

The Effects of Socio-Political Changes on Bahrain's Radio Broadcasting (1940-1992)

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Abstract

The general objectives of this research were to study the effects of political and social changes on the development of radio broadcasting service in Bahrain due to the fact that political changes had the greatest effect on the development of radio broadcasting service in Bahrain.

The study covered the years from 1940 to 1992. This period was divided into two phases. The first one is from 1940 to 1945. It witnessed the establishment of the radio station by the British. Its main goal was to serve the British during World War II. The second phase started in 1955 and continued till 1992. During this phase, the station was freed from the pressure of the British after the end of the war. This gave the station the chance to elaborate on issues important to the public and consider seriously the opinions of the people about the programmes. The development of the station was badly affected by the instability of the political situation. However, from 1970 till 1992, the stability of the political situation allowed the station to concentrate on important issues that addressed the interests of the listeners. Concerning the types of programmes, entertainment and musical programmes dominated broadcasting, in Arab or English, and less serious attention was given to educational and cultural programmes.

Radio can play an important role in educating the people because it can be heard out over a wide area and can address concepts and thoughts to all the public whether or not they are literate. Its importance increases in a developing society through preparing people to accept new ideas and concepts, as well as economical, political or social changes. As Bampus and Shelt said: "Radio is one of the great inventions of the century and one that has affected, either directly or indirectly, the lives of virtually every inhabitant of this planet."¹

Radio broadcasting in Bahrain began in 1940. A careful study of the history of its evolution and subsequent progress shows that the role of radio in Bahrain's national development is affected by political and social changes. The development of radio broadcasting in the context of political and social changes in Bahrain is the subject of this research.

There have been two different phases of broadcast development in Bahrain. The first one, from 1940 to 1945, was concerned with the founding of the first radio station, the reason for its establishment, control of the station and type of programs presented. Because the radio station was established as a result of World War II, the impact of the Second World War on Bahrain is also discussed. The second phase of broadcast development ran from 1955 to 1992, after which a public corporation was formed to oversee the development of both radio and television. The establishment of Bahrain Radio and Television Corporation (BRTC) in January 1993 is considered a big turning point in the progress of radio and television in Bahrain. Since then, the Bahrain Radio and Television Corporation has become independent administratively and financially.

This paper emphasizes the first phase and its characteristics. This is due to many reasons. First, this phase has not been studied in detail and has not been given enough attention in the literature. Even though some studies were done about radio broadcasting in Bahrain, these studies lack profound information about the first phase. We will mention two examples of the studies done to show this lack of in-depth study about the first phase.

The first example is a book written by Douglas A. Boyd. When he starts talking about the history of radio broadcasting in Bahrain, Boyd says: "In 1955, the Bahrain government started an Arabic-language radio station on Bahrain Island, which provided limited news, music, and dramatic entertainment."² The second example is a book published by the Ministry of Information in Bahrain. The book starts by mentioning that radio broadcasting started in 1955. From these two books we can conclude that the first period which ends in 1945 was totally ignored.

The importance of this study derives from different points, the most important of which is the fact that, even though broadcasting in Bahrain started a long time ago, no other previous in-depth studies were done on this station. This makes the subject of this study totally new. This is the first study which looks at the station as a whole and from many different aspects instead of limiting the study to only one aspect and phase and ignoring the other important ones. Actually a lot of studies were made but they all either talk about only one aspect or are very brief.

The only study worth mentioning is one made by a group of Bahraini students at the University of Cairo. This study was titled "Dirassat fi Adab Al-Bahrain [Studies about Literature of Bahrain]". What is important to us from this study is an analysis done on the cultural programmes that deal with literature broadcast by the station.³

An important reason for conducting this study is that the people of Bahrain relied on the news they got from the station. This is due to the fact that the newspapers in Bahrain were published on a weekly basis till 1975 which created a lack of provision of daily news that the people wanted to know. This shows how important it was to the people of Bahrain to have a radio station that broadcasts on a daily basis.

