that there are two complementary elements in the nationalism of newly formed state, i.e. the ethnic and the civic[3](Geertz, 1963:108). Contemporary discourse now considers ties like race and blood as essentially "constructed".

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[2] By primordial attachment it is meant one that stems from the' givens' ....the assumed givens of social existence. It could also mean ties that arise from belonging to a religious group, language ties, of blood etc.
The underlying assumption is that these ties evoke a sense of attachment and loyalty with people who share similar backgrounds. It could also mean ties that arise from belonging to a religious group, language ties, of blood etc.
[3] The ethnic dimension endorses the commitment of people to a "primordial ties" which gives them their distinctive identity seeking to assert a social identity that is publicly acknowledged. The need for a citizenship in a modern state is the civil dimension which intends a dynamic, efficient, progressive modern state that is internationally influential in world politics. A newly formed state thus negotiates its sovereign statehood and potential to realize collective aims along with its people identifications with blood, race, language tradition, region and religion. (Geertz, 1963:108)

In the case of UAE Arab and Islamic ties seemed to have served as functional tools for the political entity. The ties of religion and language of the people of the UAE are translated in terms of primary parameters of being an Arab and then a Muslim[4] (Findlow, 2001). The government also seems to endorse this position reiterating that it is an Arab, Islamic nation. However it is after the formation of the political entity that a distinct identity in terms of ethnic groups like 'Emarati' came to be asserted.

Communication

The idea of communication in 'nation building as theorized by Karl Deutsch, would at first glance seem to have a direct implication in the case of UAE. For him a 'people 'is defined as a large group of persons linked by complementary habits and facilities of communication (Deutsch, 1994: 27). Social communication therefore functionally linked different levels of individuals, from middle and lower classes to regional centers enabling political and economic interaction and subsequently, modernization. Group cohesion is brought about through attachment to symbols and group attachment, the exercise of power and compulsion on the part of members to obey commands .Thus making nationalities possible. Once nationality is established it strives to gain power so that members can be compelled to obey commands. This cohesiveness then compels to consider itself as a nation and is also recognized by others as "sovereign" and in employing state organization becomes a nation state. This approach in modernist theory of nationalism emphasizes on the functionality of certain features in a modern society that works towards nation –building.

Apart from this theory being too simplistic explanation it also tends to overlook certain important differences. The effects of media in the West cannot be generalized to that of the UAE which has developed as part of the Third World (Bromely, 1994:88).The problem with a functional explanation is that it tends to see the effects of mass media along a top –down dimension. How does one account for the interactivity before modern mass communication? For instance, in the context of UAE the *Majlis* was traditionally a common meeting house for the Arabs for years. On another level, it does not account for oral communication that have been a part of the Arab world like the mosques, and informal oral communication that characterized the

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[4] The Bedu people's ties to Islam that date back to the centuries of the Prophet (PBUH)

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Arab societies. We note again that mass media does not merely carry messages of "modernization" .Often in many cases it actively seeks to promote and preserve traditional values as we well.

Collective will

After having examined certain objective criteria, the subjective criteria as indicated by certain theoretical works will be addressed in the following discussions. The role of will is given some attention by Paul Brass when he talks of the instrumentalist role in ethnicity. According to Brass competing elite groups, while struggling for prestige, wealth and power use ethnic and national identities to generate mass support. Thus the process of ethnic identity depends on the political and economic circumstances with elites cooperating and overlooking differences with the larger state (Brass, 1991:13-16). Identity formation and identity change is thus dependent on 'objective cultural criteria 'which changes and varies (ibid.:19).Elite competition for the control of resources[5] , ethnic differences as well as communication brings about ethnic transformation and becomes the precondition for nationalism(ibid.:64-65).Communication brings about ethnic transformation when there is :

> The existence of the means to communicate the selected symbols of
> identity to the other social classes within the ethnic group ,the essence of
> a socially mobilized population to whom the symbols may be
> communicated ,and the absence of intense class cleavages or other
> difficulties in communication between elites and other social groups and
> classes (ibid.:63)

When oil was discovered in the 60's in UAE the Ruling elites sought to bring about a nation-state by generating support from the rulers of other Emirates using certain cultural forms and values of their ethnic groups. For e.g. through the 'Bedouin tradition of consultation', distribution of power and cooperation within the new Union was decided.

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[5] According to Brass it takes four forms those between local land controllers and alien authorities ,between competing religious elites ,between local religious elites and native aristocracies, between native ,religious elites and alien aristocracies ,competition arising from uneven processes of modernization and jobs in society (1991:63)

The significant role that the President and the other elites played in bringing about the formation of the UAE is widely highlighted especially considering the fact that the union came about with peaceful negotiations and the absence of violence. Of course, there was also the important consideration of economic resources of oil and collective benefits that would augment from a unification of the emirates. The persistence of the leaders and their determination to form a state of their own are instrumental factors that led to the formation of the UAE. Brass contribution points to the aspect of collective will (and instrumentalism), which is given significance in almost all official and historical literature of the UAE. However in the case of UAE, the symbols of ethnic groups and communication where appropriated by the leaders to forge a sense of nationhood only after the formation of UAE in 1971.

Consciousness

Anderson talks of the transformation of consciousness among people emphasizing on the subjective and the cultural elements in nation-building. The development of print-capitalism allowed people to link time, fraternity and power in ways as to imagine themselves in relation to others. (Anderson, 1991:36) The first models of nationalism therefore emerged from the Americas and the model of nation became' available for pirating 'to other parts of the world through communication of the idea of a nation. National consciousness first emerged out of a mass reading publics created by the confluence of capitalism and print technologies. He defines a nation as "an imagined political community -imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" and this consciousness is experienced as a feeling of community (ibid.:6-7). Apart from these conditions what made the nation imaginable was:

> a half fortuitous but explosive interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications(print)and the fatality of human linguistic diversity (ibid.:43) .

In the case of the UAE , it was born out of the vision of its founding President His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan .It was his 'imagination of a nation' and political vision that led to bringing in other tribes into negotiations for a nation-state. We see the element of 'imagination 'and 'creation' in Andersons sense in the

creation of a nation where none existed prior to it. However if we were to talk of print capitalism as a cause that gave rise to nationalism and nation-states it does not seem to apply to the UAE per se. Rather print capitalism and representations of the country in media after its formation as a nation, instilled a national consciousness in people of the UAE. In this sense it became an imagined community, a nation and distinct from its more similar neighbors and issue which will be examined in the next chapter.

Customs and Traditions

Beyond the imagined nature of the community there are more obvious ties of relation that seemed to have shaped the UAE nation. Smith elaborates on the nature and durability of historical ethnies[6], its contents and its temporally recurring quality (1986:16-17). Apart from linguistic and religious codes the community builds on all elements of tradition and culture including myth, symbols, values, laws, religion, family and language to develop a totality of expressions and representations. The persistence and resilience of ethnies result out of their continued self awareness, the feeling of "us", traditions and lifestyle.

In the context of UAE, this 'feeling of us' is reinforced both in official positions of the government as well as in non–official positions. The government has sought to reinforce the ties of tribal loyalties by incorporating a "Bedouin traditional" system of governance. For e.g. The Institution of the Majlis which has been incorporated in the UAE National Assembly. Furthermore the ties of tribes have been strengthened by asserting a unified "Bedouin" heritage. As Smith notes the ethnic elements of customs, genealogy etc was slowly transformed into national ties and sentiments. For Smith:

> Thus ethnic homogeneity and cultural unity are important even for the
> most recently created states. When appropriating the 'Western ' model of
> nationalism, the newly formed Asian state in order to assert itself as a
> political community, must differentiate themselves and distinguish their
> culture from that of its closely related neighbors. It must emphasize on

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[6] An 'Ethnie' is a collectivity of human beings   possessing the following social and cultural characteristics –a collective name ,a common myth of descent , a shared history ,a distinctive shared culture , association with a specific territory and a sense of identity and solidarity often bearing expression in the societies institutions (Smith,1986:22-30)

historic ties, create a myth of descent assemble historical memories or common ties of ideology (ibid.,1986: 147-148)

Also the larger Arab identification of the state with "the Arab nation", the institutionalization of religion all indicates the government's effort to legitimize its status through appeals to collective sentiments of the people[7]. At the same time the political awareness of 'Emaratis' set against 'the cultural consciousness of being an Arab poses a question of dual identities and whether cultural or linguistic identity is identical with or possibly distinct form national identity'(Smith,C.,1997:608). The UAE official Yearbook notes that one of the strategies of government of Sheikh Zayed was to encourage initiates to conserve the traditional culture of the UAE. His over riding concern was to "familiarize the younger generation with the ways of the ancestors. The" lessons and heritage of the past: were to be remembered" .He stressed that:

> He who does not honor his past cannot make the best of his present and
> future, for it is in the past that we learn. We gain experience and we take
> advantage of the lesson and results of the past (UAE Yearbook 2006)

Invented traditions

According to Eric Hobsbawm it does not make sense to speak of the nations before the rise of the modern territorial state(Hobsbawm, 1990:9-10). He writes nations are a product of 'social engineering' and so it is important to comprehend invented traditions. He defines an invented tradition as:

> a set of practices ,normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules
> and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values
> and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies
> continuity with the past (Hobsbawm and Ranger,1983:1-2).

New nation states therefore create emotionally and symbolically loaded elements in a national tradition that that brings about a feeling of community like anthem, flags and

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[7] The 1960's and &0's were marked with movements towards Arab nationalism and the Islamic Revolution in Iran .These factors could possibly have had an influence in the case of the UAE. It also seems to have been an attempt to "legitimately" identify with Saudi Arabia and other states that have had a more prominent history.

emblems of the nation. He identifies three kinds of 'invented tradition' as ones creating social cohesion among real or artificial communities, one establishing or legitimizing institutions, status and relations of authority and socializing one that by inculcate beliefs ,value system and conventions of behavior. These "historically novella and largely invented –flags, images, ceremonies and music" permeate and become a part of public life of citizens through the state institutions, state and mass public schooling'(ibid.: 2-12).

In the UAE building a collective sentiment of a nation seems to be centered on resorting to "invented traditions" to imply a unique "Emarati "identity as opposed to those of its culturally similar neighbors. For e.g. the tremendous economic and social success of the UAE is attributed to 'traditional, Bedouin' qualities of resilience, perseverance and strength of spirit implying a unique tradition of the Emirates. The government's identification with 'traditional sentiments' is reflected in the importance accorded to the palm trees in the UAE, the Arab-Islamic architecture of the buildings, the professionalization of camel racing and even stamps that mark the traditional *Bedu* life as distinct from those of its culturally similar neighbors. Other annual events over the years which have become a 'tradition' and 'a source of national pride' include the annual Dubai Shopping Festivals, the Dubai World Cup and the Annual Awards to exemplary citizens who contribute to the country.

Everyday Reminders

Other scholars have resorted to explaining the continuity of nation and national identity by explaining how they are reproduced in "everyday life". M. Billig talks of a discursive nationalism which specifically does not fit the UAE society. However his contribution lies in the idea that people come to have a notion of what a nation and patriotism is from wide sources like national histories, a unique culture in a geographically bounded territory and the imagining of their nation as "a nation amongst other nations" (ibid.:78-83). With statehood nationalism is absorbed into the homeland and symbols of nationhood (like coins, v banknotes and stamps) become part of daily life of the people. The secret of banal nationalism therefore lies in the use

of "we", "them", and "here"[8](ibid.:93-94). For the citizens of the Emirates the comparatively high level of economic and technological sophistication as opposed to its state of abject poverty in the 70's remains a continuous source of pride and one that is often repeated in the press. For e.g. the editorials of newspapers in the UAE often engage in issues concerning the nation especially on its rapid development, state of art infrastructure etc. Again in Anderson's terms this further serves to contribute to imaginings of a national homeland.

Andrew Thompson contends that when scholars talk of shared values and common culture they often tend to employ a reified notion of nation as existing over and above social relations. He maintains that nations and national identities are actively organized and socially constituted .A more common place and common sense understandings of nations helps in understanding the practical aspects of reproduction of categories of nation and national identities and how people actively employ a 'common sense stock of knowledge' about them[9] (Thompson, 2001:21).In the course of interactions with others, taken for granted categories like national identity is expressed, locally produced and individuals reflectively locate themselves in relation to others in terms of belongingness. Most of the theories in debates of nationalism are based on the modern, democratic states of Europe making it difficult to uncritically incorporate the theories without challenges. The analysis would therefore, be informed by theoretical insights of authors who have specifically worked on a sociological as well as political analysis of the Arab state.

II

THE NATURE OF THE ARAB STATE

In this section I will attempt a survey of how Arab authors have considered the Arab state and its role in society and specifically locate the case of UAE. Classifying Arab states in terms of general typologies can reveal too much or too little about the state in Arab countries. For instance when one classifies a state as a 'monarchy 'or as an

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[8] He terms this process as "flagging " and as the "banal reminders" that forms the background of nationalism
[9] In employing illustrating this active social dimension Thompson borrows from the works of Schutz and Garfinkel

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'authoritarian 'state it does reveal certain elementary features. However it misses out on the diversities and intricacies in the actual social structures of the individual political institutions in the Arab countries. Some of the Arab states are monarchies that are based on religious or tribal legitimacy whereas others follow a party system or are military based regimes and also differ despite the generalities (Tibi, 1985:48-51).

Defining the Arab state

While talking of the state, Weber underlines the concepts of domination in terms of 'monopoly of legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' and explains it in relation to the other concepts of 'Legitimations of domination' namely – 'traditional', 'charismatic' and 'legal'(Weber,1970:77-79). However, the States in the Middle East cannot merely been seen in terms of legitimacy or social political integration enforced by an intimidation of state force. According to Nazih Ayubi a more appropriate definition of a state in the Middle East would be for the perspective of Gramsci. Gramsci writes that, 'the state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (Ayubi, 2006:4-10).

The problem with assuming 'essence'

The assuming of an 'essence' in terms of religion or language in studies of Arab states has generally runs into certain epistemological difficulties. Particularly as assuming cultural and historical 'essentialism' sees 'Islamic' societies as sharing "essential elements which mark their history and limit the possibilities of their social and political development in the present"(Zubaida, 2001:122). The main thrust of his argument is that a shared 'ethnie' (if we may borrow Smiths term) was the product and not the cause of nationalism. Socio-political processes and economic processes thus become important in the formation of a nation into a state and the modern state then establishes a 'national political field'. Zubaida takes Anderson's arguments further when he says that once the new states are established, their very existence promotes the genesis of new 'imaginaries' of the nation: common education systems incorporating the symbols of state power as nation, education feeding into employment markets for the most part dominated by the state, national networks of

communication and transport contributes to conceiving a nation within a boundary even if it is a newly formed state (Zubaida, 2001:148).

Other scholars like Martin Kramer accounts for this transformation as coming about with authoritarian state rule and patronage, when with the end of colonialism political separateness became a crucial dimension of nation-states in the Middle East.:

> For now and in the foreseeable future no other identity can compete effectively with the separate identity promoted by the twenty something Arab states. Yes these people are Arabs and the great majority are Muslims. But for purposes of political identification most prefer to call themselves Egyptians and Iraqis, Jordanians and Moroccans, Palestinians and Syrians...the focus of practical loyalties for most of their citizens or subjects[10]. (Kramer,1993)

The Arab State and Oil

There seems to be no easy explanations as the formation of political entity in the Arab region are extremely uneven and varied. A typical Marxist understanding of the state considers the state in terms of a coercive instrument of the bourgeoisie. The discovery of oil has in many ways consolidated the roles of traditional elites who generally allocate most of the society's financial resources. Politics in the middle East, therefore, took on an 'articulated'nature between certain economic and technical elements of capitalist modes of production and socio-cultural elements of pre-capitalist modes of coercion and persuasion (Ayubi, 2006 :27, 225). In simple terms a 'circulation' system of sorts emerged whereby the ruling class remains in many respects 'fairly autonomous from the production process and the social classes [11](ibid.:24-25). He writes that tribal relations are expressed socially and politically in

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[11] ibid Ayubi states that in the "circulationist economies ' of the Gulf classes cannot be identified in the Marxian sense, ie in terms of its relationship with the means of production, as production processes are negligible in a predominantly export oriented oil economy. Rather classes are identified by their consumption patterns. He writes that in Middle Eastern societies horizontal stratification of classes, elites etc are interconnected with elements of vertical differentiation like tribes, sect, ethnies etc(Ibid:175).Besides the relations of production are not typically capitalist as labor(mainly foreign) is not free floating but subject to various legal. political and pre-capitalist practices

the development of clientalist[12] networks and 'other arrangements' that categorize the relationships between the groups and the state (ibid.:33).

Though the actual techniques of preserving status quo vary in each of the Arab states, the ruling class strives to co-opt with other sections of the society in a 'consociational'manner[13]. For instance, Ayubi cites Mohammed Abdallah Al-Mahmoud's study of politics in the UAE .The UAE follows a federal system of governance, but at the same time the system also bases itself on balance of powers, counter balances, alliance building and other techniques with significant groups. In the UAE two of the largest emirates, Abu Dhabi and Dubai can exercise mutual veto which is again is a quasi-'consociational' feature.

The Rentier State

One body of literature attributes these unusual forms of political frame in the Gulf Arab States to oil wealth locating it in the frame of the Theory of the 'rentier state'. A rentier state is defined as," a state where the bulk of derived rent is received by the government and the rent provides the greater part of the state's income" (Bromely, 1994:98). A rentier society therefore refers to a society where the majority of the population is involved in the development and distribution of the rent. According to Beblawi and Delacroix the 'rentier' or distributive state performs a unifying function. The state secure citizen loyalties through use of its wealth and through what it shares with whom. The state therefore takes hold of the chief responsibility of planning and use of natural resources and investments from other countries (Beblawi,1987; Delacroix, 1980).The State also creates classes through general public expenditure, providing employment in bureaucracies, land policies etc. For instance state owned land might be distributed or sold to selected citizens for business or other activities and later on repurchased by the state at a higher price. Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE are states that show a rentier nature because of the revenues that

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[12] Refers to a form of client-patron relationship.

[13] According to Al –Mahmoud consociationalism can be seen as a continuum that involves loose alliances for seeking common ideological, political and economic benefits to the federal arrangement with a recognized structure for greater consensus. Cited in Ayubi, 2006 :246

accrue from oil export. Government expenditure is therefore dependent to a large extent on oil revenues (Ayubi, 2006:310-311)[14].

The revenues that accrue to the state are allocated and distributed by the state. This has given the state and extremely important social and economic role. In the UAE for instance, every citizen is supposedly 'entitled 'to three plots of land for housing, planting and business activities (Ayubi, 2006:229). Extensive social welfare schemes provide free housing and land, marriage funds, financial assistance to widows or divorced national women etc to UAE citizens[15]. At the same time, the UAE does not confirm to the exact definitions of the 'rentier state' in the sense that the government actively encourages enterprising activities by its citizens[16]. Like other Arab states, with economic growth the UAE has sought to consolidate social solidarity within ruling families and a network of tribes and other families .For instance, in the UAE, Ayubi observes that a considerable important posts like posts of ambassadors, higher committees, top positions in the army, in the security forces have been given to members of the ruling families and young princes (Ayubi, 2006:230)

Oil, State and socio-political implications

When we talk of wealth in the context of state, the discussion usually tends to steer towards the question of elites and the other classes. A typically Marxian approach looks at the elites as the privileged classes which command power and wealth and the non-elites as classes which do not posses these. C. Wright Mills explains how an understanding of power elites indicates three characteristics that are of socio-political significance. Since the power elites are composed of men who have a similar education, careers, and lifestyles, the similarity of their social type permits a unity that comes with an awareness of sharing prestige and interchangeable positions in the three dominant institutional orders of political directorate, corporate rich and military (Mills, 1958:2-19).

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[14] Despite oil prices having decreased, oil revenues still make up 48 -59 percent of the cumulated budgets of all Arab states during 1995-2003(League of Arab States, Consolidated Arab Economic Report ,2001,328)

[15] See further UAE Yearbooks section on 'Social Development' for further details on the extensive social welfare programs in the country.

[16]For instance the government encourages the citizens to invest in high storey buildings or businesses in the free plot that is provided through providing loans which can be paid back to the government once it becomes profitable. See further UAE Yearbooks section on 'Social Development'.

In the smaller Arab States like the UAE it is difficult to identify clearly the class of elites or non-elites in its national population. One of the main reasons is the lack of data. The other equally important reason is that the generous sharing of wealth by the state with its tiny national population and their integration in the political structures has made it difficult to identify classes in the wide sense of the term. There are no general theory and so academic work about it is limited (Perthes, 2004:3). To a certain extent socio-political and economic changes in the Arab countries in particular, have been directed and guided by leaders as well as members of the elites. Perthes attempts to identify this section of important individuals as Politically Relevant Elites[17] identifying PRE's in terms of their different degree of influence:

- The core elite – those who make decisions on strategic issues
- The intermediate elite – groups and individuals who make decisions on issues of lesser political significance
- The subelite – Less influential elite who indirectly influence strategic decisions and national agendas and discourses through their administrative position, interest organizations, lobbies, media etc.

