

**THE EFFECT OF ONLINE JOURNALISM ON  
THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS:  
THE CASE OF KUWAIT**

**BY  
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*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

*(Moses) said: “My Lord! relieve my mind (25) And ease my task for me; (26) And loose a knot from my tongue, (27) That they may understand my speech. (28)”*

*The Holy Quran – Ta-Ha*

## **DECLARATION**

**I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree, that the work of which it is a record has been performed by myself, and that all sources of information have been specifically acknowledge.**

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**Ali Abdulsamad Dashti**

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# ABSTRACT

Online journalism has brought new features of journalism practices for local journalists and forced the expansion of their freedom. The Internet as a whole became the tool for freedom of expression for many suppressed countries, and online journalism became an alternative for press freedom in cyberspace. The diffusion of information enabled more opportunities for freedom of expression and speech prosperity, leading to a higher level of freedom in local press. This research project aims to examine the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the local press in the state of Kuwait.

Since mid 1990s, when the Internet was introduced in Kuwait, a new phenomenon of press freedom started to rise. After many decades of relying heavily on local newspapers and controlled radio and TV, many Kuwaitis switched to the Internet to obtain information, news and political analysis. The political dispute of power after the death of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jabber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on 15 of January 2006, followed by the public demand to change the electoral constituencies voting system of the National Assembly, and the dissolving of the National Assembly in May 2006 forced many Kuwaitis to go online to get the latest news and analysis regarding the two issues. Kuwaiti online journalism became the source for instant updated information during the disputes. Many local writers praised their work on local press. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim, a columnist and former editor in chief for *Alwatan* local newspaper, in his online Web site 'Meezan', provided non-censored detailed analysis of these situations without any restrictions or fear of government interference which was considered as a taboo "red line" no one was permitted to cross.

The researcher used three different tools (survey, online content analysis, and interviews) to determine the effect of online journalism on journalist's practices and the freedom of the press in Kuwait, focusing on the most popular Kuwaiti personal writers' sites, weblogs and forums. The results show that online journalism affected journalist's practices but did not replace the traditional practices. The Internet became a source and communication platform for many local journalists. At the same time, online journalism became one of the tools that helped increase the level of freedom in the local press.

The language of online journalism took a different direction from the local press with more freedom to write, discuss, and share ideas online with less fear of government

retribution. What was considered a taboo “red line” in the local press became an acceptable “green line” online. Local press officials recognized this effect on the local freedom, but disagree on the factors that really caused the freedom of the local press to increase.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

*Technology has given us a world in which almost anyone can publish a credible-looking Web page. Anyone with a computer or a cell phone can post in online forums. Anyone with a moderate amount of skill with Photoshop or other image manipulation software can distort reality. Special effects make even videos untrustworthy. We have a problem here.*

(Gillmor, 2004, 174)

## 1.1 Introduction & Background:

The use of the Internet stands between ‘Neo-Luddites’<sup>1</sup>, who fear that technology will destroy their lives, and ‘Technophiles’<sup>2</sup>, who hope that the technology will bring prosperity (Gordon, 2001, p. 168; Ebersole, 1995). The Internet’s speedy diffusion surpassed other mass media (telephone, TV and Radio). It took 38 years for the US population to reach 30 per cent of telephone usage, 17 years for TV, and only seven years for the Internet (Rice, 2002); it took 38 years for radio broadcasting to reach 50 million people, 13 years for TV, and only 4 years for the Internet (Simon, 2001). The word ‘Internet’ became a widely used synonym affecting many aspects of our social lives. Nowadays, the Internet is blamed for the separation of marriages, decreases in work productivity, student dismissal from colleges and universities due to plagiarism, the panic that comes from Web exposure to an unfounded rumour, as well as the downfall of undemocratic governments. In other words, the Internet is now ‘wired’ and intimately connected to our daily lives, whether we like it or not as reality.

Much like the Internet, politics is no exception. The Internet use went beyond a tool of communication to become an active political tool (Ferdinand, 2000). Many leaders throughout the world, especially Western leaders, put hope in the Internet to help foster

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Web Dictionary: Neo-Luddites are those who distrust or fear the inevitable changes brought about by new technology.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Web Dictionary: Technophiles are those who are enthusiastic for technology, especially the computer.

freedom and bring about democracy in many countries<sup>3</sup>. One innovative affect the Internet has had in particular is in the area of journalism. In fact, online journalism<sup>4</sup> emerged with the introduction of the Internet. Online journalism not only changed journalists' norms, perceptions, and practices, but also, it has played a strong role in increasing and enhancing the freedom of the press, especially among the voice of columnists at the local community level. As a new means of communication, online journalism has attracted professionals and non-professionals alike, in what appears to be an emerging new global media. Along with the emergence of huge multinational corporations, governments are attempting to exercise their power and influence through forming monopolies over local media outlets. Many leaders of governments throughout the world are realizing this transformation, and have reacted either negatively trying to control the new media through laws and technical barriers, or positively, by accepting the reality that the era of censorship has vanished.

## **1.2 The Effect of the Internet:**

Since use of the Internet became wide-spread, many academic scholars have published various articles concerning the affect of the Internet on society<sup>5</sup>. Previous studies have investigated not only the effect, but also the association of the Internet on the following areas: sociology, communities, health, sports, psychology, information, business, and technology. The early studies of the Internet were based upon “speculative hyperbole”, weak assumptions distanced from the real world, and simple assertions of technological

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<sup>3</sup> The West is more concerned with democracy as a whole than with bounded values. Since democracy is still in a developing stage for many Third World countries, values such as the freedom of the speech and the freedom of the press remain the highest priority, but not democracy per se, especially when most people in Third Word countries lack an understanding of democracy or are not even interested in obtaining the Western model of democracy.

<sup>4</sup> Online journalism is thoroughly discussed in Chapter Three section 3.3.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Chapter Three section 3.2.

determinism. However, recently they have moved toward solid empirical methods and toward social determinism expanding to cover more aspects of everyday life (Livingstone, 2005).

Media and politics is another area that focuses on the impact of the Internet on democracy<sup>6</sup>. Scholars' views vary regarding this subject matter. Some are optimistic for the role the Internet can play in introducing, cultivating, and developing the philosophical ideas of democracy, while others raise doubts (Rice, 2002). Three schools of thought exist that dominate this subject. First, there are those who take an optimistic view concerning the role that the Internet can play in fostering democracy, particularly among leaders in the West. Second, there are those who have a very pessimistic point of view and do not see the potential political role with which the Internet can have. Lastly, there are those who attach the effect of the Internet to prior factors (preconditions) in order to have an impact such as Internet literacy and usability (Brants, 2005). However, these points of view remain vague, which is why it is important to understand how the Internet or other new electronic communications might contribute to a new form of democracy (Bohman, 2004).

### **1.3 The Internet & the Freedom of the Press:**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), exemplified in the existence of the Internet, have the potential to broaden the limits of freedom beyond the control of the government, including those in developing countries. The development of the Internet has outpaced the attempt of most governments to use rules and regulations as a means of

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<sup>6</sup> Since free speech & free press are part of democratic values, my discussion of the literature review will focus first on the Internet and democracy.

control, which often directly stifles freedom. In fact, the Internet has resulted in the infusion and diffusion of incredible amounts of data and information, which has opened new doors for human expression. As a result, the conditions for freedom of speech and freedom of the press have prospered. Today, anyone with a personal computer (PC) and Internet connection can ‘own’ an online press or a Weblog (Blog), which reaches beyond the traditional, local, and physical boundaries of a country. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the United States of America, the Afghanistan War, and the Iraqi War in 2003 are infamous examples of society no longer relying on traditional media for news information. Instead, ordinary people became the reporters of news as well as participating in media productions, creating what became known as ‘citizen journalism’ (Gillmor, 2004).

During and after the May 13th massacre of Andijan in Uzbekistan in 2005, all foreign media including CNN, BBC, and the Russian networks were banned from reporting in the country. The only first hand news was reported by the journalist Galima Buharbaeva through the Ferghana.ru Web site which was listed on the top of government’s blocked sites. It was the only credible source and later many politicians quoted the site’s reports to condemn the incident. As evidenced by these examples, the association between the Internet and freedom is such that the Internet became an essential tool of expression and communication that lead to a freer and more liberated society.

#### **1.4 The Persian Gulf States & the Internet:**

When Western leaders publicly discuss the desire to bring democracy to the nations of the world, the underlying assumption is that they are directing their statements to the

Third World countries (developing countries)<sup>7</sup>. The countries that ban free speech and limit freedom of the press seem to be less democratic in nature. Those non-democratic states are imposing strict laws on free speech and free press. For the most part, the majority of undemocratic countries reside in Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East. These countries also need to obtain the Internet technologies to keep up with the rest of the developed world. Countries in the Persian Gulf are no exception to this trend. Many people in this region of the world believe that the Internet through ICT is the best way to help them improve their economy, education, and politics. In short, many argue that the Internet is perhaps the most important way in which they can achieve freedom in their countries.

In the Persian Gulf States like Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the Internet is increasingly being utilized by people and the perception by many is that new advanced technology causes economic wealth<sup>8</sup>. This positive perception has encouraged many of these countries' governments to acquire the latest technology in highly vital areas such as education, health, business, sports, and networks (Internet) as a fundamental part of e-government. Unfortunately, many of these governments have purposefully separated politics from the attainment of new technology. They see the Internet as a tool for development, but not for political purposes. Thus, obtaining the Internet technology while keeping the government's political status unchanged, raises undesirable conflict between technology and freedom of speech. In other words, how can the governments of these countries attain the latest technology of the

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<sup>7</sup> Even though the definition categorizing the countries according to the Cold War era (the First for the West block, the Second for East block and Third for the countries neither aligned with the West nor with the East) is no longer accurate, but it is still widely used referring mainly to those either under developing or poor nations.

<sup>8</sup> In 2008, Internet users in the Persian Gulf reached 10,301,000 million according to Internet World Stats.

Internet for people to take advantage of, without raising the issue of free speech and free press or risking the power of their present governments?

The level of freedom of the press varies from one Persian Gulf State to another. For example, the country of Kuwait may have more freedom of the press than Saudi Arabia, or Al-Arabia TV news channel in Dubai may be more open than the local TV news in Kuwait. The political and the technological changes occurring throughout the Persian Gulf region are forcing neighbouring countries to re-evaluate their legislation and regulation concerning freedom of speech and freedom of the press. An example of this is that the local newspaper columnists are not permitted to publish articles in their newspaper, but they can publish them online. Moreover, what is censored on the local TV may now be viewed on satellite TV stations. In fact, some Persian Gulf States are starting to adopt new media laws to expand the freedom of the press, because many of these institutions are realizing the ineffectual methods of censorship practice, or adding new legislation to manage and control online publishing. For example, in 2006, the Kuwaiti government revised the 1961's Press and Publication Law (Carnegie Endowment, 2008) to give more freedom to the local press, but at the same time, they added new regulations to keep its control over the press. In 2002, the Kingdom of Bahrain adopted a new press law giving more freedom to the local press, but they were able to attain some legal control over the journalists themselves.

Throughout many of the countries in the Arab world, including the Persian Gulf States, online journalism is viewed as a powerful and credible source of information. Some even view online journalism as a way to resist government control over the press, especially as local media crosses traditional local borders to reach new audiences throughout the world. Many Arabic online newspapers are beginning to invade the Internet, circumventing the government regulations and control. For example, *Elaph*

([www.elaph.com](http://www.elaph.com)) is the first electronic Arabic online newspaper which consists of freelance journalists from Arab countries who consistently write freely without any governmental censorship<sup>9</sup>. It has grown to become one of the most credible sources of news to Arabic online news readers. Many Arab Internet users have been known to read *Elaph* even before reading or browsing their local newspapers. *Elaph* is even becoming a credible source of information and is quoted in many Arab local newspapers. Not only has this credibility attracted new readers, but also, it is influencing the norms, methodologies, and practices of local journalists.

In June of 2007, *Alaan* (<http://www.alaan.cc>) became the first Kuwaiti online newspaper not only for Kuwait, but also throughout the Persian Gulf region to serve 24 hours of continuous news. As a matter of fact, this forced a number of local newspapers with online versions to add this feature to their news sites. Furthermore, many local columnists are establishing their own homepages as a way to write freely in cyberspace. In 2006, Kuwaiti weblogs got together to organize a campaign against local newspapers creating an online public sphere<sup>10</sup>. In August 19, 2007, a local journalist who administers an online magazine and a forum (*Alommah.org*) was arrested by the secret service in response to a comment made in his forum criticizing the Emir<sup>11</sup> (which was deleted after reading the comment). Actions taken by governments like these raise many difficult questions concerning online journalism and its influence on the local media (press). One question in particular is whether or not online journalism is becoming more powerful than

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, ownership remains an influence tool over the policy of the online medium, but it still has more freedom than local press.

<sup>10</sup> This concept is explained in Chapter Three section 3.2.4.

<sup>11</sup> By law, it is illegal to criticize the Emir.

traditional newspapers. Secondly, how is the local press in these countries reacting to online journalism? The public's tendencies and willingness to move information to cyberspace and/or to express their ideas in this domain seem to illustrate the growing discontent surrounding the lack of freedom of expression in the local press. The question thus becomes, Can online journalism help to increase the freedom of expression in the local press? Negative reaction from the governments of the Arab world to online publication also illustrates the positive affect that online journalism can have on public expression. Many Arab governments order ISPs to impose regular blocking on specific online sites. Is this actuality or just a normal reaction to the new technology?

#### **1.4.1 Kuwait & the Internet:**

The country of Kuwait is a fine example of a constitutional emirate<sup>12</sup>. It has a constitution that provides free parliamentary elections with power sharing between the governing family and the people with some limitations on the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press. Kuwait is witnessing a noticeable number of users expressing their opinions through new communication channels. Due to the freedom limitations, many Kuwaitis share their ideas in cyberspace and away from the regulated government

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<sup>12</sup> According to CIA World Fact Kuwait is a constitutional emirate system of government guided by a constitution that spelled out the duties of the ruler in a written law. In Kuwait the Emir is elected to be the head of the state with the existence of a parliamentary system. The Emir has the power to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister. Therefore, regardless of the power sharing between the government and the National Assembly, the Emir remains his power over both. Thus, Kuwait is neither authoritarian nor fully democratic state. The power sharing does exist between the ruling family and the people, but with more power toward the Emir. In fact, this power sharing made Kuwait the leading country not only in the Arab world, but also in the Gulf States for its free press and speech. This kind of political system has made Kuwait one advanced technological state in the Gulf Region. Therefore, there is the Internet technology to use and partially free press to practice. This unique political system will shed lights on the relationship between the Internet (online journalism) technology and press freedom in Kuwait.

broadcasting and traditional press. In fact, these contributions could push the limits of expression concerning the freedom of the press even farther than at first imagined. For instance, in 2006, Kuwait experienced political unrest, when the Emir Sheik Jabber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah suddenly died, and the Crown Prince Sheik Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah was unable to take over due to his illness. This event was followed by Members of Parliament's demand to change the electoral constituencies of the National Assembly, which led to the dissolution of the parliament and a call for new elections.

It was during these political disputes, that many Kuwaitis looked to the Internet (online newspapers, personal online writers, forums and weblogs) for the latest news and analyses because the local media (print, radio and TV) failed to report –to-date news. Sahat Al-Safat, Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya, Alommah.org were most popular Kuwaiti weblogs and forums for instant updated information, and many local columnists praised their work in the local press (Al-Duaij, 12/2/2007). Mohammad Abdulqader Al-Jasim, the former editor-in-chief of *Alwatan*, a local Kuwaiti newspaper, led his homepage to be one of the first and credible media sources to analyze the political situation freely in cyberspace with no limitations. In his online personal homepage 'Meezan', Al-Jasim's efforts almost single-handedly triggered the initiative to analyze the political situation without any restrictions and fear of governmental interference. Many local journalists consider this action as one of the most important steps in challenging the government establishment. Al-Jasim crossed a line that no Kuwaiti journalist before him has ever crossed before.

It is apparent that the Internet has fostered a shift in the way that media, particularly freedom of the press, is considered in the country of Kuwait. Since the mid 1990s, Kuwait started experiencing a new phenomenon of media freedom. After many decades of relying heavily on local newspapers and government controlled radio and TV media outlets, many

Kuwaitis are switching to the Internet for information, news, and political analyses. The reason for this shift in public attitudes probably has something to do with the fact that what is censored in local newspapers can be published online. Put simply, what is not aired on local TV stations in Kuwait can now be viewed on YouTube.

Since the establishment of the Printing and Publication Law in 1961, the local newspapers in Kuwait have remained under the control of five elite families (Jurdi and Dashti, 1994). With the introduction of the Internet in the mid 1990s, many Kuwaitis started to switch to the Internet to both gain information from news and to express their ideas freely. This shift has forced the local press to reconsider and to change their old strategy, in a way that is more open with a limited content control. Over the last decade, the local press has lost its momentum in its attempt to control the press in Kuwait (Al-Abdali, 21/1/2006).

### **1.5 Aim & Objectives of Study:**

This study aims to examine the effect of online journalism (personal online writers, weblogs and forums) on the freedom of the local press in the country of Kuwait. Likewise, this study seeks to assess whether or not online journalism is changing the practices of local journalists. Not only does this study examine whether online journalism enhances the freedom of the press in Kuwait, it also seeks to investigate whether or not the Internet can force the local press to adopt new principles in dealing with a free press. Due to many external factors affecting access and usage of the Internet, the debate concerning the association between online journalism and freedom of the press is still unclear; however, the most prolific determinant appears to be based upon the limited or non-democratic nature of the country, which impacts the policies that restrict the freedom of the press.

Since the country of Kuwait is a constitutional emirate with limited censorship, it is appropriate to use Kuwait as a case study to find out the effectiveness of online journalism on the freedom of the press. Kuwait is considered a rich country with high income per capita, literacy is high, and it has hi-speed Internet technology<sup>13</sup>. The external factors that prevented many users from accessing or using the Internet (digital divide)<sup>14</sup> may not apply for Kuwait. However, if Kuwaitis enjoy these features without having an effect on the freedom of the press, then we should reconsider and reevaluate the optimistic point of view regarding the Internet. Therefore, the study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Does online journalism affect the level of the freedom of the press in Kuwait?
2. How does online journalism affect the practices of journalists working in Kuwaiti local newspapers in relation to the freedom of the press?
3. Does the level of online freedom perception differ between the local journalists and local columnists in Kuwait?<sup>15</sup>
4. How the content of online journalism (personal online writers, weblogs and forums) during the constitutional issue (15 to 25/1/2006) and electoral constitutional dispute (1 to 25/5/2006) affected the level of press freedom in Kuwait?

## **1.6 Importance of the Study:**

This research is very important because it sheds light on one important challenge in

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter Three section 3.9 for statistical information about Kuwait.

<sup>14</sup> Digital Divide is the “gap between information haves and have nots” SIMON, L. D., CORRALES, J. & WOLFENBERGER, D. R. (2002) *Democracy and the Internet*, Maryland, The John Hopkins University Press,

<sup>15</sup> A local journalist is a reporter who gathers and writes the news for local newspapers; a local columnist is the person who writes regular columns for specific newspapers presenting his or her personal opinion.

the Persian Gulf, the lack of freedom of the press. A thorough review of the scholastic literature has revealed that there is, to date, no research currently studying the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press in Arab countries throughout the Middle East. This research will widen our knowledge and understanding of online journalism and the freedom of the press in the constitutional states in the Middle East, especially in the Persian Gulf countries. Press freedom is imperative because it is an essential indicator for the level of freedom in each country. This research is important because it is conducted in the context of an Arab culture.

### **1.7 Methodology:**

As mentioned above, the aim of this research is to study the effect of online journalism (personal online writers, forums & weblogs) on the freedom of the press in Kuwait as a case study. Therefore, this study will use the following instruments:

- 1) A questionnaire was distributed among Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti journalists, and another questionnaire among local Kuwaiti columnists. These questionnaires were designed to reveal the perceptions and practices of journalists and columnists concerning online journalism and whether they were affected positively or negatively.
- 2) Qualitative online content analysis was used to observe the contents of personal online writers, forums and weblogs during the two periods: A) the constitutional dispute after the death of late Emir in January 2006; and, B) the change of electoral constituencies in May 2006. This observation included: political analysis, news, comments, illustrations, and readers' responses.

- 3) Interviews with officials of local newspapers, journalists, columnists, and people in leadership positions with selected personal online writers, weblogs and forums were conducted (qualitative analyses). More detailed methodological analysis is given in respective chapters.

## **1.8 Content of the Study:**

The thesis will consist of eight chapters. **Chapter One** will give an overall review of the main questions raised in this research focusing on the effect of the Internet on societies in the Persian Gulf States, particularly the country of Kuwait, as well as a focus on the purpose, objectives, methodology, and importance of this research. **Chapter Two** discusses the freedom of the press from its historical background, theories, responsibilities, definition, and measurements focusing on the freedom of the press in Kuwait as a case study. **Chapter Three** focuses on online journalism, which includes the World Wide Web, traditional newspaper vs. online newspaper, the readership of online newspaper, and the characteristics and the content of online journalism. It covers the impact of the Internet as new technology on democracy including digital democracy and the public sphere. This chapter also includes more details about the history of the press and the Internet in Kuwait from technological and users' perspectives, press law (old and new), newspapers, and other related issues. **Chapter Four** involves a discussion of the study's methodology describing the using tools and study's procedures. **Chapter Five** presents the results and discussion of the survey. **Chapter Six** presents the results and discussion of the online content analysis. **Chapter Seven** presents the results of personal interviews, and **Chapter Eight** includes the conclusion and limitations of the study.

## Chapter Two: Freedom of the Press

*The sovereignty of the people and freedom of the press are therefore two entirely correlative things: censorship and universal suffrage are, on the contrary, two things that contradict each other and cannot be found in the political institutions of the same people for long.*

(Tocqueville, 2000, p. 173)

*Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.*  
(Abbott Joseph Liebling 1904-1963)

### 2.1 Introduction:

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the freedom of the press has preoccupied the minds of some of the world's most prominent thinkers and scholars. During this period, the idea of freedom of the press was still in its infant stage and became strongly associated with the existence of the emerging democratic societies throughout Europe and the United States of America. It became the foundation for which the practices of journalism were formed. This chapter sheds light on the freedom of the press concepts, definitions, theories, and measurements that shape our understanding. The chapter also examines the issue of the freedom of the press from an Arab perspective, particularly with an emphasis on the state of Kuwait.

### 2.2 The Concept of the Freedom of the Press:

Freedom is considered by many thinkers and scholars to be the highest value of human being (Kant, 1996). Given its important role in human life, freedom is the subject of many writings from poetry, philosophy, psychology, and history to politics, economics, and religion. One of the most prolific thinkers of the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill (1869, pp. 12-16) in his work, *On Liberty* argues that freedom is the absence of coercion. Mill is famous for moving the concept of liberty from its previous place in the realm of

theology and natural rights into the social welfare domain. He writes, “[in] terms of the social value of living truth,” liberty (freedom) has a shape and is not infinite (Hocking, 1947, p. 10). In fact, Mill goes out of his way to place a special emphasis on the freedom of thought and discussion in relation to the freedom of the press, which in his view, should improve the rational and reasoned discussion that benefits society (Gleason, 1990). The nineteenth century political philosopher and historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin wrote in his famous essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1958), the difference between the two concepts: *positive freedom* and *negative freedom*. Positive freedom is about having the means or opportunity to do things, while negative freedom is the situation when an individual is protected from tyranny and the arbitrary exercise of authority (Carter, Winter 2007).

According to John C. Merrill (1989, p. 19), freedom is “the condition of being able to select and to carry out purposes”. He asserts that freedom should lack external restrictions and provide effective power to do what one wishes. Thus, freedom ought to include both freedoms: the negative (freedom from restraint) and the positive (freedom to achieve some good). The concept of freedom in the context of journalism is challenging because it suggests that complete freedom is the place between “compulsion and inertia” (Merrill, 1989, p. 24).

The freedom of expression is an umbrella for various actions such as the freedom of speech, the freedom of publications, and the freedom of demonstrations (Abbas and Al-Fadhly, 2005). In comparative terms, Raymond D. Gastil (1979, p. 5) expands the civil definition of freedom to include “freedom of the press, the openness of public discussion, the existence of organizations separate from the government, an independent judiciary, and the absence of political imprisonment”.

Many philosophers throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries associated liberty with

the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press with no distinction between the two (Lichtenberg, 1990). Lichtenberg (1990) argues that the concept of ‘oneness’ has relevance today especially since the press is considered by many to be a powerful voice equal with individual voices; defending free press is in essence defending the freedom of individual speech. Lichtenberg’s analysis holds some validity, but some notable differences exist between the freedom of the press and the freedom of individual speech, which are illustrated when they come in conflict with each other (Cullen and Fu, 1998). Paul Ansah (1991) explains the meaning and the function of the freedom of the press in the society is to disseminate information and ideas through mass media without government control. In 1922, the American Society of Newspaper Editors set the standard principles to encourage the ethical and professional performance of journalism. Originally named the ‘Canons of Journalism,’ the Society’s principles were revised in 1975 and became the ‘Statement of Principles’. In Article II it states that:

Freedom of the press belongs to the people. It must be defended against encroachment or assault from any quarter, public or private. Journalists must be constantly alert to see that the public’s business is conducted in public. They must be vigilant against all who would exploit the press for selfish purposes. (ASNE, 1975)

Lieberman (1953, p. 134) argues that the concept of free press is neither carefully clarified, nor accurately used in the awareness of the public. In fact, this confusion distorts the distinction between the freedom of information and the freedom of expression in relation to what Lieberman claims are the three rights: 1) ‘to know,’ 2) ‘to find out,’ and 3) ‘to tell’. To further complicate the matter, many national press systems are restricted in their degree of freedom, which only fuels the idea that not only is the universal idea of the freedom of the press unfeasible, but it may be impossible (Merrill and Lowenstein, 1979).

As is the case with most revolutionary ideas, the idea of the freedom of the press is not without controversy. Some maintain that a country's national security, reputation of the government (libel and slander), privacy of citizens (public figures and public officials), and the criminal justice system (i.e., pre-trial publicity vs. fair trial and journalist and their sources) are reasons for concern. Hocking (1947, p. 194) argues that two limitations should always be noted in any discourse on the freedom of the press. The first limitation is the incompatibility among the factors of ideal press, and the second limitation, according to Hocking is that the freedom of the press is not an isolated value and varies according to its social context.

Another theory of freedom put forward by some intellectuals is that it is simply the access to resources. Lessig (2002) explains that the concept of "free" connotes different fundamental meanings; a resource is free when an individual means to use it without permission or when permission is neutrally granted. Lessig adds that free resources are the essence of innovation, creativity, and democracy. In fact, he considers the Internet to be the greatest tool that demonstrates the importance of free resources. Nevertheless, Lessig argues that the positive characteristics and potential of the Internet may make it susceptible and weaker when it confronts financial, social, and political forces of control. To illustrate the idea clearly, Lessig (2002) argues that the Internet forms innovation commons (a free resource for others to take), but due to our ignorance of its changing norms and technical architecture, the Internet is losing this innovation commons. In the case of Internet freedom, McQuail (2005) agrees with Lessig (2002) that Internet represents the freedom of access to resources. He asserts that the context of Internet freedom is too diverse and contains all forms of freedoms that are equally important. Manuel Castells (2001) claims in a another proposed theory of freedom, that freedom corresponds with the Internet because

of the natural composition of its infrastructure. The Internet is based on the concept of the ‘openness’ of its architectural and social organization (Castells, 2001, p. 26).

### **2.2.1 British & U.S. Perspectives of Press Freedom:**

In an effort to understand the ideas that underlie the freedom of the press, it is important to return to the fifteenth century. In 1439, the first printing press was assembled in Europe (Meggs, 1998). As a matter of fact, the first printing press was fully controlled and operated by the state and was considered “a tool for enhancing the power, ideology and legitimacy of the dominant or absolutist elite” (Voorhoof, 1998, p. 35). The government used what in today’s standards would be considered oppressive methods like censorship, prior restraint, imprisonment, exile, licensing, taxes, confiscation of newspapers, and even the death penalty to maintain a rigid control over civic communication. The British government maintained its control over the press until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. But by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, philosophers, scholars, thinkers, and politicians had articulated the theories of the freedom of the press. These ideas were used as instruments to confront repressive European Governments in the throes of political and social struggle. All these events and more came to a head in 1776. This was the year that Article 12 in the Declaration of Rights of the State of Virginia was published on the public record. It states “that the freedoms of speech and of the press are among the great bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained except by despotic governments” (Jamerson, 2007). Later in 1791, the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press was formally recognized by the U.S. Constitution:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition

the government for a redress of grievances.

A similar phenomenon was coincidentally occurring in Europe in 1789, when the National Assembly of France recognized the freedom of the press in its Article 11 of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, which declares:

The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law. (Citizens, August 1789)

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the freedom of the expression and the freedom of the press had risen in stature and were considered by many intellectuals to be the fundamental rights of the political democracies in Europe and in the United States (Voorhoof, 1998)<sup>16</sup>. This fundamental right maintained its liveliness throughout the following centuries until it became officially a universal right. In 1948, the United Nations adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* whose Article 19 states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. (General Assembly of the United Nations, 10/12/1948)

Five years prior to this monumental point in the timeline of free speech, the American newspaper press' imbalanced news, monopoly tendencies, sensationalism, and mass commercialism led to the establishment of a non-governmental commission, which was tasked with examining these accusations and making formal recommendations on the successes and failures of the American press industry (McQuail, 2005). By 1947, the

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the meaning of printing press can not be understood as the newspaper press, therefore, the freedom of the press was considered an equivalent to freedom of speech NERONE, J. C. (1995) *Last Rights Revisiting Four Theories of the Press*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, .

Commission on Freedom of the Press otherwise known as the Hutchins Commission Report on Freedom of the Press in the USA<sup>17</sup> reported its findings to the public. The commission published the following on the freedom of the press<sup>18</sup>:

Freedom of speech and press is close to the central meaning of all liberty. Where men cannot freely convey their thoughts to one another, no other liberty is secure. Where freedom of expression exists, the germ of a free society is already present and a means is at hand for every extension of liberty.

There are obvious reasons for bracketing the freedom of the press with freedom of the speech, as in the First Amendment. The press was at first hardly more than a means for extending the speaker's audience: the printed word could go far beyond the reach of his voice and to greater numbers and, though its durability

As with all freedom, the freedom of the press means freedom from and also freedom for. A free press is free from compulsions from whatever source, governmental or social, external or internal. From compulsions, not from pressures: for no press can be free from pressures except in a moribund society empty of contending forces and beliefs. These pressures, however, if they are persistent and distorting—as financial, clerical, popular, institutional pressures may become—approach compulsions; and something is then lost from effective freedom, which the press and its public must unite to restore.

A free press is free for the expression of opinion in all its phases. It is free for the achievement of those goals of press service on which its own ideals and the requirements of the community combine and which existing techniques make possible. For these ends it must have full command of technical resources, financial strength, reasonable access to sources of information at home and abroad, and the necessary facilities for bringing information to the national market. The press must grow to the measure of this market.

For the press there is a third aspect of freedom. The free press must be free to all who have something worth saying to the public, since the essential object for which a free press is valued is that ideas deserving a public hearing shall have a public hearing (Hocking, 1947, pp. 209 & 228).

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<sup>17</sup> The commission was funded by Time Inc. and Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. at the University of Chicago as a free and independent group with no participants from the press, radio or motion picture industries.

<sup>18</sup> It is a very important and long report and only parts related to the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press were selected.

As illustrated by the passage above, the Hutchins Commission emphasized the concept of ‘social responsibility’ that the American press must have in opening its access to all groups of society, and called for it to be “more diverse, objective, informative, and independent press institution which would avoid causing offence or encouraging crime, violence or disorder” (McQuail, 2005, p. 171).

In addition, the Hutchins Commission defines the freedom of the press as the freedom from and the freedom for; meaning there is no external pressures or restraints and the industry is free to deliver diverse ideas within a socially responsible manner for the benefit of society (Picard, 1985). The media should consider the absence of state control (freedom from) as the basis for its theory. Likewise, it is equally important to consider other fundamentals like diversity, equality of access, and communication structures (freedom for) to adequately serve the public interest (Negrine, 1994). Not only did the Hutchins Commission Report set the stage for the standards for the freedom of the press in America, but also, it set the standards for the freedom of the press for others.

Government censorship is not a new phenomenon. In fact, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in England, the government exercised control and censorship over the press. The famous English poet, John Milton, is credited with being the first person to reject the notion that the press is a threat to the state, which he called press liberty; in his well-known *Areopagitica* (1644) speech to the Parliament of England attacking the Licensing Order of 14 June 1643, he argues that restriction against the press is an evil that destroys the truth. He argues that reaching the truth is dependable on the accessibility of both truth and falsehood in free debates. Milton strongly believes that the state should stop censoring the press, because in his words, humankind is capable of choosing between good and evil through our ability of

reason and talent (Negrine, 1994; Keane, 1991). He makes the case that the freedom of the press is not an absolute right, but it leads individuals to discover the truth, and once the truth is discovered, the falsehood (against public good or disrupt the social order) should be punished (Gleason, 1990). Milton later described his view as reported in Picard (1985, p. 12):

I wrote my *Areopagitica*, in order to deliver the press from the restraints with which it was encumbered, that the power of determining what was true and what was false, what ought to be published and what ought to be suppressed, might no longer be entrusted to a few illiterate and illiberal individuals, who refused their sanction to any work which contained views or sentiments at all above the level of the vulgar superstition.

Prior restraint of the press is what Milton and later Sir William Blackstone warned would be the prevailing future threat to the freedom of speech. Blackstone believes that no previous restraints upon publications are essential for a free state where every individual has the right to present his or her opinion, but be responsible for the action and accept the consequences (As cited in Wacks, 1995). Similarly, the prominent British philosopher John Locke, who helped to shape current American political thinking, coincides with Milton's earlier view of restrained absolute freedom of the press. He agrees that if any personal expression threatens the proper social order, then it should not be tolerated (Gleason, 1990).

In 1792, the Attorney General to the Prince of Wales, Thomas Erskine defended the thinker, Thomas Paine, author of the *Rights of Man* (1791). Erskine was vehemently accused of propagating a 'seditious libel'. He argues that the charge against Paine was unjustified, since it violated the British Constitution's principle of the liberty of the press (Keane, 1991). According to Erskine, the liberty of the press is a natural right given by God to an individual, and this right ought to limit the power of Parliament. He writes:

Liberty of the press is an imprescriptibly natural right, given by God. It cannot be infringed by any earthly power, and certainly not by corrupt governments wanting to save their own skins (Keane, 1991, p. 4).