Establishment of Broadcasting in Bahrain (1940-1945)

The most important source of information for this period is the only newspaper published at that time, called "Jareedat Al-Bahrain" (Bahrain Newspaper). This newspaper was established by Abdulla Al-Zaed in 1939. This newspaper used to report about all the broadcasting such as the date of the establishment of the station and the types of programmes. It even reported very specific news and programmes about the station. For instance, it reported in detail and with care that one year a lot of rain fell and this caused some trouble to the transmission. Besides that, the newspaper used to report all political analysis done and broadcast by the station.

Before talking about the establishment of broadcasting in Bahrain, it may be useful to describe the political and economic situation of Bahrain at that time. Between 1940 and 1945, Bahrain was a British Colony involved in World War II as a military base for the British and to provide fuel for the British fleet. Beside having a good strategic location, Bahrain was already known at that time as an oil rich country. Bahrain was forced to participate in the War without its inhabitants being allowed to express any opinion about this involvement. The War had a substantial negative impact on the economy of Bahrain.⁴ Unemployment was widespread in Bahrain. The rate

of inflation increased and trade was depressed. The impact of the war was not only confined to the economy of Bahrain, but also influenced the social and psychological situation of the inhabitants.

A feeling of fear spread through Bahrain because there was always a chance of aerial and sea bombardment by the Italians, due to Bahrain's strategic location in the middle of the Arabian Gulf. This fear was justified. On the morning of October 19th, 1940, a refinery used to provide oil to the British tanks and warships, was bombarded by three airplanes during an air raid. Violet Dickson describes this event. "It was a shock to every one in the Middle East when several Italian planes flew over Kuwait on the night of October 10th, 1940 and dropped bombs on Dhahran and some on Bahrain."⁵

Despite the fact that Bahrain was forced to participate in the war as an ally of the British, public support was frequently manifested for the Germans against the British, not because the people liked the Germans, but because they suffered a lot, socially and economically, under the British rule.⁶

In the beginning of this century, it was generally accepted that radio was an important aspect of modern civilisation and a useful educational tool, and for influencing public opinion and bringing about social and cultural change. During the War, radio stations were used as a means of propaganda to gain the support of the public. For instance, during World War II, Germany had a strong broadcasting operation called "Radio Berlin", directed at countries occupied by the Allies, including the Arab countries, to support their position.⁷ Therefore, a major reason behind the founding of the radio station in Bahrain was the desire of the British not only to satisfy the popular interest in radio news but to do so in a way that pleased the British and helped them in their war. At the beginning of the war people in Bahrain used to listen to some radio stations from outside Bahrain such as Radio Berlin, although it was prohibited to tune in to any station that attacked the British. The authorities found that enforcing this rule was impracticable. Therefore, the British thought of having a station in Bahrain to respond to the broadcasting of German station and to win the battle for "hearts and minds" among the people of Bahrain,. The following is one historian's view of this innovation: "As a counterpoint to German war propaganda diffused by the Arabic Service of Radio Berlin, the British set up the Bahrain Broadcasting station which went on the air on November 4th, 1940."⁸

By founding this station, the British were trying to improve their image in the country and to convince Bahrains to be on their side in the war

against the Germans.⁹ Bahrain was chosen as the country where a radio station should be established by the British Government for several reasons. First of all, Bahrain is located in the middle of the Arabian Gulf countries so broadcasting was able to reach all the neighboring Gulf countries. Another important reason is that, compared to the other Gulf countries, the level of education in Bahrain was high. Schools in Bahrain were established in 1919. The British were relying on hiring educated Bahraini people to work in the station instead of outsiders, which saved the British a lot of money and effort.

