

Sudan Media Operational Philosophy: A Paradigm of Incompatibility between Western Theory and Eastern Practice

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ملخص البحث :

إن تشكيل لجنة هاتشنس عام 1947 لدراسة النظام الإعلامي الأمريكي الحر، واقتراحات بعض الباحثين لإنشاء نظم بديلة للنظم المعيارية التقليدية، مثل النظام الإعلامي التنموي والنظام الإعلامي الديمقراطي، وكذلك انتهاء صلاحية النظام الإعلامي الاشتراكي بتفكك الكيان السوفيتي يوم 26 من ديسمبر عام 1991، كل هذه الأحداث دلالة واضحة على عدم كفاءة النظريات الإعلامية المعيارية لتغطية العمل الإعلامي في كل ربوع العالم.

هذا البحث عبارة عن محاولة توضيح نقاط الضعف في هذه النظم المعيارية، مما جعلها غير صالحة للتطبيق في كثير من بقاع العالم. ليس هذا فحسب، فالبحث يحاول بطريقة تطبيقية دراسة واقع العمل الصحفي السوداني من خلال هذه النظم المعيارية. وقد توصل هذا البحث إلى أنه لا يوجد انسجام بين هذه النظم المعيارية وبين واقع العمل الصحفي السوداني وهذا يرجع إلى أصول النظم السياسية والاجتماعية التي كانت وراء إيجاد تلك النظم المعيارية والتي لم تكن نفسها الموجودة في السودان.

وإذ يناقش هذا البحث موضوع الانسجام بين النظم الاجتماعية و واقع العمل الصحفي، فإنه يولي أهمية كبيرة للأسس التي يبنى عليها النظام الاجتماعي والسياسي للمجتمع السوداني والذي يجب أن تتولد منه فلسفة العمل الصحفي السوداني. هنا، فقد حاول الباحث تفسير كثير من الظواهر الموجودة في واقع الإعلام السوداني -والتي تتناقض مع النظم المعيارية الأربعة- من خلال الإسلام باعتباره أهم عامل في تكوين فلسفة الحياة بصفة عامة في المجتمع السوداني. و بطبيعة الحال، فقد جر هذا الاستنتاج الباحث إلى أن يجزم بأن نظام العمل الإعلامي السوداني الحالي بصفة عامة هو ما يمكن أن يطلق عليه اسم الإعلام

دراسات إقليمية

الإسلامي حيث يرى أن ما يجب أن يقوم به الإعلام من واجبات في السودان تختلف تماما عنها لدي الغرب.

وقد حاول الباحث في الصفحات الأولى من البحث التعريف بالنظم الاجتماعية نشئ من التفصيل ثم سرد الملاحظات التاريخية والاجتماعية والسياسية التي أدت إلى نشأة كل من النظم الأربعة على انفراد .

عمد الباحث إلى سرد الحقائق التاريخية المتعلقة بالصحافة السودانية من 1989م إلي اليوم بالمقارنة إلى حالة الإعلام أيام نميري.

أما بالنسبة لفلسفة الإعلام في السودان الحديث، فقد ناقش الباحث فيها علاقة الإعلام السوداني بالحكومة السودانية والشعب السوداني في شكل دائري يصعب وجوده مع أي من النظم المعيارية الأربعة. وأخيرا، فإن الباحث يوصى باستمرار مراعاة الأسس الثقافية السودانية في العمل الإعلامي السوداني، ذلك لأنها فقط هي التي تضمن أن يكون الإعلام ملبيا لاحتياجات المجتمع السوداني.

Abstract:

The setting up of the Hutchins commission of 1947 to checkmate the libertarian operation of the American media, the suggestion of alternative theories which include the development of the reactionary theories and the likes by communication scholars, the demise of the socialist theory of the media with the breaking up of the soviet union in December 26, 1991 as well as many contentious issues in the history of the debate of the normative theory of the media suggest nothing but the inadequacy of the normative theory as well as its lack of universality.