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Negrine (1994) asserts that the press became strongly associated with the prevailing political parties, thus the press relinquished its duties and responsibilities toward society. Instead, the interests and motivations of the state became the interests and motivations of the press. Its constant challenging pressures and limitations made it unfeasible to reach absolute freedom. For example, Newspaper's political policy (ownership) and editors' limitations to choose journalists or space for new are undermining the press freedom. Benjamin Constant in his book *Principles of Politics Applicable to All Governments* (1810), claims that the safety of liberty depends upon the existence of intermediary institutions; the freedom of the press is one vital institution that can help restore and protect human liberty through public discussion because it has the ability to expose governmental abuses (Hofmann, 2003).

Since the historical progress made by Constant, Erskine, Milton and other serious thinkers, the challenges associated with the freedom of the press have only deepened. In the case of the United Kingdom, the absence of legislation to adequately deal with written press *per se* and the unsatisfying provision for self-regulation through the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) has made progress difficult (Weymouth and Lamizet, 1996). In the U.K. surprisingly, no clear standard of laws exist that can deal with news distortion, invasion of privacy, or commercial censorship. More to the point, the PCC has failed to achieve its objectives because the industry that instituted the PCC, which is financially dependent upon the profit of selling newspapers, rejected the need for self-regulation. Since the freedom of the press in Britain remains indefinite, and "simply an idea, a remarkably powerful and enduring idea, but never, ever, in Britain a fact of law," it will fail

to achieve the standing and importance that the freedom of speech has in the United States (Flintham and Herbert, 1991, p. 17).

Britain and the U.S. have given the world four important arguments that examine the nature of press liberty. The first, the *theological approach*, which is illustrated by Milton argues that God gives humankind the right to choose. The *natural-rights theory*, as illustrated by Matthew Tindal's *Reasons Against Restraining the Press* (1704), rejects the religious justification of press censorship, and argues instead that the freedom of the press is a 'natural-right everyone has of judging for himself in matters of religion' (Keane, 1991, pp. 11-20). Furthermore, Tindal writes that the freedom of the press 'prevents all surprise, and give [s] timely warning of any approaching danger' (Keane, 1991, pp. 11-20). In the third theory, Mill argues that the utilitarian theory is the best theory that explains the freedom of the press. He argues that the best government and laws are the ones that bring the most 'happiness' to the greatest number of people—free press is an 'ally of happiness' and helps to 'control the habitual self-preference' of those who govern making them respect and serve the governed. In the final theory, the attaining truth approach accuses the utilitarian theory of emphasizing the idea of utility, but not the idea of truth; liberty of press guarantees the dissemination of facts and arguments, which lead to distinguishing the truth from falsehood—laws should not prevent this right (Keane, 1991, pp. 11-20).

### **2.2.2 Defining the Freedom of the Press:**

Clement Asante (1997) notes that there are levels or degrees of the freedom of the press. Asante notes that no country in the world has an absolute freedom of the press, which suggests that different countries possess different degrees of the freedom of the press. The second point Asante highlight is that the idea of freedom is different and varies

for each country, society, culture, and people. This simple fact illustrates the difficulty of defining the freedom of the press in universal terms (Holtz-Bacha, 2004).

Scholars have attributed many definitions to the freedom of the press. For the most part, these definitions involve removing the ‘restraints’ and the ‘role’ of the freedom of the press. Nevertheless, many of the popular definitions of the freedom of the press differ in specifying the source of restraints. George Githii (1971; cited in Asante, 1997) suggests that any serious discussion concerning the definition of the freedom of the press must include economic, social, cultural, managerial, and political factors.

For other scholars (Lieberman, 1953; Hachten, 2005), the freedom of press means the absence of government and political restraint. Lieberman (1953) considers the freedom of the press to be an absolute. Lieberman (1953, p. 135) writes:

Freedom of the press is the right to serve, without government interference and with police protection, the more fundamental right of freedom of information which is to say, the public’s ‘right to know’ as a fundamental part of the political freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Besides removing governmental restraints, William Hachten (2005) maintains that the role of the freedom of the press is something more. He defines the freedom of the press as “the right of the press to report, to comment on, and to criticise its own government without retaliation or threat of retaliation from the authority,” which he calls “the right to talk politics” (Hachten, 2005, p. 32). He asserts that this type of free and independent press only exists in the Western countries that have the following characteristics: laws protecting civil liberties and property, high income per capita, highly educated citizenry, possess opposing political parties, financial support of news media, and established independent journalism (Hachten, 2005, p. 32). However, Gunaratne (2005) criticised Hachten’s definition of the freedom of press noting it only examines the Euro-American (nation-state

level) experience and ignores the center-dominated world-system level (government & media operates the system of communication outlets).

Dennis and Merrill (1996) focus on the role of promotion and education in relation to the freedom of the press. They define the freedom of the press as “the right to communicate ideas, opinions, and information through the printed word without government restraint”; they state that the main purpose of the freedom of the press “is to promote and educate an informed electorate that can make decisions about public affairs” (Dennis and Merrill, 1996, p. 5). Both authors do agree that there is no existence of an absolute press freedom, but they disagree whether the press in the U.S. is free or not. Dennis claims there is no free press in the U.S., and free press is a dream that hardly can be achieved because of the interaction between the interrelated system of rights, principles, practices, and institutions; on the other hand, Merrill disagrees with Dennis believing the press in the U.S. is relatively free in regard to other countries because it has fewer government restraints (Dennis and Merrill, 1996).

On the other hand, Weaver (1977) builds upon Dennis and Merrill’s argument stating that an adequate account of the freedom of the press must include all ‘other restraints’. He explains that the arguments of free press revolve around two main questions: 1) what is it? and, 2) how much it can be? He defines the freedom of press as: 1) the relative absence of governmental restraints on the media; 2) the relative absence of governmental and all other restraints on the media; and, 3) not only the absence of restraints on mass media, but also the presence of those conditions necessary to ensure the dissemination of a diversity of ideas and opinions to a relatively large audience, like an enforced right of access to newspapers and radio stations (Weaver, 1977, p. 152).

Other scholars define the freedom of the press from the perspective of functionality

in society. For instance, Nam and Oh (1973) define the freedom of the press as independent adversary with no fear of arbitrary sanction and free to criticize the policies and personnel of the power elite. Writing from a modern and classical point of view, Kelley and Donway (1990) believe that free press means performing the function of watchdog preventing the state from aggrandize and abusing the rights of its citizens. Put differently, Kelley and Donway seem to suggest that an adequate definition of the freedom of the press should involve the presses' ability to keep government in check.

### **2.2.3 The Importance of the Freedom of the Press:**

The importance of the freedom of the press is determined by the function that it plays in society. The role that the freedom of the press plays in society can harm as well as benefit various aspects of the world's political systems. Perhaps the first thinker to highlight this is the German philosopher Karl Marx who recognizes the importance and challenges associated with the freedom of the press in a *socialistic* society. As cited in Picard (1985, p. 38), Marx acknowledges that freedom of the press is versatile and a 'spiritual mirror' for individuals to observe themselves which is the first step of wisdom, a spirit of state that can exist in every place, and an ideal world that flows back to it giving life a richer spirit .

Another way that the freedom of the press is important is that the 'liberty' of the press is crucial in rousing public spirit and can be employed against the ambition of arbitrary powers (Hume, 1987). This is the view of the philosopher and political thinker David Hume. In other words, the freedom of the press can function as a mechanism to thwart power and coercion. Similarly, Holmes (1990) notes that the freedom of the press curbs arbitrary power, and works as a stimulant that can help citizens; this is evident with

independent newspapers because they have a tendency to be aware of public dissatisfaction and strengthens. Holmes (1990, p. 32) adds that an independent and uncensored press can function as a market of ideas that helps the citizens of society to develop, mobilize, and create new ideas in the public domain .

The role of the freedom of the press is visibly apparent in undemocratic communities, societies, and countries where the political system views this institution as adversarial. Many maintain that the freedom of the press can threaten political stability and control. Contrary to popular belief, the freedom of the press is more effective in achieving changes than actually opposing political parties in authoritarian regimes (Ungar, 1990).

Finally, the freedom of the press can provide the resources to the audience to make their assessment who are the good and bad guys in politics and take the responsibility as a watchdog on behalf of public to prevent government abuses (Gurevitch and Blumler, (1990). Simply put, the freedom of the press can educate the public on issues. Gurevitch and Blumler offered eight functions and services expected from the media in a democratic system: surveillance of the socio-political environment, meaningful agenda setting, platforms for an intelligible and illuminating advocacy, dialogue across a diverse range of views, mechanisms to hold officials how to exercise power, inducements for citizens to be involved, resisting external power of control, and respecting the audience; however, these attended goals are not easy to achieve due to various obstacles such as the conflicts between democratic values, political communication structure limits participatory energy, political messages carry different implications, and the media work according to their socio-political and economic environment (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990, pp. 271-2).

### **2.2.4 The State vs. Press Freedom:**

In the United States of America for instance, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which is a protection of autonomy, was an attempt to draw the line between individuals and the state to produce important public debate that ultimately led to self-governance (Fiss, 1990). However, Fiss (1990, p. 140) notes that public debate is an “essential precondition” of a democratic government and that debate in and of itself is not enough to encourage the self-governance of a society. Therefore, state interference and regulation(s) are required. He acknowledges that a certain level of risk is involved in any political intervention, but the ends justify the means. Fiss is confident that political intervention will benefit the society overall, because it may safeguard it from elitist and powerful groups who may design the laws for their own selfish interests. Fiss (1990, p. 152) states:

We turn to the state because it is the most public of all our institutions and because only it has the power to resist the pressures of the market and thus to enlarge and invigorate our politics.

Lichtenberg (1990, pp.104-5) argues that the misunderstanding of what a democratic society’s commitment is toward free press may have promoted misinformed criticism of regulation, which led many to argue that regulations are incompatible with the freedom of the press because in some instances, regulating and manipulating the media can serve the purpose of free press, for example, if the mass media try to restrain or deprive public debate, then the regulations are positively required to achieve the ultimate freedom of the press.

Kelley and Donway (1990, p. 67) provide three basic arguments concerning the regulation of the press: 1) from positive rights argument holds that government interference

is essential to secure the public (speaker and audience) rights to access and receive information from media; 2) the teleological argument means that the positive government involvement may sometimes achieve the values of freedom of speech more effectively than the non-interference policy because “freedom of speech is not an end in itself but an instrument for achieving certain values such as truth and fairness”; and, 3) the democratic argument holds that “government regulation may be necessary to ensure that the media provide the kind of information and debate required for an informed electorate”.

Asante (1997) notes that the cultural and political environment of a society controls the media. Asante cites that these methods are: censorship, physical harassment, threat of lawsuits, press and journalist licensing requirements, appointments and dismissal of editors, government rewards and incentives, the practice of withholding newsprint allocations, quantitative decreases in the of advertisement support, and self-censorship. However, Beata Rozumilowicz (2002) argues that a non-monopolization from any group (i.e., the government, market, or elite) is the key to a free and independent media. He claims that free and true media can be achieved only if the fundamental domains of society (legal, institutional, economic, and social-cultural) support the structure of demonopolization of media sources.

### **2.3 Theories of the Freedom of the Press:**

It is ironic that a discussion of the theories surrounding the freedom of the press begins with a reference to the Cold War era when, according to Siebert et. al. (1984), four theories of the press (the authoritarian, the libertarian, the Soviet, and the social responsibility) came to fruition during the political strife between the East and West. The *Authoritarian theory*, in the words of Siebert et. al., is complete government control over

the mass media with no independency within the media organizations. On the contrary, the *Libertarian theory* is when individuals are free to publish without the constraints and regulations of the government. The third theory is the *Soviet theory*. This theory is related to the communist ideology and maintains that the media should not be private and must instead serve the working class with self-regulation, exercising a certain level of media responsibility. According to Siebert et. al., the *Social Responsibility theory*, is when the newspapers are obligated to provide information and diversity of views to society.

For Ralph Lowenstein (1979), the authoritarian and the libertarian theories have merit, but argues that we should replace the communist theory with what he calls the ‘social-authoritarian’ theory of the freedom of the press. He is convinced that scholars should also discard the social responsibility theory due to its vague nature. Reacting to the above theories, as well as others, John Merrill (1989) provides two simple models. Merrill (1989, p. 97) explains the freedom of the press with what he calls the *A-L Model*: 1) Authoritarian-Leaning and 2) Freedom-Leaning systems. Since freedom exists in every system whether it is authoritarian or libertarian and because of the different modes of freedom, the *A-L Model* lost its validity and usefulness. These freedom modes are found with the state where press is protected and used as a social instrument, with the press to be free from state control, or with the individual where journalist uses the freedom rationally and ethically with a consideration to the society (Merrill, 1989, p. 100). Gunaratne (2005, pp. 124-125) expands the theory of social responsibility using Merrill’s A-L continuum and concludes that, “the West-centric norms of social responsibility may not necessarily reflects the norms of social responsibility in many nation-state outside so called ‘Europe’”. Simply put, the freedom of the press cannot be universalized because the East and the West do not have the same understanding of freedom, which translates into the process of journalism

(Gunaratne, 2005, p. 142).

During the 1960s and 1970s in Europe, Siebert et. al. proposed theories on the freedom of the press initiated a new, comprehensive theory, which demanded state intervention to support a diverse press and became known as the *democratic socialist theory* of the press (Picard, 1985). This theory signalled a fundamental shift in the thinking of the freedom of the press at the time. The prevailing thought of the democratic socialist theory is that the public became less suspicious of state intervention and changed the negative view of state from one that viewed it as an evil against liberty and enemy of people to one that viewed the press as more libertarian and socially responsible (Picard, 1985). The democratic socialist theory combines the characteristics of negative liberty (absence of government interference, censorship and political prohibitions) and the characteristics of positive liberty (the individual rights of printing and circulating opinions) into one theory. In essence, this theory views the freedom of the press as an individual ‘right’—an extension of the free expression, not a privilege given to those who control the means of disseminating information (Picard, 1985). The *positive freedom of press* theory is to promote free and diverse ideas and opinions with the involvement of both negative and positive liberty characteristics. The *negative press* is to prevent state barriers against a free and diverse flow of ideas. Therefore, both work for the same purpose which is “to provide each individual the ability to express his or her view to other members of the society” (Picard, 1985, p. 49).

William Hachten (1999; Picard, 1985, pp. 64-9) offers five additional concepts of the freedom of the press similar to Siebert et al. theories, but emphasizes two more: 1) *Revolutionary* (press supporting the overthrow of government or free the state from foreign domination), and 2) *Developmental or Third World* (utilizes the press to promote social and

civic changes). Under the revolutionary theory which is mainly seen in the Third World, there is no relationship between traditional press and state press. They are separated because people believe that the government doesn't serve their interests and must be overthrown. The development theory puts more responsibility on the media in developing countries to deliver 'constructive media' that is economical, political, and socially beneficial without being "critical, adversarial, or even sceptical," because, according to Hachten, "the media should bow down to the needs of the country so as to encourage development across all sectors" (Negrine, 1994, p. 26). Ansah (1988) asserts that the developmental theory is a refinement of the authoritarian theory of the press, but gives the collective development needs priority over individual rights and freedoms. Ansah (1988, p. 7) explains, "the right is conceded to the state to restrict media operations and to exercise direct control to ensure that media resources are used to promote national identity and integrations".

The *democratic-participant* media theory presented by Denis McQuail suggests that media content should not be controlled by the state nor by any elite group. Instead the society should encourage an active participation of public discourse through equal access to the media. According to this theory, citizens have the right to access, to respond, and to use the communication mediums to socially interact with each other (Caton-Rosser and McGinley, 2006).

Based on his normative set of principles, McQuail (2005, pp. 85-6; 2005) provides his own four models on the freedom of the press: 1) the *liberal-pluralist or market model*, which "identifies freedom of press with the freedom to own and operate the means of publications without permission or interference from the state"; 2) the *social responsibility or public interest model* that gives a wider freedom obligation to the society with high

media standards through envisaged self-regulation with no exclusion of government intervention; 3) the *professional model*—gives the autonomous professional journalism the power to watch the misuse of media; and, 4) the *alternative media model*, which emphasizes “the rights of subcultures with their particularistic values and promotes inter subjective understanding and a real sense of community”.

## **2.4 Measuring the Freedom of the Press:**

Few scholastic studies have taken on the difficult task of evaluating and measuring the freedom of the press. Some of the most fertile studies are the cross-sectional studies from the early 1960s under the direction of Nixon (1960 & 1965), the empirical studies conducted by Lowenstein (1970) and Kent (1972), and the collection of data from the Freedom House (1979)<sup>19</sup> (Gunaratne, 2002). Finally, there are some indicators measuring the freedom of the press due to the absence of the systematic analyses that are worthy of consideration (Becker et al., 2007).

Formal attempts to articulate, to measure, and to evaluate the outcomes of the freedom of the press began under the guidance of Nixon (1960) in the U.S., who used the United Nations (UN) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) publications on 85 countries and territories from the mid 1950s to study three variables: 1) per capita national income, 2) percentage of illiterate adults, and 3) daily newspaper circulation. Nixon (1960, p. 18) used the International Press Institute’s two major surveys and definition of government control of the press with a panel of three judges from Europe, the U.S., and a graduate student to measure the freedom of the press.

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<sup>19</sup> More details are given later in the chapter about Freedom House.

Using a five-way classification system: (F) Free press system, (F-) Free press, (I) Intermediate, (A-) Authoritarian, (A) Authoritarian press system, and added a sixth category (C) Communist systems, and (C-) less rigidity in enforcement, Nixon concludes that there is a systematic relationship between the three variables and the degree of freedom of the press.

An independent replication of Nixon's study, conducted by Bradley Greenberg (1961) used the same three independent variables to investigate an additional variable (number of daily newspapers in a given country) to assess the level of freedom in 32 countries (no Communist-bloc nations were included) in the study. Greenberg based his scale on the government control over access to news, domestic press, and foreign press. He found a high and positive correlation between the three variables, which seemed to substantiate the findings in the Nixon study.

Kent's (1972, p. 69) empirical study uses the 'unidimensionality' of 15 variables of 23 factors used by Lowenstein Press Independence and Critical Ability (PICA) free press measurement of 94 countries to study different aspects of government pressure on the press. The 15 variables were: 1) liberal laws, 2) government control of foreign exchange or its purchase of mass media, 3) licensing, 4) advertisement dependency, 5) ownership, 6) government infringement of foreign news agencies, 7) subsidies and bribes, 8) government control of newsprint, 9) tax rate on mass media, 10) government control of domestic news agencies, 11) News favouritism, 12) banned of opposition publications, 13) prior certification & appointment, 14) government loans, and 15) government control of circulation and distribution (Kent, 1972, pp. 69-70). She concludes that all of the variables in the study are strongly related to the government pressure on the press.

Using a longitudinal study from the period between 1950 and 1979, Weaver et al.

(1985) measures the freedom of the press of 134 countries. The authors reveal that “there are different predictors of the amount of government control of the press in Third World countries than in the more developed First and Second World countries” (Weaver et al., 1985, p. 115). This study uses similar concepts over a time period of years to measure the freedom of the press that include concepts like government control of press (government restrictions for being free, partly free or not free), accountability of governors (public support and voting behaviour), stress on government (revolutions, armed attacks, demonstrations...etc), mass media development (media availability), level of education, urbanism, and availability of resources.

Van Belle (2000) claims that prior to his study there was no comprehensive data available measuring global press freedom, therefore, he uses a simple five category coding scheme to measure global freedom of the press:

0. Press nonexistent or too limited to code
1. Free: clearly free with political function
2. Imperfectly Free: political function with corruption or unofficial influence
3. Restricted: not directly controlled by the government, but no political function or debate
4. Controlled: direct control of government

Due to the freedom polarization and the significant gap between groups, categories 1 and 2 grouped as free presses, while 0, 3, and 4 grouped as a restricted/ineffective presses (Van Belle, 2000, pp. 49-50 & 138).

Gunaratne (2002) argues that all previous criteria used to measure the freedom of the press (mainly used by researchers) is not adequate because these scholars, for the most part, only dealt with the end part (the state). Gunaratne suggests that a proper study is one that measures the freedom of the press as a whole, including all related factors, and is not only limited to one factor. He asserts that more attention should be given to non-

governmental factors and influences because globalisation has dramatically changed the world since the 18<sup>th</sup> century's definition of free press, which defined the press as only print media, to an all encompassing definition that comprises media (broadcast, radio, television, and online). Instead, Gunaratne (2002, p. 364) proposes a new measurement of the freedom of the press calling it 'freedom of communication-outlets,' which includes three levels: 1) the world system, 2) the nation-state, and 3) the individual. The world system level focuses on government interference and involvement in mass media in both a commercial and a technological manner. On the other hand, the nation-state level includes the governmental and commercial pressures on media content. The third measurement of the freedom of the press involves the individual level focus on individual rights regarding the freedom of expression and opinion.

Accordingly, Merrill (2000, pp. 33-5) remarks that most freedom of the press scholars apply 'Western-style libertarian press theory' when analyzing other countries. Moreover, Merrill argues that many of these scholars build most of their assumptions on a capitalistic foundation without considering other factors such as differences in culture, values, stage of developments, and expectations of citizens which vary from one country to another. In fact, Merrill claims that many of the developing countries are not interested in the Western model of the press. Many express cautious scepticism in willingness to accept the 'Western model' for their communication systems because they do not agree with many of the prevailing values associated with this concept of free press; meanwhile, many developing countries view government interference in the media in a beneficial way; as a method to protect social stability and national development since the prevailing thought is that "social order is more important than individual pluralism" (Merrill, 2000, p. 39).

At present, four institutions currently measure the freedom of the press throughout

the world: Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), but the two former institutions are the most widely recognized (See Appendixes 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, & 2.4). Since 1979, Freedom House has been collecting data on the freedom of the press around the world. The survey instrument that Freedom House uses (Freedom House Survey) considers analytical reports of regional experts and scholars, as well as numerical ratings for 194 countries and territories on a scale of 0 to 100 (0 is the highest degree of freedom of the press, 100 is the lowest degree). Based on 23 methodology questions, the survey groups the countries into three categories: ‘Free’ scoring 0 to 30; ‘Partly Free’ scoring 31- to 60; and, ‘Not Free’ scoring 61 to 100.

Freedom House Survey uses three broad analytical areas: 1) the legal environment (laws and regulations), which is worth 30 points; 2) the political environment (political control or pressure over the content) worth 40 points; and, 3) the economic environment (structure of ownership and the effect of corruption on content) that is worth 30 points. The third analytical area raises an important question on the uncertainty of how best to distinguish between a country that has limited public television like the United States with a country like Sweden that has a successful public television and even subsidizes its daily newspapers (Becker, 2003).

Christina Holtz-Bacha (2004) argues that there is a problem with the methodology of validating the data collected on the freedom of the press, citing as evidence that no comparable data exists for all countries, language barriers, and researchers’ cultural biases. Moreover, since free press is one of the pillars of a flourishing democratic society, there must be a sustainable effort “to develop a suitable and at the same time easy to handle measure for the freedom of the press, particularly a measure that can be used for

international comparisons” (Holtz-Bacha, 2004, p. 12).

In 2002, Reporters Without Borders (*Reporters Sans Frontiers*) released its first Freedom of Press Index (FPI). By 2005, it collected index data from 167 countries by asking its partner organizations (14 freedom of expression groups from around the world) and its network of 130 correspondents, as well as journalists, researchers, legal experts and human rights activists to answer 50 questions designed to assess a country’s level of the freedom of the press (Reporters Without Borders, 2005). The perspective of the FPI is quite different from the Freedom House Survey because it relies on government and non-government attacks on journalists and media. Furthermore, it goes beyond state influence on the freedom of the press to its efforts in helping pressure groups against journalists and media organizations (Holtz-Bacha, 2004). The Reporters Without Borders Index only evaluates countries according to the achievements of their media system on a criteria that is free or less free compared to others, and then ranks them accordingly. This approach is very different from the Freedom House Survey, which groups countries into three categories. The evaluation method by the Reporters Without Borders Index “avoids the difficult and somewhat arbitrary task to decide about thresholds between free and not free and at the same time demonstrates that such boundaries cannot easily be defined” (Holtz-Bacha, 2004, p. 10).

The overview of the attempts to measure press freedom shows that there is no universal measurement of press freedom. The tools used to measure press freedom still have some limitations that affect their reliability, especially when it comes to Third World countries. Thus, there is no unified measuring tool of press freedom that can be applied for all countries. The measurements do address important issues of press freedom, but did not cover all the criteria that are related to the subject.

## **2.5 The Freedom of the Press and Kuwait:**

Kuwait is an Arab/Islamic state. For the most part, Kuwait resembles many Arab countries throughout the region in that it has shared religious, cultural, and social values. The concept of the freedom of expression in the Arab world constantly struggles with Western ideology. Western ideology seems to place a higher value on the notion that the community and political government exist to serve the satisfaction of individuals. The prevailing thought in Arab countries like Kuwait maintains that an individual's purpose in life is to serve the family, community, and the state (Nawar, May-June 2000). This difference of ideologies has encouraged wrong practices and imprudent beliefs in the values that Arabic cultures promote concerning the freedom of expression, particularly as it relates to the freedom of the press. Although the answer to fix this problem lies outside the scope of this study, it is important to note that what is needed to bridge both worlds into one is education. On this point, Nawar (May-June 2000) writes that "without educating people about their first right, the case for freedom of expression will always be lost in confusion".

William Rugh (2004) categorizes the Arab press into four systems: 1) mobilization press 2) loyalist press; 3) diverse press; and, 4) transitional press. The first Arab system of the press that Rugh observes is the mobilization press system, which is defined as when the government mobilizes the press to support its policy, like the countries of Syria, Libya and Sudan. Rugh calls the second system the loyalist press. He defines the loyalist press system as when the press remains loyal and supportive of the government regardless of its private ownership, which is the case in the governments of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, UAE, and Palestine. The next Arab system of the press is what Rugh calls the diverse press. This is when the political policy, the content, and the styles differ from one newspaper to another, reflecting a variety of views in an environment that is relatively free,

as in the case of countries like Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco, and Yemen. The final Arab system of the press that Rugh notes is the transitional system, which he defines as government control of the press. In this case, the government limits some elements of freedom and diversity by using laws to give it legal power over the press, which is the case in countries like Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Algeria.

Many Arab countries have a long and rich history of practicing censorship on traditional mass media (Boyd, 1993). Since the early development of the Arab press in the early 1950s, there have been countless examples of sensitive issues where censorship has affected and negatively interfered with the practices of journalism (Amin, 2002; Khazen, 1999). In fact, most Arab governments currently own and control the media in their countries (Al-Qarni, 2004). Yet, the technological advances of the 1990s helped to usher in the new media, which begun to change the landscape of the relationship between the government and the media. In fact, more private television stations and online newspapers are emerging, and the difference this time is that many press organizations are not under the direct control of the local government.

Many Arab countries do include in their constitutions various restricted laws that give the government the power to act against any apparent violations. Furthermore, many of these governments throughout the Arab world have penetrated all sectors of their society, and this influences practices that journalist use in dealing with sensitive issues (Amin, 2002). Arab journalists rarely take advantage of the democratic freedoms that may exist in their country, and yet they highly value the freedom of the press. However, it is important to note that Arab “[journalists] retain a pervasive fear of the political system, consequently enhancing self-censorship” (Amin, 2002, p. 130).

Gulf States (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab

Emirates) share similar traditions with the traditions of other Arab countries. Even though many Gulf States are ruled by monarchies, each country varies with regard to the levels of the strictness of their political systems<sup>20</sup>. It is a well-known fact that many of the Gulf States are interrelated with other Gulf States, which means that the political, economic, social, cultural, and educational systems and institutions in one Gulf State will have an affect on others. For example, the adoption of the democratic political system in Kuwait during the 1970s indirectly affected other Gulf States in adopting a similar system, and the economic adaptation in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar is currently encouraging other states to follow their lead.

Although private media in these Gulf Countries enjoy high budgets and the state-of-the-art technology, they confront varying restrictions on their reporting. Government censorship, self-censorship, and fear of government reprisals, prevent most media from criticizing state policies or crossing the ‘red lines’. Criticizing members of the ruling family, scrutinizing Islam, or publishing information related to the national security are considered ‘red lines’ standards that should not be addressed on the local press. In recent years, however, some citizens of the Gulf States have increasingly enjoyed access to other alternative news and information sources. For instance, advances in technologies like satellite television and the Internet are starting to challenge government influence and control over both the content and the delivery of the media in such a way that previous methods of control are now becoming obsolete. More to the point, these new technologies are beginning to defy many of the institutions of these societies.

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<sup>20</sup> Many Gulf States are moving toward democratizing their political system while keeping the form of government unchanged such as Kingdom and Sheikdom.

Local media, especially members of the press, are often victims of government restraints, but satellite stations are currently experiencing higher levels of freedom. The level of freedom varies from one Gulf State to another. In Saudi Arabia for instance, the largest and most influential member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), is one of the most politically closed societies in the region. Not surprisingly, the local press is uncritically supportive of the regime and its policies. In its 2006 Annual Report, Reporters Without Borders described the freedom of the press in Saudi Arabia as one of the “harshest”. Simply put, Saudi Arabia’s ruling family has a tight control over the media. The country of Oman is also criticized by many international organizations in that it restricts free speech and assembly. In 2007, Reporters Without Borders reported that self-censorship is still an accepted practice in Bahrain where it is considered the best way to prevent government action. The UAE and Qatar allow higher levels of press freedom in the Gulf States region, but fall behind Kuwait when it comes to newspapers, which frequently and aggressively cover local political affairs and the government. Self-censorship persists on matters pertaining to the Emir and high-ranking members of the Royal Family in Kuwait. Censorship of Internet remains an important issue in many of the Gulf States, although not all countries exercise it to the same degree. This is illustrated by the fact that various controlling methods are used—filtering and banning of certain sites that are deemed inappropriate for moral or political reasons by the governments of many Gulf States is still an accepted common practice (See Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Comparison of Gulf States' Freedom of Press**

Country	Political System	Freedom of press		Newspapers
		FH* 2008	RWB* 2008	
Bahrain	Constitutional Monarchy	Not Free (71)	96	9
Kuwait	Constitutional Emirates	Partly Free (54)	61	15
Oman	Monarchy	Not Free (71)	123	4
Qatar	Emirate	Not Free (64)	74	5
Saudi Arabia	Monarchy	Not Free (81)	161	13
UAE	Federation	Not Free (68)	69	11

\*FH = Freedom House; RWB = Reporters Without Borders

According to the above Table, Kuwait practices civic and political freedom, but it is not fully democratic. Currently Kuwait is ruled by an Emir, who is the Head of State, as deemed in the 1962 Constitution, which also calls for free direct election of the National Assembly (*Majlis Al-Ummah*). Among the many powers of the head of the state, the Emir has the power to dissolve, amend and/or uphold the law, with all laws being approved by the Parliament. In Kuwait, the freedom of speech and press is directly related to the existence of the National Assembly. In fact, every time the National Assembly is dissolved, freedom of speech is controlled and the press is censored (Jurdi and Dashti, 1994).

### **2.5.1 The History of the Press in Kuwait:**

The freedom of the press has an extensive history in Kuwait, which dates back to 1956 when systemic press arose. Prior to 1956<sup>21</sup>, for all intense and purposes, the freedom of the press in Kuwait was not recognizable in the country and publications were opened to anyone as long as they were not offensive to the government. Before this, the first Kuwaiti magazine called *Mujallat Alkuwait (Kuwait Magazine)* was printed in 1928 in Egypt but was stopped abruptly after two years (Jurdi and Dashti, 1994). Afterwards, the next crucial

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<sup>21</sup> The Press Law of 1956 included 35 articles regulating the press and was only practiced for a short period before it was replaced with a more accurate and specific law in 1961.

moment in the history of the freedom of the press occurred in 1946, when Kuwaiti students in Egypt published a magazine called *AlBe'thah*. This was later followed by introduction of the first monthly magazine called *Kathmah* in 1948, which was published in Kuwait, and specialized in literature and coincided, with the establishment of the country's first Printing Office. Between the years of 1950 and 1959, there were about 20 publications in Kuwait, but most of them did not survive, citing financial and technological difficulties as well as the lack of intellectuals (AlShanoofi, 1999; Almashikhi, 2008). In 1956, the Government Printing Press opened and with it came the introduction and implementation of new press laws in Kuwait. The new press laws helped create an opinionated press, which fostered an environment that led to the appearance of more newspapers in the marketplace.

By 1961, *Al-Rai Al-Aam*<sup>22</sup> the first Kuwaiti weekly newspaper was established and printed in Beirut. One year later, *Al-Taleea* the first opposition weekly magazine established; later it switched to weekly newspaper. Five years later in 1967, *Al-Nahda*, a social magazine began publishing in Kuwait. One year later, in Kuwait the second newspaper, *Alseyassah* was launched. By the 1970s, Kuwaiti readers could chose to read from an even greater number of local daily newspapers including *Alqabas*<sup>23</sup> in 1972, *Alwatan*<sup>24</sup> in 1974, and *Alanba*<sup>25</sup> in 1976. The newspaper offerings did not end there, because in 1961 the *Kuwait Times*<sup>26</sup> and in 1977 the *Arab Times*<sup>27</sup> (English newspapers)

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<sup>22</sup> Due to a legal dispute with the previous owner, the name of the paper switched to *Alrai* after receiving a new license in 2006 as a result of the new press law.

<sup>23</sup> *Alqabas* is the last daily newspaper that received a license.

<sup>24</sup> *Alwatan* started weekly in 1962 and became daily in January 1974.

<sup>25</sup> In 1962, a daily political newspaper called *Akhbar Al-Kuwait* (Kuwait News) established but stopped in 1975, and its ownership switched over to *Alanba*.

<sup>26</sup> *Kuwait Times* is the first English newspaper in the Gulf region.

<sup>27</sup> *Arab Times* is part of *Alseyassah* newspaper.

were introduced and are still in print today. The remarkable thing to note here is that each of these newspapers are individually owned and operated. In 1976, the news had moved from local markets to the world market and the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) was established to gather news and disseminate information about Kuwait to an international audience.