About fifteen days before the opening of the radio station in Bahrain, the Bahrain newspaper published the following message in Arabic "We would like to tell the Arab people who live in the neighboring countries some good news. The Arab radio station will be opened officially on November 4th, 1940 with a big celebration. The station will start broadcasting its programmes daily from 2:30 in the afternoon. The Bahrain newspaper would like to congratulate the people of Bahrain for the opening of this station."¹⁰ At the end of October, this newspaper published the programme of the opening broadcast. It included recitation from the Quran, a speech delivered by Sheikh Hamad, the national anthem of Bahrain, reading of letters sent from different rulers containing congratulatory messages, the national anthem of Kuwait, and recitation of a poem.¹¹ Thus the first radio station in the Arab Gulf countries, began to broadcast on November 4th, 1940. The Bahrain newspaper reported the event in an article entitled "The big celebration of opening the radio station in Bahrain". Present at the celebration were the Amir of Bahrain Sheikh Hamad with his family in addition to some ambassadors and citizens. The signal that started the broadcasting was given at 2:23 PM exactly.¹²

The station was established in two small rooms. The area of each room did not exceed more than ten square feet. One of the rooms was reserved for the equipment to keep it safe and the other room was for visitors. The cost of building the station was 50 Bahraini Dinars (BD) which was equivalent to approximately 150 American Dollars.¹³

The British Department of Public Relations, which was supervising the station, wanted well educated people to count on to operate the station, so it chose Salem Al-Urayyid and Mohammad Doayghar to do the job. These two men continued the work for about a year and took care of everything related to broadcasting from technical equipment to directing the broadcasting. The station also got some help from a well known Bahraini poet, Ibrahim Al-Urayyid, who did some translations of English material into Arabic.¹⁴ These three men took charge of all the work at the station, but

were working only part time because the duration of broadcasting was very short. In addition, some programmes were prepared by teachers who volunteered their work at the station.

Salaries paid to those workers in the station during broadcasting at night amounted to only 3 Bahraini Dinars per month (about 8 Dollars). Due to the importance of the existence of the station, a committee of educated persons in Bahrain was formed to give advice about the work of the station.¹⁵

It should be also noted that the station at the beginning used only experts from inside Bahrain and did not hire any experts from outside of Bahrain. Thus all responsibility rested with Bahraini officers.

Broadcasting lasted only half an hour at first but it was later extended to one full hour.¹⁶ The broadcasting first began at 7:23 PM (Bahrain time); but this did not continue for many days. In fact, on Sunday January 13th, 1941, the time of broadcasting was changed to start at 6:23 PM.¹⁷ However, the time of broadcasting was not fixed and used to change from summer to winter. This change was partly due to the desire of the station to broadcast during a time suitable to the listeners in order to be able to influence them. In addition, broadcasting hours had to accommodate the availability of the workers at the station because most of them had other jobs. In addition, the station tried to broadcast at a time during which the power of transmission was strong in order to reach all of the Gulf countries.¹⁸

Radio programmes during this first phase of broadcasting in Bahrain could be divided into two categories. The first was programmes prepared by the Department of Public Relations, mostly about what the British wanted people to know about the War. For example, there was a programme called "The World in a Week", which defended the Allies and attacked the Germans. The station also broadcast some lectures against the Nazis such as "Nazism and Religions."¹⁹

The second category of programmes consisted mainly of popular programmes prepared purely by Bahraini staff. These programmes were basically cultural or literary, and offered general information to listeners. Because the British tried to fill available broadcasting time with programmes that praised the British, indigenous programmes were few. However, they were allowed to be broadcast on the condition they did not include any material that might offend the British.

The station also broadcast scientific programmes such as medical lectures that presented information about some common diseases and how to treat them. There were also historical programmes about the history of

Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf, cultural programmes introducing important people from Arab history; children's programmes using songs and stories; and educational programmes aimed at women, teaching them how to raise their children properly. An example of these programmes was one entitled "Educating today's children and men and women of the future."²⁰ Because the first purpose of establishing the radio station was to serve the British during the War, it was decided to close the station down after the War ended in 1945. Khalid Al-Bassam says about the closure: "When the British no longer heard the voice of the German cannons bombarding their country, the British Department of Public Relations closed this tiny station very quietly and without public complaint."²¹ The main reason the public did not protest against the closure was that they knew the station had not served them well.