However the PRE's differ from 'political class' in the sense that they include groups who do not compete for political leverage. They include functional segments of government, administration, military and other groups who exercise influence over national discourse. To a large extent they are opinion makers and advisors (Perthes, 2004:3-10).

Surendra Bhutani provides a rare account of how tribal loyalties are accommodated politically and economically in the UAE. He notes that there is 'labyrinthine complexity of local genealogical politics' in the distribution of government posts among important members. For instance, in the mid 70's the ruling Al-Nahyan tribe comprised of thirty sheikhs and their families. Many of the members of the tribe were from the beginning integrated into important posts within the government

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[17] This stratum comprises of people in a a given country who wield political influence and power in that they make strategic decisions or participate in decision making on a national level ,contribute to defining political norms and values (including the definition of "national interest" and directly influence political discourse on strategic issues(Perthes, 2004:5).

consolidating power through allocation of economic and political assets, a process which was assisted by the absence of political organizations or oppositional groups[18].

Concluding Comments

In this concluding paragraph a summary of the conclusions of the previous two sections is provided. The literature pertaining to nation-building is vast and varied just as the questions of the nature and origins of the state. In the UAE, political unification brought about an ethnically diverse population of people under a unified state[19]. Even as the emirates maintained a separate local administration, the 'state' was established formally as a unified federal state in 1971. It was called as *Dawlat al Imarat al Arabiyya al Muttahida* (The State of the United Arab Emirates) with a reinforcement of the 'state' in its name, one that is absent in other Gulf countries. Thus the character of the state as specified by Weber or Gellner can be seen here through the formal adoption of an administrative structure, a legal constitution and a demarked territory. The statement that was released on the day of its formation on 2 December, 1971:

> "The United Arab Emirates has been established as an independent state, possessing sovereignty. It is part of the greater Arab nation .Its aim is to maintain its independence ,its sovereignty ,its security and its stability in defence against any attacks on its entity or on the entity of any of its member Emirates. It also seeks to protect freedom and rights of its people ....a better life to its citizens , to give assistance and support to Arab cause and interests...".(UAE YEARBOOK, 2006)

The legal constitution based on the *Sharia,* the formal institutionalization of Islam in the state and the stress on Arab ties signals Smiths observation of sentiments and a collective Arab identity as tools for the process of nation building. Given the religion of the people and their Arab lineage a larger identification of the state with the community of Arab nation is seen. Following Smith's theorizing, in the case of the UAE it is found that an identity of mostly belonging to a tribe of the *Bedu* stock and

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[18] See also Jon duke Anthony,2001

[19] The seven emirates also had the potential to turn into independent states like the emirates of Qatar and Bahrain which became independent states.(Anthony,2001) .In practice today, each of the Emirates are entitled to their own Ruler

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other ethnic considerations may have served as functional tools for state mobilization of support for the newly formed state.

The instrumentalist position helps to understand why most official documents like the government Yearbooks, official statements in the press, and the official website of the UAE endorse the formation of the state to the collective will of the Ruler, Sheikh Zayed and the Rulers of other Emirates. The actual process of state formation required political negotiations and accommodation of ethnic ties politically and economically. Primarily oil wealth, a distributive economy and a massive social welfare infrastructure seemed to have provided a wide socio-economic base by which cultural ties could be overlapped in a political and economic setting. It also seems to have been the most important factor in transforming the different loyalties with each tribe onto the level of a unified national level as Bhutani, Ayubi and Zubaida observed; and also seemed to form a similar base for the other social institutions that developed in the country.

The 'invention' of certain 'traditions' seems to indicate the UAE's concern to present its national identities and also the legitimizing concerns of newly formed governments (Smith, Hobswam and Ranger). This conclusion seems to be strengthened by the government's attempts, facilitated by wealth, to develop political loyalties by emphasizing a common past and the distinction of its traditions over those of its similar neighbors. For e.g. the camel is often signified as the *Bedu* people's ties to the desert lands and the nomadic lifestyles of their ancestors. The date palm tree, which signified fruits and oases of the past, is today a main feature of identifying with the past[20] and embodied even in the architecture of certain constructions. Stressing on the connections with a past of relying on traditional vessels (dhows) for fishing and pearling, sailing has now become a national sport. The art of training falcons or horse riding has been adopted as a national sport. Consequently at times the more 'local' tradition is given importance over other traditions. This stress on heritage and tradition is reiterated at different levels including the press.

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[20] Many mega-projects are named after the date palm tree and its fruits and endorsed as an 'identification with the past'. For e.g.: 'the Jewel of the Palms',' Deira Palms' etc. Iconic representation of the palm tree is also seen in the design of modern architectural projects. For instance the Palm Jumeirah and the Palm Jebel Ali built on the man made islands of Dubai are shaped in the form of the date palm ,with the' trunk 'and the 'crown' protected by a sand fringed crescent shaped barrier reef.

However the reliance on communication and other ways to spread the idea of the nation came about after the formation of the state. The most important and immediate unifying factor seems to have been the generous sharing of power and wealth after the formation of state especially by making good on the promise of a "better life for the people". The massive social infrastructure served a unifying function in terms of the wide benefits it gave to the citizens of the country. In the light of these considerations it could be concluded that the various elements of the cultural attributes of nation-building in the UAE seemed to have been dependent on the functions and social service of the political entity made possible by the economic resources of oil. The implications for media that these conclusions seem to hold is significant as will see in the next two chapters.

<div align="center">III</div>

THEORIES OF THE PRESS

In this section on mass media certain specific theories of the press that would inform analysis of press and society of the UAE would be reviewed. Mass media as a social institution includes print media, radio, TV, telecommunication and so on. Thompson defines mass communication as "the institutionalized production and generalized diffusion of symbolic goods via the transmission and storage of information/communication" (Thompson, 1990: 219). It is different from other means of communication as it requires a formal structural organization to meet large scale capital, production and management demands. Its products are intended for a large, heterogeneous audience subject to controls imposed by the norms and values of society. The nature of communication between the producers and receptors of mass media could be impersonal, simultaneous or even interactive in nature (McQuail, 1969: 7-10). Like any other social institution the mass media also varies in structure and content according to different economic, political and socio-cultural context.

Generally speaking a sociological approach to the study of mass media is different from that which students of mass communications would recommend. Schudson writes that since 1972, sociology of media developed in three main directions. It can broadly be summarized as research that fall into the neo-Weberian thought emphasizing on concepts of organization, occupation, production and market, neo –

Marxian school of concepts of hegemony and ideology and neo-Durkheimian perspective of culture, ritual, and the public reception of culture (Schudson, 1994: Chapter 3).

The institutions of mass media as well as its content are embedded in social realities. Therefore a sociological study of mass media grounds itself on the processes and social structures of mass media in relation to society. In the neo Marxist Frankfurt school critical theorists consider mass communication as the principal method by which dominant ideology is communicated to a class of people. Generally these debates while framing the importance of mass communication in modern societies tended to lean towards a theory of state organized and ideologically secured social reproduction. For instance, Althusser regards state apparatuses as playing a central role in the dissemination of 'ideology' [21] (Althusser, 135-140).

This kind of characterization of mass communication as an institution of the state tends to overlook the important role of mass communication in political and social life and the way contents are produced and received in every day life. It also tends to overlook the interrelations among different agencies of mass communication and their relations with the state and other institutions. Some of the early academic works by Milton and Stuart Mills on the press focused on the role of the press as the "fourth estate" in politics. Subsequently other works emerged that situated the press within the framework of social theory. Keeping in mind the specificity of this study namely the press in the UAE such relevant literature would be briefly examined below.

The Press and the community

Benedict Anderson situates press in the framework of a social theory of the rise of nationalism. According to him the newspaper is in some ways a 'cultural product'. Providing an account of everyday news it provides a record of events that share 'calenderical coincidence'. In its relation to the market Anderson suggests that newspapers are an 'extreme form of a book' sold on a large scale and a 'one –day best seller'. Anderson writes that reading newspapers involves individuals in an

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[21] 'Repressive state apparatus' consists of government , the civil service, the police ,courts ,prisons ,army etc .The 'Ideological state apparatus 'consists of socio –legal institutions like family, schools, religious institutions, political systems ,mass communication etc (Althusser, 135-140)

'extraordinary mass ceremony 'of 'consumption' of newspapers in the process of reading it. He cites Hegel's remark that newspapers serve as the modern man's substitute for morning prayers. Anderson says that,

> Each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being
> replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions of others of whose
> existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest
> notion (ibid.:35).

In this process of an 'extraordinary mass ceremony 'a community feeling grows into national consciousness and nationhood. In this manner newspapers shape a reading public. Through print people became aware of themselves as well as others in the same language. In imagining themselves in relation to others a nationally imagined community is created and becomes the basis for the modern nation.

The press and people's participation

Jurgen Habermas also provides a social theory of the press but from a different angle. According to him newspapers are "the public spheres preeminent institution" (Habermas, 1989:181) He begins by tracing the origins of public sphere in the 18th Century to its transformation in the 20th Century. Habermas defines public sphere as follows:

> The sphere of private people come together as public; they soon claimed
> the public sphere regulate from above against the public authorities
> themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing
> relations in the basically privatized but relevant sphere of commodity
> exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation
> was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of
> their reason. (Habermas, 1989:27)

Newspapers, coffeehouses and salons of 18th century England provided a social space for private individuals to discuss very public issues and confront the activities of the state through the public use of reason. Originally 'public sphere' developed out of medium of print and face-to face interaction in a 'shared public locale' and was limited to an educated class. The literate bourgeoisie, therefore, engaged in argument that was in principle open and unconstrained. However the growing

commercialization of media and changing characteristics of media industries led to commercial capital directing development of news to extent that made news itself a commodity. He addresses this process as "refeudalization" of the public sphere. In other words private groups, and organizations based on profit began to direct and decide the flow of information .By the end of the 19th Century the "newspaper" became a medium for culture as much as "an object of communication"(ibid.:183). In the 20th Century the concept of public opinion is replaced by something like publicity in the modern sense of the term in which a mass public is manipulated by commercial and political interest groups. In such a situation only multiple organizations and organized publics can exercise effective influence (Outhwhite: 1996).

Thompson says that the speed with which mass communication systems have developed forces a new reorienting the traditional dichotomies of 'private' and 'public' that conveyed the public –private dichotomy in terms of publicness versus privacy, with openness versus secrecy, with visibility versus invisibility. The distinction between public –private dichotomy as it has emerged in Western political discourse has certain connotations. According to this sense, 'public' means 'open or available to the public' what is 'private' is what is 'hidden from view'. (Thompson, 1995).He observes:

> being available to a plurality of recipients reveals an intrinsically public
> character in the sense that they are 'open' or 'available to the public'
> .The content of media messages is therefore rendered public ,made
> observable to a multiplicity of individuals who may be and are typically
> scattered across diverse and dispersed contexts(ibid.: 31)

While looking into the impact of media and the growth of complex communication networks, Thompson articulates a rethinking of the relation between power and visibility through the development of 'mediated publicness' and how it alters the exercise of political power (Thompson, 1995).

Participation and non-European Society

Mehdi Abedi and Michael Fischer is of the opinion that the whole notion of public sphere in Habermas' terms poses problems while considering the distinctiveness of

Arab culture. They point out that the Arab and Islamic world "has a totally different presuppositional basis than the democratic ideological presuppositions of 'public', 'public culture', 'publicity' that characterizes the discourse of bourgeois polities of Western Europe and the United States"(Abedi and Fischer, 1993).Along the same lines Dale F Eickelman and Jon W Anderson talk of a new sense of public or a distinctly Muslim public sphere which is being "shaped by increasingly open contests over the authoritative use of the symbolic language of Islam"(Eickelman and Anderson,1999:1-2).

Public sphere as an analytical category

The idea of a public sphere might be valuable to this research because it opens up scope for discussion about participation and involvement of individuals[22] of one goes beyond the historical implications or Western history of the term to import only the academic aspect of Habermas' debate into the study. Through a concept of public sphere that is infused with certain capabilities one could arrive at an understanding of the public sphere that is in line with the political and socio-cultural realities of the society in UAE. The alternate expressions of the public sphere examined above might help to understand people's participation and the institutional relationship of media in UAE society. Alternatively, the nexus quality would also illustrate other key areas closely related to the public sphere like the concerns of nation-state, the segmentation of audiences according to demographies, the availability of internet etc. Furthermore, the category of public sphere allows for a workable aid to comprehend people's participation in political process, the role of capital, the changes in social and institutional relations and the transformations in media and society in general.

The press and state-society relationship

A classical framework for theorizing press studies in relation to society was first developed by developed by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schram in 1956. The four fold typology classified the press according to the form of political government. The main features in brief are as follows:-

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[22] .It is the characteristic of opinion formation and response to media messages which makes communication public in character

- The Authoritarian press theory refers to press in societies where its position is subordinated to a ruling class, monarch or government and state, subject to legislations and subordinate to the authority of the state. It institutional features are marked by a censorship of content and a less freedom to media professionals. This model assumes a top-down approach locating the press under the larger institution of the state.

- The 'Libertarian theory 'elaborates on the features of press in a liberal democratic society. The institution of the press is marked by diversity, variety, freedom of choice, with the specific intention of assisting the capacity of people to express popular sovereignty through a rational debate. The media is also directly linked to market choices and liberal economy.

- The Social responsibility theory locates media institutions as negotiating between media freedom, individual's freedom and choice and the media's responsibilities towards the society at large. The media does not engage in communication that would disrupt social order and diversity is reflected in the choices of media available to the public, freedom to express opinions etc.

- The Soviet Media Theory refers to a framework explaining media practices in the Soviet Union. The press generally functions as a tool to communicate the principles of communism. The media under state ownership, therefore, aids mobilization of people towards social and economic goals and maintain social control.

Mass Media in the Arab Region: A Brief Overview of Literature

Any study on media in Arab society would require a brief examination of the broad debates concerning the media in Arab societies. A comprehensive review of the history of Arab press is given by Ami Ayalon who traces the first Arab printing presses in mid-18th century Ottoman Empire, to written presses in Egypt, Syria, Iraq etc, its relation with colonialism and the World Wars and so on (Ayalon, 1995). As stressed before, scholarly works on media and communication in the Middle East States and the Arab states are vastly scattered and undertaken from different viewpoints. In many respects sociological research in this field is even preliminary and is generally restricted to studies of diplomacy and control. According to my

understanding media discourses concerning the Arab States has tended to lean towards the following broad areas of study :-

Media and Modernization

This type of research includes works that link mass media with modernity or development in the Arab states. Daniel Lerner presented one of the most detailed study of the process of modernization, development of communication and its relation with tradition and communication in the Middle East. He arrives at two concepts – 'empathy 'the ability to imagine oneself in place of another, and 'media multiplier' to indicate individual's capacity to experience events in terms of alternative 'modern' lifestyles. He strongly emphasizes the cultural role that media plays in cultural transformations linked with the rise of modern societies (ibid.:1958). However Lerner fails to account for the enduring significance of religion in Middle Eastern societies. One reason could be his view of modernization as a steady transition from 'tradition' to 'modernity'.

With the coming of other forms of technologies other than print media it has been increasingly found that people organize their daily lives in a manner as to integrate elements of tradition with new styles of life. There seems to be a whole lot of upcoming literature on new technologies like Internet and its impact on Arab communication. These studies for instance, mainly adopt a communication studies perspective elaborating on the 'Information Revolution', cyberspace and its impact on regulation and control over Arab audiences (Anderson, 1998:1-33).

Media and Culture and Religion

Studies of this kind also often focus on a perspective of media and its relation with 'Arab culture' or Islam. Studies on the issues of culture and the religion of Islam assumes a "cultural invasion paradigm" that reads media in Arab societies in terms of a normative distancing from the West (Hafez, 2000). Dagmar Glass discusses Arab-Islamic information and communication sciences ignored by Western academia, detailing on five different directions of information and communication theory in the Arab World, and focusing on the imbalance in global media flow through the concepts of re-Islamization or re-Arabization of information(Glass, 2001:217-

240).According to Eickelman these readings are being evaluated through a consideration of transformation of religious and political relationships with authority through the influences of mass education and communication (Eickelman : 2000:130). Nilufer Gole says that "the Islamization of ways of life" can be seen in the emergence of Islamic areas of communication (Islamic Radio and Television), banking (without interest) and new patterns of consumption (including fashion and tourism) in Islamic societies (Gole, 2000: 110-115).

Media, State and Society

Works on control and broadcasting generally cover the majority of the Arab available academic works on media. For instance, Douglas Boyd writes on changes in certain Arab states like Egypt and its relationship with the state under changing political conditions and rise of Arab nationalism (Boyd: 1975:645-653). This kind of literature also varying looks into diplomacy and state technologies. For instance, Boyd analyses the impact of Saudi ownership of national and regional broadcasting enterprises. Boyd argues that Saudi Arabia supports foreign based enterprises in order to continue to influence the Kingdom's image in the Arab world and beyond; and also to basically stabilize the Saudi political system as such (Boyd, 2001:43-59).

A different attempt at theorizing the press in the Arab states has been undertaken by William Rugh. The theoretical underpinning of his study is from the "The Four Theories of the Press" by Seibert (Siebert: 1956). Taking similar models Rugh provides an analysis of press from macro-sociological perspective of media and their impact on society[23]:-

- The Mobilizing press is found in –Syria, Libya, Sudan, and pre-2003 Iraq. The press is characterized as a quasi –tool of political parties of the state. It takes its name for " its mobilizing capabilities" especially to orient people's thinking to that of the political authorities

- The Loyalist press –refers to the press in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman the UAE and Palestine. Its most prominent characteristic is that the presses are

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[23] His typology of Arab is drawn from an analysis of prominent commonalities in the press and society relationships in 18 Arab countries

consistently loyal to and supportive of the regimes in power in spite of being privately owned.

- The Diverse press –refers to press in Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco and Yemen. Its most distinguishing factor is that the press reflects diverse political tendencies of the society, encourages discussions and differs in content and style.

- The Transitional press –refers to the press in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Algeria. This type of press is complex and difficult to identify primarily because of the steady changes that frequently characterize the press and society relationship. Though there are governmental controls these press seems to also have freedom and diversity of expressions. (Rugh,2004)

What one gathers from the above readings is that the task of forming a perspective on media in individual Arab countries is difficult. One of the reasons is that some of these works treat 'Arab media 'as a whole without accounting for individual differences that exists among the different Arab countries. An attempt to acknowledge this difference is made in Rugh's study. By far; his account seems to trace the most comprehensive account of Arab media systems in the Arab countries. It also seems to provide a comprehensive data that could be used for academic works. A more specific country oriented study of media would permit a closer examination of the press in terms of its relationship with the history of the country, the nation-building process, and its relation with other institutions like religion, family, kinship ties and so on.

CHAPTER – III

PRESS AND SOCIETY IN THE UAE

This chapter addresses the institution of the press and its relationship with societal institutions which will be broadly addressed under the headings state, religion and market for the sake of some clarity. The intention of this examination is to identify certain areas of the press that are generally interpreted narrowly or simply taken for granted in most studies of Arab media. The focus would be on how the political, economic and social realities in Arab societies influenced by the structure, content and audiences of these countries have resulted in certain institutional features. To understand why the press produces certain contents or how audiences interpret or react to its contents one must comprehend the structural relations between the press and the social systems of society. Broadly, it could be translated into three section based on three questions namely: -

- What is the relationship of the press to the political institution of a society?
- What is of the press with traditions and values?
- What is the relationship of wealth or market to the press?

An attempt to seek answers to such questions would hopefully indicate press and society relations in a deeper context.

In the 1960's there were virtually no newspapers in the UAE except a few rarely imported ones from India and England. The press like other mass media akin to radio and television had a nascent history in the UAE, experiencing a sustained growth along with the economic and social development of the state (Babbili and Hussain, 1994; Appendix 2). According to Pye in newly developing countries in post colonial Asia and Africa 'there is a peculiarly intimate relationship between the political process and the communication process' particularly as they consider the media as a tool for 'modernization, development and nation-building and as especially helpful in the forging of a new national identity'(Pye,1963). The early nation-building

foundations and the media's relationship with the social and economic institutions in society seem to have set the base for the press and state[1] relationship in the UAE.

I

PRESS AND THE STATE

Before we examine the relationship of the press with other institutions in society we would examine certain general features of the press as given by scholars that would serve a base for further study. The press in the UAE like the ones in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman Palestine is considered as a "loyalist " press(Rugh,2004).The loyalist press takes it name from its most prominent characteristic:

> 'That the newspapers are consistently loyal to and supportive of
> the regime in power despite the fact that they are privately owned'
> (Rugh, 2004:59).