This work is an attempt not just to examine the credibility of the normative theory of the media in order to determine the extent of the inadequacy but also an attempt to apply the theories practically on the Sudan media so as to examine both the compatibility and otherwise. The work tries to sort out the fundamental reasons why such theories developed in the West, as normative theory of the media are incompatible with the practices in other parts of the world. The work

argues that like any other operational philosophy, the four theories are operational philosophies that answer to the needs of the societies within which they operated and at the specific times of their vibrancy. Not only in other parts of the world, even in the societies whose political and social systems gave birth to the theories the work argues, the four theories can no longer operate as effectively as they used to be.

Introduction:

Normative theory of the media refers to the theory about how media **ought to operate**. It is there to set out some normative social obligations on the media. Depending upon the nature of the society, media is expected to contribute in social cohesion and integration of the society. In this regard, media is required to be functional and active participant within the context of the general operation of the society.

Normative theory therefore can not be described as objective or scientific. This is because it is not based on careful observation of the way media operate all over the world which might have lead to a hypothesis and subsequently result into formulation of a scientific theory. Normative theory of the media does not concern itself with the practical operation of the media; it rather concentrate on the normative obligation of the media and therefore, set a body of responsibilities. The normative theories give the impression that media is under obligation to carry out the task of those responsibilities towards their host community. Although, the issue of whether media of mass communication is under obligation to operate in a particular way or not, is far from being a resolved one, the normative theorists seem to insist that apart from the set up of the objectives of a particular media organization, certain socially valued objectives have to exist alongside. Media are expected therefore, to disseminate information in a way that they will contribute their quota in the process of public opinion formation, facilitate debate, stabilize democracy and promote peace and harmony in the society.

The main problem with the above premise is the attempt of the normative theorists to universalize the source of the normative

influence in the media conduct. This is clearly exemplified by Mc Quail. He summarized ¹roughly all the aspects of the society to which the normative theorist believed, the media owe their legitimacy and by which they should be normatively influenced. This has created part of the tension of the normative theory of the media as shall be seen in the subsequent analysis.

Like any other public and private institutions in the society, media of mass communication are expected to affect the lives of their host community positively. The normative theorists therefore, draw on the above considerations to design what media to them, ought to be doing in the host community. But the important moral question here is who has the right to decide the specific positive contributions of all the media of mass communication in the world in their various host communities.

Normative theories of the media though, seem to want to explain the ideal (at least, in some sense) rather than practical relationship between media of mass communication and their host communities, but they seem to get morally off track as they insinuate the universality of the experiences of media in some parts of the world.

Four Theories of the Press

The publication of a small pamphlet titled Four Theories of the Press by three American communication scholars had heated the debate of the normative theories of the media. Attacks, counter attacks and disputations were full of the air throughout the period of the publication which coincided with the period of the Cold War. Thus, the period marked an important millstone in the historical development of the normative theory of the media. The book has been widely sold, translated and used in education and academic debates ever since.

In the process of debating the proposed four alternative theories, many attempts were made at either deconstructing the postulations of the theory or filling the gap left by the postulations. Other writers went further to develop alternative theories with the view of covering the areas (both historical and physical) that were not covered by the

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Mass Communication Theory, pp. 163 ¹

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theories. The emergence of the four press theories had made the debate livelier than it used to be. The central argument of the four media theories is that press always takes on the coloration of the political and social structures within which it operates. It reflects specially the system of social control (Sierbert et al 1956). This opinion although, true to the specific areas covered by the four theories, is grossly deficient when applied to the experiences of media else where. In the case of modern Sudan media operational philosophy, this opinion is far from applicable as we shall see in the subsequent analysis.