Re-opening of the Station (1955-1980s)

Bahrain had no radio station with the closing of the station after World War II. During that period, great cultural, educational and social development took place. More schools were established in both urban and rural areas, and a number of local newspapers such as Al-Wattan and Sawt-Al-Bahrain started publication. All of these factors created a situation where there was a demand to have a working radio station again. A number of articles in the Voice of Bahrain Magazine were written in the early 1950s requesting the government to re-open the radio station. Those who wrote showed a willingness to pay the taxes on technical equipment to financially support the station.²²

According to a former worker in the station, the Bahraini government realized the importance of the existence of a radio station and its use as a tool to propagate a version of news that the government was comfortable with.²³

The government had recognised the importance of this station since the 1950s. However, the shortage of facilities prevented its re-establishment.²⁴ The necessary measures for the foundation of the radio station took rather a long time, but it was finally opened on 4th July 1955 under the control and supervision of the Bahrain Government.²⁵ The aim of its foundation, as revealed by its manager, was cultural, educational and for entertainment.²⁶ However, the facilities were very restricted and did not enable the station to concentrate on culture and education; as a result, entertainment programmes predominated.

At the beginning of the second phase, the physical condition of the station was little better than it was during the first phase. It consisted of a

small building with two studios that could not be used at the same time. It had few records of its own, so was obliged to rent records of local songs from a coffee shop whose owner imposed a condition on the station for their use: to broadcast only the songs that pleased his customers and during specific times only.²⁷

There were very few programmes at the beginning, only news about Bahrain, music, local songs, and entertainment generally. During first half of 1959, the station's activities increased when some variety shows were broadcast, such as a programme known as "The Youth's Corner" covering interviews with young people, about their hobbies and ways in which they could develop them.

At the beginning of the 1960s, there were contributions from other radio services like the "Voice of America" and "Radio London." The "Voice of America" presented a one-hour programme that included a variety of subjects including entertainment and cultural information. The contribution of "Radio London" was educational in nature, designed to teach the people of Bahrain the English language. There were also children's programmes presented by female teachers, including plays, entertaining stories and competitions.²⁸

Some scientific programmes were also introduced. For instance the programme, "In the World of Science and Invention" informed people about basic scientific facts and the latest inventions in the world. There was also a programme that responded to the medical questions of listeners and another offered advice to farmers.

During this period the station formed a group of actors who presented local plays on the air. The content of these plays dealt with local issues and problems facing the public during their daily life.²⁹ One of the new and successful programmes that the station introduced in 1959, was a programme that used to be recorded in the streets of Bahrain, and was intended to examine the daily problems of the people. Another programme called "With the People", was used to get some feedback and people's opinions about the programmes and the work of the station in general.

Some of the programmes were poor and not worth broadcasting, being inadequately prepared, disorganised and unimaginative. Typical examples were those directed toward children and a programme called "Forget Your Problems". It seemed that the people in charge did not check the programmes broadcast, and did not consider seriously the content of these programmes. This was noticed and criticized in the newspapers of that period. For instance, Al-Wattan newspaper wrote an article only two weeks after the opening of the station criticizing the educational value of

the types of programmes offered: "...this station, since its opening, (has) presented useless talks, and biased news. It did not offer any educational programmes, stories intended to teach the public, or social and medical talks."³⁰

In the second phase, Bahrain witnessed tremendous social and cultural changes. This was partly due to the return of students from abroad, bringing with them the culture and ideas of foreign countries, as well as opening of a number of higher education institutions in Bahrain. All these factors helped to create the need for a well developed radio station.

At this time, Bahrain broadcasting opened its doors to young qualified people who were able to present good programmes of a very high caliber. Among them was Dr. Mohammed Al-Rumaihi, who managed to present several cultural programmes in various scientific and technical disciplines. Dr. Mohammed Al-Ansari, then on the staff of the Ministry of Information also contributed to this effort by presenting cultural programmes dominated mostly by literature and arts. Abdul Aziz Bu Ali who worked in the Ministry of Education before being appointed as the Ambassador of Bahrain to an Asian country, also presented several educational programmes, mostly about science, history and other scholarly disciplines. Furthermore, many educational programmes were presented by Ahmed Yateem, a teacher and expert in media and broadcasting during this period, such as "A Page on Air", a general educational programme, and "A Window on History" which specialised in history and "Flying Carpet" (Bissat al-Reeh) which included geographical and recreational items.³¹

After the mid-1960s the station started broadcasting two sessions a day: a morning session between 9:30 a.m/ and 1:00 p.m., and an evening session between 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Therefore, the range and variety of educational programmes increased. In addition, an Arab Technical Supervisor from the BBC Arabic Service was appointed to supervise the programmes.

