

Media Policy in Egypt: Past Performance, Current Situation and Future Strategies

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السياسات الإعلامية في مصر: بين الأداء السابق والوضع الحالي والاستراتيجيات المستقبلية

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Abstract

The field of media policy is among the most important subdisciplines of public policy. Media policies is a term that describes all the legislations that aim at regulating the media industry. These policies, are mainly driven due to the technological advancements that enforced changes in the industry shape, are set and implemented with regards to the political and economic situations. Through a descriptive analysis for the literature and different local, regional and international reports, this research examines the extent to which the new legal framework that regulates the Egyptian media organizations ensures independence and pluralism, analyzing the context within which they operate and highlighting the pros and the shortcomings of the new legislative clauses. The research concludes that there is no one model or recipe for an effective public policy, yet political, economic, social and journalistic traditions play a significant role in the practice of these policies and their impact on the short and long term. The research recommends the following goals for the media policies: promoting relationships between different media entities supporting values of pluralism and responsible freedom; building reliance among media institutions and establishments, civil society organizations and the Parliament; and building sustainable trust in the Egyptian media, by providing efficient regulatory framework that would guide the performance of the different players and safeguard the public interest.

Keywords: media policy, Laws, regulations, funding mechanisms, organizational structure

المستخلص

يُعدُّ مجال السياسات الإعلامية من بين أهم التخصصات الفرعية للسياسة العامة. السياسات الإعلامية هي مصطلح يصف جميع التشريعات التي تهدف إلى تنظيم صناعة الإعلام. هذه السياسات ظهرت بشكل أساسي بسبب التطورات التكنولوجية التي فرضت التغييرات في شكل الصناعة التي تم إنشاؤها وتنفيذها فيما يتعلق بالأوضاع السياسية والاقتصادية. من خلال تحليل وصفي للأدبيات والتقارير المحلية والإقليمية والدولية المختلفة، ينظر هذا البحث في مدى ضمان الإطار القانوني الجديد الذي ينظم المؤسسات الإعلامية المصرية للاستقلالية والتعددية، وتحليل السياق الذي تعمل فيه، وتسلط الضوء على الإيجابيات وقصور البنود التشريعية الجديدة. ومن أهم الاستنتاجات عدم وجود نموذج موحد للسياسات الإعلامية، إلا أن التقاليد السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية والصحفية تلعب دوراً مهماً في ممارسة هذه السياسات، وتأثيرها على المدى القصير والطويل. كما يجب أن تهدف السياسات الإعلامية على، أولاً: تعزيز العلاقات بين الكيانات الإعلامية المختلفة الداعمة لقيم التعددية والحرية المسؤولة، ثانياً: بناء الاعتماد بين المؤسسات الإعلامية ومنظمات المجتمع المدني والبرلمان، ثالثاً: بناء ثقة مستدامة في الإعلام المصري، من خلال توفير إطار تنظيمي فعال يوجه أداء مختلف المؤسسات الإعلامية ويحمي المصلحة العامة.

الكلمات الدالة: السياسات الإعلامية، القوانين، التشريعات، طرق التمويل، الهيكل التنظيمي

1. Introduction

The field of media policy is among the most important subdisciplines of public policy. The United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization “UNESCO” has addressed the issue of media policies since the seventies of the last century, as it paid a special attention, given the technological revolution in the field of communication that made media and communication a very complex social phenomenon in various social, cultural and educational fields. This interest would have set controls or policies for media activities, defining its job, goals, and career. Therefore, some researchers believe that this field, i.e., “media policy making” is not based on randomness, but rather is subject to accumulated rules and experiences. Therefore, making media policies is not as easy as some might imagine.

Media policy plays the role of the effective mediator among the regulators, media organizations and the public, and is the creator of the agreement state between the people and the media establishments, as well as the generator of balance of the dynamics of the different media players for the benefit of all parties. Based on this, UNESCO officially called on its members to develop national communication policies and published a series of studies on national communication policies in Countries of the world since 1974. The aim is to educate member states on the concept of communication policies at all levels of governmental institutions and the profession by analysing the communication policies that already exist in some member states. Then, the organization held a series of intergovernmental conferences to discuss communication policies in different third world regions. The concept of media policy -by UNESCO- has relied on a comprehensive definition of the media regulations or communication policies that are currently adopted by different countries. It considered communication policies the sum of the principles and standards that govern the state’s activity towards the processes of organizing, managing, controlling, evaluating and harmonizing the various systems and forms of communication, particularly the means of media and mass communication. Moreover, the main information channels are included in order to achieve the best possible social results within the framework of the political, social and economic model that the state adopts.