### **2.5.2 The Press & Publishing Laws:**

When Kuwait achieved its independence in 1961, the new Constitution provided two articles that specifically sought to protect freedom of expression and freedom of the press (Article 36 & 37). Under Kuwait's 1961 Press and Publications Law, newspapers can be suspended and journalists jailed for publishing material or content that makes blasphemous suggestions concerning 'God (Allah), the Prophet, his Companions, and the Quran,' criticizing the Emir's self-identity, the secret government, and disseminating any information that may be construed to inflict harm on the economy, violate the country's ethical code, or encourage criminal behavior. Otherwise, the press is free for the most part to publish what it wants, but only in accordance with the stipulations articulated in the Law, which states that "Freedom of printing, writing and publishing is guaranteed within the limits of this law" (Press and Publication Law, 1961). The Press Law remained active for more than 45 years. Because the law was passed in the same year the constitution put in practiced, many clashes and controversial points arose between the two.

Article 35 of the 1961 Press and Publication Law gives the Kuwaiti Government the authority to suspend any print publication or cancel a newspaper's license if it is found serving a foreign entity that acts against the country's national interest, and/or if it is found that a newspaper switches from a non-political to a political publication (Abdullah, 1985).

In accordance to the 1961 Law, the Kuwaiti Government limited licenses to only the established five local owners. Since then, it has refused to grant new licenses for new daily newspapers. As a result, these same five families have monopolized the press market. By 2006, however, the new Press and Publication Law of 2006 removed this restriction and the market opened, fostering an environment that allowed for the entry of new newspapers.

The Kuwaiti Government, together with the approval of the National Assembly in March of 2006, passed a new press law containing some 33 Articles with four key changes. Unlike the previous 1961 Law, the new law gives the party that is denied license the right to appeal in court. In addition, a prior judge order is required to cancel a license, to suspend a newspaper, or to detain a journalist. As such, the freedom of the press as it appears in Kuwait is considered by many scholars throughout the world to be one of the freest in the Arab world, but this did not occur in a vacuum. It was due in large part by the progressive orientation of the Kuwaiti Government's laws and regulations. Today Kuwait has eight new daily newspapers,<sup>28</sup> which is substantially more than the previous five Arabic and two English newspapers. In January of 2007, the *Alam Alyawm* was published and was followed by the publication of the newspaper entitled *Alwasat*. One month after the publication of *Alwasat*, the newspaper, *Aljarida* entered the market in the same year. Three months later, *Annahar* (9/2007), *Awan* (9/2007), and *Alshahed* (9/2007) launched as newspaper publications. *Arrouiah* (2008) became the twelfth daily newspaper in Kuwait followed by *Assabah*, and *Addar*. In October 2008, *Assawt* became the fifteenth newspaper in Kuwait. As stated earlier, the increase number of newspapers is a result of the Kuwaiti

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<sup>28</sup> The number of daily newspapers is expected to rise in 2008 since there have been 110 requests for applications for new publications since 2006.

Government's new laws as well as the need for different views and information regarding the events in Kuwait. Thus, these new newspapers have attracted famous columnists and new writers to join them by either promising them more freedom to write or offering them good rewards. Because of these and other successes, the Freedom House organization in 2008 categorized the freedom of the press in Kuwait as 'partly free',<sup>29</sup> and in 2008, Reporters Without Borders ranks Kuwait first in the Arab world scoring 61 regarding the freedom of the press, ahead of countries like the UAE (69<sup>th</sup>) and Qatar (74<sup>th</sup>).

## **2.6 Conclusion:**

This chapter explored the issues related to the freedom of the press. It explained the concept, the importance, the definition, the theories, and the measurements of the freedom of the press. It also explored freedom of the press from Arab perspective, focusing on Kuwait as a case study. The main point raised in this chapter was the role played by freedom of the press to enhance democracy and its universality. However, the universality of the press freedom is affected by other factors since each country has its own social, culture, religion and values that needed to be considered in order to measure its level.

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<sup>29</sup> Kuwait is the only country among the Gulf States categorized as partly free with the following scores: Legal Environment: 18, Political Environment: 21, Economic Environment: 15, and a total score of 54.

## Chapter Three: Online Journalism

### 3.1 Introduction:

During the mid 1990s, online journalism became feasible with the creation of the World Wide Web. The previous establishment of a global communication networking and infrastructure, as well as the introduction of the personal computer in homes throughout the world, helped to popularize the Internet and made it easy to use globally (Curran and Seaton, 2003). Today, all print and broadcast news media have made the transition to cyberspace and this attraction of online users requiring news has created online journalism (Dimitrova and Neznanski, 2006). Online journalism is one the outcomes of the Internet revolution. It is estimated that everyday millions of online users read their daily news on the Internet (Salwen et al., 2005). Since the 1990s, free and open access to the Internet by the public has affected every social, political, economic, cultural, psychological, religious, and philosophical realms of society. This chapter focuses on online journalism and its effect on local press freedom in Kuwait. Before discussing the nature of online journalism, it is important to focus on the Internet and freedom in order to understand how the Internet influences online journalism and the freedom of the press. In addition, this chapter seeks to address some of the major issues surrounding online journalism, such as history, characteristics, advantages, limitations, types, norms, and practices of online journalism with an emphasis on Kuwait as a case study.

### **3.2 The Internet and Freedom:**

In democratic societies, the mass media is a forum for free expression; one in which individuals are free to exchange arguments and/or ideas with access to all alternative views (Voltmer, 2006). Currently, it has become a public forum (public sphere) in cyberspace<sup>30</sup> for democratic and non-democratic societies alike. In political communication systems, the political and the media institutions mutually interact with each other in an effort to gain their power base in society (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995). Political institutions gain their power from their ability to mobilize social power. Media on the other hand, derives its power from three sources: 1) structural, 2) psychological, and 3) normative. Structural power rises from the media's ability to deliver. Psychological power arises from credibility and trust that the media develops among its audience. Normative power comes from the combination of structural & psychological powers to give media the ability to interject between the world of the politician and the audience, essentially giving the media the ability to directly intervene in the political process (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995).

Since the invention of the Internet in the late 1960s in the United States, the Internet was strictly used for military and government purposes in the exchange of scientific data between scientists (Jenkins and Thorburn, 2003). But by the 1990s, it became as a popular means of communication worldwide with more and more people connecting to the World Wide Web. Not only is the Internet considered a tool of communication, but it has also

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<sup>30</sup> Cyberspace is “The universe of information that is available from computer networks and the society connected with them”, RONY, E. & RONY, P. (1998) *The Domain Name Handbook: High Stakes and Strategies in Cyberspace* Lawrence, Kansas, R&D Books: , <http://www.domainhandbook.com/gloss.html>

exceeded the stature that the telephone and television once held as the technology that has 'revolutionize[d] political activity (Federman, 2004). The decentralized physical structure, limited state control, and interactivity makes the Internet one of the fastest mediums in terms of responsiveness; readers can easily and freely create their 'own' content on any subject and access information at any time (Thornton, 2002, pp. 36-38). The rapid volume of data, information, and news on the Internet has created many challenges for governments as it relates to their attempts to control access on cyberspace (Domingo, 2006). Political institutions throughout the world have attempted to use ancient methods of censorship, but have yet to adapt to and cope with the Internet. In illustrating this point, Leonard Sussman (2000) notes that millions of bits of data travel on cyberspace each day that originate in different countries, which make it difficult for political institutions to control.

In fact, the emergence of the Internet has actually brought a fresh air of freedom. As a new medium, the Internet was considered as a threat to the political elites and to the morals of society (Chalaby, 2000). Democratic and undemocratic political institutions are not concerned about the political opposition, nor are they considered requirements of emergency surveillance, but the concern is from the dissemination of specific information that could be vital to a country's security and defence technologies (Steele and Stein, 2002). Censorship's proponents usually utilize at least four methods to restrict the freedom of expression: through legal methods using legislation that restrict writing, publishing, and disseminating of information; through administrative methods using the implementation of licensing requirements; through violent methods using physical torture, psychological intimidation, kidnapping, and imprisonment; and through economic methods using enhanced taxes (Chalaby, 2000, p. 21). Likewise, proponents of censorship typically point to the following arguments when evoking censorship: protection of the national security,

protection of the culture, and protection of economic trade advantage (Pool, 1983).

Sussman (2000, p. 542) claims that political institutions (governments) mask the Internet censorship through licensing and regulations, applying current print and broadcast laws to the Internet, controlling servers to filter the contents, and censoring electronic content that is considered unacceptable after dissemination. Another way that governments can control the Internet is monitoring the Internet Service Provider (ISP) to ensure that individuals and organizations are not violating the license agreements (Gordon, 2001). Furthermore, Braman & Roberts (2003) note that ISP contracts are purposefully written in a manner that is broad, vague, and ambiguous, in order to restrict forms of speech. In 2000, the United Kingdom adopted a new law called the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000), which gives the security services and the police in Britain the power to read individuals' e-mails and monitor the Internet traffics using surveillance systems attached to the Internet providers (Herbert, 2001). In addition, political institutions can also control, monitor, and censor the flow of data from companies that control the broadband industry such as cable or phone companies (Gillmor, 2004). Lessig (1999) argues in favour of using an 'architecture code,' which sets the parameters and defines the terms of using the cyberspace, since this code will prevent the Internet from becoming a tool of control and reaffirm to the freedom of cyberspace. He equates architecture control to 'invisible hands' that are free to control the content and delivery of information in cyberspace. For Lessig, an architecture code is the equivalent of a constitution for cyberspace that defines and determines who and how one should access the Internet; sets the rules; and controls user behaviors, but more importantly, it can protect individual freedom.

According to Lin and Ainouye (31/3/2001), universal access to the Internet is required to have broad participation. Access is not the only means of political control,

there are other factors that affect access to information such as usability, language, user friendliness, usage inequality, differentiating abilities, and the lack of basic skills (Boudourides, 2001). Keller (1995, p. 35) expands the definition of public access to comprise that which is greater than physical connections. He writes, that public access is “easy to use, affordable, and provide[s] access to a minimum set of information resources”. Gurstein (2001) argues that access is not only having the means to use the computer, but also, it means being able to use the Internet or ICT (Information Communication Technology) for two-way communications. The cost of the Internet, the overload of information, and the usage inequalities of the Internet also can hinder the effect that the Internet can have on politics (Ferdinand, 2000). Lievrouw (2004, p. 276) explains that there is a difference between information access and media access and defines the latter as “a multifaceted and rich phenomenon” that is more complex than information access; a distinction should be made between *access to* (technological access) and *use of* (content access).

### **3.2.1 Digital Democracy:**

In 1994, then Vice President of the United States, Al Gore helped to shed light on the importance of Information Technology in a free society. In his speech to the International Telecommunications Union in Argentina, he explained how new technologies will encourage and spread freedom throughout the world (AlGore, 1994). In this speech, Gore defines information technology, Global Information Infrastructure and the Information Superhighways beyond traditional means of communication. He argued that these technologies are instruments that create free democratic nations in the world. In this

sense, new technologies have led to a new concept known as ‘digital democracy’. Kenneth L. Hacker and Jan van Dijk (2000, p. 1) define digital democracy as:

A collection of attempts to practice democracy without the limits of time, space and other physical conditions, using ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) or CMC (Computer Mediated Communications) instead, as an addition, not a replacement for traditional ‘analogue’ political practices.

Catherine Frost (2006) argues that the Internet has the power to enhance democracy, encourage social engagement, and promote moral reform, but cites that the government and the majority of users are not seriously committed to this effort. Sara Bentivegna (2002, p. 59) claims that the Internet offers a ‘new model of democracy’ that is different from the main principles of global democracy, but argues that this will not happen if the navigators of the Internet will not allow it.

Several factors can make the Internet an effective tool for encouraging, promoting, and sustaining democracy. The first characteristic of the Internet that can encourage the development of democratic institutions is that the Internet is interactive in nature. Interactivity is the relationship between the end-user(s) and the gatekeeper(s) that maintain the supply of communication; to be active means to be able to participate, to gather, and to process information in a way that influences unjust decisions. A second factor that makes the Internet a tool for encouraging democracy is its vertical and horizontal communication facility; co-presence of vertical and horizontal communication is the relationship between the sender and the receiver. Vertical communication, which is mainly used in traditional media, is when the government (as a sender) constructs the communication flow to its citizens (as a receiver). While horizontal communication means equality among citizens in an interactive discussion group. Another factor that makes the Internet an effective tool for democracy building is a trait called disintermediation. Disintermediation is the process of

eradicating the storyteller in traditional media settings and gives power to journalists who have the access over all kinds of information (Bentivegna, 2002). In the process called Web surfing, the Internet users can have direct involvement in accessing the information that challenges a journalist's monopoly. Cost is another important characteristic of the Internet that is responsible for developing democratic institutions. In this context, the low cost of the Internet encourages small groups to access the Internet and to be part of the cyberspace. The Internet has the advantage over traditional media in its diversification and rapid delivery of the message for different users. Lastly, the Internet is borderless. The borderless nature of the Internet helps to infuse and circulate opinions, ideas, experiences, and arguments (Bentivegna, 2002).

According to Hill and Sen (2000), the Internet was a vital 'instrument' in overthrowing the Suharto regime in Indonesia among resistant groups that used the Internet to communicate with each other. Furthermore, the authors argue that the Internet successfully minimized and marginalized state censorship because people relied on the Internet for information and political discussion since they were sceptical about the traditional media. As illustrated above, the Internet can serve as a forum that offers real-time news, brings together participants, provides an opportunity to share different views from around the world, and challenges political institutions' control during instances of political upheaval (Ferdinand, 2000). Hill and Sen (2000, p. 133) argue that we should not rely only on the technological networks to achieve the development and goals of democracy, as the case of Indonesia, but they argue that there must be a "continued and conscious commitment from the participants to maintain an autonomy from the state, and capital," because, as they claim, "technology alone will not secure such a public space".

Hacker (2002) argues that an online chatting, debating, and interacting by

communicating via the Internet is not enough alone to sufficiently strengthen a weak democracy. However, Hacker is convinced that the involvement of a systematic power of both online and offline is essential in influencing political decision-making. In fact, Curran and Seaton (2003) assert that the offline community is strongly shaping the online world by limiting the power that affects the Internet. They write, “the virtual world is not ‘determined’ by its technology, and ‘programmed’ to promote progressive change” (Curran and Seaton, 2003, p. 264).

Most authoritarian or semi-authoritarian governments fear the emergence of the Internet technology because they argue it threatens their control and power. In 2001, for example, the Taliban Government in Afghanistan banned the Internet because it feared this mainstay of democratic practice would develop an atmosphere that is conducive to the freedom of expression, which started to become a concern for other nations across the Middle Eastern region (Simon et al., 2002). According to the position of Simon et al., this fear created a contradictory perception among those countries who sought to foster and take advantage of electronic commerce and also wanted to limit and censor electronic freedoms (Simon, 2001).

Kalathil and Boas (2003) assert that over enthusiasm exists regarding the impact of the Internet on the authoritarian regimes to move toward democracy. In this systematic study of eight semi-authoritarian and authoritarian countries, the authors found that the Internet does have an impact, but it is not considered a threat to the undemocratic governments. In fact, the authoritarian governments in the study took advantage of the new technology of the Internet to strengthen their power (Kalathil and Boas, 2003). According to Manuel Castells (2001), the island nation of Singapore fully adopted the technological modernization, but as of today is one of the most sophisticated authoritarian systems of

government. Currently, Singapore is confronting a serious dilemma. On the one hand, the government is in the process of reshaping its economical and educational systems in an effort that provides Internet access with less restrictions, while concurrently maintaining its control over the flow of information of its society (Keohane and Nye Jr., 2002). In fact, many authoritarian countries in Asia are using Singapore as the role model for Internet control (Rodan, 1998). Castells (2001) adds that the Internet is not a substitute for social change and political reform, but admits that the Internet can function as a forum for expression of citizen rights as well as an effective communicative tool for the transmission of human values. Castells (2001, p. 164) writes that “the Internet is not an instrument of freedom, nor is it the weapon of one-sided domination”.

### **3.2.2 The Public Sphere:**

The ‘public sphere’ in cyberspace is an electronic environment where private individuals can meet through the net to engage in debate regarding general issues. Put simply, it is the ‘constellation of communicative spaces’ that allow information, ideas, opinions, and debates to circulate freely, which serves to shape and form public opinion (Dahlgren, 2005). According to Habermas’ study of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the ‘public sphere’ arose when people would gather in coffee houses, salons, or societies to exchange ideas. In addition, these occasions became places where public opinions formed on a number of important topics. Likewise, this led to the development of a set of rules that excluded the promotion and expression of emotions in both action and language, but did encourage rational content and delivery equally among participants (Habermas, 1996; Thornton, 2002, p. 8). The public sphere is neither an institution, nor organization, nor a framework. Instead, Habermas describes it as “a network for communicating information

and points of view”, which encourages a democratic value of detecting and identifying problems that furnish them with possible solutions, and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes” (Habermas, 1996, pp. 359-360).

A prerequisite for the creation of the public sphere is that there must be an actual forum where participants (speakers & listeners) can freely express their views, ideas, and opinions in a face-to-face interaction such as in a coffee shop, salon, town meeting and union hall. Secondly, there must be mutual commitments for equal and free interactions between the participants without any one participant possessing or exercising control over another. As a result of face-to-face communication, another feature of the public sphere rises to correct the limitation of this open-ended interaction, which “requires technologies and institutions to secure its continued existence and regularize opportunities and access to it” (Bohman, 2004, p. 134). However, Poster (1997) points out that the question of democracy should be reconsidered because face-to-face communication in the public sphere no longer exists and proposes that new electronic mediation has taken its place instead. Peter Dahlgren (2005, pp. 148-149) conceptualizes the public sphere into three dimensions: 1) structures, 2) representation, and 3) interaction. According to Dahlgren (2005), the structure of the public sphere involves the formal institutional features like ownership, control, regulation, and political economy. The structures of the Internet are the legal, social, economic, cultural, technical, as well as Web-architectural features that comprise the public sphere. The representation of the public sphere refers to the media output that includes fairness, accuracy, agenda setting, completeness, and a pluralism of views. The final dimension of the public sphere that Dahlgren discusses is interaction between citizens’ encounters with the media and the interactions between themselves.

However, Dahlgren (2005) notes that political interactions (democratic deliberation) on the Internet remain minimal compared with other uses such as consumerism, entertainment, chatting, and non-political networking. He writes:

The argument is that the Internet has not made much of a difference in the ideological political landscape, it has not helped mobilize more citizens to participate, nor has it altered the ways that politics gets done (Dahlgren, 2005, p. 154).

Brian McNair (2006) argues that the prevailing question concerning the public sphere is the following question: “Is there a global public sphere?”. McNair (2006, p. 152) claims that this question should be refined to encompass the changing needs of the time to “what kind of public sphere is emerging at the global level?”. In other words, he explains that in order for public sphere to globalize, the national, trans-national, and global tiers must be interconnected and interact with one another through common, accessible global media networks because this kind of public sphere is crucial in the development and rise of democratic political culture (McNair, 2006, p. 152).

On the other hand, John Keane (1995) explains that there are three kinds of public spheres: micro-public sphere, the meso-public sphere, and the macro-public sphere. For Keane, the micro-public sphere is a bottom-up-scale with locality featuring all social movements. The meso-public sphere is mainly co-extensive with the government, but it may overpass to its neighbouring viewers. It is mediated either by large print circulation or electronic media, which targets particular national and/or regional language grouping. The third public sphere for Keane is the macro-public sphere. The macro-public sphere is when the sphere of globalized media affects the government and economic growth.

The public sphere is defined in relation to mass media because each have forums that allow different opinions to exist (Bentivegna, 2002). Citizens that engage in

discussions must have equal opportunities to participate in order for public sphere to have the potential for e-democracy. Bentivegna admits that this cannot be achieved since there is still limited access for many citizens in different countries (Bentivegna, 2002). So far, the governments of many countries are unwilling to censor the formation of the public sphere in cyberspace, but other private corporations such as market groups are increasingly gaining control of the structure of these public forums. In fact, actions to control or band sites on the Internet from well-known democratic governments have recently raised some concerns regarding the Internet's potential to reinvigorate the public sphere (Thornton, 2002, pp. 12-13). For example, a French court asked the Yahoo Corporation to band posting of Nazi-related, Klu Klux Klan, and other racist materials in an effort to monitor and to crack down on online materials related to terrorism. The U.S. Justice Department asked the Internet search giant Google to turn over search records in an effort to enforce a child pornography law (Hafner and Richtel, 20/1/2006). Today, more and more filtering software and hardware devices are being obtained by many countries to filter the Internet (Thornton, 2002; Barber, 1998-99).

### **3.3 Online Journalism:**

The invention of the Internet advances two new communication models and builds upon two previous paradigms. Previous modes of communication have been interpersonal communication, which is 'one-to-one' or face-to-face modes of communicating like telephone calls, e-mails, or letters. The second mode of communicating is the 'one-to-many' mode that refers to the traditional mass media model of communication. The latest communication models are 'many-to-one' and the 'many-to-many'. The many-to-one communication model refers to an individual retrieval of a large database that is provided in

combination with the computer, the database, and the Internet. On the other hand, the ‘many-to-many’ communication model allows information to be received and accessed by a mass audience (Burnett and Marshall, 2003, p. 47).

Mark Deuze (2003, p. 206) defines online journalism “as journalism [that] is produced more or less exclusively for the World Wide Web”. For the purposes of this study, online journalism includes personal online writers, weblogs and forums.

### **3.4 Characteristics and Advantages of Online Journalism:**

Originally, the Internet functioned for the purposes of information sharing like file transfers, sending and receiving bits of information and text discussion groups. But since the emergence of the Internet, no one could have predicted that the Internet as we know and understand it today would generate a ‘public arena’ with multimedia utilities and simple access (Campbell, 2004, p. 250). Some scholars argue that the Internet has transcended television and news publications in its particular ability to affect mass behaviour (medium & users) (Webster and Lin, 2002). In fact some view the Internet as a direct threat to television, due to its unlimited space and unique combination of print, visuals, and sound (Reddick and King, 2001).

Online journalism retains similar values of traditional journalism, nevertheless it has some distinctive differences. Perhaps the most important characteristics of online newspapers that distinguish it from traditional newspaper publications are: 1) multimedia (using text, illustrations, sound, and moving images in news), 2) interactivity (interaction between the communicator and the user), 3) Hypertext (linking news with other information), and 4) immediacy (24 hours update) (Ward, 2002; Beyers, 2005, p. 349; Deuze, 2003).

1. **Multimedia:** Multimedia is another essential element of online journalism. The merger between older media organizations and newer media companies helps to provide online news that is complete with graphics, photographs, animations, audio streams, and video footage (Wendland, 2002; Deuze, 2003). Advances in digital technology reduce all multimedia formats (video, audio, text, graphics and pictures) so that it may complement online journalism production. Online journalism can be easily sorted, retrieved, edited, reshaped and distributed (Domingo, 2006).

2. **Interactivity:** The availability of interactivity and feedback distinguish local media from online news media because it gives users the freedom to switch from one part of a story to another while accessing information on another Web page (Dimitrova and Neznanski, 2006). Interactivity gives the user the chance, not only to receive the information, but also the opportunity to disseminate it (Kopper et al., 2000). Deuze (2003, p. 214) divides the interactivity of online journalism into three categories: a) navigational interactivity, which is when a user navigates through content in a structured way (i.e., back to top or next page); b) functional interactivity is when users interact with other users and news outlets through discussion and e-mail; and, c) adaptive interactivity, which allows the user to customize the site's content to reflect the preferences of the user. Part of interpersonal communication, users interact through one-to-one and many-to-many using e-mails, Web forums, chats or instant messaging (Domingo, 2006). The users will be more involved with the site if there are more opportunities for interactions (Shyam, 2000).

3. **Hypertext:** It became one of the characteristics of online news providing multiple perspectives of facts and events. It is a non-linear structure of the Internet that gave the user the space to navigate news Web sites and the ability to connect to related articles within and outside the Web site; it presents a complex social realities that cannot be done in

the inverted pyramid (Domingo, 2006). Hypertext gives online news an endless space to write information that is both open and conducive to real-time updates and direct access to related documents.

4. **Immediacy**: It is one of the main defining features of online journalism that separates online news from traditional news. Stovall (2004, pp. 8-9) asserts there are four ways that online news surpasses traditional news media in terms of immediacy. First, online news has *variety*. Stovall defines online news variety as the power to address various related issues of breaking news at one time. *Expansion* is the second way that online news exceeds traditional news mediums. Expansion is the ability of online news to hold and display old and new information of an event as it develops. *Quality*, another way that online news is better than traditional news mediums, is defined as easily and immediately correcting mistakes as they are when posted. Finally, Stovall argues that online news has *context*. He defines context as the immediacy of portraying a full picture of an event that places it within a background and perspective.

Besides the entertainment appeal of the Internet, its popularity has risen because it is free and easy to use and interface, it allows the transmission of huge amounts of qualitative and quantitative information, it is efficient and effective, and it facilitates the tools for all kinds of businesses and organizations (Reddick and King, 2001, p. 37). The Internet's ease of use and interactive communicative capabilities has forced many traditional print media to convert previous information and repackage it to coincide with the online offerings, which has resulted in the decline of newspapers (Herbert, 2001). Newspaper production moved from simple repackaging to offerings that are more complicated. The feature that helped to usher this transition was the development of the 'matrix', which is the style used with various hyperlinks layers for each story to be a

“comprehensible on its own terms to have value to the user and to allow them to construct the new account in whatever way they chose” (Campbell, 2004, p. 251). Besides providing news and comments, online journalism is a medium that directs readers toward information (Hill, 2001). In addition, online journalism is a forum for ‘many-to-many’ communications with a potential to enhance and maintain democracy (Ye and LI, 2006).

Traditional media mainly uses ‘push’ strategies to direct the audiences toward specific content and even to deliver news directly to users mobile telephones, while online journalism uses the ‘pull’ strategy, which provide the users a search engine for news to be *pulled* (Campbell, 2004, p. 252). Other advantages that online newspapers have over traditional newspapers is that it is pollution free (no printing and deliver process) and that it eliminates geographical boundaries (Pack, 1993).

Another important advantage that online newspapers have over print media is the Internet monitoring technology that is used to track user behaviour, which provides the editors and managers of online newspapers an immediate statistical feedback of the most read stories to enable them select news stories that most interest to their readers (Mensing and Greer, 2006). Furthermore, the flexibility that online newspaper have can help traditional newspapers maintain their role as a cultural ‘standard-bearers’ for the community through online versions. For example, this is the case in some communities where online newspapers can assist disadvantaged groups like the elderly, disabled, or those individuals that are geographically isolated in society because it provides a sense of connection between the these individuals and the communities (Hofstetter, 1998, p. 1231).

### **3.5 Types of Online Journalism:**

Mark Deuze (2003, pp. 208-211) categorizes online journalism into four common

types: 1) mainstream news sites (i.e., CNN & BBC), 2) index & category (search engines) sites (i.e., Google, MSN, & Yahoo), 3) meta & comment sites (i.e., media watchdogs), and, 4) discussion and sharing sites (i.e., weblogs and forums) that operate in the context of hypertextuality, multimediality, and interactivity.

1. **Mainstream News Sites:** These sites are the most popular type of online journalism and offer editorial content and participatory (filtered or moderated) communication. The content of this type of news site originates from television stations like CNN or the BBC, from the Internet, or shovelled from an external source or link. Most online newspapers and *Net-native* news sources originated from this type and they use similar approaches that are used in print or broadcasting journalism such as journalistic storytelling, news values, and the relationship it has with audiences.

2. **Index and Category Sites:** This type of online journalism is mainly associated to search engines (i.e., Yahoo and Google) offering news from existing services and linking to mainstream news without offering editorial content of their own.

3. **Meta and Comment Sites:** This category includes sites that deal with general issues related to media, work as media watchdogs (i.e., Freedom Forum and Poynter's Media News), and are intended to be alternative media voices for extended indexes and category sites. Various journalists produce the editorial content for these sites and often facilitate discussions regarding content produced elsewhere on the Internet. Meta and comment sites also direct readers that may be outside the providers of mainstream news to participate by giving these readers a chance to tell their own stories.

4. **Share and Discussion Sites:** Utilizing the communication feature of the Internet, these sites provide users a forum to exchange ideas on a diverse range of local and global subjects. The users have a chance to share their own experiences with others.

### **3.6 Online Newspapers:**

Versions of electronic newspapers were first established in the 1980s in videotext format (Garrison, 2005). At that time, Gopher networks were the most popular sites for news before the mainstream emergence of the Internet. The first Internet newspaper is credited as being *Palo Alto Weekly* in California (Garrison, 2005), and later in 1992, the *Chicago Tribune* became the first print newspaper to make the transition from print to an online format. During the period between 1994 and 1995, there was substantial growth of print newspapers transitioning to online formats (Sparks, 2000). In fact, many American print newspapers rapidly moved online because of their fear of losing existing readers, losing classified ad revenues, and being left behind in the marketplace to competitors (Singer, 1999). The view that the Internet is an effective and efficient vessel for the delivery of news was evident in the tragedy that occurred in 1995 in Oklahoma City in the U.S. During the bombing all information with updated news regarding this incident was rapidly disseminated by using the Internet on a scale that no previous news provider ever utilized (Hill, 2001). In 1994, there were 78 online newspapers and by 1995, this number increased to reach 855 (Deuze, 1999). In March 1998, the online newspapers in the U.S. rapidly grew, reaching 1,290, with many still existing online today (Li, 2006). In 1997, not many U.K. national newspapers' newsrooms were connected to the Internet, but today one would be hard pressed to not find a computer connected to the Internet for the purposes of news gathering (Herbert, 2001). In 1994, the *British Daily Telegraph* made its first online

launch as the first online news site in Europe, which was shortly followed by *The Scotsman Online* in 1996 in Scotland, as the most visited Scottish Web site with 1.35 million page views per month with 65% of its readers from the U.S. and Canada (Deuze, 1999, p. 376). Credibility is another important factor that attracts online readers, and news sites associated with either local newspaper or television networks are perceived as more credible and believable than newspapers that only have Web sites (Ognianova, August 1998).

Boczkowski (2004, p 51) argues that three kinds of information practices were embraced by online newspaper practices. The first information practice that online newspapers used was identical content developed for print editions (i.e., repurposing and shovelware). The second information practice that online newspapers used was recombined print information with online information while coincidentally adding new databases and technical functionalities like recombination. Boczkowski argues that the third information practice that online newspapers incorporated was creating regular content with constant updates to news, multimedia packages of major events, special Internet sections, and user-authored content (i.e., daily making). The Internet multiplicity of information practices led to what became known as “hedging”, which is the practice where newspapers react to uncertain and changing environmental events by moving in many directions so that the risk is diversified and widely spread (Boczkowski, 2004).

Salwen (2005, p. 47) asserts that it is not an easy task for online news sites to obtain legitimacy and to be able to publish original news stories because “it would require commitment and some faith” on the part of the public. He adds that this kind of news site would require independent, competitive editorial staffs with a separate budget and since most online news sites are free to readers, this type of news site may threaten the marketplace of offline print version.

Campbell (2004) argues that the online content of online newspaper has come to the attention of policymakers, which are considering adopting new legislation, which could be similar to the laws used for traditional print media that may prevent indecent, and defamatory information from being disseminated in cyberspace. However, this may still not be applicable, because what is accepted and forbidden in domestic media cannot always be applied to other countries. In fact, the online content of newspapers that is prohibited locally in one country can be viewed on an Internet-version (Campbell, 2004).

The rising costs associated with establishing local press printing operations and the obligatory government licensing permits in various countries as well as economic and market forces of supply and demand have encouraged individuals and small organizations to venture online to establish their own online newspapers that have substantially lower costs (Saleh, 2007). The Internet fostered a new kind of personal newspaper called ‘Daily Me’ providing a personal design, content, and taste with either local or global coverage (McQuail, 2005). In this case, anyone can personalize the news to create a ‘Daily Me’. One result of this new approach, is that the notion of journalistic professionalism has drifted toward the development of what is being called ‘news consumerism,’ and this power shift has become one of the greatest challenges for online journalists in contrast to the challenges of traditional newspaper print media (Singer, 2003). Zeng and Li (2006) use a content analysis of 106 U.S. newspapers’ Web sites and discovered that strong content interactivity is correlated with newspapers’ size, strength of technical staff, and the region of coverage. They conclude that the key to a highly interactive newspaper Web site is to assign more resources to assist the interpersonal communication between journalists & readers.

Bruce Garrison argues that four models exist for online newspaper services: 1) the

24-Hours-a-Day news model, 2) the community bulletin board site model, 3) the supplementary news site model, and, 4) the exclusive news site model. The 24-hours-a-day news model is defined as a wire service operating on deadline conditions to continuously delivery real-time up-to-date news as it develops. The Community Bulletin Board Site model aims to provide national information about events in the community or nearby areas (i.e., the Boston Globe) or internationally (i.e., the New York Times). The third model according to Garrison is the Supplementary News Site model, which provides supplementary in-depth information as an additional content in relation to stories that appeared on the printed newspaper and has limitless online space. The exclusive news site model is an expensive approach used by few newspapers to provide exclusive news sites (Garrison, 2005, pp. 16-17).

### **3.7 Blogs & Forums:**

The desktop personal computer is no longer only used for personal uses. Its functionality has extended to include printing press capabilities, broadcasting station features, and/or production center abilities (Rheingold, 2000). As Gillmor points out in his book entitled, *We the Media* (2004), an Iraqi blogger name Zeyad never thought that his weblog was the main source of news for many readers and journalists around the world regarding the war situation in Iraq. Recently, many independent groups have created media centers comprised of normal, ordinary people, who may not have a background and experience in journalism, For instance, Indymedia was created in 1999 by several hundred media activists with the sole mission of gathering news that interests the public on special issues (Platon and Deuze, 2003). Indymedia played an essential role in collecting information regarding police brutalities against protesters linking the information via

satellite to a system of global networks. As a matter of fact, this news coverage was recognized to be far superior than the coverage of well known newspapers who either limited their reports or missed the event (Gillmor, 2004; Jenkins and Thorburn, 2003). In addition, Indymedia has been credited for organizing millions of demonstrators to express their dissatisfaction of the Iraqi War in 2003 through its massive online appeal of information on how to get involved, physical directions, schedule of events, available speeches, and the ability to download important materials regarding literature and materials on the anti-war effort (Hassan, 2004). Indymedia was one of the first organizations to use special software developed jointly by Australian and U.S. programmers to make these features available online for free download (Gurstein, 2001).