Authoritarianism

The fundamental guiding principles of the authoritarian theory of media are summarized by Dr. Samuel Johnson as quoted in (Mc Quail, 2006) “every society has a right to preserve public peace and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of opinions which have dangerous tendencies”. This may seem morally wrong but politically right from the view point of the custodians of authoritarianism. It is upon this justification that authoritarianism based its foundation. For two or more centuries, European repressive regimes imposed control over press; a situation from which USA escaped by freeing her self from Britain in 1776. The situation can be said to have originated from the olden day censorship that John Stuart Mill stood against. His famous argument was that the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as existing generation those who dissent from the opinion even more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived from the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose what is also as great benefit, the clear perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

The central idea of authoritarian theory is that the authorities are the custodian of truth. They are to decide what should be good for public consumption and what is not. The media is reduced to the propaganda tool, or at best the channel through which the authorities put forward to the public their own version of the truth.

Libertarianism

Libertarian theory of the media came as a natural reaction to authoritarianism. At least, authoritarianism sensitized the media custodians of the liberal democratic societies. Its postulations are that media should act as a “free market place of ideas” first used in 1918 by an American Judge. Though used metaphorically, this phrase has the unfortunate effect of linking the freedom of the press with the idea of the free market. The early concern of the founders of this theory was the role of the media in the political process. To achieve a reasonably good result, a good number of free thinkers including John Stuart Mill, Alexis do Tocqueville, Thomas Paine and a host of others insist that press freedom was necessary. To support the postulation, Edmond Burke coined the term “fourth estate” in the late eighteenth century England and in order to emphasize the power of the press alongside the two houses, that lords, that of commons and the church. The power of the press is seen within its choice to withheld information and conceals the source of the information. All the revolutionary and reformists’ movements from eighteen century onward inscribed liberty of the press on their banners and made a wide use of it in practice in order to advance their cause.

Social Responsibility Theory

This theory owes its origin to the Robert Hutchins private commission of 1947. The commission was established by the publisher Henry in 1942 and reported in 1947. The main aim of the commission was to make and enquiry about the circumstances under which the press of the United States was succeeding or failing. That was the first time since the press freedom was attained, the need for intervention of Government to put right the ills of the press was contemplated. It may seem paradoxical to begin to think that the hard won liberty of the press equally needed purifications from some ills. But the reality of the American press of the day proved beyond reasonable doubt that libertarianism was not the messiah media dreamt of.

In all, the report of the commission has contributed meaningfully, to the process of media theorization. It opened up a new chapter of

enquiry on whether the American media of the day was responsible to its host community or not. For the first time in the history of the media, the public interest was shifted from the notion of free press to that of adequate press; the one which is responsible and whose work is to provide full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's event in a context which gives them meaning and benefits the society.

Socialist Theory of the Media

The socialist theory of the media is more of an operational philosophy than a theory. It characterized the 74 years of the Soviet Union in Russia. The Union, which was a result of the Russian revolution of 1917 and lasted to December 26, 1991, had drawn its press operational philosophy from Marxist dialectical materialism.² As the father of the communist ideology, Karl Marx criticized the press of his time as capitalist tool used for further alienating and objectizing the working class. In contrast, he posited that media should serve as socialist government component contributing its quota in the expansion, and transmission of socialist government system and policy respectively.

Media in Sudan From 1989

In 1989, the Islamist revolutionists in what was known as Inqaz³ revolution under the leadership of Omar el-Basher took over the government. The Inqaz government has been more sympathetic with the media of mass communication in the country than the previous communist inclined government under Nimeiry.

The most important contribution of Inqaz government to the development of Sudan media of mass communication and its current operational philosophy and which researchers have totally ignored is perhaps, reversing the offensive communication laws passed by the pass government. Under Numeiry's administration, Sudan media of

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² Encarta encyclopedia, 2005

³ Inqaz is an Arabic word which means salvation

mass communication suffered a fate that can be closely related to what was obtainable in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin; perhaps, socialist media operational philosophy at its worst. To better appreciate the real value of reversing those laws in the developmental process of the media of mass communication in Sudan, let us very quickly, glance at the legal documents of the media of mass communication under Numeiry's administration.