The uprisings that took hold as of 2011 shook the prevailing stagnant Egyptian media environment (Webb, 2014; Badr, 2020), spurring several calls for media reform to fight the different forms of control and manipulation. These calls have resulted in major changes in the legislative frameworks that regulate the Egyptian media enterprises (Badr, 2020).

The term media policies refers to all the legislations that aim at regulating the media industry. These policies, are mainly driven due to the technological advancements that enforced changes in the industry shape, are set and implemented with regards to the political and economic situations (Baker, 2007; Napoli, 2007; d’Haenens, 2018).

The term media policy refers to a general term that encompasses all the decision making that take place in the media and communication industry, and that the issuance of these policies does not happen randomly or haphazardly, yet it goes through a cycle of four stages: first is the problem formulation, second is the will formulation, third is the decision making and finally is the execution and the implementation (d'Haenens, 2018).

Over the past few years, Egypt has witnessed the development of several media policies aiming at regulating the industry. The issuance of such policies involves a wide range of contexts and intersects with distinctive policy fields, such as telecommunication policies. The study of media policy has recently gained wide attention and interest, thanks to the technological changes, such as new mobile gadgets and digital streaming platforms, which came as players in the field of media policy that used to be focused only on the traditional media such as print media (newspapers and magazines) in addition to radio and television. Although it is important to recognize that the media policy sector rests within a broader area of policy making, this research paper focuses on the newly developed media policies and its impact on the industry performance.

This paper examines the extent to which the new legal framework that regulates the Egyptian media organizations ensures independence and pluralism, analysing the context within which they operate and highlighting the pros and the shortcomings of the new legislative clauses.

2. Media Systems in Egypt

The development of media policies in the post-revolutionary Arab region in general and Egypt in particular, cannot be studied without due attention to the press theories developed by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (1963): The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and totalitarian. The Egyptian media system has been operating under an authoritarian model (Rugh, 2007); however, this framing -despite its influence in the literature- has been found to be both incomplete and outdated. It was found that the media systems in developing countries in the 1960s were governed by this theory. In 1979 and in response to the insufficiency of the four categories developed by Siebert et al., William Rugh developed a variety of typologies to describe Arab media systems. Rugh first classified Egypt under the “mobilization press” where the media acts as a vehicle to circulate the messages of the regime and otherwise serve the rulers but this classification was questioned by Stevenson concept of Protocol News as Mass media (1988) used to follow the President daily agenda to convey the news to the people . Under the mobilized press, challenges usually faced the regime to convey desired messages and create national public opinion as well as national integration. This typology is also characterized by the limited access of competing political parties.

Under the mobilized press media system, controls take place through Laws that strictly limit media content and production and give government agencies the authority to enforce regulations and ensure loyalty to the political system. In 2004, Rugh moved Egypt from a mobilized press to the “transitional press” typology in response to significant structural and regulatory changes (Rugh, 2007; Webb, 2014; Allam, 2019).

Transitional media systems are those that have been experiencing steady positive changes, however, remain unsettled. In Egypt, there are elements of freedom of expression that exist alongside some elements that support government control and power (Rugh 2004, 2007; Khamis 2011; Webb 2014). Despite the “transitional” signature, it is unclear if these systems are in fact in transition to libertarian press or will remain as they are, and although freedom was reinforced by the acceptance of multiple political parties, the government exercises power through Laws and economic incentives.

Amin (2015) states that any country facing psychological warfare, challenged by Fourth-generation warfare, subjected to rumours and deep fake news, and surrounded by failed states and civil wars must develop a strong media policy considering all of these challenges to be able to preserve national and cultural identity of the country.

Mellor (2005) criticized Rugh’s categorization, saying the typologies place too much emphasis on ownership and the political system undermining the role of culture, language, media professionals, and developments in Arab media systems. However, Rugh (2007) argues that domestic political factors are the most influential on media systems in the Arab world.

Pioppi (2011) argued that the some elements might still allow for interference , which was echoed with Badr (2020). However, Hussein Amin -in his Article on Media and National Security- states that when a country is faced with national security threats, it usually has more control over its media. This was witnessed lately in many media systems around the world after the spread of terrorism (Amin, 2015). The typologies developed by Hallin and Mancini (2012) were criticized for being applicable only to the western hemisphere.