Despite the press being privately owned the content of the press on important political matters are nearly similar. The press in the UAE does not engage in criticisms of the leaders of the nation. At times the papers criticize certain government services which the general public finds wanting. But even then criticisms tend to be relatively mild and non-aggressive without in any case casting any doubt on the top leaders of the country .Print in the UAE does not carry any material that is pornographic, violent, derogatory to Islam, supportive of certain Israeli positions, unduly critical of friendly countries, or critical of the ruling families (ibid.:66).Despite the legal restrictions, incidents of legal actions against media personnel are rare. In reality, the boundary between what issues can be publicly dealt with are very ambiguous in the UAE. The influence and controls over the press are indirect and subtle and cannot be discerned when one reads the newspapers themselves (Rugh, 2004).

(It is these ambiguities that often accounts for studies of Arab media to focus on government and control) These subtleties and ambiguities seem to pose certain difficulties to international evaluations of press features by agencies like Reporters

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[1] A simplified working definition of a state is that it is an abstract concept of institutions and personnel that can use legitimate force in a territorial society under certain normative conditions or an ethical code.

Sans Frontiers, Freedom House, Arab Press watch etc. For instance, a survey of the World Press Freedom Reports from 1998-2004 we would read a typical report that hints at a 'relatively free' environment 'despite' the formal restrictions by the UAE laws, the 'state being one of the most tolerant regions in the Gulf' and the 'liberal nature of the country' and 'self-censorship' when it comes to 'ruling family, government and Islam'((www.freemedia.at/cms/ipi/freedom_detail.html). The Reporter Sans Frontiers' Annual reports also seems to signal certain confusions, especially seen in the widely different rankings that it gives to the state every year (www.rsf.org). One of the problems with such reports is that, the institutional frameworks for grading seems to arise out of very different contexts, often with very different beginning assumptions about the shape of 'civil society' or the role of 'democratic processes'. The traditional vocabularies of press freedoms therefore, cannot be thoughtlessly applied in many cases.

Yet, these reports uniformly suggest a common feature of "self censorship" that dominantly characterizes the press in the UAE. How do we account for these features like "loyalty" and "self-censorship" in a sociological analysis and relate it to the institution of the press? The problem with such "grading" or measuring of freedoms is that it overtly seems to characterize an environment rather than letting the institutional framework speak for itself. It is at this point that the insights gained in the second chapter come of help. In the section that follows I will attempt an elaboration of the institution of press in the UAE and also make certain references that account for its differing features.

Press and Legal Laws

To begin with let us examine the press its relation to the official laws of the state. Social institutions of society could be understood as providing the society with certain kinds of resources with which to respond to social strain and social conflict. Generally speaking the legal system is the institution most commonly associated with social control. Laws, therefore, can be seen as legal formulations that are supposedly consistent with the norms of a society and also a formal expression of power relations. Mass media as an institution in the society is also subject to the laws of the state.

In the UAE, the press is guided by rules that are formally laid down in the Constitution of the country. The UAE constitution "allows the publication of any material, as long as publication does not breach the bounds of responsibility that goes with such freedom". The Publishing Law of 1980 in the UAE explicitly states that the press cannot criticize the ruling family or friendly countries. It cannot carry names of crime victims, propagate religion, and promote liquor, sex or pornography through its materials. All materials that are published are subject to censorship under Federal Law 15 of 1988. At times one can point out certain legal restrictions in the press law. The UAE Publishing and Printing Law 1980 for e.g. include more than 15 articles with "shall not". However boundaries for the press have generally been very ambiguous (Appendix 3, also Gulf News, May 3, 2005)

These laws indicate how formal mechanisms of control of information are exercised. In most societies though there is a legally specified relationship between the state and the media, the relationship in reality is far from direct. Similarly in the UAE there is an abundance of writings which signal that these formals control are not applied in practice (Rugh, 2004; www.gulfnews.com/archives; www.khaleejtimes.com/archives) Examining media laws alone in Arab countries obscures the dynamics of the systems as they do not mention other influences in the media that cannot be understood without reference to certain institutional arrangements in society. There are a number of other institutions that come between the legal system and media institutions like religious bodies, associations and economic institutions that influence the press

Press and Its Organizational Base

Mass media in any country is often organized into formal, complex structures with elaborate division of labor and legally guided by certain laws of the state. Generally speaking to understand 'how content is created and under what conditions and its availability to audiences' one must bring at least a brief analysis of organization into the study.. The way media is organized also reflects upon the society in which it is based and also suggests its engagements with the public. Besides, the product of press is also a creative human act of a set of social, economic and political institutions and practice. I would broadly adopt these frames to guide this chapter and attempt to go beyond a direct state- media relationship. Doing so would hopefully provide for an

examination of a number of wider relations that the media engages with as a social institution in society. To begin with I would briefly examine what is the relationship of the press to the political institution of a society and subsequently look into the organization of the press in UAE.

Press and the Political Entity

Generally in liberal democratic countries private ownership of presses is identified as a key characteristic that provides for diversity of contents and choices to the people. The democratic tendencies of the media of providing forums for participation in political life, of making government processes more transparent, promoting citizen participation in government, strengthening civil society, advancing civil rights etc, does not merely stem from the institution of the media itself. Rather, this character manifests itself also because of a larger institutional framework and its development in relation to various institutions which include politics, economics, law etc. The press as the other media assists public to act in their capacity as voting citizens. In such places representation, taxation and government are interlinked leading to the recognition that the tax payers should have some say in how their governments are run. The American Revolution, for instance began with a view of "no taxation without representation."

The most distinctive aspect of some of the Gulf Arab states is a small national population and access to enormous wealth (from oil) without any taxation from the people. The governments provide a wide array of services directly and indirectly to their citizens in the form of heavily subsidized education, health care, housing consumer goods and services, direct and indirect financial benefits, wide social security benefits at little or no cost. For e.g. In the UAE state employment of citizens reaches more than 75% based on anecdotal evidence. Consequently employment can be seen as a benefit supplied by the rulers; it can also be seen as a right due to citizens. In such a case, the government is a political tool, increasing the leverage that the state has over society. For instance, the entire federal structure of the United Arab Emirates was developed after independence in 1971, alongside the expansion in the bureaucracies of each of the seven emirates themselves (Gause III, 1994:Chapter3).

Some authors like Luciani believe that the rentier foundations of the state partly explain why states like the UAE can act autonomously from society in certain cases. He writes that in states supported by taxes from the people there is an obligatory basis to respond to societal pressure. However in the case of rentier states, the state economically supports the society- providing private revenue through government expenditure, and hence does not need to respond to society. This conclusion of a direct link between rent, political order and accountability and participation of people is far from direct. Rather it necessitates a more complex historical and circumstantial analysis[2] (Luciani,1995: 211-212). The relationship between state and society and the mass media in such countries are very different from the models in the West. Kai Hafez writes that Arab media's ability to influence or even manipulate society and politics should not be overstated. Contradictory and sometimes puzzling findings about media effects and media coverage are evidences for the fact that the mass media are not omnipotent, but that their products are in fact manipulated by audiences and the public(Hafez, 2000:13).

Press and the Political Entity: An examination of Owners and personnel

A Marxist approach relates the question of power to the ways in which media is connected to the state as instruments of the ruling class. According to Colin Sparks who provides a sociological reading from a Marxist perspective, the state is the ultimate guarantee of interests of capital and not the neutral guardian of all people equally as it purports to be. He distinguishes between the government and the state and says their influences over media are also different. In a democratic society, the government consists of a small influential section of the population. The state on the other hand, is 'large; and staffed by 'professional 'people in various sectors of the state's rational, bureaucratic norms. Providing an explanation in terms of the social personification of capital he says that the rich and powerful at the apex of society including the press barons and broadcasting chiefs have a 'surprisingly high degree of shared experiences". Those who people the state and the media hold similar lifestyle,

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[2] The UAE, as indicated in chapter II, shows a slight variation from the rentier state model as inspite of the massive social infrastructure it actively encourages and rewards entrepreneurship and citizens are encouraged to contribute to the country.

and a common ideology is an important way by which the state influences the media. Therefore, as powerful social institutions –and predominantly private businesses- all mainstream media tend to fundamentally support the capitalist state. At the same time the state definitions tend to be reproduced in the media, without any conscious indication of a 'conspiracy taking place'. This could be through a process whereby the media adopts the definitions of the state. Its possibility comes about because:

> The media rarely offers an independent interpretation of an event: rather
> they report the opinion of others, very often the spokespeople of the state
> or more narrowly the government. These people define the issues for the
> media and set the terms for all subsequent debate (Ibid, 1986:76-86).

Golding and Elliott write that, in between the assumed needs of audiences and the pressures of news production lies news values. When news is assessed as a coherent view of the world it moves from news values to social values. News is ideology to the extent it provides an integrated view of reality but as an ideology it goes beyond these definitions. It is the world view of particular social groups and especially of social classes. As Peter Golding and Philip Elliot writes news as ideology implies that it provides a world view both consistent in itself, and in the interests of powerful social groupings. Consequently news is structured by the contingencies of organized production that:

> allow only a partial view of the reported world which may or may not
> coincide with a ruling ideology. The historical process by which this
> coincidence occurs is more than accidental, and is rooted in the
> development of news as a service to the elite groups[..] thus most of the
> basic goals and values which surround journalism refers to the interests
> and needs of these groups....In the case of broadcast journalism the
> complex relationship with the state exaggerates this need to cling to the
> central and least challenged social values which provide implicit
> definition of actions and events as acceptable or unacceptable, usual or
> unusual, legitimate or illegitimate.(Golding and Elliot,1979:206-211)

Press, Owners and Personnel in UAE

The social, cultural and political realities from which the Arab media emanates or operates and the specificity of Arab media calls for a subtler perspective. For one the notion of 'Authoritarian' Arab governments are not strict to the exact meaning of the term. Jon B Alterman writes that the notion of 'authoritarianism in the Middle East' is often misunderstood:

> It is not merely a top down system, and it has never been so .Every
> government in the region has to keep a watchful eye on public sentiment,
> and it has to balance coercion and cooptation-albeit in different measures
> at different times in different places (Alterman, 2001).

In the Arab countries as in those mentioned in the beginning go this chapter, the majority of presses tend to be under private ownership. However what makes it distinct from the liberal model is that despite being under private ownership, the loyalist press fundamentally exhibits similarity in national support and national content. Khalil Rinnawi says that traditional Arab media like both, written and electronic, are a kind of 'tribal media' operating within a defined geopolitical unit (state or other sociopolitical entities), with closed borders. The tribal media arrangement not only intended the maintenance of the political regime, but also maintained' the socio-cultural order and 'the cultural religious values that provided the foundation for the legitimacy of the existing political order' (Rinnawi, forthcoming).

One of the significant structural characteristics of the press in the UAE since 1975 is that the press is mostly owned by private individuals, families and groups (Rugh:63; also Appendix 2).Babbili and Hussain observe that some of the owners are "prominent families" from the emirate of Dubai and Sharjah(Babbili and Hussain, 1994:298-299). The specific nature of state with the people further complicates the nature of state and media relations. In the UAE the state has resorted to a 'consociational arrangement' whereby financial rewards, inter-familial and inter-tribal marriages, co-optation of religious institutions and local neighborhoods, renewed recognition of remote tribes were utilized to build tribal alliances in the 'state'(Ayubi,2006:241).Thus common ideological, political and economic benefits

are sought to arrive at a greater consensus. The political entity of the UAE not only incorporates socio cultural groups like tribes into the political and economic structure of the country through a distribution of power and wealth but also specifically includes socio-economic groups like businessmen and merchants in the same manner (Ayubi, 2006:194).

This nature of relationship that the government shares with its citizens seems to suggest that prominent Emarati families who own the press are often involved in many areas of both politics and business. Perthes indicates such 'influential people in the media' as functional groups of "sub-elites" in Arab society (Perthes, 2004:3-4). Ayubi says that tribal relations expressed socially and politically categorize relationships between individuals, groups and the state serve as 'functional interest – type' groups. This kind of wide leverage that results for the state over society, in terms of a direct link between the state authority and the citizens in most Arab countries, have resulted in a considerable diminution of the potentials for state opposition. Besides, the financial benefits that the press receives in terms of subsidies from the state also seem to suggest the susceptibility of the press to its influences. Kai Hafez writes that the border line between state and private capital becomes blurred because private owners are part of the power framework in which private and state interest are inseparably intertwined (Hafez, 2001:9).Also an equally important reason seems to be 'ties of loyalty' and tribal loyalties that act as a bind between relationships. Thus mutual interests seem to be an enduring reason for the support that the government receives from the privately owned press and hence it's peculiar nature of a "loyalist press".

Press and Personnel

In the context of examining press ownership one also has to examine the related issue of personnel in the press institution. Exploring media and society relations requires one to look within media institutions, their management practices and other patterns. The implication of this point is that media products are a result of collective factors that are again rooted in society structures. The products of the press namely news and entertainment, are produced by a set of identifiable organizations (namely the press).

Newspaper industries or the press are not merely political of commercial concerns but are also a social and cultural institution. As Robert .P Snow writes newspapers act as a 'microcosm of a community' providing information on a diverse topics like politics, international relations to sports and entertainment. He observes that:

> In providing this variety of information the newspaper facilitates interaction within every major and most minor institution in society .But the newspaper is more than a support system for the institutional network of society-it is an institution in and of itself (Snow, 1983:33).

The fact that the newspaper industry is set within certain social, economic and political institutions and practices, naturally, turns our attention to press personnel in the UAE considering the fact that most of them are foreign workers. Since a considerable period of time the majority of the population in the UAE has been expatriates with the national forming a tiny minority (Appendix 1).The press as an institution emerged after the formation of the nation-state in 1971 and the specific socio-demographic structure seems to have led to a huge dependence of the UAE press on foreign personnel which continues to date. Rough surveys available suggest that a total of more than 90 percent of the personnel in the press are foreigners.

Press and foreign personnel in UAE

In format the English and Arab newspapers appear to be similar .The successful ones run into 30 odd pages or so with additional supplements on business, finance, art and women. However apart from these outward similarities there are many differences. A majority of the media personnel in the Arab press in UAE include talented non-Gulf Arabs from the states of Egypt, Palestine and Jordan. The Arab press with Arab personnel caters to an Arab audience and is more closely tied to the political situations in the country and the Gulf region and tends to delve more deeply into local and regional news. The Arab press also has closer ties to the Arab culture expressed in the common vernacular language of Arabic.

The media personnel in The English press on the other hand are also made up of non-gulf Arab expatriates at the top levels with the remaining personnel from America,

Britain, Lebanon, Jordan, India, Pakistan etc. It tends to focus on news of interest to south Asians and British and Americans as they make up the bulk of readership. They also carry features and supplements that cover the culture and traditions of the wide expatriate populations. For instance the English press gives a wide coverage to news from Asia Generally a *Gulf News* paper on a typical day carries 38 pages of which only six carry news of the UAE ,while fourteen are on other places –two on the Middle East and Africa, five on the Indian sub-continent including India, Pakistan ,Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and two on the Philippines, two on Europe ,one each on the United States and Australia(Rugh,2004:70).Despite these variations there is a general agreement that there are no fundamental political differences between the two presses (Rugh ,1987; 2004)

The Press, Personnel and Professional Conventions in UAE

According to Schudson "professionalization of journalism" is an important institutional structure of the press and a defining characteristic. The absence of political associations in general and an incipient local personnel has affected the development of professional bodies of journalism in the country. One reason seems to stem from a socio-cultural disposition of not forming political unions, a feature that was markedly absent in history even at the time of the formation of the country. Attempts to build a strong professional body have been further affected by the non-availability of indigenous talent, tiny yet growing media institutions and so on. However, there have been efforts to establish a journalistic body like the Dubai Press Club and other similar associations recently.

Of course on the outset, it could be said that the lack of a collective representative body, or the fear of deportation from the country for violating press rules might have been an obvious factor that inhibits foreign personnel from publishing issues that are beyond the 'morals or civility' boundaries of the state. However as noted earlier actual incidents of legal action in the UAE over violations are rare. Consequently, an equally pressing if not less important reason again seems to stem from the rentier nature of the state and its ability to provide high incomes to the personnel. For instance, Rugh writes that salaries for press personnel seems to high enough to attract personnel from neighboring countries like Jordan and Egypt (to an extent that it has

even adversely affected the states involved)(Rugh, 2004:78).The non-combatative and supportive stand for the government or the state that the UAE press adopts seems to also arise from these features.

Concluding comments:-

This section, by far, indicated some of the ways in which the state influences the media. In fact this influence is not direct and stems from broader institutional settings. Most importantly, they are definitely not ones that command the most obvious public disapproval. Rather some of the most effective avenues of influence for the state seem to proceeds from the functioning of the political entity itself in terms of economy, its nature and ethnic ties that are integrated in the political and economic level. The close, direct link that the citizens has to the government points significantly to the fact that their interests are closely tied to that of the state. At a more general level, while dealing with the question of integration, McCormack has argued that the function fulfilled by the media in modern states is to integrate and to socialize, but not because of the failure of other institutions. The 'unique functions of mass media is to provide both to industry and society a coherence, a synthesis of experiences an awareness of a whole, which does not undermine the specialization which reality requires' especially in a changing society where experience is necessarily segmented (McCormack, 1961).The state in this case is not a static unchanging entity, which will be further illustrated in the next chapter.

II

THE PRESS, TRADITION AND RELIGION IN ARAB SOCIETY

Talking of ethnic ties naturally brings the discussion into somewhat related areas of religion, the issue of traditions and its relation with the press in UAE. More specifically it would open discussion into how patterns of social life even prior to the discovery of oil impacts in shaping modern institutions in Arab societies. If we see mass media in this light then we could say that media is not only influenced by politics but also by the social context of daily life. The content of media, then can also

be seen in the light of the 'social circumstances of production' bringing in considerations of how content is shaped by values or societal needs or what factors affect the spread and acceptance of media messages (McQuail, 1969:59).

As an institution of society the print media like other institutions in the UAE reveals certain features which cannot be understood without reference to other larger social institutions in the society. In the Western contexts religion has generally tended to be confined to the private sphere. On the contrary in Muslim societies there was no clear demarcation between the public and private or relegation of religion to the private sphere, as collective religious sentiments seems to negotiate lifestyle choices. The Holy Qur'an provides the foundation of Islam and is not merely a religion but also a way of life (Ahmed, 1999). Addressing the questions that arise in relation to the press in UAE and "Arab-Islamic values" could merit a study of its own. Without slipping into a cultural discourse at this point we will make brief attempts to address some of the issues at this point by beginning with examining the underlying philosophy that frames communication in UAE and followed by deeper complications later on.

Religion and Tradition: Implications in Communication

Modernization theory has long assumed, the declining role of religion and traditional religious institutions as part of the move to modernity .For instance Eickelman quotes Gellner as saying that "Muslim societies remained the exception to the pervasive trend towards a shared culture of nationalism with its ensuing fruits of modernity". He says that viewing religion as an alternative can be avoided when one looks at politics that goes beyond power relations and interests alone. It requires one to examine and understand the shared, often implicit ideas of what is just or religiously ordained. The problem with conceptualizing the Muslim –majority world as anti –modern is that it leads to a tendency to ignore the role of religion in an 'emerging public sphere'. With increasing technological growth, 'rise of communication media', ' mass higher education' and travel 'the public sphere in Muslim societies' have been rapidly expanding. Politics therefore is "a struggle over people's imagination, a competition over the meanings of symbols" (Eickelman, 2000).

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As elaborated in Chapter II Daniel Lerner writes about the significance of mass media in Middle Eastern society in the move to modernity. On the basis of a meticulously undertaken study he wrote that that mass media in its capacity as a 'mobility multiplier' would lead individuals to break away from traditional ways of thinking to develop modern, urbane styles oriented towards modernity. However, Lerner's study fails to account for the enduring significance of religion in Middle Eastern societies. For example he writes that:

> The symbols of race and ritual fade into irrelevance when they impede
> living desires for bread and enlightenment (Lerner, 1958:405)

Since Lerner, state authorities in the Arab countries have had to accommodate to globalization, industrialization and a overabundance of non –state actors all of which reshape the public discourse now as much as other forms of communication did in the past. Dale F. Eickelman writes that "the secular bias of modernization theory has had a significant role in deflecting attention away from the role of religious practices and values in contemporary societies, particularly the Muslim World. With the coming of additional forms of technologies other than print media it has been increasingly found that people organize their daily lives in a manner as to integrate elements of tradition with new styles of life. Increasingly then, tradition[3] is reshaped, enhanced, transformed or even strengthened through encounters with other ways of life (Thompson, 1995: 178). According to Durkheim society needs both religion and profanity.

Religion and Tradition: Implications for communication in UAE

Communication philosophies throughout the Gulf Arab region were guided and continue to be guided by the principles of Islam. Eickelman and Anderson say that much attention has been paid to how institutions formally recognized by the state provide agreed –upon boundaries of civility. Far less attention has been paid to means of communicating the "ties that bind"(The Holy Qur'an 31:32) that suggests how submission to Islam relates to the overlapping ties of kinship ,language and nations that contribute equally to creating institutions and a healthy dispersion of authorities (Eickelman, and Anderson,1999). The principles of Islam have led to certain cultural

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[3] Thompson defines it as *traditium*- that is anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past.

practices which have further become distinct from one another through the influence of regional and cultural practices. The pursuit and propagation of *ilm*(knowledge)is a very important facet of Islamic society and is one of the most frequently occurring theme in the Holy Qur'an.