On August 28, 1970, the communist oriented government passed a law that considered all the media of mass communication and News Agencies as properties belonging to the nation as represented by the communist party. One year after this offensive, the communist influenced government took the initiative a step further by passing another communication law on April 1971. The new law transferred the ownership of the media of mass communication to the Communist Party and to be administered by the Communist Party itself. On the same track, several other laws were enacted which enabled Numeiry's communist influenced government to exercise a very strict control over the affairs of the media.

Apart from freeing the media from the shackles of the communication laws of the immediate previous government, Inqaz government has been supportive to the developmental process of media in Sudan. In the very first year of its rule, Inqaz government designed an emergency plan with the aim of improving the services of Sudan News Agency (SUNA). The emergency plan, within a short period of time changed the quality of the services of SUNA. SUNA has since then, been able to monitor the events to do with Sudan and report them to their media subscribers as news items to be reported all over the world. For the first time since inception, Sudanese affairs were being reported and channeled through the Sudanese media in both English and French languages. Sudan News Agency, stationed permanent reporters in some important capital cities in the world. These include Moscow, Sana'a, Abuja, Abu Dhabi, Damascus, New Delhi, Paris, Beirut and

Rome⁴. Another giant step for the improvement of SUNA's quality of services is the opportunity given to the agency to liaise with other agencies at international level for the exchange of information. An example of this is the cultural and informational bilateral agreement signed by both Sudan News Agency (SUNA) and News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in 1998⁵.

As a natural result of this improvement in the standard and the quality of the services delivered by SUNA, the services of the subscribing media of mass communication improved dramatically. This is not to talk of the considerable degree of press freedom which resulted into establishment of other media outlets.

From the year 2001, the digital revolution referred to as the information age that has taken place all over the world especially in telecommunication and multimedia sectors was fully reflected in Sudan and has seriously changed the face of media of mass communication in the country. To take good advantage of digital revolution and information age, Inqaz government established the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) in 2001. This ministry has been shouldered with the responsibility of designing the communication and information policies of the nation, with special consideration to the delicate image of Sudan in the international community in this information age. The ministry has been able to build one of the strongest systems of communication in North African sub-region. As from then, many other remarkable achievements were registered in Sudanese communication sector. This includes the establishment of Sudan Academy for Information and Communication Sciences. Compared to three newspaper houses in 1989, the number has dramatically, ascended to 36 in 2005. This is in addition to the establishment of 8 publicly and 273 privately owned publishing companies.

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⁴ بيلوغرافيا الصحافة السودانية

⁵ علاقات السودان بالشرق الأوسط وإفريقيا

Telecommunication services in Sudan, in general dates as far back as 1897. Since that time, the bodies in charge of telecommunication had undergone a number of restructuring changes in order to boost their performance. These restructuring adjustments remained ineffective for many interrupting different communication laws especially under the Numeiry's communist influenced government and for the fact that the institutions were government-owned. These left the bodies that run the affairs of the telecommunication with little or no operational and financial autonomy and little control over their own destiny. Perhaps, the activities of telecommunication in the country remained generally as poor as it was in many African countries until the last quarter of the 20th century.

Specifically, television broadcasting could be said to have started a bit late in comparison with newspaper which has already gone far when the television started. The Sudan national television for example, aired its first program on September 23, 1963. But up to 1990, only 14 cities could access the programs of the national television station.⁶

The state of both television and radio broadcast communication remained a bit poor until when the Three-Year Economic Salvation Program (1990-1993), adopted by the Inqaz government, emphasized the role of telecommunications in the socio-economic development process and called for the removal of the monopolistic involvement of the government. As from then, both local and foreign private capitals have invested in the sector in an endeavor to overcome the persistent shortfalls in performance.