The status and structures of mass media are largely determined by the political and social orders and norms within which the media operates. Egypt has been through several political changes and challenges since 2010 (which have influenced the media landscape through the introduction of new media Laws and regulations). Thus, it is important to examine the extent to which the new legal framework that regulates the Egyptian media organizations ensures independence and pluralism, analysing the context within which they operate and highlighting the pros and the shortcomings of the new legislative clauses.

3. Background on the Egyptian Media

Before the 2011 revolution, the Egyptian media has been performing under two main Laws: Law no. 13 of 1979, and its amendment of Law no. 223 in 1989 of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union and Law no. 96 of 1996 of the press. Criticism for these Laws mainly fall under two categories. First, it is obsolete and old-fashioned, since they do not address the changes that take place in the media industry in terms of the development of the private media outlets and the digital transformation. Second, the flaws that used to exist in these Laws from the inclusion of vague terms to the power granted to the former Ministry of Information (MoI) in terms of its regulatory role and at the same time being part of the government body was considered a real challenge towards media independence (Allam, 2020).

The Egyptian media operates with a dual system of public and private ownership. Television is still the most popular and widely used platform. The public media is controlled by the State, which owns two national terrestrial channels, six local channels, and a network of satellite channels, known as the thematic channels. After the legislative changes, the public broadcasting sector is currently operating under Law no. 178 of 2018 which states that the National Media Authority (NMA) is the body that supervises and regulates the performance of the Egyptian public broadcasting sector. According to Article (2) of Law no. 178, NMA is an independent body entitled to issue the necessary codes to manage the public media institutions and channels, and Article (3) ensures that NMA enjoys independence in exercising its function. The main funding streams for NMA comes from government subsidy and advertisements.

As for the press sector, the National Press Authority (NPA) is responsible for the state-owned press. According to Article (4) of Law no. 179, NPA takes over the management of state-owned press institutions and works on developing them, developing their assets, ensuring their modernization, independence, impartiality, and their commitment to professional, administrative and economic performance. The main state-owned press organizations are the daily national newspapers in Egypt, Al Ahram, Al Akhbar and Al Gomhuriya. Similar to the NMA, they depend on government subsidy and advertisements as funding mechanisms (Amin, 2002; Sakr, 2012), yet both funding tools started to decrease in the past few years due to their unsustainable business models. The declaration of the NPA has automatically replaced the previously regulating body the Higher Press Council (Allam, 2017, Badr, 2020).

The Egyptian market enjoys several private media organizations in both the broadcast and the press sectors. The first Egyptian private television station started in 2001 with the introduction of Dream satellite channel. It was considered a huge step in the development of the Egyptian television broadcasting in terms of the content, the format of the programs, and the bold tackling of local problems (EJC, 2018). Other private satellite stations that were launched a few years later are Sada El Balad and Al Hayat TV, and they apply almost the same programming format.

After the Jan 25 revolution, many private channels were launched, such as Cairo Broadcasting Corporation - CBC (2011), On E (2016) and the DMC network (2017). Many of those networks include specialized TV channels for news, drama, sports, and cooking. All private channels were regulated by the General Authority for Investment (GAFI) since the old Law did not recognize the development of the media and the introduction of satellite private media channels and accordingly the government has to think of a way out to legalize their presence in the media landscape.

Similar to the development of private television stations, the Egyptian market has seen the development of some private radio stations. As mentioned above, the private radio and television stations were licensed by GAFI, which is part of the Ministry of Investment and accordingly part of the Government.

Private ownership started in the press sector at the beginning of 2004 with the launch of Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper, the first daily private news organization that has been able to compete with the daily state-owned Al-Ahram for its coverage for controversial topics and focus on the local issues instead of the so-called protocol news framework practiced by the state-owned newspapers.

Currently, the private sector is regulated by the Supreme Council for Media Regulations (SCMR), which is the regulatory body that is entitled to monitor, supervise and regulate all media outlets (public and private). According to Article (1) of Law no. 180, the provisions of the of the Law apply to all entities, institutions, press and media outlets and websites, with the exception of the personal website and personal electronic account.

It is worth mentioning that the Egyptian online consumption has increased remarkably over the past 10 years. It was projected that the number of smartphones users in Egypt went from 12.6 million in 2013 to 28 million in 2018 (CAPMAS, 2020; Information and Communication Technology Report, 2020). In addition, mobile penetration reaches 95% of the population, internet users reach around 50% (49.23 million), and the proportion of mobile internet users of total mobile subscription is almost 44% (43.62 million). It is important to note that the presence of the private news organizations on the digital and the social media platforms highly exceeds the state-owned ones (El-Gody, 2020).