At one time many external factors such as religion, gender, culture, social, financial, and politics prevented the public from voicing their ideas, opinions, and thoughts, but the Internet forums and weblogs have changed this and have become the mechanisms of political expression for many citizens around the world. This is particularly the case in countries like China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, where the government controls the media (Gillmor, 2004). Hassan (2004, p. 135) demonstrates this organization's massive movement:

People across the planet were able to overcome obstacles of language, distance and ideology to coordinate themselves to be at a prearranged space at a prearranged time to share in a collective physical and political experience. It had never been done on such a scale before.

Weblogs (blogs) are forms of online discussions created by one or more individuals (bloggers) to share personalized information that may be on display and accessible to public scrutiny (Campbell, 2004). Weblogs are also forums of online discussions that combine commentary, conversation, and original reporting (Singer, 2003). Another

important feature of the weblogs is that they can be linked to other pages that contain criticism and/or personal thoughts (Wall, 2005). Most weblogs have a unified format, but they may also have different goals, writing styles, and varying functions, which make it difficult to define them (Efimova and Fiedler, 2004). One reason for the success of weblogs has to do with developmental programs that make weblogs easy to initially create with the responsibility of updating the information falling on the blogger (Ross-Tomlinson, May 2006). On the other hand, online forums or Web forums do have one drawback: they are controlled by the board's managers who have the power to suspend (or warn any member) members' access to posts and their ability to reply to the topics of the forum. Typically, if a user wants to take part in an online forum like a weblog, the protocol is for each member of the forum to register, which gives the user a username and password. Weblogs and forums may have similar functions, but the differences are vast when it comes to the forum's format, content, and access.

The typical Web blogger is free from manipulation and the values of a journalistic institution, hence most readers perceive the individuals as someone they know, and "the more personal and more open about opinions a site is, the more trustworthy and credible it will be" (Wall, 2005, p. 165). Today, many online newspapers such as the *Guardian* have created their own weblogs to discuss selected issues with their online readers. So, when the *Guardian* newspaper decided to make some changes to the paper like switching the broadsheet size to the Berliner format, the colour photos replacing black, and dropping the Doonesbury cartoon, the newspaper had to reinstate the cartoon a few days later in respond to the complaints made by the customers on the Guardian weblog (Davies, May 2006). However, in the content analysis of some 120 U.S. online newspapers conducted in May 2000, Ye and LI (2006) found online newspapers' forums have less user involvement and

have not achieved their full potential in their potential ability to enhance public discourse and democratic deliberation; only 11% of bloggers surveyed by Pew Internet & American Life Project responded that they focus mainly on government or political issues when blogging (Lenhart and Fox, 19/7/2006).

Credit must be given to bloggers for their positive impact on transforming public opinion on old media in its inability to respond to the informational needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Friend and Singer (2007, p. 116) argue that bloggers have taken the role of “watchdogs of the watchdogs” where continuously monitoring journalists’ reports call attention to issues related to perceived journalistic problems such as hypocrisy, bias and inaccuracy. Bloggers can publish news that national media may miss or conceal and they can readily provide links to other weblogs to spawn further in-depth discussions (Hachten, 2005). Steve Olafson (Fall 2003, p. 91), who worked for 26 years as a reporter for a Houston Chronicle daily newspaper<sup>31</sup> explains that weblogs have:

[N]o rules. You’re not required to write about city council meetings, fatal car accidents, or the weather. Forget the inverted pyramid, forget space constraints, and forget the five W’s and the H. All the pomposity, hot air, and ridiculousness you see and hear are fair game in a Weblog, but not necessarily in a daily newspaper.

Typically the viewpoint of most bloggers is that the mainstream media is an elite group of profit driven corporations that care more for its financial self-interests and economic survival than for free press and societal responsibility (Lasica, Fall 2003). Unlike traditional media forms, news stories on weblogs begin when an initial post is published and when users start to comment, discuss, add, and edit the story (Outing, 22/12/2004),

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<sup>31</sup> He was fired because of his weblog.

which encourages the process of truth finding (Andrews, Fall 2003). Since blogs do not have their own independent reporting, they rely on mainstream media for most of their content, but one benefit they have is in their ability to expand the information beyond their original publication sites (Wall, 2005). One limitation of blogging is that many bloggers lack the skills necessary for in-depth research, experience, and resources on how to validate the facts of a story (Andrews, Fall 2003). This approach has the potential to create dangerous rumours, which can do more harm than good (Outing, 22/12/2004). If bloggers want to have a meaningful impact on shaping the political, cultural, and media domains in society, they would benefit by adopting some of the practices of journalism, because the prevailing view of many professional journalist is that bloggers are “poorly written, self-absorbed, hyper-opinionated, and done by amateurs” (Regan, Fall 2003, p. 69).

In a survey conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project (Lenhart and Fox, 19/7/2006), it was determined that Web blogging inspired many new writers to share their ideas online. Blogging is a way for the Internet user to support their own learning by breaking outside the organized system of instruction of any institution (Efimova and Fiedler, 2004, p. 494). After defining the political forum as a ‘space of discussion’ on the Internet with the use of “Web-based visualization,” Janssen and Kies (2005, pp. 318-9) argue that political forums have three contexts: 1) the local Web site forums (public or private), 2) government institutions forums hosted internationally, and 3) traditional media forums (newspapers). They conclude that these online political forums are not compatible with the Habermasian criteria of a public sphere, since the Habermas model has at least an agreement or consensus outcome and that online political discussions are “purely discursive, not tied to any decision making and not part of institutional politics” (Janssen and Kies, 2005, p. 331).

Agneta Ranerup (2001) studies online forums in Sweden in an effort to find out how local-government organizations use the Internet to enhance democracy. She focuses on three elements: the design, the topicality, and the deliberation to determine their impact on democracy. She argues that the design is the most important feature because it shapes the influence of the forum, thereby determining whether the behaviour of users is controlled. The name of the forum is also vital in indicating the democratic perception of the discussions in the forums. The second element that Ranerup emphasizes is topicality. In other words, it is important to focus on the issues discussed in the forum; whether the topics are related to political issues such as economics, education, and society, or, are the topics focused on individual and personal issues like hobbies, greetings, or conversations. Finally, deliberation is the extent given to the online forums to which views are exchanged and opinions are expressed in an online discussion (Ranerup, 2001, pp. 210-211). Ranerup's study concludes that there is no clear association between online forums and their effect on democracy.

### **3.8 The Norms and Practices of Online Journalism:**

Mark Deuze defines an online journalist as a “professional performing journalistic tasks within and for an online publication”, moreover, Deuze (1999, p. 377) claims that the standards of quality that a journalist maintains are also true of an online journalist . There are subtle differences between an online journalist and a traditional journalist. For example,

The online journalist has to make decisions on which media formats best tell a certain story [multimediality], has to allow room for options for the public to respond, interact or even customize certain stories [interactivity] and must consider ways to connect the story to other stories, archives, resources and so on through hyperlinks [hypertextuality] (Deuze, 2001).

Online journalism challenged the fundamental view of ‘truth’ that traditional journalist upheld. Instead of the professional journalist’s view of truth, which “determines what publics see, hear and read about the world,” online journalism turns this view on its head (Deuze, 2005, p. 451).

Deuze (1999, pp. 380-2) provides five skills for online writing. The first is storyboarding, which is a compulsory instrument designed to encourage a writer to think and plan on all possible formats to use in a story. The second skill that is required for online writing is what Deuze calls non-linear writing. Non-linear writing is not applying the journalism inverted pyramid style. Because the online readers only scan news, the story must be concise and appealing to the reader, which includes cutting to smaller pieces so that the information is spread across a number of Web pages that can be accessed separately by the user. The third skill that an online writer needs is embracing the informal and grammatical language that has become a part of the Internet users’ lexicon (i.e., emoticons). The next skill Deuze identifies for a successful online writer is that they must actively communicate with the readers and that online journalist should add at least one of these interactive tools: 1) e-mail links, 2) bulletin board systems, 3) Web chart, online survey questionnaires, and, 4) discussion groups. The final skill set that an online journalist needs in the view of Deuze is the ability to layer content. Content gives the user the option of skipping if he or she does not have the tools (hardware or software) to view new media applications such as video. An online journalist has the choice of adding multiple angles to every story they produce to give the users the options to choose between different elements (Bardoel and Deuze, 2001).

The very large amounts of information that exist on the Internet has given rise to a

new skill that online journalists need, which is concisely summed in tasks ‘offering information about information’ where an online journalist’s role must be that of a ‘guidedog’ and not a ‘watchdog’ (Bardoel and Deuze, 2001, p. 94). Online journalists should not only consider local audiences in their writings online, but more importantly, they must recognize that their audience is now global in nature (Pavlik, 2001, p. 63). Another skill that an online journalist should cultivate is the ability to “critically evaluate” and verify the online information in their stories. In this era of rapid technological advances, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007, pp. 23-27) assert the journalistic concept of a ‘gatekeeper,’ which is someone who decides what the public should know and what the public should not know, is no longer applicable. The authors point to the fact that what is hidden from the public’s purview can now be published by other individuals and organizations online.

Regardless of the universal practices among traditional, professional journalists throughout the world, online journalism signals a dramatic shift in the way journalists consider the profession of journalism for journalists that write online publications. As Lynn Zoch (2001) states in his presentation at the World Association of Newspapers:

By now it should be apparent that tomorrow’s journalist will be a much different person—expected to make multiple-media news judgments, trained to make use of all news gathering technology, flexible enough to work in news-gathering teams.

In an Australian survey on journalists’ Internet use, it was found that the Internet assisted in, but did not change journalists’ traditional practices of gathering diverse sources for their stories (Lewis, 2004). Instead, online journalists seemed to use the Internet as a research tool to check the preliminary facts of their stories (Lewis, 2004). Lewis concludes that the traditional journalists’ distrust of online information did not limit the amount of source diversity. However, the study did establish that traditional practices and accepted

norms of journalism have an effect. The study also found that journalists with online experience are more willing to use the Internet in their journalism practices (Lewis, p. 271).

In his examination of the Singaporean national daily *Straits Times Interactive*, which is an online news service that explores how online effects the journalists' practices, Nisar Keshvani (2000) finds that one of the changes affecting journalists' practices is that online journalism is less reliant on traditional journalism's seven levels of scrutiny or eyes<sup>32</sup>. An online story is more likely to be published online without prior approval from an editor or sub-editor. Keshvani (2000) adds that effective online journalist should be aware of new technology and be "multi-skilled". Moreover, online journalists must be a creative in their thinking concerning the quality of the story's content in attracting loyal readership, which will entice advertisement revenues (Keshvani, 2000, pp. 114-115). Furthermore, the speed of instant publication, supported by continuous news updates, shifts the definition of gate-keeping from story selection towards news judgement, values, and practices (Singer, 2005).

The journalism professionals and established news organizations typically set the standard of quality when it comes to the rules of practices and norms for journalist to adhere (Kurpius, 2002). The practices and norms of journalism represent a wide variety of perspectives that cross the boundaries of race, culture, and gender. The existence of the World Wide Web as a growing part of daily life makes it essential for journalist and the industry to apply these diverse perspectives that ensures the representation of all groups in

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<sup>32</sup> (1) supervisor shaping the story (2) supervisor's satisfaction of the first draft (3) copy editor subs the story (4) sub-editor decides story placement (5) team leader checks information (6) teeline approval and (7) night editor final check (Keshvani, 2000, p. 112).

neighbourhoods, villages, communities, cities, countries, and continents.

The use of e-mails to communicate and collect data and information that is essential in delivering the news has become a widely accepted practice among journalists and in many newsrooms. Although the telephone and personal interviews remain the prevailing tools in the journalist arsenal, e-mails are slowly becoming the tool of choice. However, before e-mail overtakes these other tools, journalist must work through the credibility and security of information issues that surround e-mails (Garrison, Spring 2004).

William Cassidy (2007) recently surveyed daily newspaper journalists and found that online news is perceived as moderately credible, which is a different result from previous findings that found online news is less credible with the public. Cassidy cites that this may be due to journalists' increased familiarity with online news information sources now as oppose to when the study was first conducted.

According to Regan (Fall 2003), an interesting twist in online journalism began occurring at the start of 2000 with many well-known journalists reporting that they started their own weblogs to express and share their personal views without any limitations. In an interview conducted in 2003, the CNN war correspondent Kevin Sites was asked by his superior to suspend his personal war reporting weblog. In this case, weblogs moved from the 'abstract authority' of news to a more 'situated authority,' which gives the users the opportunity to hear multiple journalistic voices (Matheson, 2004, p. 460). J-bloggers (Journalism Bloggers) help to enhance the norms and practices of traditional journalists because they use high-tech blogs as a neutral commentary format rather than changing news production, which is contrary to local columnists who include their opinions in their weblogs (Singer, 2005).

### 3.9 A Case Study: Kuwait:

According to the Ministry of Planning, in 2006, the country of Kuwait had a population of 2,213,403, which consists of 39.8 percent that are Kuwaiti citizens and 60.2 percent that are non-Kuwaiti citizens (Ministry of Planning, 2006). Approximately 65 percent of the population in 2006 is under the age of 25 (Energy Information Administration, 2006). In 2005, the country's literacy was about 93.3 percent, which makes sense given that all state education levels are free. In 2006, Kuwait had 10 percent of the world's oil reserves and \$11.08 billion in reserves of foreign exchange and gold with \$17,170 General National Income (GNI), and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$55.300 Billion for 2007 (The World Factbook, 2007).

Kuwait is an Arab/Islamic state and also a Persian Gulf state. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which was established in 1981 to include six Gulf States: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, seeks mutual economic and social objectives. GCC aims to create similar regulations in economics, finance, trade, customs, tourism, legislation and a common currency among its members by 2010. The United Arab Emirates had the highest real GDP growth in 2007 at 8.5%, followed by Qatar at 7.8%, Bahrain at 6.6%, Kuwait at 5.6%, Oman at 5.3%, and Saudi Arabia at 4.7 % (See Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: General Information of the Gulf States**

Country	Population	Literacy	GDP Growth
Bahrain	738,874	86.5%	6.6%
Kuwait	2,213,403	93.3%	5.6%
Oman	2,452,234	81.4%	5.3%
Qatar	824,355	89%	7.8%
Saudi Arabia	24,069,386	78.8%	4.7%
UAE	4,444,011	77.9%	8.5%

Source: CIA World Factbook 2007

The Gulf States were the first among the Arab countries, with the exception of Saudi

Arabia, to establish and build an Internet infrastructure complete with Internet connections. Given the fact that most Arab governments had a “techno phobia” history, they chose to observe the development of the new medium instead of obtaining it. Once this phobia was defeated, the Internet slowly emerged to become an accepted and serious public sphere for Gulf State users for both men and women as a way to exchange views and formulate opinions without the direct influence and control of political institutions (Al-Qarni, 2004). The amount of freedom available in the weblogs cannot be found in most traditional mediums (i.e., television, radio, and newspapers) because of their subjective reporting of news (Alafrangi, 31/8/2006). Blogs have caused “a pain in the tooth for many Arab governments which fear citizens gaining the means to reveal their illegal and anti-democratic practices” (KUNA, 28/1/2007, p. 2).

In Kuwait, the youth comprise the majority of the Internet users, which is a general trend throughout the world. In the case of Kuwaiti culture, the Internet is challenging the traditional values, norms, customs, and culture that separate the opposite genders. In addition, the Internet is bridging the opposite genders in that it provides a means of communication that was once impossible and forbidden. The Internet allows the opposite genders to freely express their opinions and ideas in e-mails and online chatting (Wheeler, 2003; Wheeler, 2001; Al-Matrouk, 2004). There are many factors that encourage users to go online. Among these factors, at least in the case of Kuwait, is the capacity the Internet gives to users that already are prone to social communication where people traditionally socialized and were good conversationalists with skills to chat and discuss matters (Al-Obaidi, 2003). Another factor is the use of the Arabic colloquial language, which is a dialect that is used in speaking that differs from the written formal Arabic language and encourages the Kuwaiti youth to write as they speak without the fear and retaliation that

usually comes with making linguistic mistakes. An illustration of this point is that there are currently more than 1,000 Kuwaiti weblogs listed only on the Kuwaitblog.com weblog.

In Kuwait, the print and broadcast media outlets quickly became aware of the advantages of making the transformation to online media instead of relying only on print versions. All Kuwaiti Arabic and English daily newspapers<sup>33</sup> have their print version produced online. Also, these same daily newspapers have active Web sites exhibiting interactive features for their readers. These interactive features include chat rooms, forums for discussions, e-mail addresses of editors, search engines, and archives. In June of 2007, *Alaan* (<http://www.alaan.cc>) became the first online newspaper, not only in Kuwait, but also in the Gulf region that delivered 24-hours of continuous news seven days a week.

The introduction of the Internet in Kuwait really began with the Internet access that students were offered at Kuwait University in 1992. By 1994, Gulfnet, a private ISP (Internet Service Provider) company was established. In the beginning, the Internet was mainly used by academics, foreign educational institutions, and foreign companies based in Kuwait that recognized the need to communicate internationally. In 1996, the government of Kuwait took a more active role in the Internet in an effort to regulate the market<sup>34</sup>. At that time, the Internet did not raise any political concerns for the government except for political subversive information. Furthermore, customs and ethics are the most serious factors forcing the government to block sites or crack down on the Internet cafés that offer access to pornographic sites.

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<sup>33</sup> The new newspapers that started in 2006 designed their online sites with their print versions.

<sup>34</sup> Most new media technologies were first introduced and used by the private sector before the government took any action. This fast diffusion of the new technology sometimes made it too late or too hard for the government to control or regulate it.

In 2005, Kuwaiti spent 1.3% (80 million KD) of its national income on Information Technology, which ranked Kuwait number 46 in the world on its ability to use the new technology. Kuwait was ranked fourth in the Arab world for its readiness of new technology with 181 PCs distributed throughout government sector, with 89 percent of these connected to the Internet (e.Kuwait, February - March 2006). The Ministry of Communication established Internet access with fiber optic infrastructure to carry Internet traffic to most cities in Kuwait. In fact, Kuwait is connected with other Gulf States through a submarine cable system (FOG). In 2005, there were 510,300 telephone main lines and in 2006 approximately 2.536 million cellular mobiles as well as three satellite earth stations: channel 3 Intelsat, channel 1 Inmarsat, and channel 2 Arabsat (The World Factbook, 2007). The Internet speed in Kuwait is also considered one of the fastest in the region.

Overall throughout the Middle Eastern region, the Internet usage has increased rapidly with 192,755,045 Internet users (3% of the world) and 920.2% growth between 2000 and 2007 (Internet World Stats, 2007). The Gulf States are the fastest growing Internet users among the Arab countries. In Kuwait Internet use has steadily and quickly increased since it was introduced in the 1990s. In 2000 there were 150,000 Internet users in Kuwait. This number reached 900,000 in 2008 (500% use growth), about 34.7% of the population (Internet World Stats, 2008), with 3,289 Internet hosts and four ISPs (i.e., Qualitynet, KEMS, Fasttelco, and United Networks) (Internet World Stats, 2008). Madar Research (2006) placed Kuwait fourth among Arab countries trailing after UAE, Bahrain,

and Qatar in terms of ICT use with a 1.4 index<sup>35</sup>. According to the 2007-2008 United Nations Human Development Report (UNDP), the UAE was first among Arab states in Internet access with 308 users per every 1,000 individuals followed by Kuwait with 276, then Qatar with 269, and fourth Bahrain with 213, while Oman came in eighth with 111 users, and Saudi Arabia in 11<sup>th</sup> place with 70 users per every 1,000 persons<sup>36</sup>.

### **3.10 Conclusion:**

Overall, this chapter illustrates how online journalism merged with professional journalism. The review of the literature shows how traditional press became part of online journalism in its struggle to survive. Traditional journalists also became part of online journalism through their norms and practices of newsgathering and writing, as well as the way in which they became part of the online public arena. Kuwait is one of the leaders among the countries in the Arab world that obtained and effectively uses the Internet. More and more Kuwaitis, especially the young users, are moving to the Internet for social, entertainment, and political purposes. The fast growing technology of the Internet and the rise of online journalism's advantages opened the door for Kuwaiti's and other Gulf State's males and females to go online to express their views freely on various political issues without any fear of government retaliation. On the other hand, the Gulf States' governments have expanded their local censorship to cyberspace, aiming to limit and

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<sup>35</sup> "The ICT Use Index covers four ICT parameters: PC installed base and the number of Internet users, mobile phones and fixed lines. The Index is calculated by adding up the values of these four parameters and dividing the sum by the country's population figure. A higher Index score indicates more aggressive ICT adoption in the country under question" (Madar Research 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Internet users (per 1,000 people) taken from year 2005 see all Arab states at this link <http://www.pogar.org/countries/indicator.asp?ind=114&yr=2005>

control the content and the use of online journalism. Furthermore, the significance of online journalism actively appeared among Kuwaiti local newspapers; where all Kuwaitis local newspapers (the old and new) now have their own online versions with “shuffling” news content and update news, but few offer users’ feedback.

## Chapter Four: Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction:

The current literature makes a strong claim that the Internet affects various aspects of all societies. The debate of whether or not the Internet has brought about societal progress or regress is ongoing, but what is true is that the impact of the Internet can be observed in our politics, economics, information, behaviours, and mass communication. Western governments tend to use the Internet as a new tool to help maintain, cultivate, and promote democracy as a whole, while most Third World Countries (developing nations) view the Internet as a tool to achieve (separately, not as a whole) democratic values such as free press, free speech, and a free market economy. Free speech and free press are among the most important values for people living in these countries; they view free speech and free press as a way to end government control over human liberty, human rights, and human dignity.

Since the beginning of the Internet and its utilization to serve the public and become a communicative tool, it has been used to express, to expose, and to share views, ideas, opinions, and values within and outside a country's boundaries. As the Internet made its way into the mainstream so too did journalists move from local journalism to cyberspace journalism, which created a new field called online journalism. The transition to online helped reduce many undemocratic government's restrictions and increased the level of freedom in many countries. Today the Internet is the barometer by which a country's freedom is measured throughout the world.

Many organizations like *Freedom House* and the *Reporters Without Borders*, who directly address issues concerning freedom, human rights, and/or human liberties have their own measurements to evaluate the level of freedom of press in each country. However,

these measurements have been criticised for not being accurate<sup>37</sup>. As a result, there does not appear to be standardized measurements that can be used to measure the freedom of the press in countries throughout the world. The cultural values of the Islamic and Arabic nations, for instance, may also determine how, why, and when the press is regulated. As such, this makes it challenging to rely on the tools of Western organizations to determine the level of the freedom of the press in each country, especially when considering the Arab and Islamic cultures. Unfortunately, no previous research exists that seriously deals with the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press, nor is there a specific or sufficient tool that we can use to measure the impact of online journalism on the freedom of the press.

For the purposes of this research the state of Kuwait is used as a case study, thus representing an Arab, Islamic, and constitutional emirate with various civil advantages as mentioned in previous chapters. According to Robert Yin (2002), a case study is an empirical inquiry using multiple sources of evidence to investigate an issue within its real-life context. Case studies provide researchers and scholars the advantage of collecting a wealth of information regarding their subjects and deals with a wide range of evidence (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006) using both quantitative and qualitative data to help explain both the process and the outcome of an observational phenomenon (Tellis, 1997).

The main purpose of this research is to study the effect that online journalism has on the freedom of press in the state of Kuwait. It will consist of two main areas: online

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<sup>37</sup> See Chapter Two section 2.4.

journalism (personal online writers, weblogs & forums)<sup>38</sup> and the local press (Journalists & columnists). It will use journalism practices, online journalism's content analysis, and interviews to determine the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press (See Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: Research plan of online Journalism and the Freedom of the Press**



## 4.2 Research Questions:

In an effort to address the serious issues mentioned above, this study poses the following questions:

1. Does online journalism affect the level of freedom of the press in Kuwait?
2. How does online journalism affect the practices of journalists working in Kuwaiti local newspapers in relation to freedom of the press?
3. Does the level of online freedom perception differ between the local journalists and local columnists in Kuwait?<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Online newspapers were excluded from the samples because at the time of online observation there were no Kuwaiti online newspapers.

<sup>39</sup> A local journalist is a reporter who gathers and writes the news for local newspapers; a local columnist is a person who writes regular columns for specific newspapers presenting his or her personal opinion.

4. How did the content of online journalism (personal online writers, weblogs and forums) during the constitutional issue (15 to 25/1/2006) and the electoral constitutional issue (1 to 25/5/2006) affect the level of press freedom in Kuwait?

After considering these questions, it is important to turn attention to testing hypotheses to ensure that the freedom of the press is adequately discussed.

*H1: The Internet has a limited effect on journalists' practices in the state of Kuwait.*

This hypothesis is based on the findings of an earlier study (Lewis, 2004), which claims that the Internet is used as an information tool, but not an effective tool that changes journalists' practices in how the news is reported. Regardless of the advancements in the Internet technology, journalists still recognize the Internet as a supportive tool for communication and information, and most agree that the Internet has been ineffective in its ability to change their traditional journalism practices.

*H2: In the state of Kuwait, local columnists are more likely to perceive online journalism as an effective tool that can enable the freedom of expression, the freedom to seek information, and the freedom to share their views with other online publications.*

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that local columnists have a wider space to practice and express their opinions locally and in cyberspace, rather than local reporters who must work in accordance with the policies and guidelines of their local newspapers.

*H3: In the state of Kuwait, online journalism helps minimize the self-regulation of the local press and forces them to address issues that previously were not permitted to be published.*

Since Kuwaitis in general can access and share information freely in cyberspace, the local press realized that the traditional policy of self-censorship was ineffective and obsolete. In fact, it was at this time that the local press merged with online journalism to report on topics that previously were considered beyond the traditional boundaries.

*H4: Online journalism plays an essential role in scrutinizing the local press so that the information in reports is not false and subject to bias, hence online journalism becomes a public change agent that can influence the government's decisions concerning freedom of the press.*

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that during political events, online journalism in its capacity to influence public opinion, may affect a government's influence on the freedom of the press in Kuwait.

### **4.3 Population & Sampling:**

The participants of this study were journalists and columnists. The sample for the questionnaires include: 1) local journalists<sup>40</sup> who work as reporters (gathering and writing news) for local newspapers and magazines. Since most reporters working in the local press are not Kuwaitis, non-Kuwaiti reporters were also included in the survey; and, 2) Local columnists who write regular columns for specific newspapers presenting their personal opinions. Columnists appearing with their e-mails were randomly selected from each newspaper in the opinion pages of each newspaper, including the four new newspapers that began in 2006 and 2007. Obtaining a list of columnists' e-mails and addresses were the major obstacles in this questionnaire. Gay and Airasian (2000, p. 140) recommend that a simple random sample is "the best single way to obtain a representative sample" where all individuals of the selected sample have equal and independent chance of being selected.

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<sup>40</sup> Jo Bardoel and Mark Deuze (2001, p. 93) defined journalist as: "Individuals working within an editorial board or newsroom (be it full-time or freelance) who perform one of four core journalistic tasks: selecting, researching (or gathering), writing (or processing), an editing news".

The interviewees include managers of the selected online journalism sites and local newspapers, columnists, journalists and politicians.

#### **4.4 Methods:**

For this study, the above four research questions are related to the identification of online instructors' roles and competencies. In an effort to answer the research questions, three different types of methods (qualitative & quantitative) are used to gather the data: 1) questionnaires, 2) online content analysis, and 3) personal interviews.

##### **4.4.1 Journalists & Columnists' Questionnaire:**

Questionnaires were used as a data collection instrument. The questionnaire was distributed in two ways; either by e-mail or by handing it out personally to those whose e-mail was unknown or did not have e-mail. Whether the questionnaire is returned by hand or sent via an e-mail, the format of a questionnaire remains as important as the wording of the questions. Lance and Johnson (1996) provide four important components to consider when designing a questionnaire: 1) page format should be brief and not crowded; 2) items used for responses (for example, yes & no, Lickert Scale, true & false... etc) ought to be standardized, comprehensive and mutually exclusive; 3) wording should be neutral, clear, simple with brief and no redundancy questions without directing the respondent toward one response; and, 4) arranging and ordering items in a logical or time sequence. Babbie (2001) states that randomizing the order of the items will confuse the respondent and that they can perceive the items as insignificant. Furthermore, the questionnaire should also include defined instructions to help the respondent understand the questions clearly without any confusion.

Two different questionnaires were designed and distributed between two groups<sup>41</sup>. The first group comprises 260 Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti local journalists. The second group consists of 115 local Kuwaiti columnists<sup>42</sup>. Many questions on the questionnaire were designed under the guidelines for survey research provided by Wimmer and Dominick (2006). Similar modified questions were also taken from a PhD thesis (Lewis, 2004) because they directly address the issue of practices and norms. The purpose of the questionnaire is to determine the perceptions of journalists and columnists' toward online journalism and its affect on the freedom of the press of local newspapers, as well as the effect of online journalism on the traditional norms and practices of journalist and columnists.

The questionnaire used for this study is entitled *Journalists & Columnists*. The instrument is designed to be answered by Kuwaiti journalists and columnists. The modified questionnaire includes 69 questions for the journalists and 54 questions for the columnists with statements designed to cover various aspects of journalists and columnists' perception of freedom of the press and their journalistic norms and practices<sup>43</sup>. The questions determine usage of the Internet, sources of information, and style of writing. The questionnaire was pre-tested to prevent any mistakes or include confusing or ambiguous questions. Only a few questions were modified and rewritten in accordance with the

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<sup>41</sup> In the West there is no distinction between being a journalist or a columnist because they are considered as part of journalism profession. However, in the Gulf Countries most columnists are neither professional journalists nor do they have backgrounds in journalism. Many of them became columnists because they are famous, have connections with the owners of local newspapers, good writers, MPs or holding a high rank government positions. In fact, they never worked at the local newspapers. Therefore, it is not accurate to consider them in the same category with the local journalists who practice journalism daily.

<sup>42</sup> Kuwaiti columnists were selected because most if not all local columnists are Kuwaitis and those who are not Kuwaitis are reluctant to address local political issues or they live outside Kuwait and are only interested in foreign affairs.

<sup>43</sup> Many unrelated questions for the columnist were deleted to address only the specific research questions.

suggested findings of the pre-test sample.

#### **4.4.2 Content Analysis:**

Content analysis is widely used in various academics fields such as psychology, sociology, political science, and communications (Weare and Lin, 2000). This method of analysis is particularly important for this study because what is needed is a systematic and replicable process (Stemler, 2001). McQuail (2005, p. 551) define content analysis as:

A technique for the systematic, quantitative and objective description of media texts, that is useful for certain purposes of classifying output, looking for effects and making comparisons between media and over time or between content and ‘reality’.

In order to have reliable results from the content analysis, the research should be consistent, lack of ambiguity of words, and possess well defined and coded words (Weber, 1990). Content analysis reveals the number and the pattern coverage of an organization’s values concerning daily news and whether it contradicts its stated mission and purpose. Furthermore, online content analysis measures similar standards used in print coverage, but it includes elements vital to online journalism such as story postings, story layers, and audience behaviours (McLellan and Porter, 2007).

Christopher Weare and Wan-Ying Lin (2000, p. 275) seriously explore several methods that researchers can use to overcome the Web challenges like content authenticity, source verification, accuracy of news reporting, and journalism norms and standards. Moreover, these authors consider what researchers should consider in conducting online content analysis and their approaches their subjects; these effects include sampling, unitization, categorization and coding. They conclude that the Internet reduced the cost of data collections, made new sources of data available, introduced new areas of research and

helped improve the quality and validity of content analysis. However, due to the structure of the Internet such as the fast growth, fast change, scope of information, and its chaotic structure, there is a tendency on the part of journalists and columnists to confuse the messages and the representative sample of population, which can threaten the external validity of online research (Weare and Lin, 2000, p. 289).

#### **4.4.2.1 Observational Online Content Analysis:**

For the purposes of this research, an observational online content analysis was conducted on two personal online writers' homepages (Meezan and Rai Al-Hur), two Kuwaiti weblogs (Sahat Al-Safat & Alommah.org), and one Kuwaiti online forum (Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya), including other related online sites<sup>44</sup>. The research considered the observable content on the Internet from January 2006 to July 2006. In particular, this analysis is focused on the published content related to freedom of press that emphasizes two historical events: 1) the death of Kuwaiti Emir Sheik Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in mid January 2006 in Kuwait; and, 2) the Parliament electoral constituencies dispute in May 2006 in Kuwait.

The rationale for choosing these important historical periods was that online journalism during these periods played a crucial role in informing and communicating with the local citizens and hence affected the Kuwaiti government's political decision to accept the public's demand. Following the death of Kuwaiti Emir Sheik Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-

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<sup>44</sup> Lossos Alkalimah is a weblog that monitors plagiarism in news reports or columnists' articles, which forced many local newspapers to fire their reporters or suspend their columnists. In 2007, the site created a freedom index to monitor any action against speech and press freedom in Kuwait. However, although it was observed in relation to the research subject, it was excluded because it was not directly involved with the two issues selected for this study.

Sabah in mid January 2006 online journalism was the main source for updated news and political analysis, which did not come under the influence of the Kuwaiti government's censorship. Also during the Parliament electoral constituencies dispute online journalism became an online public sphere to share news & information, plan actions, and create offline masses to compel the Kuwaiti government to accept public's demand for a new electoral constituencies voting system. The topic areas were defined to specify the boundaries of the content analysis to be consistent with the research questions and related to the goals of the study. The areas includes news, articles, themes, political analysis, illustrations & pictures, opinions, discussion, videos, local press reaction to what is published online and any information related to freedom of press.

#### **4.4.3 Personal Interviews:**

Interviews are conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' learning and the meaning of what they say. Patton (2002, p. 341) writes that the purpose of an interview is "to allow us to enter the other person's perspective". Kvale (1996) explains that interviews in a qualitative research study may be used to understand the respondents' world because it is rooted in the perceptions of their own experiences, which entails covering factual and meaningful information.

Conducting interviews with the officials of local newspapers, a former Minister of Information, a Member of Parliament, officials at local ISP, webloggers, forum's administrators, and online writers who have their own sites was the third instrument this study used to gather data. The purpose of these interviews is to better comprehend the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press in Kuwait. Since the participants in the interviews are newspaper administrators directly involved with local press and other

media personnel, the information collected in the interviews provided in-depth information of freedom of press.