As a nation-state the UAE has sought Arab, Islamic principles to inform and guide its population on developmental, cultural and political tasks. Keeping in line with Anthony Smith's account of 'ethnies' and the larger affiliation of "Arab, Islamic consciousness " that seems to mark the features of the UAE suggests that this larger identification of "Arab, Muslims" is a defining character of the nation-state of UAE and one which is still important in spite of the high degree of urbanization.. Furthermore, these larger ties are formally institutionalized at the level of the nation-state. Considering the wide base that the state seems to have in all institutions in the UAE, the feature also seems to be a defining one within the institution of the press. These principles are again reflected in its official objectives of sustaining and promoting communication with regional countries especially with the community of Arab nations (Babbili and Hussain, 1994) and also its legal endorsement in the press legislations.

In the UAE these principles are institutionalized in the state and also underline the institution of the press. The pressing intent of addressing this feature is to briefly demonstrate that it is not merely the state that exercises an influence over the press in UAE. Rather, other cultural institutions like religion, tradition and culture seem to play and equal if less publicized role vis-a vis the press in terms of influencing what contents would be of public interest, its functions for the readers, its visibility for the public etc etc. As Schudson writes:

> The news media's primary day-to day contribution to the wider
> society is that of cultural actors, that is, as producers and
> messengers of meanings, symbols, messages...They are part of
> culture, and culture as anthropologist Clifford Geertz, observed is
> not itself "a power, something to which social events, behaviors,
> institutions, or processes can be casually attributed," but "a
> context, something within which they can be
> intelligibly...described."(Schudson, 2003:24)

At the level of the press we could say that in order to reach a wide anonymous audience the press tries to establish a common ground for communication with its audiences. Media organizations provide symbolic content to audiences and in doing so they try to draw on the most broadly held common social values and assumptions. From this point of view, the media audience is not to be understood as passive receivers of content but as active social groupings who consume press contents in the context of their personal and social goals. When we consider this relationship it goes beyond a mere consideration of how content decisions or control is exercised. Rather it points our attention to an understanding of how the audience actively organizes and influence control. In the UAE press rhetoric or even changes in policies towards the media(incorporate and) point to public sensibilities, often addressed in terms of references to "the unique value system of the country", "respect the society's morals", "respect for values and beliefs" and "considering the unique culture of the country" and so on[4].

Though there are no clear studies undertaken to assess the 'conservative' sentiments of the people in UAE one sees public debates in the letters to the Editors column's in most papers revolving around 'Islamic values' or 'un- Islamic values'. There are other studies that indicate a public conception of what is morally right or wrong. For instance, a 2002 survey by Etisalat, the Internet providers in UAE, found 60% of its 14,000 domestic subscribers favored retaining filtering of internet for "offensive content" and 51% of surveyed subscribers "specifically felt that the proxy server protected family members while surfing online" (United Arab Emirates Yearbook 2004: Information and Culture ,254) An Open Net initiative[5] which assessed Internet blocking in the UAE found "little blocking of sites on domestic political issues or of news and media sources" and "political dissent". It concluded that the "UAE's broad filtering of Internet sites appears to be primarily based on cultural and religious concerns. Topics sensitive to or forbidden by the practice of Islam are generally inaccessible, while political and news sources remain largely unblocked" (Internet filtering in the UAE, 2004-2005). These "cultural and religious concerns" include

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[4] Refer archives in www.gulfnews.com;www.khaleejtimes.com
[5] The OpenNet Initiative is a collaborative partnership between three leading academic institutions: the Citizen Lab at the Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto; the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School; and the Advanced Network Research Group at the Cambridge Security Programme (Centre for International Studies) at the University of Cambridge.

pornography, sites derogatory to Islam, excessive violence etc which are again similar to the concerns expressed in press restrictions.

According to Eickelman the discussion of Islam in a public sphere has led to opening up of the political processes, i.e. a "democratization" of the politics of religious authority and the development of a standardized language infixed and disseminated by mass higher education, mass media , travel and mass migration (Eickelman :2000:130).According to Nilofer Gole, the incorporation of Islamic principles in every day life seems to have given rise to certain practices that are difficult to assess in the light of Western readings. For instance, she cites these as the emergence of Islamic areas of communication like Islamic radio, banking (without interest), new patterns of consumption and the formation of a new middle class showing that political patterns are now losing itself to social and cultural everyday practices(Gole,2000:110-115).

III

PRESS AND MARKET RELATIONS IN THE UAE

In this section on market[6] and media relations we will attempt to recount certain features of the press in relation to the market in UAE and specifically address the role of wealth. According to Habermas commercialization brought about a "refeudalization of the public sphere". The concentration of power in the hands of private, profit-making news organizations transformed the "newspaper into a medium for culture as an object of consumption" (Ibid: 181-183). Schudson believes that Habermas contribution lies in bringing about a recognition of how the issue of commercialization and so the market plays a role in the socio-organizational dimension of newspaper industries .According to him without necessarily resorting to terms like "refuedalization of public sphere" one can carry out a general analysis of how profit drives organization, production, content and reception of news(Schudson,2003:46). In this section we would adopt this broad approach to briefly address certain issues as per the available data.

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[6] A working definition of market is an area over which potentially infinite human wants are backed by money or purchasing power and where goods and services are exchanged.

All press in the UAE provide specialized information for commercial promotion (advertisements, commercial purposes etc).An average English or Arabic daily in the UAE appears similar to any successful daily in the West with business supplements and regular tabloids. The biggest indication of market and press relations is the growth in the number of press itself. The press has grown from merely two newspaper industries at the time of independence to around thirteen in a span of few years. Also, there are a total of 158 journals and magazines published in the country with 65 of them in Arabic and 93 in English (UAE Yearbook 2006, 263)

Press and Capital

Media organizations in the UAE are not characterized by what we would say is a typical left or right leaning in politics. Rather they are differentiated in terms of the risks that they are willing to take in terms of what they publish or broadcast. As indicated in the previous section the willingness to undertake risks seems to be influenced not only by ownership but also by capital both in the case of owner as well as media personnel. For instance, all print business like other business in the emirate must have an Emarati co-owner or sponsor. Such practices indicate certain patterns of a 'patronage' system and how certain traditional practices have been developed along with the new economic and social practices (Ayubi,2006 :226). Thus a full ownership of the press by foreigners is not possible except in the Media City. In UAE, the license applicant deposits the sum of 50,000 dirhams (approx. US$ 13,000) for every daily newspaper and 25,000 dirhams (approx. US$ 6,500) in other cases (Study of Media Laws and Policies in the Middle East and Maghreb,1999:14).

In the UAE, financial benefits by the government to the press seems to prominently feature of the press. While exact figures are not available we could say that the government provides revenue to the press in the form of official government advertisements and also subsidies. Rugh writes that in most Arab countries:

> because the government plays such an important role in the
> economy ...the commercial tenders, personnel notices, and other
> ads issued regularly by the ministries are voluminous, and typically
> they are the largest source of a daily newspaper's
> income(ibid.,2004:75)

We might say that these factors as well as the ones we discussed in the section on press ownership seems to hint at largely subtle ways in which profit and money characterize the press in UAE. These factors are yet to be accounted for in debates of the press in the UAE or in other Arab countries. Also these trends indicate forms of commercial censorship that seems to influence press functions in UAE.

Press and Profit

In most Arab countries surveys on media and circulation among different social groups are generally undertaken in a small capacity for marketing studies. There are only rough indications of circulation figures (Appendix 4). Rugh notes that between 1976-86, newspapers circulations grew in the UAE from 8000 to 198000, with the total number of dailies growing from two to eight (Rugh, 1987:72-3).Again the circulation has definitely increased from 87- 2003 (see Appendix 4). According to the Arab Press Watch despite the demand for greater clarity about circulation numbers, newspapers in the UAE have not yet started taking the necessary steps to undertake detailed auditing studies. The data is also restricted in terms of its availability to researchers or public policy officials. Yet, the high rate of consumption and income in certain Arab countries (including the UAE seems to indicate that brand advertising is more developed in these countries (Alterman, 2005:204). The 2004 Yearbook states in comparison to other media in the UAE the maximum advertising revenues have accrued to newspapers. One indication of this trend is that these trends have encouraged a widening press industry in the UAE. There are other indications of wide profits to newspapers. For instance, in the past couple of years Gulf News provides its annual subscribers with redeemable Gift vouchers that are equivalent to the annual subscription costs.

There seems to be growing indication of how profit seems to guiding or even laying the grounds for a diverse media in the UAE. These indications include privatizing ownership of media agencies including the press continue as well as the growth of the media market in general(Rugh,2004). The other more obvious sign of profit directing press and broadcasting policies are indicated by the Dubai government's initiative of setting up the Dubai Media City. Dubai Media City emerged as a focal point of media activity in the region in January 2001, as part of the Emirate's efforts to diversify its

economical interests into financial and services sector. The main vision behind its creation was to become a regional broadcasting hub and generating jobs and raise investments. Dubai Media City, has rules separating it from media operating outside the zone[7] and are exempted from UAE Media Laws. The governments draft on regulations ensures "guaranteeing freedom of expression within the dimensions of responsibility and accuracy". It provides a "totally tax-free environment, transparent relationships with government and legislative authorities, and one hundred percent foreign ownership within DMC" (Article 15 and 19).

Though it is too early to draw implications for the press these market trends seems to have set in motion a new aspect to the existing press terrain in UAE. It has led to a recognized tendency of relocation of press and broadcasting agencies back in the Arab region after they had "migrated" to European countries to avoid exiles or restrictions in Lebanon, Saudi etc in the 70's (Rugh, 2004; Rinnawi, forthcoming). Some reports indicate that foreign journalists operating out of Dubai Free Media Zone report no restrictions on the content of print and broadcast material produced for use outside the UAE (Katzman, 2003).The media city has already succeeded in luring several prominent regional and international media organizations. Global groups with regional headquarters include the Saudi-owned Middle East Broadcasting Centre(MBC), CNN Arabic, Reuters, the leading Saudi-owned daily *Al Sharq al-Awsat*, Reuters, Agence France Presse, CNBC, Saudi Research and Publishing (SRPC, the largest Pan Arab publisher) and more recently Warner Bros.

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[7] All business enterprises(including the press) and involving those by the expatriates ,whether big or small, , outside this zone require an Emarati sponsor or co- owner(*kafil)*. Generally small business seem to have a representative owner while in big businesses the investments are shared between the Emarati and other owners.

CHAPTER – IV

'IMAGINED COMMUNITY' AND 'PUBLIC SPHERE':

THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN UAE

Media in any country incorporates the social, cultural and political elements that mark the society. A study of Arab media specifically requires examining its institution as located in a society that is also influenced by political relations, social, cultural historical and other institutions in the society as attempted in the previous chapter. In societies with a relatively late 'modern' history the terrain of media grew initially as part of nation building efforts. Particularly in the context of Arab regions it is disputable whether nation-building relied on a sense of ethnic identification or relied on a socio-economic transformation of the people along an imaginary or constructed sense of sense of identity considering that no nation existed prior to it (Smith, C., 1997: 607-622). As part of the nation-state building process the operation of state-run electronic and other media was oriented towards shaping collective ethno-national identity according to the postcolonial boundaries of each Arab nation-state (Boyd, 1993).So much so that Jon Anderson summarizes that mass media has served as "channels of nation-building states and stages for ritualized communication to mass citizens as witnesses" (Anderson, 2000). The close relationship of the press and the Arab states (Kamalipour and Mowlana, 1994) and its role in nation-building tasks also hint at the largely unnoticed role of the press/media in promoting 'social imaginaries' or more concretely a national identity , that is mostly overlooked by the focus on the nature of the state and control. For instance, Deborah Wheeler writes how national sentiments in Kuwait have come to be "formulated by complete life-long immersions"- with national identity coming to be defined in "terms of major life changing events, the discovery of oil, the Iraqi Occupation, being Muslim, being born Kuwaiti" and how it is increasingly shaped and acted upon by media (Wheeler, 2000:444).

The first section of this chapter will examine how a convergence of print and capital seems have fostered a sense of community feeling in everyday life in UAE. Subsequently in the second section an informed analysis of Habermas' public sphere would be used to discern how mass media operate alongside traditionally existing channels and patterns of communication in the UAE and most importantly locate

certain interactive fields that are generally overlooked in studies of Arab societies. While addressing these concerns the analysis would take into account the majority expatriate dominated population of UAE, a consideration that is overlooked in most studies of Arab media. Jon Alterman observes that a nuanced analysis of Arab media should consider the numerically dominant population of foreigners who live in Arab societies (Alterman, 2005)

The Press in UAE

Newspaper industries or the press are not merely political of commercial concerns but are also a social and cultural institution. As Robert .P Snow writes newspapers act as a 'microcosm of a community 'providing information on a diverse topics like politics, international relations to sports and entertainment. He observes that:

> In providing this variety of information the newspaper facilitates interaction within every major and most minor institutions in society .But the newspaper is more than a support system for the institutional network of society-it is an institution in and of itself (Snow, 1983:33).

As a social institution within the larger unit of a society we could say that it embodies certain traits that are characteristically visible in society. Prior to independence there were practically no newspapers in the country, except a few rarely imported ones from Europe and India. The institution of mass media emerged as a part of the nation-building efforts in UAE after its formation in 1971.Consequently the press reflects certain characteristics that are also seen in its function and structure. To begin with, the specific socio-demographic structures in the UAE seem to have formed a specific foundation for the press in UAE that still persists today. Since a considerable period of time the majority of the population in the country has been made up of expatriates with the national population forming only a tiny minority in the country (Appendix 1). The UAE press therefore can be broadly divided into the English press and the Arab press staffed by mainly foreign personnel.

The Arab press, mainly caters to Arabic speaking population which includes citizens as well as expatriate Arabs, while the English press in the UAE largely caters to the

expatriate community which includes Asians, Europeans, and other non-Arab communities. The different audience composition of the population, the personnel in the two presses as well as their cultural, historical economic and social contexts seem to influence the features, choices, contents in the press. Since a majority of the people commonly use English as a means of communication(as a huge part of the population are foreigners) part of the factors that seem to reflect on the shaping of a sense of national community feeling sees to have been more pronounced in the English press.

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I

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PRESS AND THE 'IMAGINED COMMUNITY'

The previous chapter examined Anderson's position on theory of the press in relation to the context of forging socio-political identities. He writes that the idea of a nation was made possible through:

> a half fortuitous but explosive interaction between a system of production and productive relations(capitalism),a technology of communications(print)and the fatality of human linguistic diversity (ibid.:43) .

He describes how in the context of modern capitalism, national identities are created in the process of printing and simultaneous reading of printed materials. Accordingly he attributes the written printed word with the potentials of acting as an agent in the creation of social and political identities or social membership (Anderson, 1991:35-46).

Press and the 'Nation'

The biggest overriding concern of the newly formed government was its fragile political coalition or co-federal arrangement with the seven Emirates in the Union (Abdullah 2000; Anthony, 2000; Findlow: 2000; Moller, 1997). Apart from practical political problems; in reality the different emirates that formed the Union shared only certain cultural similarities which were also similar to its neighboring countries like Qatar and Bahrain (also a part of the former Trucial States under British Protectorate).

<div align="center">74</div>

One of the main national concerns was the problem of bringing about a 'collective' (in Durkheim's sense) as the basis of UAE society or a common feeling of unity of the people of the different emirates. This question of building a national consciousness, therefore, actively relied on tools of communication like the radio and newspapers (Babbili and Hussain, 1994).

As Anderson writes through the medium of print an individual can go beyond a face-to face experience so much so that an anonymous reader can experience a community of individuals through imagination. This imagined community is different because 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members ...yet in the minds of lives the image of their communion' (ibid.: 6).The style of this imagining is very specific, because, as an imagined community it is limited, sovereign and draws out an idea of nation for which sacrifices can be made as a group.

In addressing the people of the UAE, through the common vernacular language of Arabic in the Arab press an image of a limited, sovereign and distinct nation separate from its more culturally similar Arab neighbors was drawn out. At the same time there are certain fine variations. For instance, the Arabic press referred to ,and still refers, to the UAE largely as '*Dawlat*' meaning 'the state' .The English press on the other hand ,widely uses the term 'country' in the form that incorporates certain definitions of nation (as indicated in the chapter II and also similar to Andersons' definition of an imagined, limited ,sovereign state).The use of the term '*Dawlat*' in the Arab press does not imply the political or legal sense of the term rather points to the conclusion of cultural attributes of 'nationness' as further shaped and strengthened by the wide common social services provided by the political entity to the citizens.

Prior to the establishment of the nation-state in the Gulf region the primary loyalties of the people (and identity) belonged to that of the tribe and the family. The unification of the seven emirates in 1971 was more or less a socio-political move and the process of nation- building involved the development of a distinct national identity among its people considering the fact that the people of the seven emirates were no more similar to each other as they were to their closest neighbors. At the outset it could be said that a lack of political differences, generally recognized unified support for the government in the press and the reiteration of a 'United Arab Emirates' served

to build the image of a politically united community and a nation in the minds of the readers.

The newspaper as a 'cultural product' closely related to expanding industrial production and capitalism made it possible for the 'imagined national community' among 'growing members of the public to think about and relate themselves to other 'through a sharing of bonds' in the present as well as on the basis of historical roots of 'subjective antiquity'(Anderson,1991:40).Thus through a narration of a common past of being Bedouin tribes, through common symbols of unification like the falcon or the camel and other identification a culturally distinct community of the UAE began to be imagined within its political boundary. Of course one might say that the personal relationships that the people share with the ruling family and a small national population seems to contradict the 'imagined' nature of the community. But my point is that these (including mass communication) were simultaneous processes that began and considerably strengthened after the formal establishment of the nation-state in 1971.

The Press and the 'National' Community

The confusion as to a proper term for identifying the people of the UAE seems to have persisted in the press since a long time. For instance like the term 'Indians' meaning the citizens of India or 'Iranians' for the citizens of Iran etc. This confusion in terminology of identification of the citizens of the state seems to have possibly stemmed from the history of the country, its political union and a majority expatriate population since the time of its formation. It was not merely the problem of the press but one that the nation faced at large, in the sense there was no common term or an Arabic equivalent to commonly identify the people of Sharjah, Dubai, Fujairah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah or Abu Dhabi taken together. Unlike every other Arab country, the people of the UAE are less likely to be referred to by their nationality and simply as the people 'from the Emirates'.

Both the Arabic and English press used and still use wide terms to identify the indigenous people of the UAE in their narrations. The Arabic press for instance uses the term '*muwatineen*' to refer to the indigenous people. The term '*muwatineen*' simply means 'citizen' in Arabic. The English press on the other hand use the term

'national' and 'local' to refer to the citizens of UAE. (At times, the more specific term 'UAE national' is used alternatively to refer to the citizens of the UAE). In the early days of the press this identification probably came about from more pragmatic concerns of differentiating the numerically minor social group from the majority expatriate residents in the country. The uses of these different terms like 'muwatineen', 'national' and 'local' have crept into everyday usage too, as a common synonym and are used in the context of a UAE population. For instance, in the UAE when a person refers to a 'muwatineen Passport' it would automatically indicate a 'UAE Passport' to any insider in the country. Though, the actual translated term would literally mean 'citizen Passport' in English! (and also merely *citizen passport* in Arabic.)

Whatever maybe the case, these terms in the press have served to emphasize the uniqueness of being a *National*[1] as opposed to a non-national (own emphasis). In popular everyday usage in the country, these terms in principle, automatically implicate in a set of cultural identification of the different communities of people in the UAE. For instance any reference to a 'local man' or even a 'national woman' *always* implies a UAE citizen from *any* of the seven emirates (own emphasis). Most importantly what was implied was that the people of the seven Emirates together might now be considered as a 'national community' instead of their separate distinct identification in terms of Emirates.

Thus, the term 'national' has served to encourage and imply a unique national identity to the people of the country a whole. These narrations in the national press have given rise to the imagination of a national community onto a wider national scale and beyond the local confines of an emirate. Partly, in the imaginings of a 'UAE national' community one finds Anderson's implication of a common emotional identity that underlies any feeling of a community. Consequently not only the image of larger community of citizens of the state was drawn up but its distinction was emphasized as opposed to the community of other Arab and non-Arab expatriates. In

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[1] The use of the upper case N is my own- implying the citizen as identified by his primary identification of a nation-state

this manner the widespread use of the term 'national' as opposed to 'expatriate'[2] has certainly helped in building a image of self[3], community and nationhood in the UAE.