4. Media Policies in Egypt:

On December 26, 2016, a new Law no. 92 of 2016 was approved. The newly approved Law meets three main constitutional entitlements and stipulates the establishment of the three regulatory bodies Article 211 for the establishment of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR); Article 212 for the National Press Authority (NPA), and Article 213 for the National Media Authority (NMA). It is important to highlight that the concept of media policies is still new in Egypt, and the bodies entitled to issue the policies and monitor its implementation are still taking their first steps in the field.

The Egyptian political changes and challenges in the past 10 years were accompanied by major changes in the legal frameworks that regulate the media landscape with different implications for media performance. The Egyptian media landscape has been also through several changes. The pre-revolution legal framework used to enable the government direct and indirect tools (El Issawi and Cammaerts 2015; Sakr 2012). Many studies have pointed to the lack of independency of the MoI as an entity that should control the public and the private media sector, while being part of the government cabinet.

After the 2011 uprising, the media landscape has witnessed significant structural and legislative changes. In 2014, the Ministry of Information (MoI) was dissolved as a main demand of the revolution to safeguard an independent media and curb direct and indirect government interference. Later in 2016, the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) was established to regulate the Egyptian media, along with the National Press Authority (NPA) and National Media Authority (NMA). Two years later, in 2018, three Laws were issued to meet constitutional entitlements and replace the old ones: Law 180 of 2018: The Regulating Law for the Press, Media, and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR); Law 179 of 2018: NPA Regulation Law (replacing the higher council of the press and repealing Law 96 of 1996); and Law 178 of 2018: NMC Regulation Law (repealing Law 13 of 1979, and its modified version, Law No 223 in 1989).

These new Laws have in many cases sparked controversy, with critics believing they open the door for some interference (Badr, 2020). This is in addition to the issuance of the counter-terrorism Law of 2015, and cybercrime Law of 2018 that aim at limiting the spread of false news and misuse of social media. Yet, they have been widely criticized for their vague terms that can be used to suppress opinions expressed on the digital platforms (Badr, 2020); they are seen by others as crucial component to combat the false news phenomenon and limit the misuse of the digital platforms (Abdel Meguid, 2020).

These changes came after the cancellation of the Ministry of Information in 2014, which was one of the main demands of the Jan. 25 revolution, and the call for the establishment of regulatory bodies to create a proper governance framework for the Egyptian media.

The new legislations repeal Law no. 13 of 1979, and its modification of Law no. 223 in 1989 of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union that used to regulate the broadcasting sector in Egypt, which was challenging in many ways. The Law repeals as well Part IV of Law no. 96 of 1996 regulating the press, and any provision contrary to the provisions of the accompanying Law shall be repealed.

The approval and the issuance of the above-mentioned Law have been a request since January 25 (2011) and June 30 (2013) revolutions, which called for the independency of the media and its demarcation from the direct and indirect government interference and the establishment of a regulatory system.

It is clear that the media scene has been exposed to several challenges and changes, which have led to the formulation of new media policies. The development of these new policies is an outcome of the political, economic and technological changes that took place since the 25th of January and the

30th of June revolutions, which are worth studying given the new technological fast-paced changing environment. In the following section, an analysis for the new legal framework grouping the analyses under different categories that underlines major themes.

4.1 Overlaps and Mixing Responsibilities

Since the introduction of the new Laws, some issues have been recognized that affected the free flow of the regulatory work and delayed its implementation. For example, a change in the media was highly expected with an intention of content diversity and platform pluralism (Khairy, 2021). Yet, there were many complexities and hurdles against the effect of the whole regulatory system. For example, the enforcement of the new Laws was delayed, due to the delay of the issuance of the executive regulations, which was released after two years instead of three months without providing any valid reasons or excuses (Khairy. 2021).

Another complexity in the newly structured regulatory environment is the lack of demarcation among the different entities. A good example can be found in the overlap of responsibilities of each of SCMR and the newly introduced Ministry State of Information (MSoI). There was a clear overlap in the job description of the two entities, especially that the MSoI was not stated in the constitution unlike the regulatory bodies that were mentioned in the 211, 212 and 213 constitution Articles. The SCMR is entitled to manage all the regulations regarding media content; yet such responsibilities collide with those of the MSoI, which stated that it would be responsible in facilitating the implementation of media policies. For example, the Prime Minister's Decree no. 210 of 2020 set the objectives of the State's media policy, and the tasks and competencies of the Minister of Information. Article 2 of that decree states that among the functions of the MSoI is "suggesting the State's media policy in coordination with the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, and coordinating with the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, the National Press Authority, and the National Media Authority in implementing this policy". This Article in itself overlaps with many of the functions of not only SCMR but also NPA and NMA, where each body felt that it is a kind of interference in their scope of work (Allam, 2020; Khairy, 2021).