When in 2001 Inqaz government established the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) and charged it with the responsibility of policy formulation and legislations, another bureau was established to give a special attention to the telecommunication activities in general and to the broadcast communication in particular. This was National Telecom Corporation (NTC), vested with regulatory

⁶الاتصال التتموي الريفي، ص:96

functions power. NTC has been charged with the responsibility of the issuance of license for and regulating the activities of all the telecommunication networks and service providers.

As a result of all these efforts, more than 80% of the space of Sudan has been covered by both television and radio broadcasting, while previously, television could be viewed only in some restricted areas in Khartoum. As from then, many other remarkable achievements were registered in broadcast communication system in Sudan. This includes the emergence of transnational broadcasting by the Blue Nile satellite television station as well as the establishment of local television stations in 19 states of the nation. In 1990 there were an estimated 250,000 television sets in the country and about 6 million radio receivers.⁷ Presently, Sudan National Television operates from three different studios, located in Omdurman, Al Jazirah, and Atbarah. The major radio station of the Sudan National Broadcast Corporation is also in Omdurman, with a regional station in Juba for the south.

In opposition to the official broadcast network, the SPLM operated its own underground radio station from secret transmitters within the country and facilities in Ethiopia. Radio SPLA broadcast activities are in Arabic, English, and various local languages of the southern Sudan. In 1990 the National Democratic Alliance began broadcast activities on Radio SPLA's frequencies.

Media Operational Philosophy of the Modern Sudan

During the period of cold war between the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union (USSR), three American scholars published a pamphlet with the title Four Theories of the Press.⁸ The publication which was seemingly published to stimulate debate over the theoretical relationship between the media of mass communication and their host communities made some communication scholars

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⁷ Wikipedia Encyclopedia

⁸ These three scholars are Siebert, Wilbur Schramm and Peterson

uncomfortable. The attempt of the publication to confine such relations in only four theories; libertarian, authoritarian, totalitarian and social responsibility was met with lot of challenges.

In the process of explaining these concepts, Ciboh⁹ refers to them as operational philosophies and asserts that they are not more than influences of the political ideologies of the parent nations within which the media operate.

Earlier in the debate of the media operational philosophies, deconstructive criticisms were directed at the four theories for the fact that they could not be universally applicable. They proved incapable of covering media operation all over the world.

A cursory survey to the media operation in the modern Sudan reveals that none of the four theories is capable of explaining the reason why Sudanese media behave in the way they do. In theory, Sudan is an underdeveloped country whose media should be characterized by the alternatively proposed developmental operational philosophy. Merrill suggests that developmental journalism is the most suitable for the underdeveloped countries, in which the developmental policies of the state would be promoted with both press freedom and censorship being used in accordance with the developmental needs of the host community.¹⁰ But in practice, Sudanese media behave notoriously different from either the normative theories or the alternative developmental theory.

In a research titled Sudan: The Impact of Media Theory on the Sudanese Media, Ahmad discovers the following:

- ❖ Even though the Sudanese media of mass communication don't operate in isolation from political and economic systems, it is impossible to explain the relationship between the media and the Sudanese Government within the context of the traditional normative theories.
- ❖ Government ownership of some media outlets has some neutralizing effects on the general performance of the media between 1985 and 1993

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⁹ Global Media and Cultural Domination, 2005

¹⁰ Global Journalism, 1991

- ❖ The opinions that go contrary to government policies are hardly covered by the media.
- ❖ Sudanese government supports the media in order to create a reciprocal service relationship.

With the above discoveries about the characteristics of the media in Sudan the question remains as critical as it was; what is media operational philosophy in Sudan? But another question whose answer is equally critical in determining the Sudanese media operational philosophy is the question of the sources from which media naturally derive their philosophy. It is also of key importance to make it clear that media need operational philosophy in order to justify their existence often to the body to which they owe their existence.

In his Mass Communication Theory, Mac Quail enumerated a number of sources from which operational philosophy is often drawn by the media. According to him, these include:

- Social and political theory
- Professional theory and practice
- The public as citizens (public opinion)
- The public as audience
- The media market
- The states and its agencies and
- Interested parties in the society.