With the adoption of theses terms in popular usage the term 'national ' or 'local' began to be used as a synonym for a common identification of the citizenship of the indigenous people of the seven emirates. A new visitor to the country is quick to catch on these references and also use it an everyday reference with all its implications. A preliminary study of identities in the UAE found that citizens have only begun to identify themselves as 'Emiratis[4]' as opposed to their earlier identification in terms of local emirates[5] (Findlow:2000). One of the reasons of the popularity of this term could be the English press' use of the term 'Emaratization' to refer to the nationalization of the work force in the UAE[6]. While the English press uses the term' Emaratization', the Arabic press refers to the same project as 'tawteen' because of the non-availability of other Arabic terms.

A Larger Arab Community?

The Arabic language of the Arab press is in itself an important element that links the people of the UAE both at the national and regional level .Arabic is undeniably a part of the culture, history and most importantly a part of the religion (Islam) of a large part of the people who belong to the Arab region. Rugh writes that:

> There is an "intimate interdependence "between speakers of Arabic
> and their Arab psychology and culture, and thus, as carriers of the
> language the mass media are very important in the communication of
> Arab cultural commonality (Rugh, 2004:19)

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[2] As a whole to refer to any of the 180 odd nationalities in the country who together form more than 80 percent of the population

[3] The self in terms of the subjective as well as the generalized other whereby the organized attitudes of the whole community enabling people to incorporate a sense of overarching community values into their conception of the self.

[4] Another reason for the slow catching up of the term might be because the term 'Emirate' refers to a form of political governance with the sheikh or emir as the head. By itself it does not speak of any distinction unlike' Saudi's' or 'Bahrainis'.

[5] Historically Ras Al Khaimah has had a strong history of Qawasim independence. The emirate of Dubai also had a strong sense of independence based on its large links as a centre for trade even prior to the formation of the UAE(see also Jon Duke Anthony,2001)

[6] 'Emaratization' refers to a nationalization programme of incorporating the country's citizens as part of a workforce to build a domestic economic base and correct extreme dependence on expatriates. It was instituted by the UAE Government by UAE Cabinet Degree Number 10/98 effective from 1999.

The Arabic language is a strong element in the concept of the "Arab nation"[7]. UAE's commitment to causes of Arab 'unity ' is evident from its official positions and foreign policies[8].Such regional or political awareness of Arabs as 'Emaratis' set against a cultural consciousness of being Arab seems to raise questions of duals identities and whether cultural/linguistic affinity is similar or distinct from national identity (Smith. C, 1997:608). Since the formation of the GCC, the more immediate identification has been on the level of the "Gulf ", a view that is seemingly heightened by the common sense of destiny that unites Arab oil producing countries. In the daily press for instance, any randomly selected issue of the Gulf News would show that the initial pages are devoted to local news (titled as the Nation), followed by news from the Gulf (titled as the Region) and at times followed by African Arab states. While the example itself is trivial, its representative nature shows the concentric view of a larger Arab community beyond local confines of a nation- i.e. of UAE, the GCC and then the Arab states. This concentric view certainly hints at a larger 'imagined community' of Arabs, an inclusive Arab identification linked by a common vernacular language of print and crossing national boundaries .A pan-Arab press that caters to a regional audience is yet to develop in the UAE (for various reasons) and so a strict conclusive arguments cannot be drawn. But what is conveyed is that being an 'Arab' is an important publicly held criteria of being a part of the larger community of nations in the Gulf.

The Press and Other Communities

The press also publishes issues that narrate the social experiences, cultural practices, traditional festivals and so on of people from widely different cultural settings in the

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[7] The modern territorial, bureaucratic Arab state materialized in the middle East(the Arab world to be specific) at a time when Arab intellectuals were politically preoccupied with the Arab Nationalism or the 'Islamic Umma' (Ayubi,2006:5).Arab nationalism referred to the 50's and 60's , when Arab states were slowly gaining independence from colonial rule. The overwhelming thought behind the idea of an Arab Nation and Arab nationalism, as first put forth by Nassir, was that Arab world must be united in Arab solidarity into one sovereign Arab state (Dawisha ,2003:Chapter1).The model for this idea of nation was borrowed from the European idea of nation, rejected the political divisions among the twenty Arab states as ideas of an imperialist West and stressed on linguistic unity of Arabic language. However ,all this changed as Arab countries put their individual interests before their unity(Kramer,1993).At the same time these identifications seems to persist at varying levels in different Arab countries.

[8] See Website –www.uaeinteract.ae. Also Findlow writes that the notions of 'an Arab nationalism ' have been replaced by more practical actions of 'Arab unity ' like assisting and providing for less fortunate Arab countries.(Findlow,2002)

expatriate community. The press' reference to 'expatriates' turned it into popular convention as meaning any of the 180 odd immigrant nationalities in the country (taken together) who form the majority of the population. As Anderson writes the newspaper is a 'one day best seller' bringing together variously unrelated events of different places both inside and outside the country on an everyday basis. On a similar note, the print languages also link the anonymous mass of people in the UAE into a community that simultaneously engages in reading newspapers at various times of the day .The newspapers thus help to create 'that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations'(ibid:36).While this may seem too obvious, the fact is it is a medium by which not only the citizens but also some 180 odd nationalities simultaneously connect to each other through a common narration of experiences.

Concluding Comments-

The compelling character of Anderson's work comes out in directing attention to what shapes the forms and contents of the imagination of a community. The products of print culture like literature and newspapers are aimed at an anonymous audience assumed by the authors as a cultural community of a reading public. In this mutuality of representation a culture comes to be represented as a community. In reaching out to the general population, both the English and the Arab press created simultaneous 'fields of communications' in English as well as Arabic. In situating these two fields of communication the idea of a 'national community' of the UAE was diffused, both, among the Arab population (including national and expatriate Arabs) and also among other non-Arab expatriates through conveying the main cultural and social ideals of the UAE. In this way newspaper through its stories and news assisted in a public construction of images of self, community and nation.

The word imagined in this context does not simply mean "invented" in the actual sense of the term of creation of a myth or a common historical past. Rather it signifies a contemporary belief in shared cultural or historical ties and destiny created by that myth. The previous discussion of communication and nationalism as proposed by Deutsch may seem to have some relevance in the case of UAE. Keeping in line with his terminology the 'collective aspirations' and ideologies seems to have acted as a

unifying force enhancing the potentialities of mass media. As Billig writes the cultural values of the Emarati people, the presentation of 'Emarati' image and its significant symbols like the dhow[9] ,the date palm , the camel etc in various narrations of UAE press seems to serve as 'banal reminders' to the people of their traditional ancestry. The secret of banal nationalism lies in the use of "we", "them", and "here" (Billig, 1995:93-94).

The press seems to have widely popularized this distinction in terms of "unique Emarati" traditions (as opposed to similar regional practices) and hence helped in bringing in a sense of distinction from culturally similar neighbors. Hobsbawm and Ranger and Beblawi write that a newly formed government attempts to reclaim or recall ancient or even local traditions as a legitimization for their newly formed government and especially in presenting their national identities. For instance the Gulf News introduces such features in the form of a sponsored Advertisement series titled "Our Emarati Tradition". One such issue carried "the rubbing of noses as a form of unique Emarati greeting ".In reality the practice is a form of greeting among Arab men and widely prevails among the people of the Arabian region in general. Similarly endurance, loyalty, tolerance and the spirit to endeavor are attributed as "Emarati, Bedouin qualities". The papers therefore also present features of 'local' life that include the date palm and its significance, the camels, unique Emarati traditions of falconry and even camel beauty contests (www.gulfnews.com/ archives).

Alternatively in an extremely expatriate dominated disproportionate population, the press seems to assist in prioritizing supposedly ancient, at least more local, traditions over recent non-indigenous history and culture. In such a scenario, at times one also sees the strengthening of the definition of 'national' or 'local' cultures, in so far as this requires the exclusion of the 'non-national'. Again as Findlow writes a predominant question of an identity in antithesis or in terms of an alienation does not seem to mark the UAE community as they increasingly think of themselves as 'Emaratis,' by definition Muslims and Arabs (Findlow,2000: 27).

Off late, there seems to be indications to even include UAE expatriates in an attempt to encourage a "community feeling" through a programme to boost "national identity"

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[9] A long, flat sailing vessel that is lateen rigged and also found in part of Arabian peninsula, Africa etc.

"among all members of the community". For instance, The scheme, Watani[10], promotes a "national identity in the UAE and enhance a high level of citizenship values among all who have chosen to make the UAE their home-whether national, expatriates or visitors". The feature that appeared in Gulf News titled as a, "Plan to boost UAE identity underway: Aim to create a shared sense of community" further indicates some of the issues that were dealt with in the above paragraphs. It cites a wide ranging scheme of:-

- **Nisa'a Watani**(Woman of my nation)- a variety of lectures, sessions sport and events dedicated to the development of women as heart of the society.
- **Shabab Watani**(Youth)-takes a group of youngsters on various journeys to discover what makes their nation distinctive.
- **Thaqafat Watani**(Culture) covers a wide spectrum of diversified learning with intellectuals and specialists ...functions in national art and literature both traditional and contemporary.
- **Riyadat Watani**(sport) utilizes sport as binding activity thus enhancing loyalty to the community through sport, with small neighborhood groups forming a wider interactive network that will engage socially and competitively.
- **Eman Watani** stresses spiritual values and the role of Islam as a major contributor to the moral and spiritual richness that binds communities.(Gulf News, Dec 1,2005)

To conclude, the expression of taken for granted categories like 'national' and 'local' indicates how the press socially constitutes or actively assist individuals to locate themselves in relation to others in terms of belongings. Again in Anderson's terms the above observations further serve to contribute to imaginings of a national community in the UAE. Zubaida takes Anderson's arguments further when he aptly summarizes, that once the new states are established, their very existence promotes the genesis of new 'imaginaries'of the nation: common education systems incorporating the symbols of state power as nation, education feeding into employment markets for the most part dominated by the state, national networks of communication and transport contributes to conceiving a nation within a boundary even if it is a newly formed state(Zubaida, 2001:148).

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[10] 'Watani' in Arabic means 'my nation'.

II

THE QUESTION OF DIALOGUE

The previous section examined concept of a community which opened discussion into an expansive view of news and notions of social membership. This section would now focus on looking into a concept that would open the discussion into a commonly held set of norms for public conversation. The question of a dialogue between the state and its people or the lack of it is one that has dominated studies of Arab media. The closeness that is ascribed to the 'autocratic', 'authoritarian', 'non-democratic' Arab states is also often attributed to the political frame of Arab countries. Most of the time these descriptions tend to lean towards a top-down model of communication from state to the people overlooking the many ways audience react to or actively contribute to communication. The limited examination of press overlooks the other traditional forms of communication like in the traditional cafes, mosques or oral communication that has strong roots in the Arab societies for centuries the distinctiveness of Arab media and the social, political and cultural realities from which it emanates and operates requires nuanced understanding.

Habermas refers to the "public sphere" as a structure of public life that allows the possibility of a rational debate that forms the basis of democratic societies. Habermas defines public sphere as follows:

> the sphere of private people come together as public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulate from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason(Habermas, 1989:27).

Habermas's bourgeois public sphere is primarily a "private people come together as a public". The three parts of the public sphere in the eighteenth century included the public sphere in the "world of letters," composed of clubs and the press, "through which the vehicle of public opinion it (the public sphere) put the state in touch with

the needs of society" (pg.30–31). The institutions of the public sphere, after coffee houses and salons, included art and cultural criticism journals (pg.41) and "moral weeklies," which expanded the circle of the coffee houses (pg.42). The form of communication in the "dialogue form" attested to their closeness to the spoken word (pg.42) and thereby the "public held a mirror up to itself' (p.43). Newspapers in this manner became the media of the public sphere. Habermas documented the shift in the function of the public sphere in the "transformation of the public sphere's preeminent institution, the press" (pg.181). With commercialization of the "newspaper" became "a medium for culture as an object of communication" (pg.183) a process that he termed as a "refeudalization" of the public sphere whereby corporations, political parties, experts and civil servants began to make decisions on behalf of the citizens(Habermas, 1989).

Press, Public Sphere and Participation in the UAE

To comprehend the political and socio-cultural realities in the context of this study one requires a category that would allow the possibilities of illuminating an understanding of the public sphere in the UAE. A concept of a public sphere that allows one to examine the informal links between press and the society of UAE would hopefully indicate the nature of press and society relationship in the UAE and also communication at large. Most importantly the concept would help to understand participatory communication in the UAE, its extensions in the press, to discern how wider social and cultural issues are addressed and to comprehend how a general agreement of what is acceptable in a culture is reached. It would also help to understand how some older forms of traditional communication persists alongside mass media agencies like the press.

There is a general opinion that a public sphere did not exist in Arab societies prior to the arrival of mass media. Even before the arrival of mass media in the Arab societies, oral communication was for centuries an important part of Arab societies (Ahmed,1994) .Early spread of information took place through face to face communication, communication through mosques ,traditional coffee places, *dowrehs*, *majlises* and other informal settings provided as social space for interaction. Even today this type of communication plays an unpublicized role in Arab countries. For

instance, in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states the elites rely on word being spread through formal meetings or informal gatherings such as *diwaniyas* of Kuwait[11]. However, academically recorded works are few and researchers may have to rely on what they can hear (Perthes, 2006:12). These practices have traditionally provided for a common platform to discuss various issues in Arab societies.

The problem with Habermas conception is that he connects the modern public sphere with mediated as opposed to only face-to-face communication. According to Mehdi Abedi and Michael Fischer, the whole notion of public sphere in Habermas' terms poses problems while considering the distinctiveness of Arab culture. They point out the Western history of the notion of public sphere:

> "notions of public sphere and its allied terms– public opinion ,the public
> or publics , publicity and public culture– come from particular histories
> of political development in Western Europe ,yet increasingly are
> inscribed in transitional arena through global media and politics"

Further the authors conclude that the Arab and Islamic world:

> has a totally different presuppositional basis than the democratic
> ideological presuppositions of 'public', 'public culture', 'publicity' etc in
> the post ....bourgeois polities of Western Europe and the United States".

So according to them the pervasiveness of media and the percolation of its effects are recasting the meaning of the word "public" and the limits of what is usually perceived as 'public' in the Arab world (Abedi and Fischer,1993:220).

The *Majlis* : Communication and Interaction

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[11] The Kuwait Information Office, New Delhi, provides the following information on diwaniya - "All men in Kuwait belong to a diwaniya or have their own diwaniya. The word finds its origins in the word diwan. The diwan was the office of the Amir where he met his subjects, listened to their problems and met members of the community to hold consultations with them.Today's diwaniyas are a meeting place for men, where topics such as politics, business, the stock exchange etc are discussed. It is also a way of staying in touch with friends, exchanging ideas and keeping relationships alive in today's fast paced life.Diwaniya is normally a large reception room within or outside the main house, with all facilities to make family or friends comfortable including tea and snacks.The diwaniyas are a barometer of public opinion, a unique institution that has existed throughout the history of Kuwait". In www.kuwait-info.com/sidepages/culture_heritage

One such arena for communication is the institution of *majlis* in UAE. The term traditionally referred to a gathering of people in 'a place for sitting 'to engage in various discussions. It usually takes place in a circle, in a room with an octagonal or circular seating arrangement. The *Majlis* also refers to a form of unofficial open house and could mean any meeting of people. The *Majlis* is in practice open to 'any one who hears of it' even without an invitation. Traditionally, the sheikh or the ruler of an emirate was the leader of the most powerful tribe. It was a traditional principle in the Bedouin society that the people should have free access to their sheikh and that he should hold an open *majlis* or council frequently in which they can voice their opinions. It followed from the traditional view that rulers and chiefs are in power only as long as they could maintain the loyalty and support of their people (Tribal Nature of Gulf Society at www.country-data.com; Anthony,2002). Besides, the concept of *Majlis* underlines the importance of consultation (Shu'ra) and Consensus (Ijma) in Arab and Islamic societies. Its functions and significance in Arab societies have not yet found its way into academic research of the region. As indicated in Chapter I and II, the UAE has woven the concept of *Majlis* into its administrative structure at government level. At the time of its formation the Federal National Council (Majlis AL-Ittihaadi Al-Watani) or the Parliament was formed by the principle of a *majlis*. The FNC consists of 40 members who are drawn proportionately from each of the seven emirates ensuring a representation of the interests of each member of the Emirates[12].

The government of the UAE, from its early days seemed to acquire the public mood of its citizens from the discussions in open *majlises*. In the UAE one not only hears of formal majlises but also informal ones .They are often held by members of the Ruling family, seniors citizens, or other prominent citizens. The issues that are discussed in the *Majlises* are closely watched by the ruling members to comprehend the opinions of its citizens. Findlow observes that:

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[12] There is also a National Consultative Council, chaired by a Speaker and with 60 members drawn from the Emirates main tribes and families. It provides a forum for vocal suggestion for the introduction and revision of federal legislation. Its role is similar to the Federal National Council in a nationwide level – of that of questioning officials and endorsing local legislation. In smaller settlements, the Ruler chooses a local representative – *emir* or *wali* to represent the needs of the people.

From the perspective of decision-making, the religiously and socially conservative views of influential numbers of citizens are carefully assessed before major changes to national infrastructure are implemented (Findlow, 2000:26).

There are other indications of how the interactions with citizens and a close perception of public sensibilities have influenced government decisions and how it is conveyed by the press. For e.g. Findlow's brief content analysis of the press reveals that through the 70s to the 80s, the government closely acted along the lines of popular held religious beliefs of its citizens. We noted this point earlier too in our chapter on the UAE government's official identification of the UAE as an "Arab, Islamic" state keeping in line with the sentiments of its people. In 1977, the government undertook active steps to address the 'widely felt reservations at the inauguration of the country's first university in 1976' which were 'allayed by an emphasis on the Islamic character of the new institution'. In the decade that followed, universities that were linked to Muslim or Islamic initiatives were publicly praised by the officials through the media. Findlow writes that the fact that this praise was considered necessary is in itself a 'significant pointer to official perceptions of public sensibilities' (Findlow, 2002:38-40). The personalized nature of relations that the rulers shares with the citizens[13], the open houses that were held regularly and the influence the citizens has over certain policies of the government suggests a definite interactive space for people's participation in public discourses. The UAE Yearbook provides us with some information on the *Majlis:-*

> The ruler or his family members hold open *majlises* where topics range from a request for a piece of land, or for a scholarship for a son or a daughter to go abroad, to complex subjects such as the impact of large scale foreign immigration upon society or complaints about perceived flaws in the practices of the various ministries or departments. In smaller Emirates, the *majlis* of the Ruler himself holds center-stage. In Fujairah, an open *majlis is* held by the Ruler every week and daily during the Holy month of Ramadan for both citizens and expatriates. Tribesmen who prefer traditional *majlises* to the modern governmental structure, take this

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[13] It is a known fact in the country that the citizens are on familiar terms with the rulers or at least some members of the ruling family if not all. See also Findlow, 2002

opportunity to make their requests or complaints to the Ruler directly. The *majlis* plays an important, although often unpublicized role in the evolution of the state today. Heated discussions between the sheikhs and citizens on questions such as government policies, foreign relations, unemployment among UAE graduates are held, before a consensus is approached that subsequently reflects on government policy (UAE, Yearbook:2005)

The Majlis and the Press in UAE

Gregory Gause agrees that the press in the UAE has had the independence to reflect points of view that are critical of the governments. He writes that in many Arab countries:

> First and foremost, there are no inherent cultural or historical impediments inhibiting local people from wanting a say in how their countries are run. When permitted by the governments, citizens form organizations to advance their interests. Some such organizations form around what are usually referred to in the West as "traditional" bases -- tribal ties and Islamic institutions. Those "traditional" institutions have shown remarkable flexibility in adjusting to the circumstances of large bureaucratic states, modern technologies and dramatically changed economies. Other civil society organizations have developed along more "modern" functional lines -- chambers of commerce, professional syndicates, social clubs, newspapers, even ideological groupings that are political parties in everything but name (Gause, 1994: chapter 4)

One cannot help but note that a space for dialogue that always existed and still exists in the UAE. In other words there was a public platform for interaction between the ruling members and the citizens. Thompson writes that the strength of Habermas' work in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is that it "treats the development of the media as an integral part in the formation of modern societies" (1995: 7).In the UAE the press through reporting these debates, mediated these communications to reach a larger audience and in its capacity as a medium circulated communication to a level of participation beyond the social space of the Majlis. The press in this manner played a mobilizing role that was structured around shared

interests of the citizens and the rulers. In providing an expressive space, the press did not merely follow a top-down approach in the actual sense of the term, rather at times; it even set the stage for an emerging public discourse in the state. Most importantly, it suggests another meaning of the term public which goes beyond the traditional confines of openness. In the sense that the contents of a previously 'public' debate in the *Majlis* was made more observable 'to a multiplicity of individuals who may be and are typically scattered across diverse and dispersed contexts'(Thompson, 1995:31).

The changing relations of the press and the state today seems to suggest a changing interactive field that increasingly involves citizens in national public debates. Thus the *majlis* and the mediating role that the press plays in the UAE seems to provide a site for discussion and public engagement with issues by making discourses 'public'. These understandings further contribute to a reinterpretation of a Western understanding of the term "public". Jon W Anderson says that in Arab societies the arrival of media provided a 'linkage to social experiences' taking discourses from previously narrower realms onto a larger broader more "public" realm .Most importantly these 'contemporary cultural resources' has facilitated and 'expanded the social space between the elites and the folk' making public what was previously articulated in face-to face interpersonal setting like *dowrehs* or *majlises* (ibid., 1999:42).