Another clear overlap exists between the SCMR and the National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA): the regulatory body of the telecommunication sector in Egypt. According to the Cyber Crime Law no. 175 for the year 2018, NTRA is the body that has the power to block digital websites when there is content that threatens national security. This power is also given to SCMR, which is entitled to block any website that would violate the Law. Such lack of separation in the responsibilities of the different regulatory bodies would affect the performance of the whole industry and may cause a delay in the implementation or it could be a tool to be used to manoeuvre violations cases in the courts.

4.2 Freedom of Expression and Media Pluralism

Looking closely at the new set of Laws, it is clear that they have created several controversies. For example, the three new Laws state that the new regulatory bodies are independent bodies and enjoy organizational and financial independence; they also ensure that there is no exercise of power practiced over them. For example, Law no. 180 holds many positive clauses such as Article 2 that ensures the state guarantees freedom of the press, the media, printing, and paper, audio, visual, and electronic publishing. Article 3 confirms that it is prohibited, in any way, to impose censorship on Egyptian newspapers and the media, and it is prohibited to confiscate, suspend, or close them. However, in Article 4, the Supreme Council may prohibit publications, newspapers, informational or advertising materials for national security considerations, and the term “national security” was repeated again in Article 69 that talks about the SCMR goals, and it states that one of the SCRM goals is to ensure that media institutions adhere to the requirements of national security. According to Law experts, although the term national security is understood and used in different international contexts, leaving it undefined in a country where regulations are newly introduced would give room for interference and abuse for the term and might lead to the disturbance of legal obligations (TIMEP Brief, 2019; Allam, 2020).

Some criticism was directed towards the wording of some Articles that led to some confusion in their interpretations. For example, Articles (2) and (3) of Law no. 178 for NMA ensure the independence of NMA and describe it as a public broadcasting station. Yet, Article (4) states that NMA aims at managing the services of the state-owned media institution such as broadcasting services, digital production and engineering services. The confusion came from the usage of the terms “public” then “state-owned” media institutions (TIMEP, 2019; Article 19). According to some reports, being state-owned does not go along with the term public. On the other side, some experts responded to this point stating that being state-owned does not mean necessarily state-managed.

As for the digital native websites, Article 6 states that no one can develop a news website without SCMR's approval and issuance of license. This Article was questioned by some since the process of approval might take time, and this might affect the timeframe of developing a website. For example, Article 19 insists on imposing license procedures in addition to the registration of the digital website, and it believes that this puts too much power in the hands of SCMR. Yet, Mahmoud Alam Eldin, a former member at the NPA believes that this Article protects the spread of fake news that are widely spreading and accordingly it protects the public interest (Mahmoud Alam Eldin, personal interview, October 20, 2021).

Other criticisms were highlighted by Article 19 specifically on the power given to SCMR to block any site, blog or any personal account on the ground of publishing false news. Yet, according to a former senior member at NPA, imposing sanctions on websites that post fake or false or fabricated information

is significant. Such significance increases especially when it is done in a developing country, where a considerable percentage of the population has access to the internet, yet with an average quality of education paving the way to rumours to spread widely and easily and lead to drastic consequences.

4.3 Financial and Licensing Obligations Brought Controversies

According to Article 35 in the SCMR Law, news organizations are required to deposit large sums of money in the banks before the establishment procedures and for a period of one year. For example, if the newspaper is daily, an amount of six million is required, two million pounds for weekly newspapers, one million pounds for monthly or regional daily ones, four hundred thousand pounds for weekly regional ones, and two hundred thousand pounds for monthly regional ones. Regarding electronic newspapers, its capital should be at least one hundred thousand pounds. Although many criticisms were directed to the large amount of deposit required to issue a newspaper, others have defended the part stating that half of the amount should be deposited one year ahead in order to protect the rights of its workers in the event that its publication ceased. Again, Alam El Din said that this Article came as a reaction to the problems that took place after the political changes and the economic reform program that left many entities unable to pay for its employees. The rationale behind it is to protect the employees' rights in case of any financial difficulties or economic recession. The interviewee added that those financial obligations filtered out mediocre websites that cannot sustain its business model in the market.