The modern media of mass communication in Sudan, starting from the Inqaz revolution in 1989 do not seem to draw their operational philosophy from the aforementioned sources as postulated by Mac Quail. This explains why Ahmad (in her research) finds it difficult to explain the relationship between Sudan media and government within the context of the traditional normative theory.

When Khalil, (1992)¹¹ conducted a research on the social role of the media in Sudan he came up with some revealing findings. Put together with the conclusions we come across in Ahmad (1993), these findings would give a direction for the possible operational philosophy of the Sudanese media of mass communication. Khalil concludes that:

- ❖ Sudanese media contribute immensely towards inculcating moral values among the youth
- ❖ Not only that the youth put their trust in the media, but also their level of readership is considerably high

What is worth special attention here is how some unlikely features met in the same space and time in Sudanese media. In a normal situation, when the relationship between media and government in a particular setting can be described as that of mutual understanding and reciprocal service, the likeability of the citizens viewing both with some degree of suspicion would naturally go high. This is at least, true in theory. In practice, the media-government-citizens relationship in Sudan goes contrary to the above postulation. As Ahmad (1993) had us believe, (as scientifically proved by his research) that not only that the opinions going contrary to government policies are hardly covered by the media, the relationship between the media and government is supportive. Khalil (1992), on the other hand tells us about the trust and the considerably high level of readership from citizens (youth). This is not to talk of the contribution the media offer in raising high the moral values of the society.

Going by the findings above, it follows that Sudanese media seem to exclusively owe their existence neither to the government nor to the citizens. It therefore remains as fresh as possible, the question of where the media of Sudan owe its existence and to which it is answerable.

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This is another master degree research conducted written in Arabic language. Any ¹¹ information quoted here is the translation of this writer. Full citation of the work is found in its original context at the end of this work under the references in Arabic language

While presenting “Islamic Communication Style” as a more realistic alternative to the deficient normative theory of the media, Sharaf¹² discusses an operational philosophy closely identical to what is obtainable in Sudan market place of mass communication. He describes the Islamic system of communication to the mass audience as that in which the sprit of faith dominates over any other secular ideology. This is not to say that any useful facts which are scientifically proved are dismissed. In fact, it is fallacious to assume that theocratic philosophy is always against and ready to dismiss any scientific findings. Unless either of the two is mixed with some degree of human errors, theocracy and science would never go against one another.

Central to the argument of the Islamic media operational philosophy is the emancipation of human mind from the latent messages of media directed to the subconscious mind of audience for propaganda reasons. It argues for presenting all (not some parts of) facts without any attempt of manipulation so as to leave the audience with a non-manipulated freedom of choice. With all facts presented to the audience, this philosophy predicts that human mind will be able to place each and every aspects of the material world around him in its proper position. This would naturally enable him to establish the most useful kind of relationship with the universe around him. The philosophy is not necessarily teaching the audience about all the tiny details about the laws governing the works of the universe, but it focus attention about the way in which he can be able to establish the most fruitful relation with it. The main aim of the philosophy is to prepare human being to take his proper position as the vicegerent of God in the universe. The mass communication media, according to this philosophy therefore, should not come so low as to go by the whims and sentiments of the audience by exhibiting, say, sexually charged materials with the name of entertainment. Neither should the media be irrationally promoting a particular social or political viewpoint simply because the same is supported by the mass audience of that media. Equally unacceptable is any lexical ‘acrobaticism’ in the media

¹² 1998, الإعلام الإسلامي و تكنولوجيا الاتصال

materials so as to achieve some propaganda purposes. The idea is that media is not viewed as a psychological warfare, but as a tool for the refinement and purification of human mind from any ideological forces that knocks it off balance.