In the 1970's, new programmes were introduced, for example, one presenting a review of some important book. New programmes about specific subjects in the world of cinema, theater, and art in general were also broadcast for the first time.

In 1973 station faced a major challenge: television broadcasting in Bahrain began. This had a negative impact on the station and its popularity. Abdul Rahman notes that the relationship between the radio station and the people was stronger before the advent of television. This relationship was manifested in the large number of letters the station used to receive from its audience expressing comments and criticism about its programme output.³²

The crisis caused by competition from the T.V. channel forced the station to change its programme format. There was an increase in the number of short radio items, usually less than five minutes, and a decrease in the number of longer programmes, as was reported in the newspapers. For example, Bahrain Al-Youm (Bahrain Today) carried an article entitled "The radio station challenges television in broadcasting short programmes."³³

The station also presented more variety and entertainment programmes to attract listeners. Typical of this change in programming was "Cinema World" which involved a presentation and summary of a film, as well as containing cinema news. Another programme known as "Hello, Broadcasting" involved asking an official in a ministry or company to answer listeners' questions.

The idea of establishing a radio station broadcasting in English came from the perceived need that some means of communication should exist between the government and those foreign newcomers to Bahrain who did not understand Arabic. There were also other reasons behind this idea.

The Ministry of Information implemented the idea and took a decision in August 1976 to start executing the plan. On April 2, 1977, the English-Language radio service in Bahrain started. Boyd stated: "Because English is widely spoken in Bahrain, it was believed that a commercial English language service would be popular in Bahrain and in other Gulf States that could receive the signal. Furthermore, income derived from such a station would help finance activities of the Ministry of Information."³⁴

At the beginning, broadcasting was for six hours starting at noon and ending at 6:00 p.m. on both FM and medium wave bands. The transmission unit had a power output of only one-quarter kilowatt. In spite of this low power, the broadcasting could be heard all over Bahrain as well as in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia. The reaction and feedback from listeners was very encouraging, so the station increased the duration of broadcasting first, to nine hours every day, and then to twelve hours in October 1977. At the beginning of 1978, the number of hours of broadcasting was raised again, to fifteen hours daily. Eighteen months later, this was increased to eighteen hours a day.³⁵ Boyd notes that: "The basic format of radio Bahrain is similar to that of a popular United States music station. Disc jockeys host blocks of time, featuring popular music almost exclusively. News is regularly scheduled and throughout the day there are short features about sports, books, cinema, etc."³⁶

The most expensive air time for commercials was during the popular "Radio Bahrain Top 20" programme. Commercials were for local businesses, including restaurants, hotels, and clubs, and in this respect

served to promote the tourist activities that many people from neighboring countries find attractive. Because of the large audience in Saudi Arabia's neighboring Eastern province, and the fact that Saudi Arabian broadcasting prohibits commercials, advertising for products such as cold drinks, food products, home appliances, and automobiles played a big part in the commercials on Radio Bahrain.³⁷

From 1980 to 1992 Arabic and English radio station made some improvements to the physical setup. In 1981, it moved to a new and bigger building, giving the station the ability to extend its services alongside the vast development that Bahrain experienced at that time. Different departments were completed and new technical equipment acquired. For example, there were eight studios instead of four, fully equipped with modern and sophisticated equipment.³⁸

In September, 1982, the radio station in Bahrain underwent some major changes concerning the variety of programmes. A new broadcasting arm was formed called "The Second Arabic Programmes Station". This was followed by the formation of yet another programme called "The Holy Quran Programmes Station", which started broadcasting at the beginning of October, 1982.³⁹ As present, the different programmes which operate on different channels are:

1. The General Programme, whose duration of broadcasting is twenty four continuous hours. The major programmes are cultural, musical and entertainment programmes from different Arab countries. The sources of the programmes are programmes produced locally, and programmes produced by some Egyptian and Lebanese companies. There are also programmes prepared by the Gulf Co-operation council Countries;
2. The Second Programme, which is separated from the general programme station and has a duration of twelve hours. This station is characterized by its local programme output, since it broadcasts a variety of traditional programmes (programmes about the folk-lore of Bahrain), radio series and music from the Gulf countries. These kinds of programmes make up almost 90% of the total programming.
3. The Quran Programme; broadcasting from 8 p.m. till 12 p.m. and consisting mainly of religious programmes and lectures; and
4. The Music Programme: Nearly 70% of its time is allocated to Western music, while the other 30% is allocated to informative, cultural, dramatical, religious, commercial and children's programmes (see table).

Percentage Distribution of Radio Broadcast Time by Programmes, 1991 - 1992⁴⁰:

Type of Programmes	Channels				Channels			
	1991				1992			
	FM	Holy Quran	Second Prog.	General Prog.	FM	Holy Quran	Second Prog.	General Prog.
Informative	14.5		7	12	14.5		5	10
Entertainment	69.5		61	30	68.5		50	20
Cultural	6.5		15	25	7		20	30
Dramatic	4		10	14	4.5		14	15
Religious	1.5	100	6	12	1.5	100	10	17
Children and Household	2.5		1	6	2.5		1	6
Commercials	1.5			1	1.5			2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

I will mention just the very important notes and remarks concerning the percentage of types of radio programming by percentage of time allocated:

1. Informative programmes (news): in 1992 Bahrain Radio Broadcasting allocated 10% of its time in the general programme, and 5% of its time in the second programme, to information programmes. This proportion represents a slight decrease from 12% in the general programme and 5% in the second programme in 1991. The information category on all channels of Bahrain Radio Broadcasting was dominated by daily news casts and news in brief. Beside news, channels throughout the years had a few programmes that were devoted to information and current affairs (See table).
2. Entertainment: a major feature of Bahrain Radio Broadcasting output. Bahrain broadcasting allocated nearly 70% of its time to entertainment, especially in the FM channel, and second programme. In 1992, the share of entertainment programmes, in the two channels mentioned before, dropped slightly; nevertheless it was still above 60%. However, the case in the general programme was much better (See table).
3. Cultural programmes on Bahrain Broadcasting increased considerably in 1992, compared to 1991. Bahrain Broadcasting had nearly 30% of its time devoted to cultural programmes in the general programme in 1992 compared to 25% in 1991 (See table).

From this short account of the types of programmes presented by Bahrain Broadcasting, it is noticeable that most of programmes were for entertainment: There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, the shortage of financial resources of Radio Broadcasting, and the shortage of trained technical cadres, which did not lead to the production of the local educational programmes.

Secondly, and more important, is the lack of knowledge of the officials in the Ministry of Information about what the public thought of the programmes broadcast on Bahrain Broadcasting. In fact the Information Ministry does not have a research department.

Radio Broadcasting in Bahrain does not have a systematic method for soliciting audience comments and feeding these back on a regular basis. The reason for that might be because Radio Broadcasting is operated by a government that has little interest in audience research. Boyd noted that many media managers believe that themselves; they have the ability and knowledge to provide a well-rounded schedule that includes news, entertainment, and educational programmes: for them, the statement by former French broadcaster official Arthur Conte "I am the Public" applies.⁴¹

4. **Commercials:** In 1992 Bahrain Radio Broadcasting allocated only 1.0% of its time in the general programmes to commercials (See table). If the officials at Bahrain Radio Broadcasting wanted to increase the commercials in their station, they should have had clear knowledge of the audience at whom the commercials were aimed.

Political Changes and Radio Ownership

A careful study of the history of radio and its evolution will show that the role radio plays in Bahrain's society has been affected by political changes.