Dale F Eickelman and Jon W Anderson talk of a new sense of public or a distinctly Muslim public sphere which is being "shaped by increasingly open contests over the authoritative use of the symbolic language of Islam". The policies of nation- and citizen-building linked by the emergence of mass media and the rise of mass education (particularly of mass higher education) throughout the Arab region has resulted in the breaking of traditional religious monopolies in the Arab region. Situated outside formal state control:

> this distinctly Muslim public sphere exists at the intersections of
> religious , political and social life. Facilitated by the proliferation of
> media in the modern world, the Muslim public can challenge or limit
> state and conventional religious authorities and contribute to the creation
> of a civil society.... Contemporary forms of communication that range

from the press.... to videocassettes have reversed the asymmetries of the earlier mass media revolution by new media in new hands. This combination of new media and new contributors to religious and political debates fosters an awareness on the part of all actors of the diverse ways in which Islam and Islamic values can be created and feeds into new sense of a public space that is discursive, performative, and participative and not confined to formal institutions recognized by state authorities (Eickelman and Anderson, 1999:1-2).

The Press, Public Sphere and Participation of Women

Habermas' categorization between public and intimate spheres is problematic as it tends to relegate women and children into a private dominion. A fundamental catalyst for the development of feminist theory and the women's movement in the eighteenth century was the denial of women's access to public realms. Nancy Fraser argues that "the official public sphere rested on, indeed was importantly constituted by, a number of significant exclusions" (namely race, gender, property ownership) and excluded the lower classes and women. (ibid.,1992: 113). Again the applicability of terms of a Western European understanding of "private" and "public" in the case of Arab women would pose certain definite difficulties, the nuances of which are beyond the scope of the present discussion .

Since 1999 women have been appointed to "public" positions in Ministries like Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as other positions of employment. There are many women's associations and small unions in various emirates of the UAE and there seems to be indication of a growing involvement of women citizens to engage publicly with issues that concern them. Though there are no clear references some reports in the media indicate/hint at certain unclear mechanisms for women to participate in issues that concern them. For instance, in 2001, the lower rate of male enrolment in higher education led the government to make attempts to introduce a" gender discriminatory university admission policy". According to this policy a male student had to score a lesser average of 60 % in high school examinations in comparison to the 70% cut off for female students that was necessary

to gain admissions to universities[14] . Widely placed protest by women citizens and intervention by Sheikha Fatima the wife of the President led to the policy being scrapped (www.gulfnews.com/archives).

Despite the governments open support and initiates to encourage participation of women, public coverage of nation's women in the press was minimal till about a decade ago. In the recent years, there is a considerably increasing coverage of UAE women in the press in terms of everyday stories of struggles, travel, education, employment and other narratives. News, as Schudson writes, is what is publicly notable (within a framework of shared understanding that judges it to be both public and notable (Schudson, 2003:6). When the press carries such stories it seemingly adds a point. As Schudson notes, when the press offers the public a news or story that is news, they confer on it public legitimacy. They bring it to a public forum where it can be known to and discussed by a general audience. Similarly these stories in the UAE press not only distribute the issue or concerns of Emarati women to a larger audience but also amplifies it through stimulating social interaction over "newsworthy" topics. In legitimizing these events the press can be said to organize its readers too by virtue of the capacity to publicly include them (Ibid: 29) [15].

The Press, Public Sphere and Expatriate Population

From the time of its formation the UAE has had a huge expatriate population naturally raising a question of mechanisms of representation and communication that involves them. There are no NGO's or political associations or oppositional groups in the country.

The English press in the UAE, particularly, provides a sphere for a much needed space for communication of information and public discourse between the majority non-Arab expatriates and the government. Thompson writes that culture in modern societies "are extensively and increasingly mediated by the institutions and mechanisms of the mass communication" (Thompson, 1990:15). The mediation of

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[14] Apparently, the policy was justified on account that the total ratio of women in the UAE outnumbered the ration of men.

[15] For another perspective on gender and press see- Marlyn Booth,2001 :Woman In Islam : Men and the "Women's Press" in the Turn Of The 20th Century Egypt. In *International studies of Middle East studies*.33,171-201.

culture becomes more complicated with the further introduction of mass media capabilities and the complexities that arise out of an increasing participation of individuals.

The English press has been particularly noted for critically addressing issues related to labor problems, employer- employee relations and other issues that are generally handled in other countries by associations or NGOs (Reporters San Frontiers Annual Report 2005; Also Rugh, 2004). The press has for long time, regularly taken up the problems and issues facing the expatriate community and conveyed them to the government departments or authorities[16]. It even criticizes the workings of government departments or private enterprises that are found lacking (however they do not ever imply any of the top leaders of the country)

These include a wide variety of issues faced by the expatriate population varying from legal problems labor problems, to breaking stories of Asian child camel jockeys, visa racketing, awareness of rights of expatriates etc. A quick examination of the prominent English papers over a period of a week would reveal the kind of interaction that we are referring to. A detailing of different discourses in the press would require a far deeper study which is not possible at this particular stage. We might say that the press in the UAE provides for an essential media(ted)-space for discussion considering the wide nature and complexities of its audience. It also functions as an important forum to address complaints. One often finds expatriate issues that are highlighted as news followed by a quick public reaction, clarification and responsive actions from the authorities.

The press in the UAE also conveys important policy changes and changes in legal issues to the expatriate community, more so, considering that fact that important changes and rules tend to be made available through government channels in Arabic. Most newspapers today are made up of two broad categories of news and entertainment. According to Dahlgren, the former has always been seen as information while questions of socialization have been raised only in connection with entertainment. However Dahlgren writes that even news has its socializing functions which he terms as the 'social teacher' (Dahlgren, 1981). The English press is

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[16] It even criticizes the workings of government departments or private enterprises that are found lacking. These criticisms are done without criticizing the top leaders.

generally credited as being communicative link that conveys the norms and values of the nation to the expatriate communities. At times there are 'awareness 'campaigns aimed to orient the expatriate community with the ways of the UAE society. At times even seemingly private issues are conveyed to the 'public' like appeals for financial aid, medical help, other appeals for help etc. These stories are subsequently followed by official responses by members of the government or even from other citizens and expatriates.

With Internet facilities and newspapers going online there seems to be indications of increasing ways of interactivity in the country. Generally speaking newspaper contents tend to be localized in terms of availability in space, language constraints etc. The initial changes brought in by the print media have been reoriented in certain ways. The availability of content online also opens up the audience to quicker and new methods of interaction. For instance The Gulf News, has developed online polling called as 'YouGov.Poll'. The results of the poll by its readers are then published in the papers and made public. Online availability of newspapers not only provides choice and interactivity to the audience but also seems to restore control to the audience in a varying capacity.

Concluding Comments-

Andersons work highlights how the written or printed word can be understood as an active agent in the creation of social and political identities. Also the above analyses indicate that mass media communication in the UAE is not linear process of information moving from the government to the people. Rather the press in varying capacities shares, participates and associates itself with the reading public. A view of this kind moves to makes the discourse on Arab mass media more complex; in so far as the way the reading public makes sense of the press and even affects it becoming no less important than the presumed effects the press has on readers.

Kai Hafez writes that while Arab countries did indulge in varying degrees of regulating content that pose a threat to the security of the state or which were beyond the moral boundaries or sentiments of the people, at the same time they did allow for certain mechanism to gauge public opinion or different ideas. This was achieved using a combination of coercion and co-optation, with careful monitoring of public

opinion, to understand what might lie beyond the bounds of popular acceptance. He observes that,' many governments allowed for the emergence of a kind of loyal opposition, permitting a diversity of views within implicit boundaries allowing new ideas to gestate new ideas to gestate and kept the intelligentsia in line.' The media – initially printed, followed by radio and television – played an important role in this equation by both disseminating government viewpoints and providing a forum for carefully modulated criticism and commentary on government policies (Alterman, 1998).

From the discussions so far we might say that there is the existence of a recognized space for discourse through mutual participation of individuals in the UAE. The institution of *Majlis* and the mediation of its conversations into the reach of a wider audience by the press and the press' role in addressing certain critical concerns of both expatriates and the national population indicates the extremely important functional role that the press plays in UAE society especially when one considers the absence of opposing parties or political associations and NGO's in the country. To conclude the state is not an unchanging static entity as I hinted in the previous chapter. Rather state authorities continue to play a significant and changing role. As Richard Norton writes the state has often become one of the many competing sites "in which values and ideas are adapted, debated, reshaped, or nourished" (Norton, 1999).

CHAPTER – V

CONCLUSION

The first section of this chapter would draw on the insights gained so far and attempt to locate the media in a wider context of theoretical framework as appropriate to Arab societies. This section would be then followed by some concluding observations based on the insights gained in this case study.

I

THE PRESS IN A THEORETICAL FRAME

As indicated in Chapter II, III and IV the fact that Arab societies have their own mechanisms of ensuring people's participation in national discourses and the distinctiveness of Arab media makes it all the more imperative to theoretical locate the relationships between individuals, the media, institutions and the state in Arab countries. Chapter II already examined the theoretical underpinnings that characterize the press and society as analyzed by Siebert. The other models of characterization of press and society relations in Arab countries have been provided for by Rugh in terms of a loyalist, diverse, transition or mobilization press. As McCormack writes, drawing out broad typologies tends to lead to a tendency to judge media in:

> static terms: democratic media equals good, totalitarian bad ;competitive
> media good, monopolistic bad; objectivity good, partisanship bad;
> laissez-faire media good, government –controlled media bad. These
> judgments throw no light on how the media functioned in the social
> world (McCormack, 1994: 36-7).

The various typologies only serve to provide a definition to certain key features of mass media as each abstract construct brings to mind certain immediate features associated to the media and how it functions in a society. Similarly, Seibert's four theories of the press elaborating the dominant features cannot be applied per-se to explain media in developing or Third World countries. For one, as Herbert Altschull argues the categories of the four theories of the press which were formulated during the Cold War are no longer applicable. Also they seem to incorporate and 'Us vs Them' approach that reflects the hostility of that period. According to him an

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independent press cannot exist in any system and he describes three basic forms of the press systems- the 'market form' coinciding with the Liberal- Capitalist World, the 'Marxist as coinciding with the socialist countries and 'advancing press' for the Third World Developing countries (Altschull, 1984).

For instance, the problem with characterizing Arab media as 'authoritarian' press is that it indicates only a top-down model of communication. Part of the problems with adopting such a theoretical perspective is that it tends to assume the capacity of Arab media as an ideological state apparatus in Althusserain sense of the term or the media as a messenger of the government. To start with such a characterization misses out on how the Arab audiences react and affect media in terms of cultural resources or their literacy etc. Rugh's categorization while offering a comprehensive analysis of press in Arab countries some how does not seem to account for the circumstances of Arab media in developing countries. McQuail's Development Media Theory seems to redefine some of the implicit assumptions that seemed to have been the parameter for these theories and also casts Arab media in a fresh perspective.

The Development Theory Model

The starting point for a separate development theory of mass media is the fact that some circumstances of developing countries limit the application of other theories or reduce its potential benefits. According to McQuail, development media theory takes into consideration the fact that Third World countries could not be expected to have the necessary conditions or infrastructures to sustain media freedom comparable to those that exist in the developed countries. The media in a developing country therefore, would have certain normative frameworks quite different from those found in a capitalist country .One would find different features of the authoritarian, libertine or other theories in the press in these countries. For instance a developing country may face infrastructural problems, lack of professional personnel, resources and even an audience when compared to a developed society. A developing society also has to engage in social, economic and political development as a primary national task. In this situation, the functions and goals of the press must be seen differently, especially around the following themes:

- the primacy of national development tasks (economic, social, cultural, political),

- the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy of particular national society,

- and solidarity with other developing countries that results out of an awareness of similar identity and interests in the international polity.

In other words, in emerging societies, the responsibilities of the media must be emphasized much more than their rights and freedoms. The theory therefore, makes allowances for the notion that, in developing countries, nation-building is a primary national task to which other institutions including the press must submit (McQuail, 1987:119-121).

As seen so far the socio- political formation of the UAE in 1971, was followed by the huge task of nation-building. The primary internal challenges were political unification, economic and social development and 'nation-building '.The development of this particular feature seems to have stemmed from a history that seemed to necessitate the inculcation of a spirit of nationalism (Babbili and Hussain, 1994:296-297). In the 1960's there were no newspapers in this area except for some rarely imported ones from India and Europe. One of the main reasons was a lack of demand, very low living standard and audiences who were mainly illiterate. The UAE reached the UNESCO minimum standard for daily newspaper circulation only in1986. Even then, one of the reasons was a small population, and also the presence of a large number of newspaper reading expatriates in the country (Rugh, 1987:4-5). The communication needs of the UAE were, therefore, initially stated in terms of existing institutional arrangements of nation building tasks like encouraging social and economic development, education, etc.

In spite of the sharp rise in income and living standards today recent domestic problem like demographic issues, military weakness, security problems, potential social problems, necessary economic restructuring, and youth unemployment among others indicates that the UAE faces socio-economic challenges that are common to other Third World countries (Abdullah, 2000).

As an institutions itself the press in the UAE exhibits certain features that typically face some Third World countries like lack of indigenous talent, excessive reliance on foreign workforce, the absence of a strong tradition of journalism, a short history of journalism, absence of strong professional journalistic body, the reliance on anticipatory 'self-censorship' based on sensitivity to the environment without any legal enforcement of press laws, press support for fundamental national policies, economic constraints, kin ties and press ownership etc. The other obvious feature of the press in the UAE is that it gives a lot of publicity to government achievements and activities supporting the official stand of the government on all fundamental issues (Rugh, 1987, 2004).The press again, does not engage in excessive criticism of friendly Arab countries indicating a recognition of similar interest and common problems that they face at independent Arab states.

According to my understanding, when seen in this light, I could say that the press in the UAE best fits into explanations of a Development Model theory .A consideration of all these factors seems to indicate a theoretical understanding that goes beyond Seibert's characterization or Rugh's characterization of the press in Arab countries. In the sense, the developmental model seems to theoretically accommodate the various characteristic of the press in UAE. Most importantly such an explanation seems to go beyond merely elaborating features of the press in relation to the government. Instead it turns our attention to wider concerns of the press in the larger context of particular circumstances of social systems rather than a mere elaboration of underlying philosophies.

II

This section would now attempt a conclusion based on the insights gained in the previous chapters. Arab media as indicated in the beginning of the study has been analyzed from various ideological points. Mostly, the various attempts to describe Arab media have somehow tended to focus on issues of accessibility and political control. Besides at times many authors have examined Arab media as a whole consequently overlooking the in nuances in Arab media because of their location in specific Arab countries. This study therefore began as an attempt to locate the press in the UAE a small Arab country in the Lower Gulf region. William Rugh hints that the

UAE has somehow not captured the attention of scholars in comparisons to other Arab countries. He writes that:

> The internal situation in the UAE has been largely ignored in the recent
> years by the world's press and by foreign governments, because (unlike
> Algeria) there is no crisis in the country and (unlike Iraq) it is not causing
> any trouble for its neighbors (Rugh, 1997).

While this might be a reason, there was definitely a paucity of literature that adequately deals with the social institutions in UAE. As a result of which this study faced a lot of constraints in terms of relying on past literature on media and social institutions in the UAE in particular, which I feel would have made for some more critical analysis.

Media as part of the social institutions in society is shaped by unique national histories as well as other dynamics in society. As a social institution it is related in various ways to the social and economic structures of the society. Consequently is cannot be understood without reference to certain institutional arrangements in society.

The specificity of mass media in the UAE is that it had an almost parallel growth along with the modern nation-state as a newsprint industry practically did not exist prior to it. At the time of its formation even basic amenities associated with 'modern' societies were minimal with the people leading a life of backwardness. The existing institutional arrangements in the UAE in terms of infrastructure, media, expansion in bureaucracies, political arrangements developed after 1971 aided by wealth from the discovery of oil. Besides the newly formed 'state' was faced with huge nation building tasks considering that the people in the areas of the 'UAE' had as diverse an ethnic background as the people in the neighboring parts of the Gulf. The specific patterns of nation-building and the resulting social and economic patterns have shaped the mass media in UAE. At the same time the local and social arrangements that resulted out of these processes also led to certain institutional features of the press in UAE.

The main particulars that came out in the process of discussing the issue of nation-building is the concerns on incorporating the 'traditional' with modern forms of governance. Consequently rule became based on a particular form of 'consensus' (*ijma*) and 'consultation' (*shura*) that formed the base of the government. The other important issue was the task of building a nation where none existed prior to it. Simultaneously, the new found oil wealth and initial infrastructural developments seems to have resulted in a growing number of expatriates arriving in the country, leading to an exceptionally disproportionate expatriate national population in the UAE.

As already indicated, the process of nation-building in UAE seems to have been particularly assisted by the economic resources of oil and a huge distributive economy or the development of a vast social infrastructure. In the process there seems to have been an overlapping of social, economic and political ties that link the people together. In the sense, that ordinary citizens, groups, members of important tribes etc were all incorporated in varying degrees in the emerging political and economic structure of the country through a generous sharing of wealth, power and a reinforcement of tribal ties through marriage alliances both within tribes and amongst them.

It would be a mistake to assume that everyone employed by the state or every citizen of the state is absolutely committed to it, the rulers or national policies. But as I have gathered, one of the important consequences of a rentier economy is that it does not rely on taxation and when socio-economic and tribal ties coincide the basis for a political opposition is considerably weakened. Since the personal interests of the people are vested directly in the state the likelihood for opposition is considerably less. In the UAE a wide social infrastructural base, a tiny national population, the personalized form of relationship that the ruling families share with its citizens in terms of citizens personally knowing the rulers or at least some members of the ruling family, has led to a degree of popular support for the ruling families and a stable environment in the country that is not seen in other Arab countries.

The various cultural attribute of belonging to a nation and building a collective 'Emarati' identity, at the national level instead of at the level of individual emirates, seems to have been brought about by the unifying services of the political entity. The

need to forge a unique national identity in the newly formed state in the light of these quickly varying patterns like a distributive socio-economic base, tribal ties, raising the standard of living, literacy, rapid modernization, and a large expatriate presence, forging a national ethnic and political identity seems to have required the media in UAE to be particularly focused on nation-building tasks – focusing inwards rather than outward. Such an essentially centripetal rather than centrifugal media was a primary instrument of shaping internal politics and maintaining stability.

Essentially then some of the main features of the press of the press seem to have been shaped from the structures in UAE society. A perspective that only examines laws would tend to overlook how other institutional arrangements in society like the religious institutions, economic institutions and so on relate themselves to mass media. Therefore a brief analysis of organization is necessary to understand under what conditions and how the media produces the content that it does.

Of course legal laws are one of the main features that mark the media in any society. However in reality the relationship between the media and state though legally defined is far from direct in most countries. The press in the UAE cannot engage in undue criticism of the ruling families or print material deregulatory to Islam or those that threaten national security. The exact boundaries between what is permitted or not, is very ambiguous and incidents of legal action are extremely rare. In fact the country is believed to follow a very 'soft' approach to the media in comparison to other states.

The most important defining feature of the press in UAE is that it is "loyal" to the policies of the state despite being predominantly under private ownership. This feature seems to have stemmed from the pattern of institutional building that emerged with the formation of the nation-state. For one, the owners are linked to the political and economic structures of the country. Also the ties are further strengthened by the ties of kinship and tribal loyalties. Besides the press receives financial benefits from the government in terms of notices, advertisements etc. So mutual interests and benefits and kinship ties or tribal loyalty seems to be the reason for the press to support national policies of the state.

Another important feature of the press in UAE is that 90 percent of the personnel are foreigners. For one the huge majority expatriate population and a minor national population has resulted in the development of two kinds of press namely the English press mainly catering to the expatriate community and the Arabic press catering to citizen and non-citizen Arabs. Again one of the important reasons for the specific feature of loyalty seems to arise from the high salaries that the press personnel are offered. Plus a good standard of living and a tax- free environment seem to be additional incentives for these personnel to be supportive of national policies. These characteristics also point to certain forms of commercial censorship or the ways in which wealth affects the press. It is further indicated by a Arab Press Freedom Watch (APFW) Report of 2004, commissioned by the Ford Foundation, aptly titled "Sunshine and Censorship: Press Freedom in the UAE"(Pickens,2004). Of course it does not hold true for all the journalists in the country. Some of the personnel have demanded changes in the Media Laws, even though it is never really put into practice. On of the reasons could be that the Laws are archaic as they were formulated in 1980 and basically imposes certain restrictions mostly on journalists. Besides, recent global incidents seem to have given the issue of 'press freedom' an impetus, particularly with Western pressures to 'democratize' institutions in Arab regions.