#### **4.5 Research Procedures:**

In addition to defining the population of the study, the procedures for collecting the data was extended to cover the following steps:

##### **1. Preparing the Questionnaire and Interviews:**

The questionnaire for this study uses a combination of previously tested and implemented questionnaires from various dissertations (Al-Matrouk, 2004; Lewis, 2004). For the purposes of this study, the content and the design of the questionnaire is tailored for the targeted population in this study. Changes and modification were made to the questionnaire to obtain optimally useful answers. These elements of the Kuwaiti society were considered when designing the questionnaire: values, language, religion, and politics.

##### **2. Distributing the Questionnaire:**

Because using mail post is still not applicable in Kuwait due to late delivery and wrong addresses, on January 2007, 260 questionnaires were distributed among journalists working in the local press in Kuwait. Two assistants helped to circulate the questionnaires to other newspapers. The researcher was the only individual who possessed access to view respondents' answers. The participants were given one week to answer the questionnaire. Afterwards, the assistants followed up to collect the remaining questionnaires.

##### **3. E-mailing the Questionnaire:**

On Sunday October 28, 2007, 115 e-mails were sent to Kuwaiti columnists from all

daily & weekly newspapers. Only columnists with their e-mails<sup>45</sup> appearing with their columns were randomly selected<sup>46</sup>. Ten e-mails were returned with wrong addresses. Four of them were corrected and sent back while six remained unsent, but replaced with new names. The researcher sent a reminder e-mail one week later (4/11/2007) to encourage the participants to complete the online questionnaire. The e-mail follow-up was justified given the nature of e-mail messages, which can be easily missed, deleted, or forgotten once new messages arrive in e-mail boxes. A higher response rate occurred after the second e-mail was delivered because they were addressed personally<sup>47</sup>. The researcher also made personal phone calls and visits to encourage the participants to complete the questionnaire. Ten columnists returned the questionnaires in person to the researcher.

#### **4. Conducting the Interviews:**

Interviews occurred in a semi-structured, one-to-one discussion using a prepared set of questions with the researcher at the interviewee office. The time limit was unrestricted to ensure that all the important issues are covered; however, each interview was allotted a minimum of 60 minutes. The one on one interviews were conducted on-site at a preferred place for the interviewee. All interviews were recorded on audio tape and audio digital recorder. The researcher also transcribed the conversation within two days. Each conversation was typed and translated to English, which is then typed directly into Microsoft Word. This process helps to record the conversations, which makes the review and confirmation of the transcript easier for the purposes of the study (Patton, 2002).

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<sup>45</sup> Obtaining a list of Kuwaiti columnists' e-mails and address from local newspapers was impossible.

<sup>46</sup> Four columnists were handed the questionnaire in person.

<sup>47</sup> A list of columnists' names appeared in the first e-mail. Many journalists told the researcher using their personal names encouraged them to fill out the questionnaire. Moving the e-mails to the trash folder was another factor which caused the questionnaire to be ignored.

Due to security issues and distance communication, the managers of online sites were interviewed using e-mails. The participants were sent a list of questions to be answered with no time limit. If the answers are not received within one week, the researcher followed up with an e-mail reminder confirming the receipt of the questionnaire. This process also indirectly encourages the participants to answer the questions. The researcher sent follow up e-mails when the recipients required further clarification. A few telephone interviews were conducted for those who were hard to reached for a face-to-face interview or e-mail. Each telephone interview took less than 60 minutes.

In 1986, the Emir of Kuwait, Sheik Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah dissolved the National Assembly and the government implemented a harsh policy against freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The TV, radio, and print media were seriously censored and the citizens feared to speak up. These restrictions stayed in place until the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, when the government adopted an open and free policy with the local media. This policy enabled the Kuwaitis to freely speak up and discuss all kinds of political issues without the fear of government punishment. However, topics protected by the constitution such as blasphemy of Islam or criticizing the Emir or traditionally banned such as the Royal Family affairs remained strictly prohibited in public discussions. Therefore, since this research is being conducted in the current time, the interviewees are expected to be able speak relatively freely, which will add valuable data to this research.

#### **4.6 Data Collecting & Analysis Techniques:**

The data collected from the questionnaires was measured in ordinal and nominal scales. For this research descriptive statistics were used to measure the mean, the median, the mode and to measure the variability, the range, the variance, and the standard deviation.

The T-test was used to assure the accuracy and validity of the data computation and analysis and the F-test was used to find statistical differences between the two populations. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used for these tests.

A 5-point Lickert Scaled (ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Don't Know, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) was used to measure the statements in the questionnaire. The descriptive statistics method was used for the statements in the Lickert Scale to obtain the means and response percentages to compare these values with each other and compare them with other questions and variables. A battery of four statements<sup>48</sup> chosen from the questionnaires was administered to measure the freedom perception (attitude) ( $\alpha = .750$ ) to compare the two samples (journalists and columnists) as well as with other variables such as age, gender, nationality, working years and years spent using the Internet.

#### **4.7 Validity and Reliability:**

Validity refers to “the degree to which a test measures what it claims, or purports, to be measuring” (Brown, 1996, p. 231). Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the collection of data in a consistent and accurate way (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989). To increase the likelihood of valid and reliable results, the questionnaire was translated to Arabic with the assistance of two faculty members from the Arabic Department at Kuwait University and two colleagues from the Communication Department at Kuwait University to ensure the compatibility of their translation with a sample pilot study conducted with 15

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<sup>48</sup> By helping journalists write freely about political subjects; Uncensored online journalism broaden the freedom of press for local publishing; Well-known individuals publish sensitive political issues online encouraged others to publish similar issues locally; Online journalism gave the impression that sensitive issues can be published locally.

Journalists and columnists. These subjects were selected from a representative population. The pilot test examines the questions for meaning and understanding, measures the findings, and the format of the questionnaire. The content analysis' coding was also tested with the assistance of two academics at the Department of Mass Communication to ensure the compatibility of each finding.

## **Chapter Five: Journalists & Columnists' Survey Results**

### **5.1 Introduction:**

The objective of this study is to identify the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press in the state of Kuwait. Not only is the data divided into three sequential chapters (Chapter 5, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7), but also each chapter respectively examines each one of the three tools (survey, online content analysis, and interviews) used to collect the data. Chapter Five analyzes the descriptive and inferential quantitative data collected from the questionnaires of the journalists and columnists, which were conducted in two different periods (January 2007 & October 2007). Tables and figures are used to graphically display the results of this study. Chapter Six explores the qualitative data as it relates to the content of online journalism, which was collected during the time period from January 2006 to July 2006. Lastly, Chapter Seven involves a discussion of the interviews that were conducted with individuals that work in the local press such as editors, journalists, columnists, government official, Internet Service Provider (ISP) personal, and a member of parliament.

### **5.2 Questionnaires:**

The first questionnaire was administered to working Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti journalists in the local press and included a total of 69 questions which were distributed in the month of January 2007<sup>49</sup>. According to *Kuwait Journalists Association*, there are 833

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<sup>49</sup> This survey is not systematically conducted because the researcher was not able to get full list of all journalists or columnists working in the local newspapers, at the same time, it is not applicable to use the post to mail the questionnaires since it is not guarantee to be delivered to the right addresses and on time.

registered journalists in 2008. In fact, the researcher distributed 260 questionnaires to journalists working in the local press and had a response rate of 83%, (n=215). On the other hand, the second questionnaire, which was conducted with the columnists in October 2007, consisted of 54 questions<sup>50</sup>. According to the *Kuwait Journalists Association*, there are 565 registered Kuwaiti columnists in 2008. The response rate for the Kuwaiti columnists was 58% (n=61, N=105).

### **5.2.1 Population and Sample:**

The principle data source for this study is based upon the two surveys conducted with journalists and columnists. The population for each survey included local journalists that assemble and write news for local newspapers, as well as local columnists that write regular columns for daily and weekly newspapers. The population included 1,437 journalists<sup>51</sup> and columnists who work for Arabic and English local newspapers<sup>52</sup> throughout Kuwait. The sample size of the group of journalists included 260 participants who were randomly selected from each newspaper. The sample size of columnists included 105 participants who were randomly selected as they appear in the newspaper with their e-mails<sup>53</sup> because obtaining a list of Kuwaiti columnists' e-mails and home addresses from

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However, since a high percentage of respondents turned on their questionnaires, the results can provide some indications of most journalists and columnists' practices.

<sup>50</sup> A few questions were deleted from the questionnaire because they were not related to the columnist as advised in the pilot study.

<sup>51</sup> According to *Kuwait Journalists Association* there are 1,437 registered journalists which includes columnists and any person who works in the local press, excluding the employees who work in the printing department.

<sup>52</sup> As stated in the methodology in chapter 4, it is impossible to have access to the names and addresses of local journalists because they are considered confidential and in Kuwait it is not practical to use the post mail to send questionnaires.

<sup>53</sup> The four new newspapers that started in 2006 and 2007 were also included in the sample since many

local newspapers or *Kuwait Journalists Association* was not possible. The participants were affirmed the confidentiality of the data, and to get them to trust the researcher with e-mail, they were told that the researcher is a Kuwaiti student working on his PhD at the University of Stirling in Scotland; his e-mail was provided if they had questions related to the study (See Appendix 4.1). Obtaining the names and the phone numbers from the participants was optional.

Two research assistants helped disseminate the questionnaires among the journalists at each newspaper. The research assistants were briefed about the purpose of the study and the proper procedures to disseminate the questionnaires to prevent any bias of handling the sample. Each newspaper was assigned two days for visiting during the week and weekend. The date and time for the visits were randomly chosen from a list of all newspapers.

On October 28, 2007 the researcher sent 105 e-mail messages to randomly selected Kuwaiti local columnists. The messages included a short explanation about the purpose of the study and attached questionnaire. Ten e-mails were returned and designated as incorrect e-mail addresses; four of them were corrected and resent to the respective e-mail recipients. Six of the ten previous e-mails were unable to be resent, and as a result, they were replaced with a new random sample of columnists. In an effort to conduct a follow up, an e-mail reminder was delivered by the researcher once more to the 105 participants a week later on (4/11/2007) to encourage the participants to complete the questionnaire (See Appendix 4.2). The second wave of e-mails experienced a higher response rate because the e-mails were personally addressed to the participants with their names appearing in the

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former columnists started to write for them.

header of the e-mail<sup>54</sup>.

Each of the questionnaires consisted of three sections. The first section emphasized general information on the participants and information on work and the Internet usage. The second section comprised of questions focused on participants' perception as it relates to online journalism and its effect on local freedom of the press. Responses to the questions in the surveys were based on the Lickert Scale and each answer was assigned weights to establish normally distributed scores based on the collected responses (See Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1: Lickert Scale**

<b>Weight</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>5</b>	Refers to 'Strongly Agree'
<b>4</b>	Refers to 'Agree'
<b>3</b>	Refers to 'Don't Know'
<b>2</b>	Refers to 'Disagree'
<b>1</b>	Refers to 'Strongly Disagree'

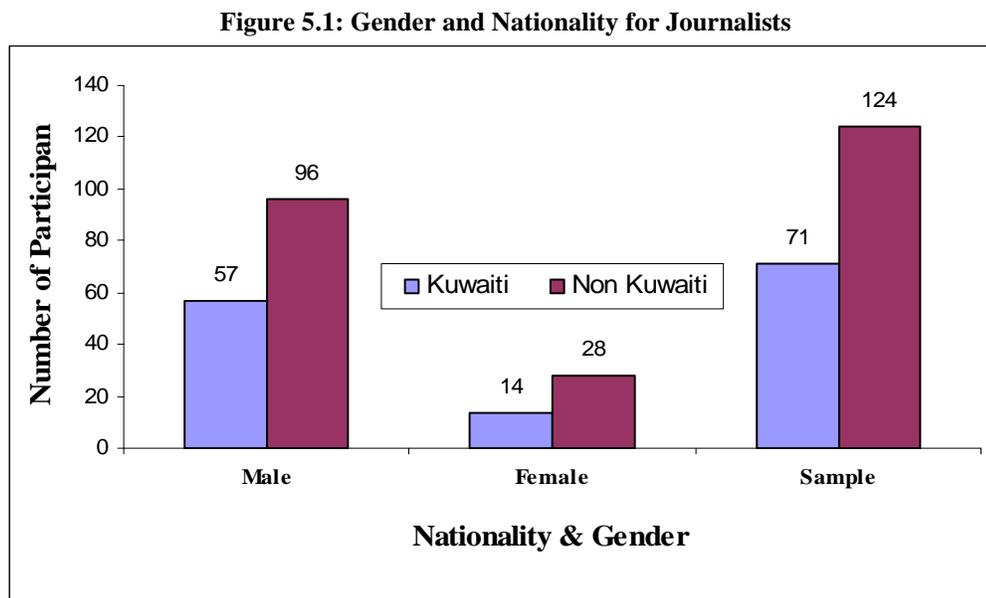
Two statistical methods of analysis were employed throughout this study. First, the descriptive statistics method was used to obtain the means and response percentages for the purpose of conducting comparisons. The means and percentages of responses were compared with the established critical point (cut point), which is the third response, "Don't Know", in the Lickert Scale above. The second statistical method of analysis used in this study was the inferential method, which adds validity to the descriptive statistical findings. The last section includes personal questions about participants' age, sex, nationality, and communication information.

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<sup>54</sup> The first e-mails included a general short introduction without their personal names.

## 5.2.2 Demographics:

Approximately 215 journalists took part in the survey for this study. Figure (5.1) below presents the breakdown of the sample size for the participants that completed the survey for journalists. A crosstab test between nationality and gender shows that 21% (n=42) of the participants were females while 79% (n=153) were males (N=195; missing 20). In fact, 36% (n=71) of the participants were Kuwaitis (male 57 & female 14<sup>55</sup>). About 64% (n=124) of the responses were from non-Kuwaitis and 96 were male and 28 were female.



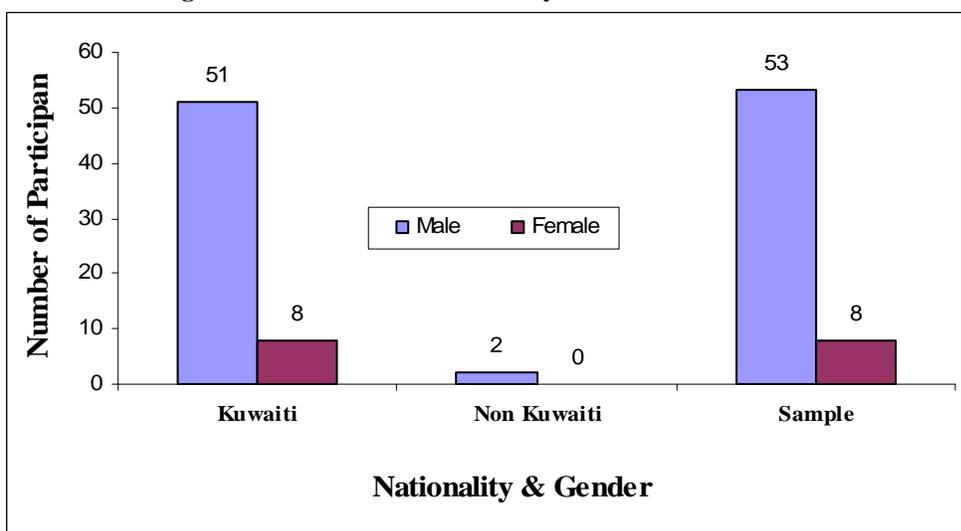
As for the survey administered to the columnists, 13%, (n=8) of the participants

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<sup>55</sup> Most Kuwaitis prefer working in print media as a part-time job due to its low salary, leaving the permanent jobs for other nationalities. At the same time, the number of women working in print media is considered low in comparison to men due to cultural, economic, and family factors. DASHTI, F. & DASHTI, A. (2001) Women & Media in the State of Kuwait: Female Mass Communication student's Views of Women & Media. *Journal of Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University*, 25, 33-51.261, However, after the establishment of new newspapers, the number of Kuwaiti journalists has been increasing.

were female<sup>56</sup>, and 87% (n=53) were male. It is interesting to note that only two of the columnists were non-Kuwaiti (See Figure 5.2). The majority of local columnists are Kuwaitis, and most non Kuwaiti columnists who write for local newspapers live outside Kuwait and are not interested discussing local issues. Not to mention that non Kuwaiti columnists strongly obey the press law to prevent government harassment since they do not have the same privileges as Kuwaitis.

**Figure 5.2: Gender and Nationality for Journalists**



According to the results of the survey, 41% (n=86) of journalists have been journalists for more than 10 years, which was compared to a group of journalists that have work experience between three to five years (25%, n=52). Approximately half of the columnists surveyed had between six and ten years of work experience and the other half (30%, n=18) had more than 10 years of work experience. The majority of journalists surveyed (92%, n=196) have access to the Internet at their place of employment. Similarly,

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<sup>56</sup> Today, the number of female columnist remains small, but the introduction of new newspapers in the marketplace is expected to increase the number of female columnist entering the field.

90% (n=54) of columnists have Internet access at work<sup>57</sup>. The frequency of Internet use is more than one-third (n=69) for journalists using the Internet for journalistic work that have more than five years of work experience. As for columnists, 70% (n=41) have used the Internet for writing purposes in their work if they have been a columnist for more than five years.

### **5.3 Results:**

The survey results of each questionnaire are divided into two sections: 1) Practices; and, 2) Perceptions of Freedom. In the “Practices” section, the results are illustrated as frequencies, percentages, and means. The section entitled, “Perceptions of Freedom”, includes a presentation of formal statistical tests as well as frequencies and means.

#### **5.3.1 Practices:**

Table (5.2) displays the results of the journalists’ and columnists’ daily visits to Web sites and their e-mail usage. The results indicate that most journalists visit Web sites for work purposes with 73% (n=149) responding “Daily or Almost Daily”. E-mail is the second most used communications tool among the journalists for work purposes (65%, n=129). Similarly, 70% (n=42) columnists visit the Internet daily or almost daily for writing purposes while 61% (n=37) of columnists responded that they use e-mail daily or almost daily.

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<sup>57</sup> The percentage of columnists that have Internet access at home is (97%, n=59).

**Table 5.2: Use of the Internet for Reporting and Writing Purposes**

Journalists	Daily or Almost Daily		At Least Once a Week		At Least Once a Month		Never	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Visits Web Sites	149	73%	36	18%	12	6%	8	4%
E-mail	129	65%	37	19%	22	11%	12	6%
Columnists	Daily or Almost Daily		At Least Once a Week		At Least Once a Month		Never	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Visits Web Sites	42	70%	12	20%	4	7%	2	3%
E-mail	37	61%	15	25%	4	7%	5	8%

Table (5.3) shows the results of the online sourcing practices of journalists before they write news stories. The data shows that 32% (n=62) of journalists use the Internet daily or almost daily to seek out diverse views before writing news. Meanwhile, 23.4% (n=45) of journalists “Never” use the Internet for seeking out diverse views on a subject via the Internet before writing a news story, 22.4% (n=43) “At Least Once a Week” and 22% (n=42) “At Least Once a Month”. Furthermore, 40% (n=75) of the journalists surveyed “Find new sources” via the Internet daily or almost daily. However, 41% (n=75) journalists never use online information as a primary source. It is worth noting that 73.5% (n=133) of journalists “Never” use online information without indicating it was obtained via the Internet.

**Table 5.3: Online Practices of Journalists**

	Daily or Almost Daily		At Least Once a Week		At Least Once a Month		Never	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Seek out diverse views on a subject via the Internet before writing a news story	62	32.3%	43	22.4%	42	21.9%	45	23.4%
Use online information as a primary source	30	16.4%	41	22.4%	37	20.2%	75	41%
Source news stories totally from the Internet (not using other news gathering techniques)	35	19.3%	40	22.1%	27	14.9%	79	43.6%
Use online information without indicating it was obtained via the Internet	20	11%	14	7.7%	14	7.7%	133	73.5%
Find new sources	75	40%	56	30%	33	18%	23	12%

The results below in Table (5.4) show that two practices of columnists are similar to the journalists. In fact, 47% (n=28) of columnists daily or almost daily seek out diverse views on a subject via the Internet before writing. Secondly, the results of the survey show that the majority, 53% (n=30), of columnists daily or almost daily find new sources via the Internet.

**Table 5.4: Online Practices of Columnists**

Columnists	Daily or Almost Daily		At Least Once a Week		At Least Once a Month		Never	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Seek out diverse views on a subject via the Internet before writing	28	47%	18	30%	5	8%	9	15%
Find new sources	30	53%	14	25%	10	18%	3	5%

Table (5.5) suggests the varying uses that journalists and columnists have for the Internet concerning their communication platform practices. A communication platform is a two-way interaction between journalists or columnists and online readers. The data indicates that 56% (n=115) of journalists use the advantage of online interactivity to receive readers' feedback. Moreover, 35% (n=65) of journalists responded that they daily or almost daily reply to users' feedback, while only 19% (n=36) of journalist never respond to readers' feedback. Conversely, columnists tend to be more interactive in using the Internet as a platform. The results of the survey indicate that 92% (n=56) of columnist receive readers' feedback via the Internet. In addition, 55% (n=33) of columnist respond daily or almost daily to readers' feedback. It is interesting to note that only 2% (n=1) of the columnists surveyed never respond to readers' feedback.

**Table 5.5: Responding to Readers' Feedback**

<b>Journalists</b>	<b>Receiving Readers' Feedback</b>	<b>Responding Daily or Almost Daily</b>	<b>Responding at least Once a Week</b>	<b>Responding At least Once a Month</b>	<b>Never Respond</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	115	65	55	31	36
<b>Percentage</b>	56 %	35%	29%	17%	19%
<b>Columnists</b>	<b>Receiving Readers' Feedback</b>	<b>Responding Daily or Almost Daily</b>	<b>Responding at least Once a Week</b>	<b>Responding At least Once a Month</b>	<b>Never Respond</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	56	33	18	8	1
<b>Percentage</b>	92 %	55%	30%	13%	2%

When the feedback from the Internet was compared with other communication tools (e.g., telephone, letters, and interpersonal), the results (as shown in Table 5.6) indicate that 38.4% (n=78) of journalists received less feedback via the Internet. In addition, 26% (n=52) of journalists surveyed responded that they do not receive readers' feedback. On the other hand, approximately 44.3% (n=27) of columnists actually received more feedback via the Internet, which is compared to 24% (n=49) of journalists survey. According to the results of the questionnaire, 5% (n=3) of columnists responded that they do not receive readers' feedback. Finally, the other result show that 75% (n=46) of the columnists surveyed for this study do use readers' feedback or views in their writings while 27.4% (n=51) of journalists never use online feedback to create or follow-up news stories.

**Table 5.6: Internet Feedback vs. Other Communication Feedback**

<b>Journalists</b>	<b>Less feedback via the Internet</b>	<b>About the same amount of feedback</b>	<b>More feedback via the Internet</b>	<b>I do not receive readers' feedback</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	78	24	49	52
<b>Percentage</b>	38%	12%	24%	26%
<b>Columnists</b>	<b>Less feedback via the Internet</b>	<b>About the same amount of feedback</b>	<b>More feedback via the Internet</b>	<b>I do not receive reader's feedback</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	22	9	27	3
<b>Percentage</b>	36%	15%	44%	5%

Credibility is one important factor that encourages journalists and users to turn to specific Web sites for news (Lewis, 2004). As shown in Table (5.7), the credibility of the information that is available on the Internet remains low among the journalists surveyed for

this study. In fact, 44% (n=88) of journalists surveyed were found to disagree on the information available online as it relates to credibility, while 31% (n=63) of journalists agree that the Internet does provide credible information. On the other hand, 45% (n=27) of the columnists that participated in this survey agreed that the Internet provides credible source of information and 32% (n=19) of columnists disagreed that the Internet provides a credible source of information.

**Table 5.7: Online Information Credibility among Journalists & Columnists**

<b>Journalists</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Std.</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	14	49	51	78	10	2.9	1.048
<b>Percentage</b>	7%	24%	25%	39%	5%		
<b>Columnists</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>		
<b>Frequency</b>	3	24	14	15	4	3.12	1.059
<b>Percentage</b>	5%	40%	22%	25%	7%		

When the participants were surveyed about specific news Web sites on a scale of five categories (See table 5.8), the data shows that Western (BBC and CNN) and Arabic (Alarabia & Aljazeera) news Web sites tended to be perceived by journalists as being strongly credible when compared to local print Web sites (See Appendix 5.1).

**Table 5.8: Credibility scale**

<b>Weight</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>1</b>	Refers to 'Always Credible'
<b>2</b>	Refers to 'Mostly credible'
<b>3</b>	Refers to 'Sometimes Credible'
<b>4</b>	Refers to 'Rarely credible'
<b>5</b>	Refers to 'Never credible'

Interestingly, the perception of the Internet's credibility varies among journalists when they were asked questions about weblogs and forums used in this research project (Table 5.9). Actually, this study found that the highest number of response were in the category of "sometimes credible". Similarly, this is the case with the columnists, but the

highest number of responses lies between “Mostly credible” and “Sometimes credible.” Furthermore, 59% (n=126) of the journalists surveyed and 72% (n=43) of the columnists perceive Kuwaiti weblogs and forums to be credible when providing coverage of disputable local issues.

**Table 5.9: The Credibility of Kuwaiti Weblogs & Forums**

Journalists	Kind of Web site	Always Credible	Mostly credible	Sometimes Credible	Rarely credible	Never credible	N
"Meezan" AlJasim Web site	Writer's Personal Homepage	n	19	47	61	12	7
		%	13%	32%	42%	8%	5%
Al-Shabaka Alibraliya weblog	Forum	n	10	36	57	22	8
		%	8%	27%	44%	17%	6%
Sahat Alsafat	Weblog	n	10	36	55	22	4
		%	8%	28%	43%	17%	3%
Alommah.org	Weblog	n	6	37	57	22	7
		%	5%	29%	44%	17%	5%
Columnists	Kind of Web site	Always Credible	Mostly credible	Sometimes Credible	Rarely credible	Never credible	N
"Meezan" AlJasim Web site	Writer's Personal Homepage	n	7	22	19	4	4
		%	13%	39%	34%	7%	7%
Al-Shabaka Alibraliya weblog	Forum	n	2	13	19	5	2
		%	4%	25%	36%	9%	4%
Sahat Alsafat	Weblog	n	2	16	17	4	1
		%	4%	30%	32%	8%	2%
Alommah.org	Weblog	n	3	19	16	6	9
		%	6%	36%	30%	11%	17%

Table (5.10) shows the results of online journalism's ability to influence the credibility and content neutrality of stories in the local press<sup>58</sup>. Among the journalists surveyed the means seem to suggest that the perceptions remain slightly above the middle of the Lickert Scale toward “agree” and “strongly agree”.

<sup>58</sup> Q34 & Q35 from Journalist's Questionnaire.

**Table 5.10: Local Credibility & Content Neutrality**

Statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Online journalism increased the credibility of news in local press	n	33	70	41	47	12	3.32
	%	16%	35%	20%	23%	6%	
Online journalism helps neutralize the stories and make them acceptable for local press	n	29	76	42	45	10	3.34
	%	14%	38%	21%	22%	5%	

The journalists surveyed in this study use the Internet for different purposes, but the highest rated use of the Internet according to journalists is for the reading of articles (67%, n=137)<sup>59</sup>. The second highest rated use of the Internet for journalists was e-mailing with (64%, n=130). Approximately 62% (n=127) of journalists ranked news stories as the third highest function of Internet use. For columnists, approximately 89% (n=54) of them responded that they used the Internet to read articles, which is the highest rating for columnists as a group. The next highest rating for Internet usage as it relates to columnists is the e-mailing of colleagues, which comprises 75.4% (n=46) of columnists. The third highest rated usage of the Internet according to columnists was for verifying facts (69%, n=42) (See Appendix 5.2).

Table 5.11 shows the results of journalists being asked to rank their top five uses of the Internet from the functions listed in question 25. It indicates that using e-mail to communicate with colleagues ranks the highest among journalists (49%, n=82). The second ranked function of the Internet identified by journalist is the reading of articles with (44%, n=74). The next highest reason that journalist use the Internet is for reading news stories, which is comprises approximately 39% (n=65) of journalists. There does appear to be some consistency among the Internet usage between journalists and columnists.

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<sup>59</sup> Question 25 from journalist's questionnaire and question 14 from columnist's questionnaire provided the respondents 21 functions of Internet usages to choose from.

Reading articles is the highest use of the Internet among columnists with 61% (n=36) from the functions list provided in question 14. The second highest use of the Internet for columnists was for e-mail with 46% (n=27). Lastly, 39% (n=23) of columnists use the Internet for information and/or quote purposes.

**Table 5.11: Top Five Usage of the Internet**

<b>Top Five Uses of the Internet Among Journalists</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
E-mail	82	49%
Reading articles	74	44%
News stories	65	39%
Follow up specific news	65	39%
Verifying facts	52	31%
<b>Top Five Uses of the Internet Among Columnists</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Reading articles	36	61%
E-mail	27	46%
Information and/or quotes	23	39%
Follow up specific news	21	36%
News stories	21	36%

For Lickert Scale results it is appropriate to use the mean to give a clear picture of the average answer. However, the standard deviation gives an indication of the average distance from the mean. As illustrated in Table (5.12), journalists use the Internet for a variety of other important purposes. Exposure to diverse information is the highest rated use of the Internet for journalists. The mean (m) for the journalists surveyed was 4.58. The second highest rated use of the Internet for journalists is to checking the Internet for news and ideas (m=4.27). Expressing their opinions freely (m=3.76) is the third highest reason for Internet use cited by the journalists. The next highest reason for Internet usage that journalists cited in this survey was that it encouraged them to write freely (m=3.67). The last ranked use of the Internet mentioned by journalist in this study is that it enabled them to check the accuracy of news stories (m=3.33). Therefore, the means from the above responses indicate that Internet functions positively used by journalists where average

answers remain around and within the “agree” category and toward the “strongly agree” category.

**Table 5.12: Responses to Internet Functions by Journalists**

Statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
<b>The Internet helps expose me to various information</b>	n	129	68	4	2	1	4.58
	%	63.2%	33.3%	2%	1%	.5%	
<b>I will always check the Internet for news &amp; ideas</b>	n	85	100	7	9	2	4.27
	%	42%	50%	3%	4%	1%	
<b>I express my opinion freely on the Internet than on my local newspaper</b>	n	65	69	23	36	6	3.76
	%	33%	35%	12%	18%	3%	
<b>The Internet encourages me to write freely</b>	n	56	77	22	41	6	3.67
	%	28%	38%	11%	20%	3%	
<b>The Internet is the place where I share my writings &amp; ideas with others</b>	n	37	88	24	44	4	3.56
	%	19%	45%	12%	22%	2%	
<b>The Internet is where I check the accuracy of news stories</b>	n	29	76	32	56	6	3.33
	%	15%	38%	16%	28%	3%	

Overall, the columnists surveyed for this study use the Internet for many of the same reasons that journalists did. However, the main difference between the Internet use by columnists and journalists is that columnist exhibited a higher mean ( $m=4.72$ ) in their responses which indicates that the Internet helps to expose one to various sources of information. The second highest function of the Internet cited by columnist in this study is that they always check the Internet for news and ideas ( $m=4.34$ ). Encouraging columnists to write freely ( $m=3.98$ ) was the third ranked function for Internet use by columnist. The next major purpose that columnists use the Internet for was to check for news accuracy, which resulted in a mean of 3.97. Columnists responded that they expressed their opinion more freely on the Internet than on their local newspaper with a mean of 3.78. The next highest mean for columnists' responses was a mean of 3.64, which indicated that the

Internet is the place where columnists share their writings and ideas with others (See Table 5.13).

**Table 5.13: Responses to Internet Functions by Columnists**

Statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
<b>The Internet helps expose me to various information</b>	n	44	17	0	0	0	4.72
	%	72%	28%	0%	0%	0%	
<b>I will always check the Internet for news &amp; ideas</b>	n	30	25	3	3	0	4.34
	%	49%	41%	5%	5%	0%	
<b>The Internet encourages me to write freely</b>	n	27	17	6	8	2	3.98
	%	45%	28%	10%	13%	3%	
<b>The Internet is where I check the accuracy of news stories</b>	n	18	30	4	8	0	3.97
	%	30%	50%	7%	13%	0%	
<b>I express my opinion freely on the Internet than on my local newspaper</b>	n	26	13	5	11	4	3.78
	%	44%	22%	9%	19%	7%	
<b>The Internet is the place where I share my writings &amp; ideas with others</b>	n	16	23	6	11	3	3.64
	%	27%	39%	10%	19%	5%	

### 5.3.2 Perceptions of the Freedom of the Press:

When addressing the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press at the local level,<sup>60</sup> which is illustrated in Table (5.14), the results show that approximately 52% of journalists (mean=3.25, & std.=1.241)<sup>61</sup> and 67% of columnists (mean=3.73, & std.=1.300) strongly disagree and disagree that online journalism has no effect on enhancing the freedom of the press at the local level. In other words, the results suggest that the majority of journalists and columnists both perceive that online journalism has an effect on the freedom of the press at the local level.

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<sup>60</sup> The statement in Q36 from journalist's questionnaire and Q22 from columnist's questionnaire "Online journalism has no effect on enhancing the local press freedom" addresses the main question of this research where the respondent has to select one of five categories from Likert scale (from Strongly Disagree = 5 to Strongly Agree = 1), however due to low sample in some categories, the categories were combined into three: Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 5, Don't know = 3 and Strongly Agree and Agree = 1)

<sup>61</sup> For both populations (N=264), the mean=3.36 and std.=1.268.

**Table 5.14: Online Journalism & Freedom of the Press**

Online journalism has <u>no</u> effect on enhancing the freedom of the press at the local level	Journalists	Strongly Disagree & Disagree		Don't Know	Strongly Agree & Agree	Mean	Std
		n	106	31	67	3.25	1.241
	%	52%	15.2%	33%			
	Columnists	Strongly Disagree Disagree		Don't Know	Strongly Agree & Agree	Mean	Std
n		40	6	14	3.73	1.300	
%	66.7%	10%	23.3%				

Table (5.15) shows respondents' perceptions of online journalism's effect on freedom of the press at the local level. The results indicate that journalists exhibited a positive perception on online journalism's ability to affect the freedom of the press, which is implied in the lower means for most of the statements below the "Agree" on Lickert Scale. Conversely, columnists' perceptions on the effect of the Internet on the freedom of the press at the local level were higher with the means above agree and toward strongly agree (See Table 5.16).