Another element deals with the administrative independence of the regulatory bodies. The board of trustees of the three regulatory bodies experience a hefty representation of governmental officials leaving behind the representation of several significant entities, such as the National Council for Women, the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood, Al-Azhar institution, the Church, and the non-governmental organizations as well. Literature ensures that internal pluralism, which happens through the representation of different entities, would be gradually reflected on the external pluralism, which is the content delivered to the audience.

Looking at the funding mechanism, it is clear that the three regulatory bodies do not enjoy financial independence, contrary to what is stated in the three laws. Yet, looking at SCMR, one would find that the main source of funding comes from the state budget, which is not fixed, and it varies each year. This is unlike the developed models, where the main funding tool comes from the license fee paid by the different owners to the SCMR to issue the license. This shows that the work of the regulatory body is susceptible to some exercise of power.

Another relevant point is found in the NMA funding model, where Article 24 of Law no. 178 states that among the funding mechanism, the government grant comes in the first place. Other sources are mentioned as well such as fees in return for the work, studies, consultations and services performed by the Commission for those who request it, as well as loans given to the Commission after following

the prescribed legal procedures. It is quite surprising that the Law does not mention the licensee fee collected from each household on a monthly basis and considered the main source of funding for public broadcasting stations. According to a current member at NMA, the Egyptian socio-economic situation stands against the implementation of the license fee as a tool for funding public television, yet this does not mean the cancellation of the option altogether, since it is the best option that would guarantee independence. The interviewee even referred to other models, such as Spain, where the funding for the public television comes from the taxes. Yet, the percentage dedicated to the public television out of the taxes is known and a financial report comes out to show the expenditures on the public media.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation: Looking Forward

The Egyptian media landscape has seen several developments over the past decade. The technological advancements have brought lots of changes and new entries in the media and made media and communication a very complex social phenomenon in various social, cultural and educational fields. This made it crucial to have media policies that would accommodate all the changes. The establishment of the regulatory bodies has been a long-awaited demand after the revolution, and is a first good step towards a more developed media. It is worth mentioning that the road of media policies is connected and related to the external environment in terms of politics, economics, culture, technology, and education. There is no recipe for one good media policy to be taken as a reference for other countries, as each country has its own specific context that it performs within its own variables. Media policies cannot be analysed outside the socio-political system that media operates within, since they play a big role in the process. However, there are general guidelines that should be applied to ensure the development of media policy that enables media pluralism and independence. For instance, the separation of responsibilities, the flexibility in issuing licensing procedures, the proper measurement for ownership concentration are among the guidelines. The issuance of regulatory bodies is only the first step towards a better structured media system, and the developmental steps should be done gradually but consistently. Separation among entities should be at the forefront since the delay of regulatory codes is usually delayed by disputes among the entities. Laws that are related to press freedom should also be revisited in light of the current reasonable stability in Egypt. The goals for media policies should focus on 1) promoting relationships between different media entities, supporting values of pluralism and responsible freedom, 2) building reliance between media institutions and establishments and civil society organizations and the Parliament, and 3) building sustainable trust in the Egyptian media. This can be done by providing an efficient regulatory framework that would guide the performance of the different players and safeguard the public interest. Despite all the challenges that Egypt is facing and the open access to all voices to the Egyptian public through the internet, social media and satellite transnational media, media policy still safeguards the society to a large extent.

Media policy continues to try to be diverse and clear, and it carries out its duties to make the media institutions serve the public interest through introducing different codes, introducing requirements to keep confidence-building policies, building national media identities, raising and developing professionalism, developing the media industries, strengthening legislation and institutional frameworks, building human resource capacities, and promoting media ethics. However, it is also challenged with expansion of media use by the public that does not necessarily consume Egyptian media products and a change from mass media used to address and serve mass audiences are changing to be more fragmented audiences. A change from 4G to 5G and beyond in telecommunication is enhancing connectivity to a large extent, bringing more voices to the Egyptian public that are not necessarily carrying positive messages and content appealing and interacting with different age groups in society. Media Literacy policy is not fully adopted in the state to safeguard younger ages from these messages. Therefore, a change from a media policy paradigm to a communication policy approach to meet these challenges and more in the near the future is a must. Strong coordination between the Higher Council for Media Regulation and the different ministries regulations such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology that have common elements, referring mostly to the individual's ability to seek, choose, process, analyze, and evaluate the information, should be enhanced and even embodied for a new integrated communication policy.

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