In the earliest days, radio broadcasting was brought to Bahrain as an extension of the British political and cultural influence, an extension of their Empire. This situation is not unique to Bahrain of course. Television was introduced in Cyprus by the British, for example, to help keep the people off the streets - as a tranquilizer, so to speak.⁴² As Wedell described, when Tanzania was a British colony, Radio Tanzania was an instrument for furthering colonial ends; any changes or developments achieved during this period were not genuinely intended to further the interests of the people or to meet their needs and aspirations. Therefore, the main reason for establishing this station was to serve the British.⁴³

Although it appeared that Bahrain's government established the radio station in its second phase, the real controller and operator of the station was still the British. The station's Director, G.H.D. Belgrave, was a Briton appointed by the Government's Advisor, who was also a Briton.⁴⁴ In the fifties the British not only controlled the station, but also tried to control the press. In 1956, only one year after the station opened, most of the newspapers and magazines were shut down because the press did not follow British orders in condemning the unsuccessful popular uprising that took place against them in 1956.

Nakhleh reported about the newspapers closed by the British: "The politically active journalistic tradition in Bahrain developed and ended in the first half of the fifties. It was obviously short-lived, but it left a definite mark on the political life of the country."⁴⁵

According to Nakhteh, *Sawt al-Bahrain* (The Voice of Bahrain) began as a literary newspaper in 1952, but assumed a definite political posture, and was closed by the British in early 1956. *Al-Qafila* (the caravan) was another political weekly which started in 1953 but was closed in late 1955. It later resumed publication and was licensed under a new name, *Al-Wattan* (The Homeland) and operated under new conditions. However, in late 1956, it was again ordered by the British to cease publication. *Al-Mizan* (The Scale) is a third example of a newspaper which was closed by the British in late 1956 after two years of publication. At that time, all mass media were operated and controlled by the British.

The three most common models of media ownership, as Sydney Head defines them, are: (1) permissive, as in the free enterprise system of the United States; (2) paternalistic, as in the public corporation, such as the British system; and (3) authoritarian, with government ownership and control as in the previous Soviet system. While these models are clear-cut in practice, Head argues that among developing countries, "... each country tends to select elements from various models evolving a composite system of its won."⁴⁶ Nowadays, with the exception of Lebanon, all Arab states, including Bahrain, own and operate their broadcast media.

There are fundamental reasons for government ownership of radio and television in Bahrain. First of all, when broadcast media were introduced into Bahrain, the high cost of building and operating a national radio or a television station was beyond the reach of the private sector; therefore, radio and television service became a state responsibility. Secondly, and more importantly, was the perceived potential mass effect of the broadcast

media; radio and television do not encounter the illiteracy barrier that the press does. Mass media in the Arab world, including Bahrain, have also been associated with national security. For instance, in August 1982, the Arab Center for Security Studies and Training hosted a symposium in Saudi Arabia on "National Security and the Responsibility of Mass Media". Among the recommendations proposed at this symposium was the need for a closer co-operation and co-ordination between mass media and security personnel.⁴⁷ Hence, it is evident that the governments in the region are not likely to grant broadcast media any form of independence. In addition, Katz and Wedell. *Broadcasting in the Third World*, argue that one of the reasons why governments control broadcasting in developing countries is a technical one, related to the availability of frequencies: "governments took the view that its utilization must be controlled in order to enable their countries to make the most effective use of frequencies allocated to them by international agreement."⁴⁸ Such is the case for the countries in the Gulf Region. There are more than ten television channels already existing in this region, a situation that has caused frequency interference in the region.