Again the press is also influenced by the social context of production. The creation of content is also a cultural and creative act and so consideration of media messages are shaped and influenced by the values and traditions of the state. In the UAE rapid urbanization has not resulted in religion or Arab Bedouin tradition being relegated to a private sphere. Rather Arab, Islamic values and public sentiments actively influence and shape communication policies. Yet, at the same time, as far as I can see it is not one of defining themselves in terms of an antithesis but rather a simple retaining of the past in the face of rapid modernization. In fact the question of retaining 'traditional' values is a predominant discourse in the country. The government is committed to the Islamic religion, which is recognized as a means of continuous identification with the state, the official religion of the state and as the major source of legislation (the Islamic Sharia). So it is assumed that the press must respect the essential nature of the state and often its relationship to a particular embodiment of religion.

The close relationship of the press and the Arab states also indicates the largely unnoticed role of the press in promoting 'social imaginaries' or more concretely a national identity. The press in terms of reiterating a "United Arab Emirates" and through a common narration of experiences promoted the feeling of a national community distinct from its culturally similar neighbors. Also in implying a 'national' identity to the indigenous population the press also seemed to have forged a community feeling among the national community distinguishing them from the majority expatriate dominated population. Newly emerging nation-states like UAE seems to have met the challenges of creating a nation by inventing traditions in terms of 'Bedouin customs and practices' that are presented as 'unique Emarati culture' in the process distinguishing themselves from their culturally similar neighbors as well as from the immediate non-indigenous culture. Thus a shared 'ethnie' seems to have been established after the nation-state through promoting a 'genesis of imaginaries' of the nation through national networks of communication contributing to conceiving a nation as within a boundary. At the same time there are other cultural or linguistic affinities like the Arab community that seems to be again connected by the common vernacular language of print.

There are essential problems with the Western conception of the Arab governments as 'authoritarian governments'. The actual form of rule has never been top down as every government keeps a watch on public opinion and sentiments as they are aware that they require the support of the people. In Arab countries, contrary to the Western notion, there do exist certain institutional arrangements whereby the citizens interact with the governments. The *Majlis* is one of the traditional representative and participatory institutions in the UAE that points to one of the many informal networks of communication that are present in Arab societies. The press mediates the discourses in the *Majlis* to a wider population including the expatriate community enabling communication to reach beyond the restrictions of a language barrier. At times demands in decision making or requests of even the expatriate communities are mediated through the institution of the press. In the UAE this is reflected in frequent changes in law in quick succession seeming to reflect the mood of the population. The ways in which 'traditional' form of communication and the press complement each other also indicates the approach by which the press assists in nation-building tasks in the UAE. In actually critically addressing certain problems that the expatriate

community faces or the problems with certain policies of the ministries or government departments the press acts as an important communicative link between the people and the government.

Media organizations in the UAE are not characterized by clear political leanings towards what is a typical understanding as left and right but are distinguished by how many risks owners are willing to take in terms of what they publish or broadcast. In fact the various differences between the various newspapers are so subtle that it is difficult to discern it by reading the papers themselves. Some of the ways in which the state influences the press are not direct. Rather some of the most effective avenues of influence that for the state seems to proceeds from the functioning of the political entity itself in terms of economy, its nature and ethnic ties that are integrated in the political and economic level. Also the influence over mass media stems from other broader institutional settings as well like the specific demographic situation, the vast variety of different cultures in the society, Arab and Islamic values and so on. Most importantly, in UAE they are definitely not ones that command the most obvious public disapproval.

Again Arab mass media needs to be understood not in isolation but as part of a larger socio-cultural setting of the Gulf in general and the Middle East in particular. I could not engage in these particulars in my study because of its restricted scope. Organizations of Freedom of Expression, backed by Western governments, have for long consistently opposed broad invocation of national security or anti-terrorist provisions as a basis for media repressions especially in Third World countries. With September 9/11 and the War in Iraq the American government has increased pressures over Arab states in particular to reform and democratize their institutional settings. At times, the restrictions over mass media in Arab countries are encouraged and even demanded by Western governments, with the issue being further complicated with pressures on these countries to monitor radical groups, regulate or even prohibit certain groups or communication that could disrupt or threaten international order. Such contradictions therefore also seem to mark the terrain of mass media in most Arab countries. For instance, in August 2003, the government closed down the Zayed Center for Coordination and Follow-Up, a local think-tank

accused by observers of publishing anti-Jewish literature and sponsoring anti-Jewish lectures (Katzman, 2005).

Coming back to my case study, in the UAE, a small national population, personal connections and oral face- to face communication and even personal ties with the ruling families seems to indicate a circulation of information beyond the print media and seemingly challenging any notion of a restricted 'authoritarian' press. In a situation where loyalties are drawn along family and tribal lines the traditional vocabularies of a Western press seem to rest very uneasily over the Arab press. This fact is further indicated by debates in the press between indigenous and foreign personnel with the indigenous personnel often arguing that Western concepts like freedom is a relative concept that has to applied carefully in the context of responsibility or that even a replication of the Western press per se may not be possible in the Arab context .

As Michael Schudson says people tend to overestimate the power of the media for the simple reason that:

> The media are the visible tip of the iceberg of social influences on human
> behavior. We see them, we hear them, they are readily available- in fact
> nearly unavoidable .They are the squeaky wheels of social life: loud,
> garish, and insistent (Ibid, 2003:19).

The distinctiveness of Arab media calls for a subtler perspective that examines the social, cultural and political realities from which the Arab media emanates or operates rather than a mere categorization of the press as authoritarian. Specifically Arab press has always had a changing relationship according to the varying social, economic and political circumstances. My goal has been to indicate how such circumstances come to exist and provide for certain features that come to characterize the institution of media in an Arab society. Of course like I stated before, the relationship in never static. Changing elements like the proliferation of new satellite channels, internet and the changing social and political circumstances all come to transform the terrain of a media environment.

This case study has most importantly indicated that while the UAE press has formal and informal relationships at a wider societal level, the relationships at the interpersonal levels including laws, oral communication, and social ties cannot be overlooked. For instance, when the UAE press gives importance or wide publicity to national projects and developmental works or wide publicity to charity (*zakat*) it does not reflect a trend of focusing on non –controversial topics or non-political issues or even the encouragement of apolitical issues among the UAE public. Rather it points to the highly personalized character of the society and the cultural context of the audiences and the personnel who consciously make these choices in the way they see the world.

So any study of the Arab media would be better understood not when studied in isolation but when it is studied in the larger socio-cultural setting of the country in particular, in a sociological perspective. My study has not focused on the 'Arab media' as a 'text' in terms of looking at its representation in Western media or language use or on news about images which is the forte of the field of cultural studies. I did not adopt an approach the perspective of Mass communication studies, where studies focus on technical conditions and consequences of communication for society, individual and culture. Nor was the focus on an isolated study of media in terms of political systems or the role of media in international relations which again falls under political studies.

Instead I have adopted a sociological perspective so that it would open analysis into a comprehension of media systems as a social institution within a larger, specific historical, economic, cultural and religious setting. Communication is influenced not only by communicators but also by the audiences in society. Besides different types of mass media operate alongside existing channels and patterns of communication etc which are again determined by individuals and groups in the social structure. As indicated in the previous chapters I have adopted these approaches to look into the nature of the UAE society; and how the incorporation of the 'traditional' into the political framework, the personal ties with the ruling families, the tribal relations between the people, the unifying role of wealth, traditional communicative channels like the *Majlis*, oral communication, Arab –Islamic cultural heritage and a specific audience of a small national population and a huge foreign population among other

variables, have shaped the press in the UAE. Most importantly it indicated an understanding of the press as a constitutive product of the specific nature of the society. In drawing out these features and its mutual relations with the media I have attempted an illustrative example of what a sociological study of the mass media could look like.

Appendix : 1

The table below indicates the percentage of population of UAE Nationals and Expatriates 1965 – 2006 (especially note the increasing expatriate population)

Year	UAE Nationals	Expatriates
1968	63.5	36.5
1975	30.0	20.0
1995	25.1	74.9
1997	25.0	75.0
2006*	15 – 20*	80 – 85*

Source: The percentage for the years 1968-1997 were sourced from the UAE Year Book, 1998;

* sourced from US Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 2006 available at (www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5444.htm)

Appendix : 2

The table below indicates the growth of the press in UAE before and after formation of UAE as well as press ownership

Newspaper	Year of publication	Publisher	Ownership
Arabic			
Al Ittihad (Union)	1969	Al Ittihad Press and Publishing Corporation	Private
Al Khaleej (Gulf)	1970	Al Khaleej House for Printing and Publishing	Private
Al Wahdah (Unity)	1973	Al Wahdah Newspaper Establishment	Government
Al Fajr (Dawn)	1975	Al Fajr Establishment	Government
Al Bayan (Decree)	1980	Al Bayan Establishment	Private
English			
Emirates News	1971	Al Ittihad Press and Publishing Corporation	Government
Gulf News	1979	All Nisr Corporation	Private
Khaleej Times	1979	Galadari Establishment for Printing and Publishing	Private

Source : Babbili and Hussain, 1994, 296 - 299

Appendix : 3

UAE Publications and Publishing Law 1980*
Federal Law No 15 for 1980 concerning publications and publishing

Chapter 1- Definitions
Words and expressions used in this document are defined as under unless stated otherwise

Article 1
State: The United Arab Emirates
Ministry: The Ministry of Information and Culture
Minister: Minister of Information and Culture
Publications: All written material, drawings, musical compositions, or any other form of expression that can be heard or viewed.

Circulation: Selling, distributing publications or displaying them for the purpose of sale or advertisement, or any other action that makes publications within the reach of a number of people.

Newspaper: Any newspaper, a magazine, or a publication, issued regularly or intermittently under one name.

Printing press: Equipment or system for printing or recording words, drawings or pictures for the purpose publication and circulation. The phrase does not apply to cameras, normal typing machines or photocopiers.

Owner of the printing press: Applies to anyone leasing the printing press.

Publisher: Anyone who publishes printed material.

Bookshop: Any establishment that trades in all types of publications.

Works: Literary, artistic and scientific works in whatever form.

Cinema: Any work that features visual means of expression.

News Agency: Any press establishment that disseminates pictures or words through tickers, telegraphic machines or any other means.

Chapter 2-Printing Presses and Publications

Article 2
Owner or the manager of a printing press shall fulfil the following requirements:

1. He shall be a UAE national
2. He shall be fully qualified.
3. He shall be of good conduct and must not have been convicted for an offence   involving moral turpitude, or he has been acquitted or his moral standing has been   restored by the proper authority.

Article 3
No one is allowed to operate a printing press unless he obtains a license as per provisions of this law.
Application for a license shall be submitted to the Department of Information and Publications at the ministry, and shall include the following details:
1. Name of the printing press owner.
2. Name of the manager who runs the printing press, his surname, nationality and place of residence.
3. Name of the printing house, its location and type of tools used and their number.

Article 4
The proper authority at the ministry shall approve or not approve the application within thirty (30) days of the date the application is submitted. Any delay beyond this date shall be considered acceptance of the application.

Article 5
In case the application is rejected, a complaint against the decision can be submitted to the minister within fifteen (15) days of the date the application was rejected.
The minister shall take a decision on the complaint within fifteen (15) days and his decision shall be considered final.

Article 6

The owner of the printing press or the official responsible shall notify in writing the proper authority at the ministry of any change to the details of the application for licensing. The matter shall be brought to the attention of the authority within fifteen (15) days of the date the change is made.

Article 7
The owner of the printing press shall waive ownership of his printing press only to a UAE national, who fulfils requirements mentioned in Article 2 of this law and after prior approval in writing from the proper authority at the ministry. The assigner shall submit to the proper authority an application including all details and documents confirming conditions mentioned in Article 2 of this law, and these are required from the assignee.

Article 8
If the owner of the printing press dies, his heirs shall notify the ministry in writing of his death within two months (2) of the death. The printing press licence shall go to the heirs, unless they express their desire to discontinue the printing press activity. This is made without prejudice to provisions of Article 2 of this law.

Article 9
The owner of the printing press or its manager shall keep a record stamped by the ministry, to record titles of material pending publishing, names of the material originators and number of copies printed from that material. The owner or the manager shall submit the record to the proper authority at the ministry.

Article 10
The name of the printing house and its address shall be recorded clearly in one of the pages of the printed material and also the name of the publisher and his address.

Article 11
Ten copies of the published material shall be submitted by the printing house to the censorship department at the ministry.

Article 12
An approval from the proper authority at the ministry shall be obtained by the printing house before any journal is published. The authority shall take a decision on the application submitted within fourteen (14) days of the date the application is submitted.

Article 13
Provisions of Articles 10, 11, and 12 of this law shall not apply to publications of a private or commercial nature.

Article 14
The printing house, before printing any material ordered by any party which does not hold UAE nationality, shall obtain permission from the proper authority at the ministry to print that material. The authority shall issue a decision on the application for permission within fourteen (14) days of the date the application is submitted.

Article 15
The printing house shall neither reproduce any material for circulation in the country, which is prohibited by the proper authority, and nor shall it print any material that contradict Articles 12 and 14 of this law.

Article 16
The printing house shall obtain permission from the proper authority at the ministry if a customer orders material to be printed for the purpose of distribution in another country. Application for permission shall include the material ordered to be printed, the name of the customer, his nationality and his place of residence.

Chapter 3- Circulation of Publications

Article 17
No one is allowed to sell, or distribute publications on the main road or in any public place, even temporarily, unless he obtains permission from the proper authority at the ministry.

Article 18
Anyone who wishes to sell or distribute publications shall register his name with the proper authority at the ministry. The minister shall issue a decision explaining the rules of registration.

Article 19
Publishers and suppliers of publications shall submit to the proper authority at the ministry five (5) copies of each publication they publish or supply before they circulate such publications. One copy of each publication is required if only a few copies of such publications are imported. Copies submitted shall be returned after procedures are completed. The minister shall issue a decision specifying such publications.
In all cases, a receipt shall be issued for copies submitted.
The authority mentioned in the first paragraph shall, without delay, issue a decision with respect to circulation of

the publications. The authority may delete from the publication any paragraph including material whose circulation is prohibited by the provision of this law. Deletion may be made by cutting out the subject material by scissors, or covering details by a special ink or any other tools deemed effective. In case the deletion is impossible, the minister may prohibit circulation of the publication in the country.

Article 20
The minister may ban any periodical or any publication from entering the country if that publication includes material prohibited to be circulated by the provisions of this law or any other law.
Decisions issued by the minister shall be published in the official gazette and as per provisions of the previous paragraph.

Article 21
Parties are prohibited to circulate any imported publication unless they obtain permission from censorship department at the ministry.

Article 22
No diplomatic missions in the UAE is allowed to issue any publication for the purpose of circulation unless they obtain permission from the proper authority at the ministry. Application for permission shall be submitted through official channels and must include a draft of the publication stamped by the head of the diplomatic mission. In case the circulation of the publication is approved five (5) copies of the publication shall be submitted to the proper authority at the ministry before it is circulated.

Article 23
Clubs, societies or foreign centres are not allowed to issue or circulate any publication unless permission is obtained from the proper authority at the ministry. Application for permission shall include a draft of the publication stamped by the head of the club, society or centre. If permission is issued, five (5) copies shall be submitted to the proper authority at the ministry before the publication is circulated.
Provisions of the previous paragraph apply to publications of private or commercial nature.

Chapter 4-Newspapers, Periodicals, and News Agencies

Article 24
No newspaper shall be published unless permission from provisions of this law is obtained.

Article 25
The owner of the newspaper shall meet the following requirements:

1. He shall be a UAE national. This requirement shall not apply to periodicals issued by diplomatic missions and foreign news agencies licensed to operate in the UAE.
2. He shall not be less than 25 years of age.
3. Shall be fully competent.
4. He shall be of good conduct and behaviour.
5. He shall not have been previously convicted for an offence involving moral turpitude, or unless he has been acquitted or his moral standing has been restored by the proper authority.
6. He shall not occupy a public service post in the country.
7. He shall not be employed by a foreign agency in the country.

Article 26
Any newspaper shall have an editor-in-chief to supervise its entire content, or it shall have a number of editors, each of whom supervises a particular section. Owner of a newspaper may be the editor-in-chief of his newspaper or a responsible editor if he meets requirements provided in this law.

Article 27
The editor-in-chief or the editor shall meet the following requirements:
1. Shall hold a higher degree from a recognised college, institute or university.
2. He shall have scientific experience not less than one year, with full experience to perform his job.

Article 28
Any editor or writer wishing to work in a newspaper shall meet the following requirements:
1. He shall have a higher scientific degree from a recognised college, institute, or university, or otherwise, he shall have practised journalism regularly for not less than three years.
2. He shall have been registered with the authorities organising the journalistic profession in his country.
3. He shall be fully qualified.
4. He shall not have been previously convicted of an offence involving moral turpitude, unless he is acquitted or his moral standing has been restored by the proper authority.
5. He shall not have been previously ordered to leave the country for an offence related to publishing.
6. He shall not hold a job with a foreign country or agency.

7. He shall not be a public servant.
The two requirements included in clauses 1 and 2 shall not apply to UAE nationals.

Article 29
Newspaper owners and chairmen of boards of journalistic establishments and news agencies shall not appoint editors or writers on a permanent or temporary basis, unless they are registered with the information department in the ministry.
Provisions included in the previous paragraph shall not apply to foreign correspondents appointed by their agencies abroad.
Individuals and agencies mentioned in paragraph 1 shall notify the proper authority at the ministry of the names of foreign correspondents, their nationalities and place of residence.

Article 30
Foreign correspondents are prohibited to practise their job in the country before they are licensed by the proper authority in the ministry. Licensing shall be for one year, which can then be renewed.
The ministry shall sponsor foreign correspondents.

Article 31
Anyone wishing to issue a newspaper shall submit an application to the proper authority in the ministry including the following details:
1. Name, surname, nationality and place of residence of the applicant.
2. Name of the editor-in-chief or editors and publishers, if any, and their surnames, their age, nationality, place of residence and qualifications.
3. The name of the newspaper, its language, the date of issuance and its address.
4. The name of the printing press in which the newspaper is published if it does not have its own printing press.
The application shall be signed by the newspaper owner, or editor-in-chief or by editors or the publisher, if any.

Article 32
The minister shall submit the newspaper's licensing application to the Cabinet to take a decision on it. The application shall be supported by the ministry's own opinion on the subject.

Article 33
The owner of the newspaper or the editor-in-chief shall notify the proper authority at the ministry of any change that occurs to details of the application. The notification shall be made within eight (8) days at the maximum of the date the change is made.

Article 34
The undersigned of the application provided in Article 31, shall deposit along with the application, a guarantee of Dh 50,000 for each daily newspaper, and Dh 25,000 for the other cases. This shall be made to ensure settlement of fines imposed by the provisions of this law or any other law against the editor-in-chief, editors, or the owners of the newspaper, the publishers or the printing press.
The guarantee may be made by a bank guarantee issued by one of the banks operating in the UAE and is payable to the ministry. The guarantee shall be irrevocable and unconditional.

Article 35
The guarantee shall be replenished the fifteen (15) days following a warning served in this respect, if the guarantee provided in the previous article dwindles after fines have been deducted from it.

Article 36
Any printing house is prohibited to print a newspaper, whose license expires, or the proper authority suspends its activity, or it is prohibited from being circulated in the country.

Article 37
No newspaper shall be circulated, unless it includes the name of the owner, editor-in-chief, or the editor, the name of the printing press, its date of issuance, place of issuance, price of an issue, value of subscription. All these details shall be printed clearly either on the front or the last page. If the newspaper has no editor-in-chief, but a number of editors each of whom is responsible for a particular section, their names must be printed in the same way mentioned above.

Article 38
As soon as an issue of a newspaper or its supplement is circulated, five copies shall be submitted to the proper authority at the ministry. Receipts of the copies shall be issued to the newspaper.
If the newspaper issues a number of different copies of the same issue, a copy of each different issue shall be submitted to the ministry.

Article 39

The editor-in-chief or the editor shall publish free of charge any public notices sent by the ministries. Notices shall be published in places where important news is published.

Article 40
The editor-in-chief or the editor shall publish upon the request of the proper authority any correction for news previously published.

Correction shall be published in the first issue published following the request and in the same place and with the same font size. These corrections shall be published free of charge if the space it takes is not twice the size of the original article. Fees shall be paid for the excess space.

Article 41
No newspaper shall abstain form publishing any correction, unless in the following cases:
a. If the correction is received two months after the date of publication of the article.
b. If the newspaper has previously published the corrections.
c. If the correction is written in a language other than the language in which the original article is published.
d. If the publishing of the correction entails an offence punishable by the law.

Article 42
If the editor-in-chief or the editor abstain from publishing the correction, he shall be imprisoned for a term not less than six (6) months, and/or pay a fine not less Dh 1000 and not more than Dh 10,000.

Article 43
The court, when it acquits the editor-in-chief or the editor from the charges provided in the previous article may obligate them to publish the correction in any wording it sees suitable.