**Table 5.15: Journalists' Perception Regarding Online Journalism's Effect on the Freedom of the Press at the Local Level**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	
By helping journalists write freely about political subjects	n	76	70	29	25	1	3.97
	%	37.8%	34.8%	14.4%	12.4%	.5%	
Uncensored online publishing broaden the freedom of the press for local publishing	n	70	53	39	34	9	3.69
	%	34%	26%	19%	17%	4%	
Well-known individuals publishing sensitive political issues online encouraged journalists to publish similar issues locally	n	47	91	29	31	3	3.74
	%	23.4%	45.3%	14.4%	15.4%	1.5%	
Online publishing gave the impression that sensitive issues can be published locally	n	82	86	17	16	4	4.10
	%	40%	42%	8.3%	7.8%	2%	

**Table 5.16: Columnists' Perception Regarding Online Journalism's Effect on the Freedom of the Press at the Local Level**

Statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
<b>By helping columnists write freely about political subjects</b>	n	39	14	2	5	1	4.39
	%	64%	23%	3%	8%	2%	
<b>Uncensored online publishing broaden the freedom of the press for local publishing</b>	n	35	18	18	4	4	4.38
	%	57%	30%	30%	7%	7%	
<b>Well-known individuals publishing sensitive political issues online encouraged journalists to publish similar issues locally</b>	n	24	20	7	8	0	4.02
	%	41%	34%	12%	14%	0%	
<b>Online publishing gave the impression that sensitive issues can be published locally</b>	n	39	19	0	1	1	4.57
	%	65%	32%	0%	2%	2%	

The statistical T-test and F-test were conducted to measure both the correlation and differences between the populations of the sample. T-test evaluates the differences in means between small groups, while F-test (Analyse of Variance) compares more than one independent variable (gender, age, nationality...etc) at once to find separately the influence of each variable. Related statements<sup>62</sup> concerning perceptions and/or attitudes of the freedom of press at the local level were administered in one group. The results of the study indicate that perceptions of freedom of the press among columnists were found to be significantly higher than perceptions of freedom of the press among journalists. In fact, the p-value, which is an indication of the significance, was actually 0.000. The estimated

<sup>62</sup> Perception statements on the freedom of the press were administered from questions 29, 30, 31, and 32 of journalist's questionnaire and questions 17, 18, 19, and 20 from columnist's questionnaire: By helping journalists write freely about political subjects; Uncensored online publishing broadens freedom of the press for local publishing; Well-known individuals publishing sensitive political issues online encourages others to publish similar issues locally; Online publishing gives the impression that sensitive issues can be published locally.

marginal means, as shown in Table (5.17), clearly illustrates that perceptions of the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press are higher for columnists than for journalists.

**Table 5.17: Estimated Marginal Means for Journalists & Columnists**

Freedom Perception Perception	Mean	Std.	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Journalists	3.87	.781	3.766	3.99
Columnists	4.32	.775	4.123	4.531

Table (5.18) below shows the results of the F-test, which was conducted to calculate the correlation between journalists and columnists' nationality, gender, age, time period in the profession, and duration of Internet use, as it relates to perceptions of online journalism on affecting the freedom of the press at the local level in Kuwait. According to the results, male journalists were found to have greater freedom perception than female journalists, although the difference between the two genders is not highly significant (p-value=0.031). On the other hand, the difference between perceptions of the freedom of the press at the local level between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti journalists was highly significant (p-value=0.001) with Kuwaiti journalists displaying greater significance. As for the variables like age, duration of working in the profession, and the duration of Internet use, there were no levels of significance (p-values of 0.937, 0.577, and 0.102 respectively). In other words, these variables did not appear to affect the journalists' perceptions of freedom of the press at the local level (Table 5.18). However, the survey results also indicate that there is no significant difference among columnists with regard to gender, age, duration of working as a columnist, and period of Internet use, in association with perceptions of the freedom of the press at the local level (Table 5.16).

**Table 5.18: Other Factors & Perceptions on Freedom of the Press**

Journalists	Freedom Perception
	Sig.
Nationality*	.001
Gender	.031
Age	.937
Duration of working as a journalist (years)	.577
Duration of Internet use (years)	.102
Columnists	Sig.
Gender	.556
Age	.701
Duration of working as a columnist (years)	.259
Duration of Internet use (years)	.209

\*Since there are only two non-Kuwaitis, the nationality was excluded for columnists

The correlation between perceptions on the freedom of the press<sup>63</sup> among journalists and columnists was not significant ( $r=.348$ ) when the aggregate was considered. Moreover, the correlations between the two factors were not too dissimilar for journalists ( $r=.278$ ) and columnists ( $r=.486$ ) when they were considered separately.

#### **5.4 Conclusion:**

The results above indicate that the Internet plays an important role in journalists' and columnists' daily practices, especially as it relates to the communication and gathering of information. Journalists and columnists in Kuwait do not only rely on traditional tools (telephone & face-to-face interviews) to gather information in their work processes. In fact, the Internet has become another instrument that a majority of journalists and columnists use for work purposes on daily basis. For example, e-mail use, the reading of online articles, reading online news stories, following up on specific news, and finding

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<sup>63</sup> Question number 36 of journalists' questionnaire and Q22 of columnists' questionnaire state: "Online journalism has no effect on enhancing the local press freedom".

information and/or quotations were cited as top reasons for Internet use among journalists and columnists. Furthermore, the results of this study show that the Internet affects the practices of journalists, but it is important to note that it is not replacing the traditional practices. According to the results of this study, the Internet still remains limited for specific purposes.

This study showed that journalists mainly use the Internet as a sourcing tool or as a communication platform for conducting their work. As a sourcing tool, journalists seek, gather, and check information on the Internet, and they use it as a platform to interact and share views. In addition, this study showed that journalists check the Internet daily to seek out diverse views before they write the news. Furthermore, journalists use the Internet to source their own news stories and find news sources in their daily practices. Many journalists think that the Internet is an effective communicative and interactive tool that they can use with their readers. Besides receiving e-mails from readers, journalists seem to respond to readers' feedback and even use their feedback to create follow-up news stories.

As a group, columnists seem to be more affected than journalists are when it comes to the Internet. For example, the results of this study indicate that almost 70% of columnists visit the Internet for writing purposes with only 15% of them not seeking out diverse views on a subject via the Internet before writing a news article. Moreover, 61% of columnists use e-mail daily for writing purposes. In fact, 92% of columnists receive feedback from readers and 74% use reader feedback and/or views in their writings. These findings suggest that the Internet affects and possibly adds different practices for journalists and columnists, but that columnists tend to be more influenced by the Internet than journalists. At the same time, the surveys findings support the first hypothesis (H1) that the Internet has a limited effect on journalists' practices where traditional practices are still

used by most journalists. Although the Internet has not completely altered 'traditional practices' of journalism, it is clear by the results of this study that the Internet does influence the practices of both journalists and columnists.

Credibility is one of the most important factors that encourage journalists and columnists to browse specific Web sites for news. Since the information available on the Internet cannot always be reliable and valid, journalists in Kuwait remain sceptical and tend to view it as less credible. Since columnists in Kuwait only browse the Internet for information and not for the sole purpose of writing news stories, they tend to perceive the Internet as a more credible source than journalists. However, journalists and columnists perceive that English Western news Web sites are more credible than Arabic online news Web sites. Journalists and columnists perceive that electronic versions of local newspapers are less credible than Arabic online news Web sites. Consequently, when journalists and columnists perceive that news Web sites are credible, this tends to increase the positive perception online journalism has on freedom of the press at the local level. This is evident in the fact that the mean responses for columnists was 3.73 and the mean for journalists was 3.25 when this study examined the relationship between the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press at the local level.

Furthermore, the results from the surveys conducted in this study, as shown in Tables (5.15 & 5.16,) suggest that columnists perceive the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press at the local level more favourably than journalists. This point is supported by the small difference in the level of online freedom perception between the columnists and the journalist. Thus, the results of this study support the second hypothesis (H2) that local columnists are more likely to perceive online journalism as an effective tool that can enable the freedom of expression, the freedom to seek information, and the

freedom to share their views with others in online publications than local journalists. However, the perception of journalists and columnists concerning the effect of online journalism to enhance the credibility of the local press was not significant. In addition, the perception of journalists and columnists concerning the effect of online journalism to neutralize the content of the local press was also found to be not significant.

## Chapter Six: Analysis of Online Content

### 6.1 Introduction:

Online content analysis is the second tool used to measure the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press at the local level. The researcher observed online journalism in the form of personal online writer's homepages, weblogs, and forums from January 2006 to July 2006 with an emphasis on two concerns: 1) the constitutional issue after the death of Kuwaiti's Emir Sheik Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in mid January of 2006; and, 2) the Member's of Parliament (MP) demand to change the Electoral Constituencies in May of 2006, which led to new Parliamentary elections in June of 2006 in Kuwait. The observation included daily examination of Web sites focusing on news, themes, political analysis, illustrations and pictures, opinions, discussions, and readers' feedback. Materials related to the local press or freedom of the press in Kuwait that published the online work of writers *Meezan & Rai Al-Hur*, two weblogs *Sahat Al-Safat & Alommah.org*, and one forum *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* were thoroughly studied and analyzed throughout the duration of this study.

### 6.2 Coding of Content Analysis:

In order to get meaningful data, the materials were coded as context unites sorting similar concepts in one group as shown in table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Coding of Content Analysis**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Denotation</b>
<b>Analytical</b>	Presenting facts to logically analyze the situation
<b>Informative</b>	Only presenting facts related to the situation.
<b>Style Used</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Defensive:</b> Using vocabularies or sentences refuting allegations against a member of the Royal Family or the Kuwaiti government during Constitutional &amp; Electoral Constituencies' issues.</li> <li>b) <b>Attacking:</b> Using vocabularies or sentences attacking or against a member of the Royal Family or the Kuwaiti government during Constitutional &amp; Electoral Constituencies' issues.</li> <li>c) <b>Neutral:</b> Not showing any position during the Constitutional &amp; Electoral Constituencies' issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Explicit:</b> Openly mentioning details (e.g., titles, names, specific problems, scandal and secrets) about the topic.</li> <li>b) <b>Implicit:</b> Using insinuation or no overt mentioning of specific details (e.g., titles, names, specific problems, scandal and secrets) about the topic.</li> </ul>
<b>Royal Family's Affairs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Discussed in-depth:</b> Publishing details on the Royal Family, which openly cross the censored line, which was prohibited in the past.</li> <li>b) <b>Not Discussed in-depth:</b> Publishing information on the Royal Family without details, which is practicing self-censorship policy that does not cross the line.</li> <li>c) <b>Not Discussed:</b> No discussion of the Royal Family's affairs.</li> </ul>
<b>Names of the Royal Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Mentioned:</b> Specific names of the Royal Family are mentioned.</li> <li>b) <b>Not Mentioned:</b> No names of the Royal Family are mentioned.</li> </ul>
<b>Other Political Leader Personnel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Mentioned:</b> Printing names of political leaders working in Kuwait's government (ministers) or Parliament (MPs).</li> <li><b>Not Mentioned:</b> Not printing names of political leaders working in Kuwait's government (ministers) or Parliament (MPs).</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Two Issues Analyzed:

**Constitutional Issue:** In January 2006 Kuwait experienced a political dispute when the Emir, Sheik Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, died and the Crown Prince<sup>64</sup> was not capable of succeeding him due to his own illness (Al-Zu'abi, June 2006). As a result, this created two factions within the Royal Family: those who supported the ailing new Emir<sup>65</sup>, Sheik Saad

<sup>64</sup> In accordance with the constitution and the fourth article of the 1964 Emirate Inheritance, the Council of Ministers declares Crown Prince Sheikh Saad-Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah the next Emir of Kuwait.

<sup>65</sup> After the death of the Emir Sheik Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, 2006 the Crown Prince Sheik Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah became for a short period the Emir. A after the Parliament removed him he was called *Emir Al-Walid* (The Father Emir). It is a common practice within the Royal Family that the Emir rotate between the two main branches in Al-Sabah family.

Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, and those who supported the former Prime Minister, Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Henderson, July 2006; BBC News, 23/1/2006). This conflict resulted in a constitutional disagreement among the Royal Family, the constitutional court, the parliament, and the government over whether to leave the ailing new Emir as ruler of Kuwait or for the parliament to remove him from power. On January 24, 2006, after the Royal Family failed to solve the issue regarding the succession of the ailing new Emir, the Kuwaiti Parliament voted to oust him from power<sup>66</sup>. Not only was this Parliamentary action an extraordinary practice in Kuwait, but it was also unusual for any of the Arab states. After that, the Council of Ministers nominated Sheik Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, to be elected as the next Emir. After winning the majority of votes needed of the National Assembly, the former Prime Minister became the 15<sup>th</sup> Emir of the state of Kuwait and thereby ended the historic nine days of constitutional disagreement.

During this period of constitutional conflict the local media (i.e., print, radio and TV) failed to clarify and communicate this political situation (Al-Duaij, 21/5/2006). Historically, the affairs of the Royal Family were completely “family business” and the prevailing viewpoint is that citizens ought not to interfere in these personal issues. The local media seemed to adopt the policy of “mutual respect”, which entailed not reporting on the Royal Family’s internal affairs. However, what was not reported in the traditional media outlets on the Royal Family’s disagreements, disputes and problems, became the foremost subject of public discussions online.

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<sup>66</sup> The letter of abdication was presented to the Parliament shortly after the voting.

**Electoral Constituencies Issue:** Free elections began in Kuwait's National Assembly in 1963 with 10 Electoral Constituencies (*Dawa'er* in Arabic) with each of the Electoral Constituencies possessing five seats. However, the electoral voting did not give the Kuwaiti government the majority of power in the Kuwaiti Parliament. During the 1981 elections, the Kuwaiti government implemented 25 new Electoral Constituencies and each constituency was given two seats, which gave the Kuwaiti government the power to control the elections because many of the candidates that were chosen were loyal to the policy priorities of the Kuwaiti government (McElhinny, 9/6/2006). The addition of 25 Electoral Constituencies was not without controversy. In fact, there was an outcry of public criticism and concern from the MPs, which perceived these methods by the Kuwaiti government as illegal and corrupt. Fueled by the bribery that helped to facilitate pro government MPs' business within the government, as well as other corrupt practices (services deputies), the public viewed this action by the Kuwaiti government as a corrupt way to win the election (Alnajjar, June 2006).

In May 2006, 29 MPs demanded the reduction of the 25 Electoral Constituencies (Al-Zu'abi, June 2006). As a result, the Kuwaiti government appointed a Ministerial Committee which was headed by the Interior Minister to study the dilemma and file its recommendation to the Council of Ministers. The committee recommended five Electoral Constituencies each with ten seats and a maximum of four votes (Al-Etaibi, 5/5/2006). Unfortunately, this recommendation was adamantly rejected by the Kuwaiti officials, which led to a heated dispute within the Kuwaiti Parliament (Al-Abdali et al., 10/5/2006). The controversy that ensued was that the MPs insisted on the five Electoral Constituencies, but the Kuwaiti officials sought the 10 Electoral Constituencies. Obviously, the MPs did not trust this political maneuver by the government. So when the MPs accepted the 10

Electoral Constituencies, the government decided to refer the bill that sought to reduce the number of Electoral Constituencies from 25 to 10 to the Constitutional Court. This challenge prompted the MPs to consider this move by the government as a way to corrupt the political system, which ultimately triggered the dismembering of the Kuwaiti Parliament and a call for new elections (Al-Zu'abi, June 2006). Although these actions occurred during the time period between May 1<sup>st</sup> and May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006, it was on May 5<sup>th</sup> that the Ministerial Committee concluded its report and four days later the Kuwaiti government adopted the 10 Electoral Constituencies. On the 15<sup>th</sup> the Kuwaiti National Assembly discussed the bill and some MPs voted with the government referring the bill to the constitutional court which led to the withdrawal of the 29 MPs from Parliament's hall, on the 17<sup>th</sup>, three MPs decided to grill the Prime Minister<sup>67</sup>, and on 21<sup>st</sup> the Emir dissolved the Parliament.

#### **6.4 Kuwaiti Online Journalism:**

For the purposes of this study, online journalism includes personal online writers (Meezan & Rai Al-Hur), weblogs (Sahat Al-Safat & Alommah.org), and forums (Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya). These elements were selected because of their known popularity among Kuwaiti online users and the significant roles they played during Kuwait's Constitutional and Electoral Constituencies affairs. Currently, the online writers, weblogs, and forums remain active, but unfortunately, one forum (Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya) decided to quit for good.

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<sup>67</sup> May 29<sup>th</sup> was the date scheduled to grill the Prime Minister.

### **6.4.1 Writers' Personal Online Homepage:**

For the purposes of this study, two personal online writer's homepages *Meezan*<sup>68</sup> & *Al-Rai Al-Hur*<sup>69</sup> were thoroughly observed during the constitutional and electoral constituencies' issues. The aim was to examine the effect that the content of these homepages had on the freedom of the press at the local level. At the time the study was conducted the personal homepages of these online writers' were the only known Kuwaiti personal Web sites that had the ability to write freely with no government censorship.

#### **6.4.1.1 Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim *Meezan*:**

Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim, a lawyer and the former editor-in-chief for *Alwatan* local newspaper (1997-2005), was one of the sources used to analyze political and social issues in cyberspace with no limitations. In April of 2005, Mr. Al-Jasim started his own homepage, which writes political articles focused on issues related to government corruption, but he predominately writes articles related to the affairs of the Royal Family in Kuwait. On his online homepage entitled, *Meezan* (See Figure 6.1) it is generally accepted that Al-Jasim's work incited the initiative to conduct in-depth analysis of the local political system without any restrictions and fear of government interference (Al-Dayeen, 25/3/2007). The content of Al-Jasim's homage is considered beyond the standard of local freedom of the press in Kuwait and even in Gulf States.

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<sup>68</sup> <http://www.aljasem.org/>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.raiur.com/index.php>

Figure 6.1: Al-Jasim's Personal Homepage 'Meezan'



Mr. Al-Jasim argues that an individual's freedom of expression is the primary right of a human being that cannot be taken away and even with the high level of freedom in the Kuwaiti local press there are always limitations (e.g., self, political, economic and social interests) that can cause frustration among the members of society. However, in cyberspace an individual can practice his or her individual freedoms without any limitations (Al-Jasim, 2005). As a result, Mr. Al-Jasim decided to create a personal online Web site to encourage the emergence of freedom of the press such that it may embarrass key production members of the local press and compel them to decrease their self-censorship.<sup>70</sup>

In his first online article entitled “*Alsultah Tahat Alsultah*” (The Authority under the Authority) on 3/6/2005, Mr. Al-Jasim began his initiative to show his disdain for the local

<sup>70</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim in 23/12/2006.

press. In this article he tries to show how the former Emir (Sheik Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah) grew in political power by accusing the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (the current Emir) of making strategic mistakes. This article was quickly circulated throughout Kuwait and on the first day the story was posted online there were 40 visits to Al-Jasim's Web site. In fact over the course of a few days there were more than 400 visitors to Al-Jasim's Web site and it only took 24 hours for the Web site to be circulated without publicizing the Web site's address<sup>71</sup>. In his second article entitled, "*Bitantik Ya Sheik Wayid Kharbanah*" (Your Origin Sheik is Very Much Ruined) on 10/6/2005, Al-Jasim reveals the underlying reasons behind government corruption and he examines how hypocrisy became part of the Kuwaiti society. He notes that<sup>72</sup>:

The first article I wrote astonished the readers. They were wondering how come a person in Kuwait has the courage to write these types of articles! It is impossible unless he is backed up by a strong man...instead of focusing on the content of the articles, they tried to find the reasons why I am writing openly, and why I wrote this article after I quit the newspaper? Are the Americans behind me? Other went further and said this is a play because the Prime Minister won't let him write these sorts of articles unless he has a green light to do so!<sup>73</sup>

The average number of weekly visitors to Al-Jasim's Web site is over 2,000. However, during times of political turmoil the number of visitors can reach upwards in the neighborhood of between 6,000 and 7,000 hits per week. On 6/2/2007, Al-Jasim celebrated the second year of *Meezan's* existence with over 2,000,000 visitors and more than 100,000 prints; he also received more than 4,000 e-mails from readers (Al-Jasim, 1/6/2007) (See

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<sup>71</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim in 23/12/2006.

<sup>72</sup> The original quotation was said in Arabic and translated into English but the author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

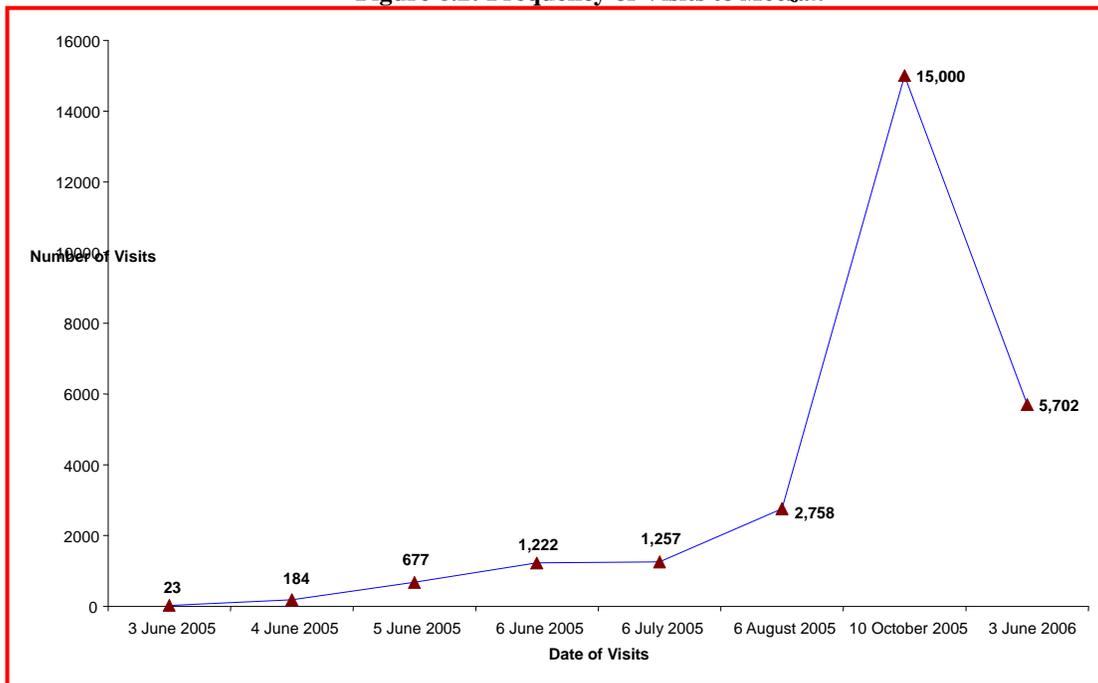
<sup>73</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim in 23/12/2006.

Table 6.2 & Figure 6.2).

**Table 6.2: Frequency of Al-Jasim's Web Site Visits**

Actions from 15-23 /12/2006	
Date	Number
Reading articles	16,588
Printing jobs	848
E-mails	31
Visiting the site	11,634
Sending to friends	23

**Figure 6.2: Frequency of Visits to Meezan**



Mr. Al-Jasim claims that his articles indirectly affected the local press. In his interview he noted that there were many instances where some editors-in-chief of some of the local newspapers in Kuwait have leaked information to him, which he published online. Al-Jasim notes that “One columnist told me that all columnists of local press are

embarrassed because I have been writing freely and they are not allowed to do so”,<sup>74</sup> which had been traditionally prohibited by members of the local press. In fact, a well-known local columnist, Ahmad Al-Dayeen (25/3/2007), wrote in his daily column that Al-Jasim’s Web site:

The prevailing face of the colleague Abdul Qader Al-Jasim is the one of a professional and disputatious journalist when he was editor-in-chief for *Alwatan* newspaper, and the other face is the one of a harsh critic writer of local issues through his site ‘*Meezan*’ on the Internet with his weekly brilliant and sensitive articles, that raised the space of political writing in Kuwait to unprecedented levels (25/3/2007)<sup>75</sup>.

In the interview with Al-Jasim he claimed that he has some influence on the local press in Kuwait. He is honest in noting that he encouraged some local newspapers to write on issues and subjects that they never published before. For instance when the Emir met with the members of the Sharia Completion Committee on Ramadan in 2006 he told them he wanted to dissolve the Kuwaiti Parliament without asking for re-election and a member leaked the news of the event to members of the press. On the very same day an editor-in-chief for a prominent local newspaper contacted Mr. Al-Jasim and told him about what the Emir discussed in that meeting. According to Al-Jasim, the editor-in-chief urged Al-Jasim to write about this on his Web site because the editor-in-chief could not publish this kind of news locally due to fear of retribution from the government. As a matter of fact, no local newspaper published anything on the issue of Parliament being dissolved until a few days after Al-Jasim’s article appeared online. Al-Jasim notes that it was only “because I broke

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<sup>74</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim in 23/12/2006.

<sup>75</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English but the author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

the psychological barrier that forced the local press to publish it”,<sup>76</sup> that the local newspapers in Kuwait actually reported on the story. In a Kuwaiti weblog entitled, “Jiblasquare” on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, 2006 Al-Jasim was called “the most dangerous man in Kuwait”<sup>77</sup>. Furthermore, opponents of Al-Jasim also went online accusing him of receiving support from the American Embassy. In online news Web site<sup>78</sup> called “*Shabakat Sawt Alkuwait Alakhbariya*” (Voice of Kuwait News Network), Mr. Al-Jasim was accused of being an instrument of the American political machine, only writing pro American articles (Sautalkuwait.com, 30/9/2006).

In 2005 Mr. Al-Dayeen noted in an interview that he visited a high-ranking government official and saw on his desk a printed copy from Al-Jasim’s homepage written on it top secret, which in his view “shows the discrepancy of this bureaucratic mentality of the government”<sup>79</sup>. Besides writing weekly online, Mr. Al-Jasim decided in 2008 to write for a local newspaper claiming that they decided to give him free space to bring his online experience to the local press with the hope of enhancing the awareness level of the freedom of the local press. This was more important than ever, especially when some local columnists began using similar language that Al-Jasim had been using in cyberspace, which is evident when Al-Jasim writes, “the newspaper published some articles which I was not sure would be published locally”<sup>80</sup>.

On the day that Mr. Al-Jasim received a death threat from an unknown source his

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<sup>76</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim in 23/12/2006.

<sup>77</sup> <http://jiblasquare.blogspot.com/>

<sup>78</sup> The website <http://www.sautalkuwait.com/> is not updated daily and does not identify, however, it has an e-mail contact.

<sup>79</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Ahmad Dayeen in 1/11/2007.

<sup>80</sup> E-mail interview with Mohammad Abdulqader Al-Jasim in 2008.

Web site was blocked by the office of the National Security for a few days (Al-Thubaiti, 10/3/2006). Al-Jasim wrote an article indicating to the readers that blocking his Web site would not make any difference because he has the ability to purchase any number of possible domain names, as well as having the ability to e-mail nearly 2,592 readers (Al-Jasim, 1/10/2006). However, the blocking of his Web site by the office of The National Security did annoy him, which he wrote about in an article entitled, “*Malek Alfitnah Hathir!*” (The King of Sedition is Present!). In the article, Al-Jasim urged those behind the blocking of his Web site to accept the reality that this action would not stop him nor journalists/columnists from writing freely. He raised many questions with no answers:

What scares you in this site? Is it possible the regime is shaken and affected by a weekly article that did not exceed 800 words? Is the system or the family or the government or the country vulnerable to be shaken from an article?...Then lets suppose that you blocked this site, so can you close the minds of the people and eradicate their tongues? What about the dialogues exchanged by people in *Diwanias* (social gathering) and boards? Do you have the technology to "withholding thinking"! Also, what I write here is incomparable with what is published in the Internet forums, in these forums, people say what they want to say without even inferior compliment!...Don't you see that my articles are republished in most Kuwaiti forums and in many local and foreign sites? Can you close all those sites? (Al-Jasim, 1/10/2006)<sup>81</sup>.

On Friday, 22 June, 2007, Al-Jasim wrote an article entitled, “*Hata Enta Ya Bo Subah!*” (You Also father of Sabah!), which accused the Kuwaiti government of using public money to gain MPs’ support during a National Assembly’s lack of confidence vote ‘grilling’<sup>82</sup> for the oil minister (Sheik Ali Al-Jarrah). Moments later Al-Jasim received a phone call from the Prime Minister (Sheik Nassir Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah) denying the

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<sup>81</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English., The author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning

<sup>82</sup> Local English newspaper called the vote a lack of confidence “grilling”.

allegation and on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 2007, most local newspapers published the story in respond to Al-Jasim's article<sup>83</sup>. Because of this article he received a death threat through an e-mail, which he filed a complaint (Lazim, 24/6/2007).

During the Constitutional Issue Al-Jasim wrote many critical articles regarding the constitutionality of the issue criticized the actions of the Speaker of the Parliament Mr. Jasim Al-Kharafi, the apparent hidden agenda of Mr. Al-Kharafi, the illegality of the situation, and the power disputes within the Royal Family. Al-Jasim's writing in this case seemed to go beyond the recognized and generally accepted standards of local media. Using a candid, explicit, and aggressive style, Al-Jasim exercised one of the highest levels of freedom that ever existed in the local press in Kuwait, which was evident in the fact that he actually named and accused a member of the Royal Family as one of the reasons for the political corruption in Kuwait.

In his first article entitled, "*Allah Khayr Hafith!*" (Allah Best Guardian!), Al-Jasim criticized the Speaker of the Parliament by accusing him of unfair interference with affairs of the Royal Family and the fact that he sided with the Prime Minister (Al-Jasim, 17/1/2006). The second article published on 18/1/2006, and entitled, "*Somew Alshiek Jasim*" (His Highness Sheik Jasim), referred to the Speaker of the Parliament who is not a sheik, but who tried to act as a member of the Royal Family. In this article Al-Jasim urges the Royal Family to solve their problems through understanding and compromise so that the dignity of the Crown Prince is protected while also keeping the family united. Al-Jasim argues that the Speaker's hidden agenda is to weaken the Royal Family's power in an effort

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<sup>83</sup> See for example, the issues on 24/6/2004 for Alwatan, Alqabas and Alseyassah newspapers.

to transfer more power to the other local families (traders) so that they may affect the elections of the next Emir (Al-Jasim, 18/1/2006).

In Al-Jasim's third article published on 21/1/2006, entitled, "*Hal Yajooz Azil Alsheik Saad?*" (Can Sheik Saad be Exempt?), he praised the Kuwaiti Constitution for being the source for all groups, but argued that the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament used the powers of the Constitution to wrongly convene a special session of Kuwait's National Assembly to remove the Crown Prince. Al-Jasim claimed that Article 3 of the 1964 Succession Law<sup>84</sup> was inapplicable in the absence of the Crown Prince and stated that these powers do not extend to the next Emir. The Constitution is clear that a Crown Prince must be elected and Al-Jasim's article was the first to signal the discrepancy in the interpretation and implementation of the Constitution (Al-Jasim, 21/1/2006b).

In his fourth article entitled, "*Alsheik Saad Ramz..Walromooz La Tuqsa*" (Sheik Saad is a Symbol...and Symbols Should Not Be Exempt) (21/1/2006), Al-Jasim continued his criticism of Parliament's misuse of the Constitution to oust the ailing Crown Prince. He noted that it was the wisdom of the elder members of the Royal Family that saw the illegality of this maneuver (Al-Jasim, 21/1/2006a).

In "*Hathi Akhratha!!*" (This is the End of It!!), Al-Jasim's fifth article, which was published one day before the special session of the National Assembly, he discusses the exception of the Crown Prince in reference to Articles 3 & 4 of the 1964 Succession Law.

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<sup>84</sup> Article three of the 1964 Emirate Inheritance law states that "for the Emir to practice his constitutional authorities, he should not miss one condition of the conditions that should be available in the Crown Prince. If he losses one of these conditions or his health ability to practice his authorities, the Ministers Council after making sure of that, brings the matter to the Ummah council ( Parliament) to consider in his case in a special secret session... If it is deliberately proved for the council that the condition is dropped or the aforesaid ability, it will decide by a two third majority of its members the transfer of authority practice to the Crown Prince temporarily or the presidency of the state for him permanently."

In addition, he blamed the Royal Family for their negative behavior toward the Crown Prince and discussed how this destroyed their image both locally and internationally. He writes:

Whatever was the ‘outcome’, the reputation and the prestige of the ruling family locally and internationally is at stake. I do not know how the ruling family’s future will be...but how can Kuwait be governed after today...Don’t let the celebrations that will take place for the winning party deceive you, let the winner wins whoever wins...What is the benefit of winning after the loss of identity?...You wrestled at the time when Sheik Jabir’s grave was still wet. We gave you our condolences and your eyes were towards the governance...your faces sapped not for being sad for Sheik Jabir as much as they were weary from looking forward to rule (Al-Jasim, 23/1/2006)<sup>85</sup>.

On the same day that the Kuwaiti National Assembly voted to oust the newly elected Emir (the former Crown Prince) and recognized Sheik Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jabir Al-Sabah to be the next Emir, Al-Jasim wrote his last article on 24/1/2006 entitled, “*Akher Alshiyokh Alhaiba!!*” (Last Prestigious Sheiks!!)<sup>86</sup>. Al-Jasim explains that although Kuwait was experiencing a historic struggle of political power, there were neither tanks nor arrests. Al-Jasim is quick to note that Kuwait’s Constitution was the main source of this stability. In addition, Al-Jasim explained in this article that the new Emir, Sheik Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jabir Al-Sabah, might be the last prestigious Emir, given that the Royal Family lost its historic momentum throughout the process of choosing its Emir. Since it is illegal to criticize the Emir in accordance to the Kuwaiti Constitution, he decided not to criticize him anymore.

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<sup>85</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English. The author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

<sup>86</sup> The author used this title for his book published later in Kuwait which contains selections of articles that he published online.

During the historic Electoral Constituency event in 2006, Al-Jasim wrote eight articles online that critically analyzed and commented on this event<sup>87</sup>. In his first article published on 29/4/2006, entitled, “*Hasafa Aleek Ya Ahmad!!*” (Pity You Ahmad!!), Al-Jasim analyzed how well-known figures such as the Speaker of the Parliament and Sheik Ahmad Al-Fahad (the Emir’s nephew) lost their respect among the public. He noted in this article that these individuals tarnished their reputations and respect trying to keep their influence and maintain the ways of the old era alive. This was obvious when their criminal photographs appeared on the Internet, exposing them as criminals or unwanted on the net, which was impossible in the old era, Al-Jasim claims (See Figures 6.3 & 6.4).