Although theory at times seems inapplicable in practice, but the above is closely identical to the media operation in Sudan as proved by media researches conducted in Sudan. The researches are assertive of the fact that Sudanese media, government and citizens (audience) were able to establish healthy and supportive relationship. Unlike in Mac Quail's (2005) speculation where media have to source legitimacy from the part of the society to which they owe their existence, the media in Sudan don't seem to source their legitimacy from any angle of the society. In fact, with the declaration of Sudan as an Islamic state in 1989, the media, the citizens, the institutions of the society and the government itself have to source their legitimacy from Islam, which is the new legal system and political ideology of the society and to which they all owe their existence. Part of the beauty of this perhaps, is the unity of purses and direction which is the natural result of this unity of source.

An important aspect of this philosophy and which should be emphatically emphasized is its universal applicability. It is therefore, worth noting that while the traditional operational philosophies (normative theories) each focuses attention on either a political system, a country, a region or a particular audience, Islamic media operational philosophy focuses attention on humanity as a whole. This is directly connected with the universal nature of Islamic message to which the operational philosophy owes its origin.

In the same line of argument, the nature of the origin of this philosophy necessitated the disputation of the postulation that modern technology of communication media is value loaded. This philosophy does not only sided with the value-free part of the debate but also asserted that in as much as human mind is refined as postulated above, human is capable of controlling the level and the nature of the effect

the technology should have over the audience of his media. In fact, that is the very meaning of being the vicegerent of God in the universe. Unless human mind is corrupt with such ungodly ideologies that exclude God and implicitly attribute His qualities to human being, such as Darwinism and Marxism, human is always capable of putting the media on the right direction, the one which is beneficial to all humans, irrespective of their religious, political, racial, cultural and regional differences. To make it clear, it is perfectly safe to assume that the sensational aspect of western journalism, for example, is a full responsibility of the operational philosophy of the western media (libertarianism), not that of the media technology nor the media practitioners. In comparison, the absence of such sensationalism in Sudan media operation should necessarily be interpreted within neither the context of the media technology nor the unwillingness of the practitioners (owing to their human nature), but the philosophy that governs the workings of the society including the media.

A Purposeful Use of Media in Sudan

Although, effects theory is still a very hotly debated area of Media and Psychology researches, Sudan has been a testing ground for the nature of effect that can possibly result from a purposeful use of the Media.

When ICT-Fund was endorsed by the Inqaz government as part of the media revolution, the aim was to focus on the support of the informational need of the society. And the universal objectives include the provision of computer system for every household and the realization of E-government. For the realization of these informational objectives, the Inqaz government takes into account the idea of Telecentres as the most appropriate platforms for providing urban, rural and remote areas and businesses with the idea of ICT services and applications in order to gain their confidence. The centers were meant to provide not only the physical access, but also the necessary user support and training to help the addressed populations to effectively exploit and develop ICT applications.

In 2006, the Internet users in Sudan were estimated at about 2.8 million. How remarkable is this achievement can be fully appreciated if it is remembered that Internet service was totally not available in Sudan in 1996.

The media campaigns, government tolerance and privatization of the telecommunication sector, the policies, the regulations and plans adopted by the government of Sudan have created not only a capital-attracting and pro-competitive environment that have fostered the build-up of a modern, fully-digital infrastructure in the country but also created a climate suited to enhance ICT development nationwide. The remarkable transformation and achievements witnessed in the Sudanese Telecommunication sector coupled with the growing and diversifying use of the ICT services including those of the internet and its applications have been a success story that made Sudan to be widely held among the most developed in Africa as well as in the Middle East. But considering the large population of the potential patronizes of the country, a huge investment opportunities still exist in the market. With a current annual growth of 30%, the Sudanese telecommunication sector is the fastest growing in the world.¹³

Normative Theories and Sudan Operational Philosophy

The body of the normative theory suffered serious deconstructive criticisms from experts, professional journalists and academics. The fact that normative theory is unscientific and therefore not reliable was seriously challenged.¹⁴

One other thing that discredited the theory is its incomprehensive nature that made it incapable of covering the media practice all over the world. It, generally speaking concentrates on the media practice in the western developed countries excluding the media practices of the developing and underdeveloped countries.