If the editor-in-chief or the editor is sentenced, the correction shall be published in the first or the second issues following the issuance of the sentence. If the defendant abstains from publishing the correction, the plaintiff may publish the correction in three newspapers of his choice and at the expenses of the defendant.

The editor-in-chief or the editor, if he is cleared of the charges levelled against him, may publish that at the expenses of the plaintiff.

Article 44
The owner of the newspaper shall waive ownership of his newspaper only to a UAE national, who meets requirements mentioned in Article 25 of this law and after approval from the proper authority at the ministry. The assigner shall submit to the proper authority an application including all details and documents confirming conditions mentioned in Article 20 of this law and are required from the assignee.

Article 45
The licence of a newspaper is cancelled by a decision by the minister and upon request from its owner. The minister may cancel the licence in the following cases:
1. If the newspaper does not appear within six (6) months of the date the licence is issued.
2. If the newspaper does not appear regularly within six (6) months of the date the licence is issued.
3. If the owner of the newspaper dies and his heirs are not able to issue the newspaper regularly within one (1) year of the date of the owner's death.

Article 46
Newspapers or periodicals shall not copy articles, novels, stories or any other literary work unless there is consent of the author. Quotation, or brief notes may by copied without the consent of the author.

Newspapers may publish articles that discuss political, economic, scientific, or literary issues, or other issues of public interest unless publications of such issues are prohibited.

The author of the article and the source shall be mentioned clearly.

Article 47
Newspapers and periodicals may quote arguments and pleadings that take place in the courts and within the limit set by the law, unless the court decides that the proceedings take place in a closed hearing.

Article 48
Articles 17, 18, and 20 of this law apply to circulation, or selling of newspapers or banning them from entering the country.

Provisions included in Articles 19 and 21 of this law apply to import and circulation of foreign newspapers.

Chapter 5
Import and Export of Publications and Newspapers

Article 49
Non-UAE nationals registered in the record are prohibited to import or export publications and newspapers.

Article 50

No one shall be registered in the records mentioned in the previous article unless he belongs to one of the following categories:
a. Press establishments and firms dealing in publishing.
b. Parties that import or export publications and newspapers.

Article 51
Anyone wishing to be registered in the records mentioned in Article 49 of this law shall submit an application to the proper authority at the ministry accompanied by the following documents:
a. A Declaration of two copies that include the applicant's name, his surname, nationality, place of residence and the name of his press establishment, its location, names of the partners or directors authorised to sign for the firm.
b. Details of offices, where import and export processes take place and the name and surname of owner of each office, his nationality and his place of residence.

Article 52
Anyone registered in the records mentioned in Article 49 of this law shall notify the proper authority of any change made to the details mentioned in the previous article. Notification shall be made within fourteen (14) days of the date of the change.

Article 53
No Holy Quran books, or part thereof, or religious books published in the form of publications or audio material, shall be imported without permission from the proper authority in the ministry and without the prior consent of Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Awqaf.
In all cases, imported copies shall have been approved by the responsible religious bodies in Arab or Islamic countries.

Chapter 6-Cinema Films and Other Artistic Shows

Article 54
No party shall be allowed to import or export films unless he is a UAE national registered in the records kept by the ministry.

Article 55
Anyone wishing to be registered in the record mentioned in the previous article shall submit an application to the proper authority at the ministry accompanied by the following documents:
c. A Declaration of two copies that include the applicant's name, his surname, nationality, place of residence and the name of his press establishment, its location, names of the partners or directors authorised to sign for the firm.
d. Details of offices, where import and export processes take place and the name and surname of owner of each office, his nationality and his place of residence.

Article 56
Anyone registered in the records mentioned in Article 54 of this law shall notify the proper authority of any change made to the details mentioned in the previous article. Notification shall be made within fourteen (14) days of the date of the change.

Article 57
No film or a commercial advertisement shall be allowed to be shown in a cinema hall unless permission is obtained from the film censorship committee. Documents required to be submitted along with the application shall be determined by a decision by the minister.

Article 58
No diplomatic mission shall be allowed to show a film to individuals other than its employees and in a venue other than its official location unless permission is obtained from the film censorship committee.
Clubs, societies or centres are not allowed to show even to its members and in its official location unless they obtain permission from the committee mentioned in the previous paragraph.
Documents required to be submitted along with the application for permission shall be determined by a decision from the minister.

Article 59
A committee referred to as the "Film Censorship Committee" shall be set up and chaired by the ministry's assistant undersecretary for press censorship affairs. Members of the committee shall be representatives of ministries of education; interior, social affairs, justice and Islamic affairs, state security and Israel boycott office. A decision by the minister shall be issued to set up the committee. Ministries' representatives are nominated by their ministries. The committee shall be assigned to examine films to be shown in cinema halls. The committee is also assigned to examine films that are shown to individuals other than officials of diplomatic missions and in places other than official locations of such missions. The committee examines political, social, moral and religious content of films shown by clubs, societies and centres.
The minister may appoint in the committee anyone with competence and experience.

Article 60

The committee mentioned in the previous article may remove from the film any scene that it sees involving moral turpitude, or violating religious morals or values on which state and society are based.

The committee may permit the film to be shown after the scenes are removed.

The ministry may issue instructions to cinema halls or officials managing such halls to maintain a good standard of films.

Article 61

The Film Censorship Committee shall not license any foreign film to be shown unless there is an Arabic subtitle.

The application for permission shall include a summary of the film, its actors and the name of the producer.

In all cases the Arabic subtitle must conform to the film's dialogue.

Article 62

A committee shall be set up in the ministry and referred to as the "Higher Committee of Grievance". The committee, the members of which will be people from the field of art and law, shall be assigned to look into grievances raised by owners of cinema halls against decisions taken by the Film Censorship Committee and in accordance with provisions of Articles 57, 58, and 61 of this law.

The committee shall be set up by a decision by the minister.

In all cases, the decision of the committee shall be based on logical reasons.

Grievances against the committee's decisions may be submitted to the minister within fifteen (15) days of the date the decision of the committee is issued, and the decision of the minister shall be final.

Article 63

No one, whose age is less than sixteen (16) years shall be allowed to watch a film shown in cinema halls, or any other place specified by a decision by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs.

Article 64

Managers of cinema halls and other similar places mentioned in the previous article shall issue a notice in a clear place prohibiting children under sixteen years of age from watching the film and as per the decision issued in this respect by the Film Censorship Committee.

Article 65

The minister shall issue a decision naming the ministry's officials authorised to enter cinema halls and other places mentioned in Article 63 and printing presses and places where publications are sold and distributed. The officials will enforce the law and are empowered to confiscate any material or prove any action contradicting requirements of this law. They are empowered to confiscate materials and tools used in committing offences provided in this law.

Article 66

In places other than cinema halls, no artistic work shall be shown to the public without prior permission from the information department of the ministry. Applications for permission shall include details and documents. Such details and documents are specified by a decision issued by the minister.

Provisions of the previous paragraph apply to circulation or publication of any artistic work, whether such work is audio or visual.

Article 67

No one shall be allowed to perform theatre or screen cinemas, or the like, unless he is licensed by the proper authority at the ministry. Licensing shall be for one year, which can then be renewed. A decision by the minister shall specify requirements of the licence, its renewal and documents required to be submitted along with the application.

Article 68

Provisions of the previous article apply to individuals facilitating employment of cinema and theatre actors, or other artistes.

Article 69

Provisions of Articles 66, 67, and 68 of this law shall not apply to shows sponsored by ministries, government departments and public institutions and which are shown for the purpose of supporting their activities.

Chapter 7- Materials Prohibited to Be Published

Article 70

No criticism shall be made against the Head of State or Rulers of the Emirates

Article 71

Any work is absolutely prohibited from being published if it involves instigation against Islam or the system of

ruling, or if it causes harm to the interest of the state or the values of society.

Article 72
No opinions shall be published if they violate public discipline and order, or involve insult to teenagers, or call for or circulate subversive ideas.

Article 73
Any material is absolutely prohibited from being published, if it instigates criminal activity or incites hatred or provokes action of dissension among individuals of society.

Article 74
It is absolutely prohibited to publish confidential official or military communications unless permission is obtained from the proper authority at the ministry. It is also prohibited to publish conventions or treaties the government holds before they are published in the official gazette unless permission is obtained.

Article 75
Minutes of meetings, deliberations, or court hearings shall not be published in bad faith, misinterpreted or distorted.

Article 76
No article blemishing the president of an Arab, Islamic or any other friendly state will be published. It is also prohibited to publish any material that causes agitation to relations between the UAE and other Arab, Islamic and friendly countries.

Article 77
No article defaming Arabs and their civilisation and heritage shall be published.

Article 78
No news on an ongoing criminal investigation shall be published if the judge orders investigations to be kept confidential, or the public prosecution restricts publication.

Article 79
No news, pictures, comments about an individuals' private life shall be published if their publication is meant to disgrace such individuals. It is also prohibited to disclose any secret that may cause harm to the reputation of someone, or his property, his commercial name, or if the publication is meant to coerce somebody into paying some money or render a benefit to someone else, or the like.

Article 80
It is prohibited to publish in bad faith any false news about someone, or forge or tamper documents to relate them to such individual.

Article 81
It is prohibited to publish news that cause harm to the national currency, or causes damage to the national economy.

Article 82
Publications or advertisements shall not include any phrases, expressions or pictures that are inconsistent with public conduct, or otherwise mislead public.

Article 83
No advertisements shall be made on medicines, or pharmaceutical preparations unless by permission from the proper authority at the Ministry of Health.

Article 84
It is prohibited to malign a public official, or anybody occupying a post in the public prosecution, or assigned to perform a public job. The writer shall not be held responsible if he proves he did so in good faith.

Article 85
No reportage involving more than one person shall be published unless it covers points of views of all parties involved in that reportage.

Chapter 8-Penalties

Article 86
Anyone violating any provision of Articles 24, 26, 27, 29, 33, 57, and 58, or articles from 71 to 85, shall be imprisoned for a term not less than one (1) month and not more than six (6) months and/or fined not less than Dh 1000 and not more than Dh 5000.

The court may, apart from the punishment prescribed by the previous paragraph, suspend the activity of the newspaper, or close down the cinema hall for a period not more than one (1) month.

Article 87
Violators of provisions of Articles 19, 20, 21 of this law are subject to punishment provided in paragraph (1) of the previous article.

Article 88
The owner of the newspaper, editor-in-chief, editors and publishers, if any, shall be imprisoned for a term not less than six (6) months, and/or fined not more than Dh 10,000, if they issue the newspaper after it closed down, even if it was issued under another name.
The court may, apart from the punishment included in the previous paragraph, suspend the activity of the newspaper for a period of not more than two (2) months.

Article 89
Any violator of provisions of Article 70 of this law shall be imprisoned for a term not less than six (6) months and not more than two years and/or fined not less than Dh 5000 and not more than Dh 20,000. The editor-in-chief shall be punishable by punishment provided in the previous paragraph.
The court may, apart from the punishment included in the two previous paragraphs, suspend activity of the newspaper for a period of not more than six (6) months.

Article 90
Published material or the newspaper may be administratively impounded if publication, issuance and circulation are made in violation of provisions of Articles 12, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 36, 37 and 44 of this law. The matter shall be brought to the court to decide upon confiscation of items impounded.

Article 91
Any violator of provisions of Articles 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16 of this law shall be imprisoned for a term not less than one (1) month and not more than three (3) months and/or fined not less than Dh 1000 and not more than Dh 5000. The court may order closing down of the printing press if the owner operates it before he obtains the proper licence provided in Article 3.

Article 92
Any violator of provisions of Articles 25 and 35 of this law, shall be fined not less than Dh 2000 and not more than Dh 5000.

Article 93
For any other violation of provisions of this law the violator shall be fined not less than Dh 1000 and not more than Dh 2000, and/or imprisoned for a term not less than one (1) month and not more than six (6) months.

Article 94
The court may confiscate items seized if the violation is made under Articles 18, 19, 20, 21, 61, 63, 64 and 66 of this law.

Article 95
If the writer, or the graphic designer or the like commits an offence punishable by this law, the editor-in-chief or the editor shall be considered a part of this offence and shall have the same punishment handed to the original violator. Nonetheless, the editor-in-chief or the editor shall be pardoned if he proves that publication is made without his knowledge.

Article 96
If a material, a drawing, a picture, or a symbol, or any similar mean is used to commit an offence punishable by this law and that such material, drawing, picture, symbols or the like are published beyond the UAE boundaries, the importer of the publication or the newspaper in which such materials are published and the circulator shall be a party to this offence unless it is proved that the importer or circulator was unable to know the content of the material.

Article 97
The owner of the newspaper or the publication shall jointly pay along with the editor-in-chief or the editor damages the court orders to be paid to the victim.

Article 98
The press is free within the limits set by the law and it is prohibited to suspend activities or close down newspapers by administrative means unless the press defames Islamic beliefs or incites hatred against the system of ruling, or causes harm to the supreme interests of the country, or publishes materials that cause damage to the constitution, particularly to the concept of unity and federation, or threatens public order, or serves foreign interests that contradict national interests, or if the newspaper is discovered to receive any form of assistance from a foreign

country, or publishes ideas of a hostile country, or discloses military secrets, or publishes materials that cause confusion among the public.

The Cabinet, upon a report by the Minister of Information and Culture, shall issue a decision suspending activities of the newspaper for a period not more than one year, or otherwise cancels the licence issued to the newspaper. The Cabinet may also suspend activities of the newspaper for a period not more than one year if it publishes what contradicts the ban provided in Articles 70, 71, 72, 75, and 80. Decision of suspension or cancellation of the licence shall not prejudice the right to bring offenders before the court.

In case of extreme need and in circumstances mentioned in the previous paragraph the newspaper may be suspended for a period not more than two weeks and by a ministerial decision provided that the Cabinet is made known of the decision.

Article 99
The common law action for offences punishable by this law extinguishes after three months of the date the offence takes place.

Article 100
A common law action shall not be raised for offences of insult or slander, which take place in newspapers or the like unless by a complaint raised by the complainant to the public prosecution, or a law enforcing official.

If there is more than one complainant, the complaint shall be raised by one of them and if there is more than one defendant and that the complaint is raised against one of them it shall be considered raised against the others.

Article 101
No common law action shall be raised for defamation offence committed by newspapers or other publications against the president of state of an Arab, Islamic or friendly country, or representative of a country to the UAE unless by a request from the minister.

Article 102
No common law action shall be raised for slander or insult offences committed by newspapers other publications against the Federal National Council, army, courts, and other public institutions unless upon a request from the institution or head of the complainant agency.

Article 103
The complainant may disclaim his complaint at any time until a final rule is issued on the common law action. The common law action extinguishes by disclaimer. If there is more than one defendant, the disclaimer shall not be effective unless it is made by all of the complainants.

Disclaimer made for one defendant includes others.

Chapter 9-Miscellaneous

Article 104
Anyone may challenge before courts the final administrative decisions issued by the provisions of this law. The challenge shall be made within sixty (60) days of the date the subject decision is issued.

Article 105
Provisions of this law do not apply to publications issued by ministries, government departments and public institutions issued for the purpose of their activities. Provisions do not apply also to books, publications, and pamphlets issued or imported by the UAE University, or by Ministry of Education for the purpose of using them in its colleges, schools and institutes.

Article 106
Federal law No 5 for 1973 and any other provision that contradicts this law shall be cancelled.

Article 107
The minister shall issue necessary decisions and regulations to implement the law.

Article 108
The law shall be published in the official gazette and shall be effective upon issuance.

Source-This text of Media Laws have been sourced from a blogspot at (www.jumeirahblog.com).

* Verification with a few media personnel indicate this is an accurate translation of UAE media Laws which are otherwise only available in Arabic.

Appendix :4

The table below provides a rough estimation of daily newspaper circulation estimates from 1987-2004

Table- 1
Estimated Circulation of Major Daily Newspapers in the UAE in 1985-86

| Major Daily Newspapers	Circulation Estimates	First Publication	Location
Al Ittihad (The Federation)	50,000	1969	Abu Dhabi
Khalij Times	45,000	1978	Dubai
Al Khalij (The Gulf)	40,000	1970	Sharjah
Al Bayan (The Dispatch)	30,000	1980	Dubai
Gulf News	10,000	1979	Dubai
Al Wahadah (Unity)	10,000	1973	Abu Dhabi
Emirates News	7,000	1970	Abu Dhabi
Al Fajr (The Dawn)	5,000	1975	Abu Dhabi

Source: Rugh, 1987, pg 73

Table 2
Estimated Circulation of Major Daily Newspapers in the UAE in 2003

Major Daily Newspapers	Circulation estimates,2003	First Published	Location
Al-Khalij(The Gulf)	60000	1970	Sharjah
Al-Ittihad(Unity)	58000	1979	Abu Dhabi
Akhbar al-Arab(Arab News)	35000	2000	Abu Dhabi
Al-Bayan(The Dispatch)	35000	1980	Dubai
Al-Fajr(The Dawn)	28000	1975	Abu Dhabi
Al Wahda(Unity)	20000	1973	Abu Dhabi
Khalij Times	45000	1978	Dubai
Gulf News	20000	1978	Dubai
Gulf Today		1999	Dubai

Source: Rugh, 2004, pg 61

APPENDIX -5

MAP OF UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
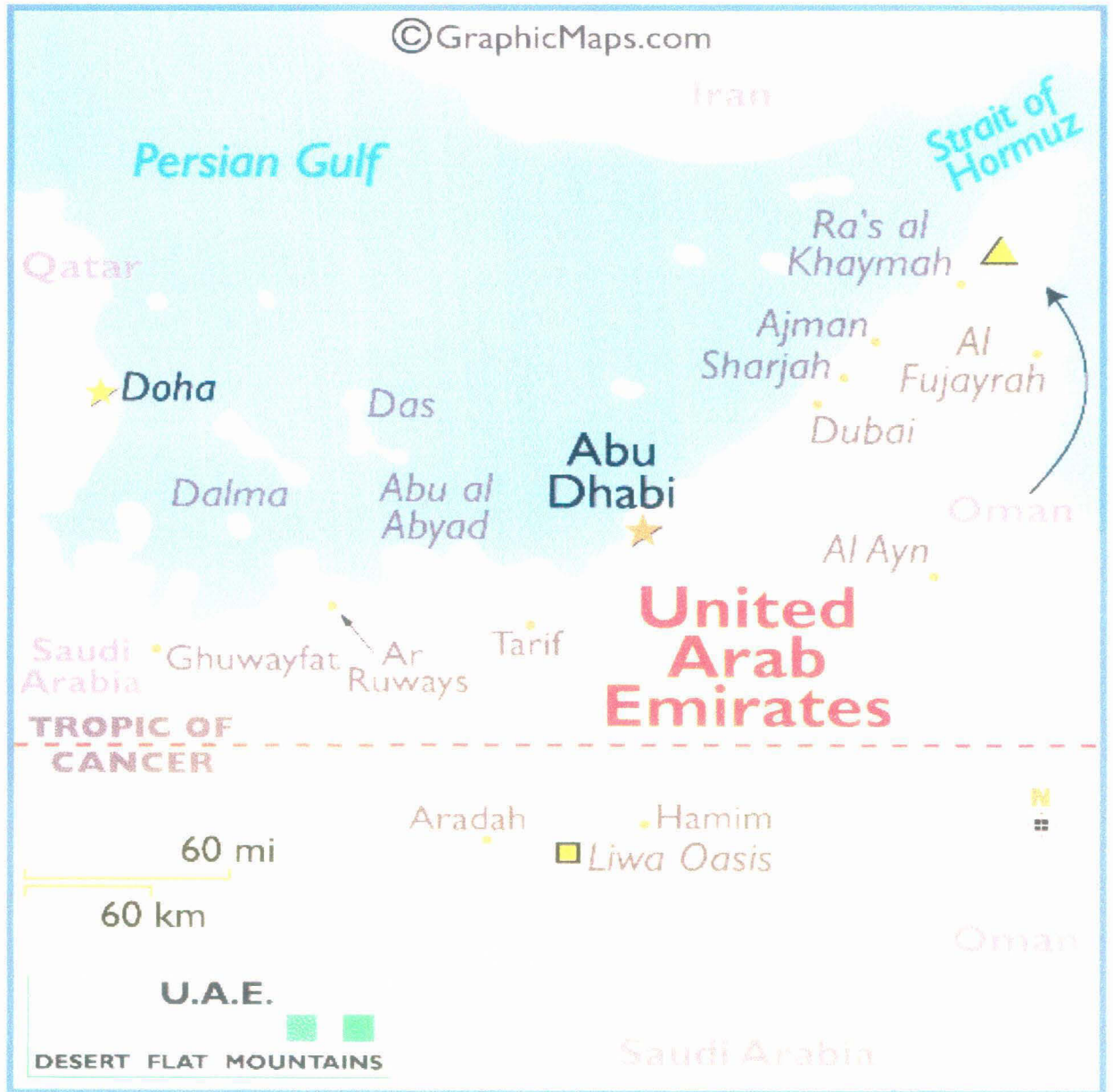
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