The broadcasting services in Bahrain are usually placed directly under the authority of one of the government ministers. A typical name for such a ministry is the Ministry of Information; and its minister is a member of the Ministerial Council or the Cabinet. The Ministry is financed directly by state funds. This kind of organisational structure has its advantages. First, it gives the government an effective medium to propagate its policies and channel the medium in the direction of its developmental plans. Second, it enables the government to have direct control over what should or should not be broadcast. Third, it ensures adequate financial resources for the media. However, this kind of organisation is not without its drawbacks. One of these, is that "government-run systems have trouble establishing credibility with their audiences."⁴⁹ Further, all the media personnel are subject to the government's official civil service regulations that were established with no recognition of the artistic nature of the media personnel's work. Furthermore, the financial tying of the broadcasting organisation with the government's general budget makes it subject to the government's financial bureaucracy. This could hinder the broadcasting management from taking advantage of programme opportunities and responding more effectively to audience needs and interests.⁵⁰

Final Evaluation

In the first phase of radio broadcasting in Bahrain, the main reason for opening the station was to oppose the broadcasting of Radio Berlin and change the audience from listening to Radio Berlin to listening to Radio Bahrain. Thus, the station focused its main efforts on political propaganda, making its cultural output very weak. However, it would be unfair to say that the station served only the needs of the British, though the station management only allowed, under strict censorship, the broadcasting of certain general programmes which did not go against British policy and did not attack the Allies. The British High Commissioner Office in Bahrain provided the radio with pre-prepared programmes, which were directed toward serving the purpose of the British. Cultural and scientific programmes were only occasionally broadcast and only when time permitted. The station did not exist for cultural purposes; it existed purely for propaganda. The only line of action it took was to satisfy people's eagerness and impatience to hear the news of the war then raging.

In the second phase of radio broadcasting in Bahrain, the work of the station was generally not well organised or well prepared. The station staff were not very experienced, yet some workers used to do all kinds of jobs like reading the news, writing the programmes, directing them, and even acting in plays at the same time. We can conclude that the few good programmes that appeared on Bahrain radio at that time were due to individual efforts and not based on a well organised and prepared overall plan. Furthermore, lack of financial support from the government was a major factor that prevented the station from improving. No doubt, if sufficient funds had been available then, the station would have brought in some experienced staff or increased their number. At that time there was also no co-operation between the radio station and the Ministry of Education to prepare educational programmes for the public. This might be attributed to many factors: first, the lack of a plan with defined objectives during this period, and secondly, the lack of financial support, since the preparation of these programmes required the availability of funds and these funds were not then available. Also, the doubts that officials in the Ministry of Information had that radio was an effective tool in educating society was a factor. If the importance of radio had been recognised, we would have expected good financial support for the production of high standard educational programmes.

Most of the programmes were intended to entertain the listeners. Also, it is worth mentioning that the station was, in general, during the first part of

the second phase much better than it was during the first phase. This period had been better than the preceding one because this station was not founded for propaganda for the British, but attempted, within its limitations, to present certain cultural and educational programmes. Although these programmes were few and weak, they were serious attempts.

In the second part of the second phase, this radio station moved to a new location and building that offered facilities that were not available before. The station also presented some high quality cultural and scientific programmes during this period, for example "A Meeting with an Official" and "Book of the Week", and many others. However, there were still some negative aspects that officials in the Ministry of Information, and particularly in the Broadcasting Station, should be reminded of this so that they can study and evaluate them and develop the station accordingly. One of these aspects is that the number of cultural and scientific programmes was still very low in comparison with the number of general programmes. There was no balance between the type of programmes and the duration of broadcasting. In fact, the entertainment programmes made up 50% of the total programmes, and all of the informational, cultural, educational and medical programmes in addition to the other programmes made up the other 50%. The situation had not changed much in 1992, and most programmes were committed to entertainment and not culture and education.

Many programmes were produced just to fill up the broadcasting schedule; they were not based on well prepared plans by the Ministry of Information. Examples include programmes such as "Meeting of the Beloved", "For the Sake of Life" and "Half an Hour in the Station's Library". Most of these were dominated by the entertainment aspect and their time was filled with songs.

One of the most important issues that the station should consider is obtaining the views of the public on its programmes since the station has no means of knowing the opinion of the public on its broadcasts. The station should conduct listener surveys from time to time to establish feedback. Conducting such surveys would give the staff of the station useful suggestions for future plans and allow them to know what kind of programmes the public want. Also, the station should seek the help of experts in Bahrain to write and produce higher quality programmes. For example, historians can be used to write historical programmes for the station, and university staff can contribute to the production of scientific and informational programmes.

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