Figure 6.3: Negative Picture of Emir’s Nephew As It Appeared Online



<sup>87</sup> First article published on 29/4, 5/5, 12/5, 14/5, 16/5, 19/5, 22/5, and 26/5/2006.

Figure 6.4: Negative Picture of the Speaker of the Parliament As It Appeared Online



On 5/5/2006, in the article entitled, “*Bisht Alsheik!*” (The Sheik’s Cloak!), Al-Jasim argues for the decrease in the Electoral Constituencies. He insisted that there must be a guarantee for free voting and the sheiks’ interferences in the elections must be constricted. Al-Jasim argued in this article that the uniqueness of this current political situation brought about new ways of public self-expression in Kuwait, which helped to remove governmental (sheiks’) interference from the election process. He writes:

Superiority popular public attitude and the multiplicity of the efforts being made for the ‘militarization’ of public opinion either through the use of the Internet, telephone messages, via public forums or via articles in some newspapers, all these efforts commemorated in fact public opinion and awoken it from a deep slumber... (Al-Jasim, 5/5/2006)<sup>88</sup>.

In the article published on 12/5/2006, entitled, “*Alshiyookh Mo Abkhas!!*” (Sheiks Are Not Superior!!), Al-Jasim continued with the argument that a political boycott would

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<sup>88</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English, The author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

pressure the decision-makers to reconsider their agenda. Coincidentally, he argued that if action was not taken to reform the corrupt people within the political institution it would embarrass the Royal Family (Al-Jasim, 12/5/2006). Similarly, he argued on 14/5/2006, in the article "*Alestiqala Wala Shay Ghairha!*" (Resignation & Nothing Else!), that what is needed is for the MPs to resign their positions. Furthermore, Al-Jasim wrote that if the MPs had a genuine sense of nationality they would regain the support of the public and peacefully oppose and prevent those who try to revolt against the principles of the Kuwaiti Constitution and jeopardize the current and future of Kuwait (Al-Jasim, 14/5/2006). Two days later Al-Jasim wrote an article entitled "*Enaha Muwajaha Mustahiqa Fe'alan!*" (It is Quite Worth Confrontation!) in which he warned the youth that make up the majority of the popular public attitude to not let anyone take advantage of them and he encouraged them to push their political agenda.

In Al-Jasim's articles published on 19, 21, and 26 of May, 2006, he evokes the same themes that he mentioned in previous publications concerning the importance of the youth movement. Al-Jasim wrote that the youth movement was a result of the blunders in the electoral voting process which helped them force their agenda on the Kuwaiti government and achieve their goal of ridding individuals and factions within the government of political corruption in the country. This seemed to urge the Royal Family to take serious steps toward recalculating their internal family differences, which would ultimately result in public respect and prestige. Al-Jasim responded to the Emir's speech that sought to dissolve the Parliament by refuting his claim that the dispute brought sedition in the country. He wrote that it is not realistic for "sedition to start with a public movement and end with the Emir's decree" (Al-Jasim, 26/5/2006). On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, 2006 Al-Jasim wrote a letter to the Emir entitled, "Risalah Ela Sahib Alsomow" (Letter to His Highness),

explaining that the Kuwaiti people are anxious to see reforms take place that would stop the sheiks who are responsible for corrupting the political system in Kuwait. He writes:

What we expect from you Your Highness, after members of the ruling family went further in seeking to sabotage the firmed democratic approach to which you referred to and desire to protect. The Kuwaiti people are now declaring regret and complain about the interference of some members of the [Royal Family] in the elections to the extent that it is hurting the existing relationship between the Kuwaiti people and the ruling family. Your Highness, over the past years an element of subversion has emerged in the political work. It is devastating where method of political bribery dominant the country and this method, Your Highness, has no place and no need in Kuwait. The people love the ruling family and owe allegiance to it, and what the people of Kuwait hope for is to deter anyone who is attempting to achieve the political aspirations through buying the votes, whether they are members of the ruling family or those who follow them (Al-Jasim, 22/6/2006).

During this Electoral Constituencies issue, the *Meezan* Web site received 103,323 visits and 5,418 printings<sup>89</sup>.

#### **6.4.1.2 Ali Jabir Al-Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah *Rai Al-Hur*:**

Mr. Ali Jabir Al-Salem Al-Sabah, former local columnist and a member of the Royal Family, started his online homage page entitled, “*Rai Al-Hur*” in September of 2001, so that he could write freely without any regulation or censorship (See Figure 6.5).

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<sup>89</sup> Excluding copying and pasting the articles.

Figure 6.5: Al-Sabah's Homepage Rai Al-Hur



His first article entitled “*Aykitho Almarid*” (Wake up the Giant) appeared on 16/9/2001. Mr. Ali Al-Sabah stated that the main reason that he established his Web site was his tiredness of governmental control of the local media news without understanding the future consequences and without respecting the opinions of those who are forming public opinion (Al-Sabah, 2001). Mr. Al-Sabah has readers’ feedback under each article and sometimes his feedback appears in response to the reader’s feedback<sup>90</sup>. He usually writes at least four articles a month that deal mainly with issues related to Kuwait, but sometimes the content of his articles extends to other issues affecting other Arab countries or issues specific to the West. As a current member of the Royal Family his writings are particularly significant. He is the first member of the Royal Family in Kuwaiti history to take on such a profession. However, this connection has not prevented him from criticizing his own Al-Sabah family. In fact his criticism has been known to extend to even his uncle (Sheik Salem Al-Ali) who is the oldest and most prestigious member of the Royal Family (Al-Sabah, 15/2/2007). In

<sup>90</sup> Al-Jasim claims that reading and responding to readers’ feedback requires plenty of time because feedback needs to be filtered and he needs to respond personally since he doesn’t trust others to do the job.

his article titled “*Hodat Al-Sabah Warajul Qudwah*” (Al-Sabah’s Assurance and a Leadership) on 26/11/2005, he wrote how Kuwaiti citizens have historically chosen not to interfere with the affairs of the Royal Family unless it was necessary to do so for the sake of objectivity.

However, Mr. Al-Sabah disapproves of the mentality of those members of the Royal Family that surround the Emir but carry different points of view on how to rule the country. For instance Mr. Al-Sabah writes that the blockage of Mr. Al-Jasim’s homepage “*Meezan*” illustrates that governmental censorship is a real threat to the freedom of the press (Al-Sabah, 26/11/2005). On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, 2007, the Emir met with members of the Royal Family to express his disappointment with many significant issues happening in Kuwait and one of them in particular was a discussion on cyberspace. The Emir indirectly criticized Mr. Al-Sabah’s Web site stating, “I am surprised that one of you [of the Royal Family] put on the Internet a site attacking his uncle and his brothers” (Al-Salman et al., 15/4/2007).

In many of his articles Mr. Ali Al-Sabah tries to maintain a level of objectivity and freedom of expression with his readers while at the same time neutrally addressing the challenges confronting Kuwait. He uses civilized words and an open style in his articles. Unlike Al-Jasim, Mr. Al-Sabah avoids using the actual names of the Royal Family in a negative manner, which has brought about some criticism of his writings. One reader named Al-Mutairi wrote on 5/6/2006, in response to an article appeared on 3/6/2006, entitled, “What Does Orange Mean?,” which referred to the color used by anti 25 Electoral Constituencies:

Be honest and just. Please write the real truth. I think this is the least you could do for Kuwait. Sheikh Ali, I really like what you write, but what I do not like is that you are always diplomatic in your articles and just circle

around the truth without hitting the real targets people expect to see in your write-ups. History proves that corruption was a handmade [tool of one person] of one body in Kuwait and you know him better than I do.

(Al-Sabah, 3/6/2006)

After the death of the Emir, during the Constitutional issue, Ali Al-Salem did not write any articles<sup>91</sup>. However, after the issue was over and the new Emir came to power he wrote one short article on 27/1/2006. As a result approximately 65 readers responded with comments which overwhelmingly placed the blame of the situation on the Royal Family and the citizens for ignoring the principles of qualifications in the government sector. He raised some critical questions regarding the scenario that some members of the Royal Family played during the situation. He stated that he wondered if there was a forgery during the arguments referring to the letter of demission sent by the Crown Prince. In his conclusion, Mr. Ali Al-Sabah called for the efficient cooperation between the office of the Emir and the Kuwaiti National Assembly to prevent any future communication barriers between them.

During the Electoral Constituencies issue Mr. Al-Sabah wrote two articles in May, 2006. The main idea of these articles “*Layysat Min Maslahat Al-Kuwait*” (Not in the Interest of Kuwait) & “*Alashir Almanatiq Afthal min Khams*” (Ten Districts are Better than Five) concentrated on who was behind the affair that betrayed the Prime Minister, blaming the government and its specialists ministers, the speaker of the Parliament, as well as himself for the chaos that Kuwait went through (Al-Sabah, 17/5/2006). Mr. Ali Al-Sabah does not use attacking or hateful language in these articles. Instead he writes analytically and discusses the issue at hand. However, in many of these articles he focuses on the

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<sup>91</sup> This may be because he was part of the family negotiating team.

individual(s) that may be responsible for the corruption. In one of the responses dated 26/5/2006 to the article called “Not for the Interest of Kuwait”, a reader named (Q80y) writes that<sup>92</sup>:

Through my search of Kuwaiti sites for those who are interested in the political situation of Kuwait, they have recently become a shelter for those who seek real information and truthful news of the country away from falsehood of the local newspapers (most of them and all 5s!!) which have become a platform for corruption and polishing the corruptors, rather than reporting their crimes to be an example for others. This is the duty of the press in the respected and developed states. It may be the sword that is directed on the corrupt that is even sharper than the Parliament’s and the political monitoring authorities, because...they [online journalism] appreciate public opinion and respect citizens who have every respect! Our gratitude goes to Sheikh Ali and to all other brothers who are administering such national sites of goodwill (Al-Sabah, 17/5/2006).

#### **6.4.2 Weblogs and Forums:**

With the advancement and availability of Internet technology and easy to use programs for weblogs and forums, more and more Kuwaitis became webloggers and forum administrators. For example, one Kuwaiti blogger set up a Web site just to monitor (watchdog) plagiarism in the work of the local press as well as develop a monthly indicator of the local freedom of the press throughout Kuwait (Bader Al-Kuwait, 2007). Others created weblogs to address controversial issues not discussed in the traditional local press media outlets. During the Constitutional and the Electoral Constituencies’ events many Kuwaiti weblogs and forums provided information, data, news, and openly discussed these matters freely in cyberspace. The weblogs and forums that were selected for this study

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<sup>92</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English. The author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

were chosen because they are locally recognized by local newspapers, columnists, or other weblogs for their efforts in influencing the local press and for their superior reporting during these issues.

#### 6.4.2.1 Sahat Al-Safat Weblog:

In January of 2005 three young bloggers: Jandeef, Mobtade, Bu Salem, and later Rasheed Al-Khatar established *Sahat Al-Safat* weblog<sup>93</sup>. As shown in Figure 6.6, the main page illustrates the latest posting of articles (mainly in Arabic but sometimes in English), news, opinions, and pictures. Issues on the weblog contain local, national, and international news. According to Mr. Jandeef, the weblog was created to be a “place for others to post their comments freely with no censorship, unlike in forums” (E-mail Interview with Mr. Jandeef, March 2007).

Figure 6.6: Sahat Al-Safat Homepage



During the Constitutional event in January of 2006 the weblog’s activities “pushed

<sup>93</sup> <http://kuwaitjunior.blogspot.com/>

typical media outlets to reconsider their reporting models... [and] pushed the envelope in terms of what's considered a red line because they failed to provide updated inside information regarding the issue as the weblogs did"<sup>94</sup>. Mr. Jandeeff notes:

We have almost no constraints. It costed us \$0 to set it up. We're not getting paid for it. It's not owned by anyone. So we have more freedom to comment on and cover issues that newspapers wouldn't cover for several reasons. Also, blogs being an online vehicle makes it more dynamic and interactive with the recipient<sup>95</sup>.

*Sahat Al-Safat* deals with various local issues but also extends beyond to cover international issues. Articles constantly appear in the site criticizing local newspapers, especially *Alwatan*, for their biased reports or questioning their hidden agendas<sup>96</sup>. On 13/2/2005 Mr. Mobtade explained that there are five people in Kuwait that appear to set the agenda for the news. Mobtade argues that the five editors-in-chief from the only five local newspapers have the ability to sway the public to take one of two sides: pro or anti government while controlling the truth (Mobtade, 13/2/2005).

On December 18, 2005 in an article entitled, "*Ana Kuwaiti Wa Ahib Alkuwait*" (I am a Kuwaiti and I Love Kuwait) published on the front page of *Alwatan* newspaper for an author known for his prejudice against other sects of the Islamic religion, Jandeeff noted that the purpose of an article was to fuel debates and hatred between the different sects that make up Kuwaiti society (Jandeeff, 18/12/2005) (See Figure 6.7).

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<sup>94</sup> E-mail interview with Mr. Jandeeff, manager of Sahat Al-Safat , in March 2007.

<sup>95</sup> E-mail interview with Mr. Jandeeff, manager of Sahat Al-Safat , in March 2007.

<sup>96</sup> See for example, Alraialaam 19/5/2006 and Alseyassah 20/5/2006.

Figure 6.7: The Front Page of Alwatan Newspaper



#### 6.4.2.2 Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya Forum:

The Forum *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya*<sup>97</sup> started in 2002 and is a liberal online discussion forum that encourages the sharing of various kinds of opinions, news, information, events, and illustrations. However, the forum mainly discusses issues such as politics, sports, art, religion...etc that are related to Kuwait. All members are welcome to share their views freely and explicitly, but only in accordance with the rules set by the administrators. The forum requires writing in the Arabic language and users are not permitted to use a local dialect or ‘street language.’ In addition, users are banned from writing on any topic that aims to publicize ideas, opinions, and information against liberalism. The supervisors<sup>98</sup> monitor this forum 24-hour a day, seven days a week to prevent any illegal actions. The supervisors try to ensure that the topics do not permit

<sup>97</sup> <http://secularkuwait.org/vb/>

<sup>98</sup> The supervisors are selected by the managers of the site and are mainly active members.

dialogue on sensitive religious topics such as the ongoing debate between Sunnis and Shiites. If any member violates the rules that govern the forum, an administrator will take action against the individual, which may result in an alert, a warning, temporally suspension, or even permanent termination on accessing the forum (See Figure 6.8).

Figure 6.8: Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya Forum



Articles and news reports printed in the local press are freely discussed in the forum either to refute or support them. A local columnist Misheal Alnnami (a member of the forum) constantly publishes his banned articles in *Alseyassah* local newspaper to get the members' feedback. Dr. Sajid Al-Abdali, a local Islamic columnist had this to say in his local column about the forum<sup>99</sup>:

One of the impressive matters in *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* is that it contains topics dealing with intellectual political Kuwaiti affairs with absolute freedom, particularly the current hot events, which I couldn't find in any Kuwaiti sites whether it was Islamic sites or otherwise. This has brought to my knowledge with absolute certainty that a new era of electronic journalism has become present with no doubt, and time of obstacles,

<sup>99</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English. The author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

blocking and elimination has gone with no return. Banning an article in a local newspaper with a few thousands Kuwaiti readers, will make it appear online with millions of readers from all corners of the world...Despite the fact that *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya Al-Kuwaitia* contain loads of issues in which I may not agree with intellectually and systematically, it remains an exquisite site that deserves appreciation, and I wish for more improvement intellectually and methodologically (Al-Abdali, 21/1/2006).

In February of 2007, after five years of being active on the Internet, the Web site was terminated. Here is what a member of the Kuwaiti National Network Forum wrote concerning the Web site:

*Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* was the most successful political forum, yet at the same time, the most controversial one. It was considered to be the official Web site for the voice of people, where it had an impact on public opinion and local issues...The Web site was characterized for its wide range of freedom to express opinions that many writers, columnists, and intellectuals quoting subjects that were expressed in the forum by its members, in fact, some local, Gulf and Arab newspapers were complementing the Web site, at the same time, there were some writers who wrote against it<sup>100</sup> (Lucifer, 4/4/2007).

In April of 2007 a new forum was established that had a similar name called, “*Shabakat Al-Hiwar Al-Libralia*”,<sup>101</sup> but it had a new administration and regulations. It was not as good as the former *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya*, however, it encouraged the expression of different ideas and open discussions. The local Internet Service Provider (ISP) blocked the site because many pro-Islamists felt that Islam was being unfairly assaulted (Al-Duaij, 4/6/2007; Bader Al-Kuwait, 2007). Similarly, on March 25, 2007, in the forum called

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<sup>100</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English. The author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

<sup>101</sup> <http://secularkuwait.net/>

“*Sahat Al-Eradah*”,<sup>102</sup> which was established during the Electoral Constituency’s issue supporting the Five Districts, decided to quit. The decision to quit raised suspicious doubts in the mind of the public. Many started to question whether or not the forum was terminated because of pressure from the Kuwaiti government.

### 6.4.2.3 Alommah.Org Weblog:

*Alommah.org*<sup>103</sup> is a weblog magazine and forum dedicated mainly to the Kuwaiti National Assembly issues and publishes information only on Parliamentary issues as of 2007, has also a discussion forum of approximately 2,350 members (E-mail Interview with an administrator of *alommah.org*, March 2007). Established in January of 2003, this online archive of Parliamentary affairs publishes MP questions, suggestions, and statements. Soon after, a section was added to the Web site for columnists (See Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9: Alommah.Org Homepage



When the Electoral Constituencies event arose, the Web site changed its policy and

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.sahtaleradah.com/forum/> During the constituencies’ dispute between the government and pro & con MPs, this Web site was established to keep updated news and information and to show its solidarity for those who supported the five constituencies.

<sup>103</sup> <http://www.alommah.org/home/>

became more politically active in local politics. An explicit position of the Web site is summed up in the following, “addressing issues and activated them from the Internet to the local arena from the world of fantasy to the real world”; the hidden identities of its members provided them the ultimate freedom to criticize any official in the government, Parliament, or public figures without the fear of being arrested<sup>104</sup>. The Web site was part of ISP blocking and in February of 2007 the local ISP, Kuwait Electronic & Messaging Services (KEMS), blocked the *Alommah.org* Web site, which required the Web administrators to change to another server.

*Alommah.org* is one of the few Web sites that published pictures of accused/charged individuals, which included corrupted members of the Royal Family and members of the elite class in Kuwait (See Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10: Pictures of the Royal Family Appearing on many Web Sites



The Web site started a campaign against the local press to show how biased, unreliable, and invalid in its reporting. As a matter of fact it accused the local newspaper, *Alwatan*, of taking an unfair position against MP Mohammad Al-Sager because he argued against the owner (Ali Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah) of the *Alwatan* newspaper (1/05/2007). To

<sup>104</sup> E-mail interview with a member of Alommah.org in March of 2007.

refute this allegation the Web site provided a video clip that shows the facts of the situation in an unbiased manner. Over time *Alommah.org* became the “watchdog” of the local press and its mission was to expose the misinformation, lies, propaganda, and any non-journalistic work that was published in print media. For example, on 15/4/2007, *Alommah.org* published an article showing how *Alwatan* distorted the coverage of a prominent MP by the name of Mr. Ahmad Al-Sadoon, even after the Emir rejected the accusation in his speech on the matter, which was reported in the *Alqabas* and the *Alseyassah* local newspapers.

On 19/8/2007, in response to a negative comment made on the *Alommah.org* Forum that criticized the self Emir,<sup>105</sup> the manager, Mr. Bashar Al-Sayegh and another journalist, Mr. Jasim Al-Qames who worked for the local newspaper *Al-Jarida*, were arrested and beaten<sup>106</sup> by the Kuwaiti Secret Police (Amin Al-Dawlah). The comment was deleted after the Web site administrator discovered it, but the user who made the comment is still under trial. According to reports published in local press, weblogs, and forums, this arrest contradicts Article 31<sup>107</sup> of the Kuwaiti Constitution.

### **6.4.3 The Role of Weblogs & Forums during the Two Political Issues:**

During the Constitutional issue the *Sahat Al-Safat* weblog<sup>108</sup> was the most active source for news and information. In fact it posted 15 reports with constant updates on the latest news events. On three occasions during the day, the weblog posted news throughout

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<sup>105</sup> It is illegal by law to criticize the Emir.

<sup>106</sup> The photographer claimed he was beaten and threatened by a dog while his eyes were covered.

<sup>107</sup> Article 31 states: (1) No person shall be arrested, detained, searched, or compelled to reside in a specified place, nor shall the residence of any person or his liberty to choose his place of residence or his liberty of movement be restricted, except in accordance with the provisions of the law. (2) No person shall be subjected to torture or to degrading treatment.

<sup>108</sup> Sahat Al-Safat celebrated its first anniversary on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

the morning, the afternoon, and at night. The first report posted on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 2006 had 19 comments. By 21<sup>st</sup> of January, 2006 this frequency increased to 56. Two days later, on 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, 2006, this number increased to 157<sup>109</sup> and reached 112 for the two reports on the 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2006.

The first article addressed the issue of oath<sup>110</sup> and refuted the statements made by the Speaker of the Parliament that appeared in the *Alraialaam* local newspaper (17/1/2006). In this article, the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Jasim Al-Kharafi, claimed that the former Emir of Kuwait, Sheik Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah ‘Father of the Constitution,’ did not speak the exact oath in 1963 because he was already the Emir at that time, and the Kuwaiti Constitution did not require the exact oath in this kind of circumstances. It was impossible for the ailing Crown Prince Sheik Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah to read the exact oath of which he is legally obliged. The weblog refuted these claims and addressed the hidden agenda of the Speaker of the Parliament while broadcasting online the video oath of 1963 (Khatar, 17/1/2006). In the second article titled “*Ejtima’e Alosrah: Kalakeet Awal Marrah*” (The Family’s Meeting: Ruins for the First Time) published on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, 2006 Rasheed Al-Khatar wrote about the meeting of the Royal Family that ended with no agreement to dissolve the dispute over the next Emir. As a result of this article Jandeeff wrote an article two days later on how the *Alqabas* newspaper courageously appealed to the

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<sup>109</sup> 40 + 28 for the two morning reports, 38 for the afternoon report, and 51 for the night report.

<sup>110</sup> The crucial issue of the constitutional affairs was article 60 of the constitution regarding the Emir’s oath in the Kuwaiti National Assembly which states: Before assuming his powers the Amir shall take the following oath at a special sitting of the National Assembly: "I swear by Almighty God to respect the Constitution and the laws of the State, to defend the liberties, interests and properties of the people and to safeguard the independence and territorial integrity of the Country". Since the new ailing Emir was not able to read the exact oath standing in the National Assembly, the Speaker of the Parliament insisted that article 60 is clear and should be implemented supporting the other branch of the family. There are two main branches in the Royal Family: Al-Salem branch (the new ailing Emir) and Al-Ahmad branch (the current Emir), and historically the position of Crown Prince switches between the two branches. However, which has also been done before, the current Crown Prince is from the same branch of current Emir (Al-Ahmad).

newly elected Emir, compelling him to step down, which raised suspicion among members of the media on the possibility of a hidden agenda (Jandeef, 20/1/2006). On 21<sup>st</sup> of January, 2006 a news update appeared in a story format with analysis of the situation while questioning the Kuwaiti TV station and Kuwait wire service (KUNA) for their reluctance to report the new Emir's request to have an oath section and press refusal to publish neither news regarding the ailing new Emir nor from members of Al-Salem group challengers of the Prime Minister (Khatar and Jandeef, 21/1/2006).

In 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, 2006 the article titled "*Talab Somow Alemir Liaqed Jalsat Alqasam Yadhkol Matahat Altafseerat Aldestoriya*" (The Emir's Request for Oath's Meeting Will Enters a Labyrinth of Constitutional Interpretations) provided detailed reporting and analysis of the latest news with more focus on media coverage of the situation accusing the local press for their biased reporting:

What is most frightening is the extent of Al-Sabah camp [the current Emir] control of Kuwaiti media, although the Emir is still receiving telegrams of condolences, the television shows only those addressed to Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad [the current Emir], in an apparent attempt to increase the obstacles to Al-Salem camp and make Sabah Al-Ahmad Emir of Actual Reality (Khatar and Jandeef, 22/1/2006).

The article also focused on the actions taken by the local ISP (FASTtelco) to block all weblogs with blogspot.com addresses because of the Kuwaiti government's fear of their objective and balanced reporting and coverage of the situation (Khatar and Jandeef, 22/1/2006). Following reports were all devoted to updated news and analysis of the issue, ending with the following appreciation letter to the readers on the 25<sup>th</sup>:

We have tried in *Sahat Al-Safat* during those days to be a source of accurate and reliable news...We recognize that many of you were only aware of *Sahat Al-Safat* after the constitutional crisis...Yet *Sahat Al-Safat* recently celebrated its first anniversary, and will carry on its humble role to assist everyone through news analysis and presentation of news, showing the

bright aspects of our country and criticizing other than that (Salem et al., 25/1/2006).

The *Sahat Al-Safat* weblog gained in credibility among the Kuwaiti public and this was due to as Jandeef (March 2007) explains:

I think we established our credibility during the constitutional crisis when most local media outlets were rooting for this or that side, while people came to SS [*Sahat Al-Safat*] to read about the day's events, and woke up in the morning to find they were fairly accurate.

During the Electoral Constituencies issue the weblogs<sup>111</sup> and forums (*Sahat Al-Safat*, *Al-Shabakah Al-Librallyya*, and *Alommah.org*) played a vital role in supporting the new Electoral Constituency demand put forth by the MPs in a collation known as the “29 Coalition” to reduce the electoral constituencies voting from 25 to 5 districts. This coalition started the ‘*Nabiha Khamsa*’ (We Want Five) campaign, which was an effort begun to gain strong public support. In an attempt to demonstrate their solidarity with the MPs, most of the participants consisted of Kuwaiti youth who made the transition from the cyberspace to the practical life.

As a whole, the weblogs consolidated their activities and shared information between each other to strengthen their influence. Throughout the course of the youth movement there were no specific groups or individuals that led the charge, which gave it a sense of anonymity. In fact, a kind of collective leadership arose where each blogger and online user acted spontaneously by themselves (E-mail Interview with Mr. Jandeef, March 2007). This online community really created what can be called an “online public sphere”. In this environment each user had the opportunity to present his or her view freely with

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<sup>111</sup> More than forty weblogs were recognized for their participation in the *Nabiha Khamsah* (We Want Five) campaign.

other users, without any limitations on freedom of expression. The discussions included all aspects related to the Electoral Constituencies. After the establishment of a TV station<sup>112</sup> support rallies were staged by members of the youth movement in front of the National Assembly that praised the Minister of Information's resignation. Many members of the youth movement even encouraged other Ministers to follow his lead. They disgraced the MPs who were against the new bill by creating big posters, banners, stickers, T-shirts, and orange flags, which became the symbol of opposition.

Sahat Al-Safat's weblog became one of the most famous Web sites for up-to-date news, information, pictures, videos, analyses, and for planning activities for the youth campaign within the country of Kuwait, even though the Web site resides outside Kuwait (Jandeef, 6/5/2006). A new Web site ([www.kuwait5.org](http://www.kuwait5.org)) was created which was dedicated entirely to the youth campaign of Nabihah Khamsah (We Want Five). *Alommah.org* also supported the MPs of the 29 Coalition by publishing their activities and actions on the Internet. It also published negative articles with pictures for those individuals that believed they were dismantling the democratic system in Kuwait, which included ministers, MPs, and members of the Royal Family. In this forum members also discussed disputes and criticized many local newspapers for their biased coverage of the campaign. For example, on May 21, 2006 a member named Asheq Al-Kuwait of *Alommah.org* Forum who had a firsthand account of the pro government rally refuted a story which appeared in the local

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<sup>112</sup> The government banned the TV station "*Nabihah Tahalof*" and other stations from Arabsat and Nilesat satellites claiming it was organizing the satellite airing in violation of the new Press Law. However, the TV station "*Nabihah Tahalof*" resumed airing on Hotbird satellite.

newspaper *Alseyassah*<sup>113</sup> that stated the pro government protest came with many busses filled with government supporters.

The government feared the growing influence of the youth campaign and its ability to affect public opinion; therefore, it started challenging the weblogs through the local press. Articles began to appear in some of the local press outlets that condemned the youth campaign. Many of the pro government columnists<sup>114</sup> also attacked the leaders of the campaign accusing them of a lack of experience in politics, since they mainly consisted of youth<sup>115</sup>. Pictures that appeared in *Alommah.org* were widely republished in many forums and weblogs. Similarly, news, opinion, and analysis were exclusively circulated between weblogs and forums, especially if they were related to distorted articles that appeared in the local newspapers. For example, on May 15, 2006 a member of *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* obtained a picture published on *Alommah.org*, which commented on how the *Alwatan* newspaper tried to distort the news (See Figure 6.11).

Figure 6.11: Refuting News in Alwatan Newspaper



<sup>113</sup> See YOUSEF, R., AL-HAJRI, K., AL-OMRAN, B. & AL-GHANAM, G. (21/5/2006) Tafaqamat... Wa 'Alhal' Khilal Saat. *Alseyassah*. Kuwait,

<sup>114</sup> Columnists such as Fouad Al-Hashem from *Alwatan* newspaper and Faisal Al-Qinae from *Alseyassah* newspaper.

<sup>115</sup> See the daily articles of Fouad Al-Hashem of *Alwatan* newspaper that appeared during the period of May 5<sup>th</sup> to May 25, 2006.

*Alwatan* local newspaper seems to have falsified these images on the blue movement rally,<sup>116</sup> which were widely distributed among weblogs and showed how *Alwatan* forged these pictures (*Sahat Al-Safat* on 25/5/2006). For example, a picture printed in the *Alwatan* newspaper, which shows thousands of individuals attending a rally against the new electoral bill during the constituencies voting issue, was actually falsified in the Forum with details fabricated (See the Next Figures 6.12 & 6.13)<sup>117</sup>.

**Figure 6.12: Falsifying Pictures Appeared in Local Newspaper**



<sup>116</sup> This pro government movement called itself Blue Movement and was created in response to the Orange Movement.

<sup>117</sup> Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, deputy editor-in-chief of *Alwatan* newspaper, claims that the pictures were not fabricated nor were images of people duplicated in the pictures.

**Figure 6.13: Falsifying Pictures Appeared in Local Newspaper**



As a result of this public campaign, the Coalition of 29 MPs submitted a request to “grill” the Prime Minister, Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammad Al-Sabah (the first ever in the history of the Parliament), which led to the dissolution of the Kuwaiti Parliament on 21<sup>st</sup> of May, 2006 and a call for new elections on 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 2006, but with the current 25 Electoral Constituencies<sup>118</sup>.

The elections brought new challenges for the weblogs and forums to help the MPs of the Coalition of 29 and new candidates who supported the five Constituencies increase their chances of winning the election, at the same time ensuring that the MPs who were against the bill reducing the electoral voting to five will not win the re-election. The youth actions included convincing members in the Coalition of 29 to run again for a seat in Kuwaiti Parliament,<sup>119</sup> campaigning against the MPs who supported the government position, filming undercover bribes, and assistance in cracking down on illegal tribal

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<sup>118</sup> This is the fourth time the Kuwaiti National Assembly was resolved (1976, 1986 and 1999).

<sup>119</sup> A few MPs were hesitant to re-run and the movement succeeded to change their minds. However, it failed with one former MP.

elections. A new weblog also emerged named *Shabab Thid Al-Fasad*<sup>120</sup> (Youth Anti-Corruption) aimed at informing the public of illegal activities during the elections.

During the 2006 elections the weblogs and the forums continued practicing their role as the watchdogs of local newspapers, especially those who were against the electoral changes, publishing evidence to refute the distorted information while discussing the matters with other users. For example, on 28/6/2006 the *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* forum discussed what it called the lies that the *Alwatan* newspaper reported on how an Islamic group had decided that they were going to vote for each candidate with the idea of trying to neutralize the voters (*Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya*, 28/6/2006). After the 2006 Elections on 2/7/2006 *Alommah.org* responded with the below statement on what was written in the local press about Kuwaiti bloggers and the youth campaign during the elections:

We have incurred a lot of ridicule from most newspapers and things were said about us that were not supposed to be said. Do you recall *Alwatan* ‘the yellow newspaper’ and what they have written about the “*Nabiha Khamsah*” [We want Five] campaign?? And *Alseyassah*’s switch from five to ten constituencies? Do you recall the *Alanba* newspaper’s position and its support for the twenty-five constituencies? Do you recall the grey position of *Alraialaam* newspaper? All the newspapers except *Alqabas* had blindly fallen under the government’s support trap and sought personal interests with other government parties awaiting rewards and deceived the people through what was previously published about us, accusing us of causing the dissolution of the *Majlis Alommah* (the National Assembly), portraying us as the minority and the other party as the majority, and distorting the image of the youth gathering...Today, we have proven to them who is the majority and how the five Electoral Constituencies were on the top of the election agenda for all male and female candidates. Do you get it? We want Five and enough distortion (*Alommah.org*, 2/7/2006).

During the 2006 elections, many local newspapers reported unfair and one-sided news

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<sup>120</sup> <http://shbabxfasad.blogspot.com/>

stories either to distort the facts for their own agenda or to help bolster support for a specific candidate as shown in Figure 6.14. The newspaper seems to have falsified an image that appeared on 7/6/2006 which appears to illustrate that more women attended the Speaker's speech when the contrary is the case. This is suspicious because the ownership of *Alraialaam* (the local newspaper that published the image) is connected to the former Speaker of Parliament (Mr. Jasim Al-Kharafi) who was running for re-election at the time.

**Figure 6.14: In June 6, 2006 Fabricated Pictures Appeared in Alraialaam**



The efforts of the weblogs were rewarded when most of the members of Coalition of 29 won their re-election and the numbers were increased to a total of 32 members. During the first session of the Kuwaiti National Assembly a majority vote passed the bill for five Electoral Constituencies to be implemented in the next election in 2010<sup>121</sup>. This victory acknowledged the achievements of the youth movement and their online and offline

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<sup>121</sup> In 2008, the Emir resolved the Parliament and called for new elections on May 17<sup>th</sup> with five Electoral Constituencies.

efforts in affecting public opinion and restoring a sense of democracy in Kuwait. After the elections a group called the “*Altahalof Alwatani Aldemocrati*” (National Democratic Alliance)<sup>122</sup> tried to publish an advertisement in many local newspapers, but it was rejected by *Aseyassah* and *Alqabas*. However, after the news circulated online, especially after the *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* and the *Alommah.org* posted the statement on their Web site, the local newspaper *Alqabas* decided to print the statement as a news report, but removed and edited some sentences. The discussions in the Forum at the time claimed that the Internet forced the newspaper to reconsider its decision but representatives at the *Alqabas* denied this (*Al-Libraliyya*, 3/7/2006).