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¹³ Wikipedia encyclopedia, 2009

¹⁴ Mc Quail, 2006, Mass Communication Theory

Having observed this, a host of other communication scholars suggest that alternative theories will quench the developmental thirst of the communicative needs of the underdeveloped countries. They explained that developmental theory should help promote the developmental policies of the government of its host communities. Press freedom and censorship should all be used in a way that they will serve the developmental purposes of the society.

Of the criticism that can be potentially directed to the normative theories of the media is that they are suitable all the times. Totalitarian and Socialist theories for example, are simply past historical periods. European countries used the totalitarian theory at some epochs in their history for two centuries to be precise, while the Soviet Union applied exclusively the socialist theory of the press for the period of 74 years. Both theories are no longer in existence.

The libertarian theory that characterized the United States' media practice has woefully failed to meet up with the communicational needs of the American society that it leads to the establishment of Hutchins commission in 1942 which submitted its report in 1947. In its report, the commission was compelled to use the term "responsible media" which eventually gave birth to the social responsibility theory of the media. Social responsibility theory itself is not without flaws. Merrill (1984)¹⁵ argued seriously that the relativism of the term 'responsible' and 'irresponsible' even within an individual society made this theory highly inaccessible. He posited that responsibility in the media practice will be determined by the degree (which greatly varies) of pluralism accommodated by an individual journalist, the society and the set of codes laid down by the experts. Following Merrill's line of argument which concludes that responsible media in a particular society may not necessarily be responsible in another; in fact, it may end up being irresponsible, the possibility of the universally responsible media reportage is negligible. It follows therefore, that social responsibility theory of the media in particular as well as the general body of the normative theory is inadequate in explaining the attitude of media operation.

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¹⁵ Freedom and Authority in Internationalization

An African example of this as pointed out by Ciboh (2005), is segmentation of media responsibility going on in Nigeria. According to him, “in Nigeria there exist a monolithic kind of press responsibility which has created what is now labeled “some section of the press” thought to be responsible by some segment of the society and irresponsible by others”¹⁶

In an effort to shy away from all these inadequacies of the normative theory, some scholars opined that journalism code of ethics should be regarded as an alternative theory to determine the conduct of media practices. This is also not without its flaws in some sense. A universal code of ethics is realistically not obtainable. The major players in determining code of conduct differ from society to another. Culture, religion, law of the land, interested groups and other key players are not the same in different societies.

Conclusion:

Why the normative theory of the media fails to accommodate the operational philosophy of the media in modern Sudan is simply because of the differences between the societies in which the theories were developed and Sudanese society. The very basic component of Sudanese society which is Islam remain a serious dichotomy line between the west and the eastern parts of the world and other societies that are adherent to Islam including Sudan. Although, religion is included in the sources of the normative theory of the host community of the media, but the interpretation of what religion is has is fundamentally different from western societies to the societies that are adherent to Islam. As religion is one of the components that create the idiosyncrasy of other societies, Sudan has Islam as an overall ideology to which all other components are answerable whether directly or indirectly. This explains the reason why the media, the audience as well as the Sudan government, as we have seen above, all owe and justify their existence to the new Sharia system as was reintroduced with the emergence of inqaz government in 1989.

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¹⁶ Global Media and Cultural Domination

One other reason of the incompatibility is the fact that the normative theory should cover both the dos and don'ts of the media in relation to society. But the case is different in practice. Defining the concept normative theory, Mc Quail¹⁷ implies that stating the don'ts of the media while discussing the theory is an exception rather than the rule. Surprisingly, all the contributors to the development of the normative theory overemphasized on what the media should in order to justify its existence and kept mute about what the media should not do in order not to disgrace its existence. This work supposes this as another reason why normative theory of the media failed to be compatible with the media practices in Sudan as Sudan and any society that is adherent to Islam balances the scale of don'ts with that of dos in all its dealings.

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