#### **6.4.4 Local Columnists’ Reaction to Online Journalism:**

The opinion pages are the most important sections in all Kuwaiti newspapers. Besides credibility, columnists help to enhance newspapers’ readership and differentiate each other from the competition. Readers choose specific newspapers, not only for their news coverage, but also for the quality of their columnists. Most newspapers have two or sometimes even four opinion pages, not including the last page, which is intended for selected popular columnists.

Many local columnists wrote positive articles praising the affect of online journalism on freedom of the press, as well as its ability to increase users’ information, knowledge, and opportunities for accessing new ideas. During the events that transpired during both the Constitutional and the Electoral Constituencies, columnists were very active and wrote in strong support of the youth movement and against the methods the

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<sup>122</sup> <http://tahalof.blajat.com/>

Kuwaiti government used in cyberspace. Mr. Abdullatif Al-Duaij, a liberal columnist with the Alqabas daily newspaper, was strongly praised for his weblogs and forums, daily columns, and for his coverage of the youth movement's actions during the Constitutional issue and his efforts to report the facts that local media neglected to report (Al-Duaij, 21/5/2006). In fact, he wrote many columns admiring the actions of the youth movement and encouraged them to continue the momentum that their cause created. Mr. Al-Duaij and other daily columnists strongly recognized the online youth solidarity for their involvement in strengthening a sense of democracy in Kuwait. In his column on 21/5/2006, entitled "*Lilhaqiqa Wa Liltareekh Wa Liman Yahimoho Alamer*" (For the Truth and for History and To Whom It May Concern)<sup>123</sup>, Al-Duaij states that during the Constitutional crisis, weblogs ushered in new ways of delivering credible media sources throughout Kuwait that the local and traditional press outlets failed to cover and deliver on a continuous basis. He writes<sup>124</sup>:

The constitutional crisis that resulted from the death of His Highness the late Emir and the inability of government agencies and even public agencies (which banned newspapers to publish some of the issues) to cover the event, brought a major impetus to the youth movement as *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya Al-Kuwaitia* and *Sahat Al-Safat* weblogs became active in providing continuous true coverage of the real events of that period. The failure of official agencies and the paralyzed press had led the youth to 'receive' the initiative. It is no secret to anyone that *Sahat Al-Safat* and *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* in that period became the information center even for our own newspapers themselves (Al-Duaij, 21/5/2006, p. 11).

Currently, Mr. Al-Duaij writes in his daily column about the importance of weblogs and forums and their ability to enhance the freedom of the press in Kuwait. In addition, his

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<sup>123</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English. The author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

<sup>124</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic and translated into English. The author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

writings at the time encouraged the youth to keep their efforts alive, while at the same time accusing the local ISPs of using their power to block the weblogs. Mr. Al-Duaij claims that the administrators of the *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* did not decide to quit by themselves, but (as rumors spread) they received direct and indirect warnings and pressure from the Office of National Security of the Kuwaiti government (Al-Duaij, 12/2/2007). Dr. Sajid Al-Abdali, an Islamist and a former columnist at *Raialaam* (*Alrai*) newspaper<sup>125</sup>, also praised the youth movement for their weblogs and forums, which helped to drive a shift in Kuwait's public opinion during the Constitutional and Electoral events. Dr. Sajid Al-Abdali also lauded the youth movement for their credible content and quality of coverage in comparison to the local newspapers and TV stations. In an article on 21/1/2006, entitled, "*Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya*" (The Liberal Network), Dr. Sajid Al-Abdali was amazed when he visited *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya's* Web site and acknowledged its uniqueness from other weblogs for its freedom in discussing Kuwaiti political issues by noting that the era of censorship no longer exists. Dr. Sajid Al-Abdali stated that any banned article that may or may not be read by a few thousands local readers can now be published online and accessed by millions of readers (Al-Abdali, 21/1/2006). He explains in his regular column that<sup>126</sup>:

The clearer, more explicit, more direct and courageous follow-up media coverage of what happened during the past period and of the current ongoing political events, have not been published in the daily print newspapers nor broadcasted via any satellite TV stations, but published on the Internet in the Kuwaiti forums and weblogs sites regardless of their different views. The forums and the weblogs crossed the stage of spreading

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<sup>125</sup> Dr. Sajid Al-Abdali established his own website to publish his articles and communicates with online readers: <http://www.sajed.org/index.php>, and currently he writes for the new local newspaper called *Aljarida*.

<sup>126</sup> The original quotation was written in Arabic which was translated into English, but the author modified some of the words to give a similar meaning.

news and follow up coverage to a new stage of making news, directing and moving the public towards it. Many of the protests and symposiums were announced from these sites. Many of the rumors rebuffed and refuted in these sites. Many of the corruption clarified, identified, and exposed their followers by the knights pen of young men and women on these sites... (Al-Abdali, 22/6/2006).

However, Mr. Al-Abdali believes that the *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* forum ultimately failed because it promoted the freedom of expression, which seems to be the ruin of many weblogs in Kuwait and throughout the Arab region; the freedom to express one's beliefs, opinions, and ideas sometimes results in conflict and insulting remarks by those who are in disagreement. Dr Ahmed Al-Rubai<sup>127</sup>, a regular columnist at the *Alqabas* daily newspaper and a known liberal, wrote that the Arab government will regret their crackdown on weblogs and forums. Al-Rubai argues that these weblogs and forums are considered to be more influential and technological than the governments who would be entering in a "war against ghosts not knowing their names or address"; however, Mr. Al-Rubai raised an ethical question regarding the relationship between the freedom and the responsibilities where many weblogs took advantage of this freedom by creating slander, hatred, prejudice, and sectarianism, and attacking people's beliefs (Al-Rubai, 25&27/2/2007).

On the other hand, there are columnists who wrote against the freedom of expression in weblogs. As a matter of fact, Mr. Ahmad Al-Kous, a regular contributing columnist in the *Alwatan* daily newspaper and known Islamist, wrote against the liberal and secular Web sites. Mr. Al-Kous urged members in the Kuwaiti government to shut down these Web sites and accused them of disseminating lies, false news, rumors, and misinformation, which he argued would undermine the reputation and dignity of the

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<sup>127</sup> Dr. Ahmad Al-Rubai died in March 2008.

Kuwaiti people, especially the rulers (Al-Kous, 28/5/2006). Mr. Faisal Al-Qinaee, a regular columnist with the *Alseyassah* daily newspaper, in his column entitled, “*Diktatoriat Allibraliyeen!*” (The Liberals’ Dictatorship) argued that since the members of ‘liberal’ weblogs knew nothing about politics they were ignorant. Mr. Faisal Al-Qinaee went further and stated that these bloggers actually misused their freedom of expression, since all they did was publish their views and blocked those who disagreed with their viewpoint (Al-Qinaee, 29/5/2006).

## **6.5 Conclusion:**

The findings of the content analysis show that the language used to discuss and analyze issues on the Kuwaiti online journalism (e.g, personal online homepages, weblogs and forums) seemed to transcend that which is considered traditional standards in the local press (Red Lines). This technology and its ability to address local issues, especially discussing the affairs of the Kuwaiti Royal Family by presenting their names and/or their unfavourable pictures in comprising situations was almost limitless. During two major issues (Constitutional and Electoral Constituency) in Kuwaiti history, online journalism permitted individuals to criticize the actions and affairs of the Royal Family in a free and open environment, which allowed online users to discuss these sensitive issues without direct and traditional retribution from the Kuwaiti government.

It is possible to suggest that online users’ anonymity could explain how many online users were able to express their views, opinions, and ideas freely, but this was not always the case. In fact, Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim intently and courageously used his own Web site, the *Meezan*, to openly and negatively criticize the affairs of the Kuwaiti Royal Family, which is one of the issues that is self-censored in the local press. Al-Jasim’s

writings encouraged other online publications to follow.

For the first time in a public domain in Kuwait, the style and content of Al-Jasim's online writings actually characterized members of the Kuwaiti Royal Family as corrupt and suggested that they be removed from their positions of power within the government. The analysis that Al-Jasim's work fostered was a critical examination of the Royal Family that included a well-known and influential member of the family. Not only did he use objective and critical language to reveal and expose members of the Kuwaiti Royal Family and senior officials within the government, but also their images and video clips were posted online. The combination of words, images, and video gave online users insight into the corrupt nature of some of the members of the Royal Family and government officials within Kuwait.

In responses to the criticisms made by online journalism, some members of the Royal Family and some members of the senior Kuwaiti government criticized members of the online journalism community for being inaccurate and biased in their reporting, citing online journalists and columnists lack of awareness and experience in political affairs of Kuwait. Pro government columnists negatively reacted by writing and publishing articles in the local press that attempted to refute many of the online allegations and in the process accused online users for their hidden political agenda.

The local press also took a lion's share of these harsh criticisms. Critiques of published articles and images in the newspapers were the subject of many online discussions. During the Constitutional and Electoral Constituencies issues the collective initiative of online journalism acted as a platform and vehicle for up-to-date analysis and coverage of news that the local press failed to publish. Online journalism acted as a watchdog for the local press by refuting published news and presenting the facts that local

press fabricated or censored.

Online discussions on both weblogs and forums created a savvy online public sphere. This fostered a collective and decentralized direction with every user being an active participant of this sphere. All demographic elements of Kuwaiti society were represented with men, women, the youth, and even the elderly participating in this silent technological revolution that was occurring within Kuwait. In addition, this public sphere even created a strong solidarity offline by encouraging offline users to be part of the movement that affected the public opinion and forced the government to listen to their demands. This action encouraged the Kuwaiti government to negatively react to online journalism and they responded through blocking some Web sites and forcing other Web sites to terminate.

Furthermore, it is clear that the content of online journalism crossed the traditional standards (Red Lines) of the local press. Through the use of critical, unfiltered, candid language, and open discussion on sensitive issues like the affairs of the Royal Family. Online journalism fostered a sense of freedom within the media that Kuwait had not yet experienced. Therefore, the findings support hypothesis four (H4), which states that online journalism plays an essential role in scrutinizing the local press so that the information in reports are not false and subject to bias to become a public change agent that can influence the government's decisions concerning freedom of the press.

## Chapter Seven: Local Freedom of the Press in Kuwait

### 7.1 Introduction:

The third and final instrument used to analyze the effect of online journalism on the local press in Kuwait is the collection and examination of information found in interviews with officials associated to the local press. As stated previously in the Chapter 4, the purpose of conducting interviews for this study is to collect in-depth, qualitative data about the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the local press. During the time of this study, there was no Kuwaiti online newspaper<sup>128</sup>. Thus, it would not have been appropriate to compare the content of local newspapers in print with the content of non-Kuwaiti online newspapers. As a result, individual interviews were the best tool to collect data from the people who are either working or associated with the local press. For this study, interviews were conducted with editors of local newspapers, journalists, columnists, a member of the National Assembly, a Former Minister of Information, and one official at a local Internet Service Provider (ISP). All of the subjects interviewed were asked the same questions (See Appendix 4.3). The researcher conducted all the interviews by himself. Each interview took a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of one hour. All subjects were assured of the confidentiality of the information obtained.

Overall, the qualitative results from the interviews show that there is some agreement among the interviewees regarding the effect of online journalism on the level freedom of the local press. However, this effect seems to vary among the interviewees. The editors from the local newspapers seemed to be in agreement that online journalism

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<sup>128</sup> At the time of the study there were only four local newspaper versions online.

has a positive effect on journalists' practices, yet they were not in agreement on online journalism's affect on local freedom of the press (See Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1: Local Editors' Perception of online effect on local press**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Effect on Journalist's Practices</b>	<b>Effect on Local Press Freedom</b>
<b>Alqabas</b>	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Alwatan</b>	Agree	Somewhat Agree
<b>Alrai</b>	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Alseyassah</b>	Agree	Don't Agree

On the other hand, columnists, MPs, and Kuwait's Former Minister of Information tended to agree on the effect that online journalism has on local freedom of the press.

## **7.2 The Perceptions of Kuwaiti Local Press officials:**

The Press in Kuwait is considered one of the freer in the Arab and Gulf states. Since the 1960s, the Kuwaiti press has practiced and exercised the highest level of freedom throughout the Arab region, and by the 1970s it reached its peak. However, a shift occurred during the 1980s and the Kuwaiti government began to crack down on the freedom of the press by advocating for more discretion and censorship. By the 1990s, members of the press and the institutions that employed them became notorious for self-censorship. It was not until the advent of the Internet in the mid 1990s that the press in Kuwait was revolutionized and the pendulum swung back in the direction of enhanced freedoms, even though this new era of freedom remained monopolized under five elite families (Jurdi and Dashti, 1994).

For more than 30 years, the press in Kuwait suffered under a ban. However, the future of the press was solidified after the National Assembly approved the new Press and Publication Law in 2006. This law permitted the press licensing, which resulted in an increase in the number of local newspapers from five to 15 daily newspapers within two

years. Many factors have affected cultivation of the recent freedom of the press in Kuwait. The shift in the policies of the Kuwaiti government, the implementation of the recent 2006 press law, the National Assembly, and the technological advancements of the Internet are some of the most influential factors that affected the practice of the freedom of the press. The one factor that is the primary subject of this study, and one that is often omitted in academic scholarship, is online journalism.

According to his interview, Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif, the editor-in-chief of the local *Alqabas* daily newspaper, agrees that online journalism helped to increase freedom of the press in Kuwait. The first factor that he identified was the Internet. In particular, he cites that young online users have a desire to have a voice without fear of retribution from the authorities. The second factor that Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif notes is the efforts of the Kuwaiti National Assembly, which is closely connected with freedom of the press. The National Assembly as part of the democratic process in Kuwait serves as a safeguard for the local press, preventing any government action to illegally censor or control the free practice of the local press. The third factor is the disagreement and internal conflict within the Royal Family concerning the meaning, purpose, and definition of the freedom of the press<sup>129</sup>. Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the local *Alwatan* newspaper, supports the idea that online journalism is the combination of many factors that helped to increase the level of press freedom in Kuwait, but notes that it is not the main driver. For Mr. Al-Jasim, there are two factors that influence the freedom of the press: 1) the weakness of the political system, which encourages others to speak up; and, 2) the continuation of democratic

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<sup>129</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif, *Al-Qabas* editor-in-chief on 24/4/2008.

practices of the Kuwaiti National Assembly since 1992. During his interview he noted that regardless of the National Assembly being dissolved several times, the return of the elections contributed to members of Kuwaiti society speaking up, especially during the campaigns<sup>130</sup>. Mr. Al-Jasim claims that the level of press freedom in Kuwait is increasing regardless of the Internet because of the changes that occurred in the world that lead to the decrease of the authority and power of the government<sup>131</sup>.

Similarly, Mr. Shawkat Al-Hakeem, the Managing Editor for the *Aseyassah* newspaper, disagrees that online journalism was the primary driver in helping to enhance the freedom of the press in Kuwait. In fact, he notes that it was the combination of the political, social, and intellectual atmosphere, which is part of the process known as globalization that is moving countries like Kuwait in the direction of more freedom. He notes that “online journalism may have a role of feeding information for press practices, but not a role in increasing the level of freedom”<sup>132</sup>. Mr. Al-Hakeem believes that Kuwait exhibited a high level of freedom even before the introduction of online journalism. He instead argues that online journalism may work as an instrument for motivation or provocation, but it is not a tool that can enhance the level of freedom because there are countries like Syria that may have free access to the content and delivery of online journalism, but the freedom of the press is still highly censored.

Mr. Jasim Kamal, a local journalist with the *Alwatan* newspaper<sup>133</sup>, agrees that the

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<sup>130</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, deputy editor-in-chief for *Al-Watan* newspaper, 9/6/2008.

<sup>131</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, deputy editor-in-chief for *Al-Watan* newspaper, 9/6/2008.

<sup>132</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Shawkat Al-Hakeem, managing editor for *Al-Seyassah* newspaper on 8/5/2008.

<sup>133</sup> Mr. Jasim Kamal is also a columnist and a board member for the Kuwaiti Journalists Association.

freedom of the press has increased in Kuwait, but he argues that this is mainly due to the ‘open’ policy of Kuwait’s Royal Family. Unlike other Gulf States rulers, the Royal Family in Kuwait shares the power with its citizens. Mr. Kamal argues that online journalism positively affected the practices of journalists, but he maintains that online journalism remains limited “regardless of the amount of press freedom we have in Kuwait, there are always red lines and newspaper policies that we have to respect despite of the Internet”<sup>134</sup>. He stated that online journalism, as a component of the Internet, made it easier for the journalist to have access to sources, allowed for easier access to a wide variety of information, allowed for the making of online interviews, enabled the journalist to check a story’s reliability and validity, and saved time because gathering at the newspaper is no longer required. Similarly, Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif of *Alqabas* newspaper adds that online journalism provides new ideas which they expand thorough details<sup>135</sup>.

Mr. Ali Ballout, the Managing Editor at the *Alrai* newspaper,<sup>136</sup> believes that online journalism as a component of the Internet has strongly affected the journalists’ practices, increased the level of awareness, enhanced intellectual knowledge, and fostered freedom of expression among the journalists<sup>137</sup>. He claims that the Internet has changed the practices of journalist, citing that this technology has allowed individuals to have access to the world of information and multiple sources at a stroke of their fingertips. He stated that:

In the past, we only rely on the news wire services while today you can visit the entire world with no limitations and for free. This fast growing information made everything ready to use. No longer do you have to use journalistic creativity to write a story such as thinking, searching, asking,

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<sup>134</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Jasim Kamal on 27/1/2008.

<sup>135</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif, *Al-Qabas* editor-in-chief on 24/4/2008.

<sup>136</sup> Recently, the name has changed from *Alraialaam* to *Alrai*.

<sup>137</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Ali Ballout, managing editor at *Alrai* newspaper on 29/5/2008.

meeting...At the same time, credibility challenges the fast news. It became necessary for those who work in the local press to be careful when writing news stories to make sure the facts are true and edited in a way that stays fresh and does not rely on news published yesterday so it does not lose its credibility in front of the readers. At the same time, we try to use a new style of writing where all the elements of journalism are found at the beginning of the story, as opposed to Arabic style of news writing. (Mr. Ali Ballout, managing editor at *Alrai* newspaper)<sup>138</sup>

Mr. Ballout stated in his interview that readers' feedback has placed the journalists in front of daily scrutiny, which did not exist over the last thirty of forty years and this gives the author an in-depth picture of the readership that the newspaper is targeting. The Internet also helps journalist prevent mistakes and provides a resource in dealing with challenges. However, Mr. Shawkat Al-Hakeem of *Alseyassah* newspaper does agree with the point of view that online journalism positively affects the practices of the journalists, and notes that some journalists also may misuse and rely too heavily on the Internet as a resource in their daily practices. He argues that the Internet fosters an environment that may lead some journalists to plagiarize quotations or misuse sources.

During the Constitutional issue, Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif of *Alqabas* newspaper noted that weblogs were better in that they provided a higher quality and frequency of coverage; even more than the local newspapers. The functionality of online journalism allows the journalist to deliver the news instantaneously with news updates, which coincides with the activities of Mr. Mohammad Al-Jasim's articles on his homage *Meezan* that encouraged Kuwaitis to write freely about the affairs of the Royal Family. Throughout the history of journalism in Kuwait, the magnitude of freedom of the press has never been experienced

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<sup>138</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Ali Ballout, managing editor at *Alrai* newspaper on 29/5/2008.

before with such accuracy and excellent style claims Mr. Al-Nisif. However, Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim of *Alwatan* newspaper disagrees with this statement. He argues instead that online journalism had no effect on the local press during the Constitutional event and cites that the local press decided on its own to restrict itself to the lowest level of freedom. Mr. Al-Jasim stated that the local press was not free by its own will, nor was it neutral and objective in its reporting, because it denied publishing statements made by members of the Royal Family that opposed the Prime Minister. Given the local press' position at the time of the Constitutional issue in their support of the Prime Minister, and many newspapers' refusal to publish any opposing view, the opposing family moved to online journalism to express their point of views<sup>139</sup>.

Mr. Ballout of *Alrai* newspaper claims that online journalism's affect was evident during the Constitutional issue when weblogs and forums provided a vehicle for the processing of news. Weblogs and forums like the ones mentioned earlier in the study allowed individuals to express their feelings openly and freely, and "the information was faster than light as media practitioners stood amazed in front of a strange situation where a tribe's son who doesn't know anything started to understand and use the Internet"<sup>140</sup>.

On the contrary, Mr. Al-Jasim of *Alwatan* newspaper claims that the information contained in weblogs cannot and should not be trusted, which includes their previous accusations against the *Alwatan* newspaper that occurred during the Electoral Constituency event. In fact, he argues that these accusations were not true and he denies that online journalism changed the policy of the newspaper. He stated that "I don't think these

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<sup>139</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, deputy editor-in-chief Al-Watan newspaper on 9/6/2008.

<sup>140</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Ali Ballout, managing editor at Alrai newspaper on 29/5/2008.

allegations or accusations on the net have changed anything of our status among our readers nor affected us because we will not let an online forum or a weblog force us to change our policy”<sup>141</sup>. He added that whatever was and is stated about the affect that online journalism has had on the local newspapers in Kuwait is exaggerated, especially when it comes to the writings of Mohammad Abdulqader Al-Jasim in his personal homepage *Meezan*. He added:

Members of the government were frightened by his writings in the beginning and some members of the [Royal Family] responded to his writings by accusing him of being a cheap writer, but later they realized that they are giving him too much authority. They were nervous in the beginning because they were not used to seeing these kinds of articles and they were annoyed by them as well. (Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, Deputy Editor-in-Chief *Alwatan* newspaper)<sup>142</sup>

In addition, Mr. Al-Hakeem of *Alseyassah* newspaper argues that the impact of online journalism on shaping public opinion is very limited and compares this with the local press’ ability to permit the reader to read news 24 hours a day because it is in the hands of the readers. Unlike newspapers that can be read any time, the Internet user has to follow the news to read it. Mr. Al-Hakeem notes that “since weblogs are administered by one or three people, they have no credibility and most of times are inaccurate”<sup>143</sup>. During the *Nabiha Khamsah* campaign, he claims that weblogs actually spread rumors and disseminated invalid and unreliable news content and citing that online journalist worked without responsibilities and knowledge of journalism practices and standards, which differs from members in the local press who exhibit a willingness and responsibility toward the

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<sup>141</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, deputy editor-in-chief Al-Watan newspaper on 9/6/2008.

<sup>142</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, deputy editor-in-chief *Al-Watan* newspaper on 9/6/2008.

<sup>143</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Shawkat Al-Hakeem, managing editor for *Al-Seyassah* newspaper on 8/5/2008.

readers and the law.

However, Mr. Al-Jasim of *Alwatan* newspaper agrees that the level of freedom on the opinion pages has increased dramatically, and many journalistic practices, especially the time savings have been the result of online journalism<sup>144</sup>. Moreover, the credibility of online journalism is also another element that has affected the newspaper industry, especially among the columnists. Since columnists do not necessary represent the view of the newspaper, they are given extra freedom to practice, unlike local journalists who are limited by the newspaper's policies and regulations. At the same time, online journalism forced newspapers to reduce their freedom limitations on their columnists<sup>145</sup>. Mr. Al-Nisif of *Alqabas* newspaper stated that:

For news stories the paper is tied accordingly to the law, but this can be extended for the columnists where the level of freedom is higher because whenever we ban an article for local columnists he or she puts it on the net and says the article was band, which is not good for our image because no one should know about any band article...this forced us to give the columnists extra freedom to practice. (Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif, *Alqabas* editor-in-chief)<sup>146</sup>

### **7.3 The Perceptions of Columnists, Former Information Minister & MP:**

Coinciding with the results from the questionnaires, columnists tend to believe that online journalism has tremendously affected the freedom of the local press. Dr. Sajid Al-Abdali, a local columnist for *Aljarida* daily newspaper, believes that online journalism not only increased the level of freedom on the local press, but it also elevated columnists'

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<sup>144</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim, deputy editor-in-chief *Al-Watan* newspaper on 9/6/2008.

<sup>145</sup> Personal Interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif, *Al-Qabas* editor-in-chief, on 24/4/2008.

<sup>146</sup> Personal Interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Nisif, *Al-Qabas* editor-in-chief, on 24/4/2008.

language to be more straightforward with the government and the MPs<sup>147</sup>. Likewise, a famous local columnist Mr. Ahmad Al-Dayeen of *Alam Alyawm* daily newspaper agrees with Dr. Al-Abdali, adding that online journalism has played more than one role in affecting freedom of the press by increasing the limitations of media speech and enhancing the transparency and accountability of local news stories<sup>148</sup>. During the Constitutional issue, Mr. Al-Dayeen states that online journalism provided a vehicle for up-to-date news sources and permitted the publishing of stories that were originally censored on local newspapers and provided different views. However, during the Electoral Constituency issue online journalism not only provided information, it also encouraged the public to take action and freely discuss and comment on what was published locally in newspapers.

Mr. Mishari Al-Hamad, a local columnist for *Alam Alyawm* daily newspaper believes that online journalism affected the content of local newspapers and the quality of their sources; and he added that the increase in the number of local newspapers also affected the level of press freedom<sup>149</sup>. Furthermore, the columnist from *Alwasat* daily newspaper Mr. Waleed Al-Ahmad stated that many local columnists were irritated from what was written on the Internet during the Electoral Constituency issue, which shows how much online journalism affected the local press. He noted that online journalism helped removed many of the traditional standards (Red Lines) of the local press, which encouraged the columnists to express their ideas and opinions<sup>150</sup>. While agreeing with the above columnists, Mr. Mohammad Al-Washihee, a local columnist for *Alrai* daily newspaper,

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<sup>147</sup> Phone interview with Dr. Sajid Al-Abdali on 25/11/2007.

<sup>148</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Ahmad Dayeen on 1/11/2007.

<sup>149</sup> E-mail interview with Mr. Mishari Al-Hamad on 5/11/ 2007.

<sup>150</sup> Telephone interview with Mr. Waleed Al-Ahmad on November 2007.

believes that columnists made gains in freedom because they were able to represent their own views, since journalists were more closely tied with newspapers' policies<sup>151</sup>.

The former Minister of Information, Dr. Anas Al-Rasheed, explains that there are different variables that affected the increased level of freedom in the press throughout Kuwait; besides satellite and SMS technology, the approval of the Press and Publication Law in 2006, as well as, the development of the pro government policies helped to foster freedom of the press. Dr. Al-Rasheed noted that Kuwait was one of the only Gulf States in the Arab world that practices the highest level of freedom as stated by the Freedom House and U.S. State Department.<sup>152</sup> He stated that:

No question the high level of freedom on the Internet helped to increase the level of freedom in our local press where issues that were band in the past are now gradually being discussed in the local newspapers. We need to adopt a policy on how to face it not how to boycott it. At least during my term as Minister of Information, the government never thought of ceasing freedom on the Internet or controlling the Internet. (Dr. Anas Al-Rasheed former Minister of Information)<sup>153</sup>

Dr. Hasan Joher, a member of the Kuwaiti National Assembly and one of contributors of the 2006 Press and Publication Law, strongly agrees that the Internet has a great role in strengthening freedom of the press<sup>154</sup>. He notes that Kuwait is a constitutional and democratic country based on the rule of the law, and the Internet ushered in an atmosphere of change. However, at the same time, the Kuwaiti government realized that it is not relevant to control the press since the Internet took on political and social dimensions and most of the Internet users consist of youth that form 35% of the society in which they

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<sup>151</sup> Telephone interview with Mr. Mohammad Al-Washihee on 26/11/2007.

<sup>152</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Anas Al-Rasheed, former Minister of Information and a faculty member at the Department of Mass Communication – Kuwait University, on 3/6/2008.

<sup>153</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Anas Al-Rasheed on 3/6/2008.

<sup>154</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Hasan Joher, columnist and MP on 27/1/2008.

are eager to go after what is band locally through the Internet, creating the kind of competition between the traditional press and the Internet<sup>155</sup>. Dr. Joher said:

I strongly believe in the last few years, at least the last three years, the ceiling on freedom in the traditional newspaper is much higher than before...some of the newspapers in Kuwait used to be pro government started to include new columnists who have different views and are more critical against the government...editorials has started to be very critical and directly speak to the Emir, the head of the state. This was not usual in the past...yes, online journalism has affected the traditional press, causing it to be more open and more competent. (Dr. Hasan Joher, columnist and Member of Parliament)<sup>156</sup>

In regard to the Constitutional and Electoral events in Kuwait, Dr. Joher explains that online journalism had a huge impact on the local press. He notes that the issue regarding the royal dispute after the death of the Emir was widely available to the Kuwaiti public, and the details about the closed meetings within the Royal Family were published in real-time via the Internet and SMS. He added that:

I believe this kind of wide spread information put a lot of pressure on the Royal Family themselves to contain the problem and finish it as soon as possible. At the same time, I think the writings of Mr. Mohammad Al-Jasim in his personal home page '*Meezan*' in particular played an important role and were very effective in pulling the legs of the press to mention what he was saying because a large majority of the society interacted with what he was writing. He was the first one to openly and strongly deal with this issue. (Dr. Hasan Joher, columnist and Member of Parliament)

Dr. Joher explains that traditional newspapers will continue to be part of Kuwaiti society in the future because it has become infused with the Arab culture, heritage, and tradition and online users may read the news first hand. When asked about the future of freedom of the press in Kuwait, Al-Dayeen said he believes that the press freedom is

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<sup>155</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Hasan Joher, columnist and MP on 27/1/2008.

<sup>156</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Hasan Joher on 27/1/2008.

closely related to the political system's ability to restrict or broaden the level of freedom. He also noted that at the same time, he thinks that the Kuwaiti government will move forward in their attempt to regulate the Internet with new laws and policies while the local press will give more attention to online versions with more independence and constant updates. Columnists will also debate whether to write locally or to have their own Web sites<sup>157</sup>.

#### **7.4 Kuwaiti Government's Reaction to Online Journalism:**

Mr. Ali Derisavi, a marketing manager at FASTtelco a local ISP, states that this organization blocks sites that contradict Kuwaiti culture and social norms, values, and moral standards, such as pornographic sites. At the same time, he notes that his organization also receives on a regular bases list of specific site addresses from the government to block and FASTtelco does not have the privilege to ask or evaluate as they have to comply with the rules<sup>158</sup>. But Mr. Derisavi believes that this blocking method is not valid because "blocking is not fixing the problem, it is only a quick fix"<sup>159</sup>.

Dr. Anas Al-Rasheed believes that the blocking of sites is a form of censorship that is used by many Arab states. He notes that censoring the Internet will not be effective with the fast and emerging technology of the Internet, but he agrees that there should be a standard mechanism in the world to administer the Internet as a tool to communicate; he (as the former Kuwaiti Information Minister) intended not to mention online publishing in the 2006 Press and Publication Law because it would have opened a wide range of legal issues.

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<sup>157</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Ahmad Dayeen on 1/11/2007.

<sup>158</sup> A personal interview with Mr. Ali Derisavi on 21/1/2008.

<sup>159</sup> A personal interview with Mr. Ali Derisavi on 21/1/2008.

For example, if a person uploaded a pornographic video in the U.S. and downloaded it in Kuwait, for which laws would the user be indicted, U.S. or the Kuwaiti<sup>160</sup>!

Dr. Joher states that two factors created obstacles for the government to monitor online publishing: 1) the lack of legislation to address this new area of technology; and, 2) the clever tactics used by the owners or sponsors of the sites to register the servers outside the country to escape any local indictment<sup>161</sup>. However, Dr. Joher believes that there should be laws to organize the Internet to prevent the dissemination of invalid and unreliable information that would negatively affect society, at the same time; he notes that government may react too strongly to the new technology to show the public that it is watching, monitoring, and enforcing violators<sup>162</sup>.

Mr. Al-Washihee believes that the level of freedom is increasing as he predicts that in 10 years the Internet will reach the highest level of freedom and the government will have to embrace it whether it wants to or not. Yet, he thinks that the Kuwaiti government does monitor the Internet and receives reports regarding the content on targeted Web sites, while blocking other sites. Mr. Waleed Al-Jasim believes that the government cannot censor the Internet, and only ‘dummies’ can be caught using the Internet, since the policy of the government is a reaction not action. He notes that the Kuwaiti government will attempt to set some controls on the Internet but he is convinced that the weblogs will overcome this obstacle in their own way. On the other hand, Mr. Al-Nisif claims that online journalism became an easy medium that can spread rumors about the government, since the bloggers do not know, understand, or embrace the rules and practices of local

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<sup>160</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Anas Al-Rasheed, former Minister of Information on 3/6/2008.

<sup>161</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Hasan Joher, columnist and MP on 27/1/2008.

<sup>162</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Hasan Joher, MP, on 27/1/2008.

newspapers.

## **7.5 Conclusion:**

The findings of Chapter Six show how the level of freedom has increased in the writings of Kuwaiti online journalism. This chapter has attempted to answer whether Kuwaiti online journalism has affected the local journalists' practices and the level of freedom in the local press. The results from the interviews vary between the editors at the local press and the columnists. There are disagreements among the editors of the local press concerning the effect of online journalism on local press freedom, but they do agree that online journalism affected journalists' practices<sup>163</sup>.

The columnists tend to believe that online journalism has affected the freedom of the local press and encouraged many columnists and some newspapers to address issues that were not allowed to be published in the past, but remains within the minimum, since their writings fall under the premises of press law. It became usual to read articles online that were band from local publications. At the same time, local columnists started to develop their own Web sites, either as archives or to express themselves online with more freedom.

The practitioners in the local press, current MPs, and the former Minister of Information, support the notion that the political system in Kuwait plays a major role in helping to elevate the level of freedom in the local press. Columnists strongly took advantage of the content published in Kuwaiti online journalism to address similar issues in

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<sup>163</sup> Interestingly, the two editors who disagree that online journalism has affected the level of freedom in the local press are editors in the two newspapers (*Alwatan & Alseyassah*) that were under heavy online criticism during the constitutional and electoral constituencies issues for their biased and inaccurate reporting.

the local press with more explicit style. Furthermore, online journalism dramatically changed the practices of journalists' newsgathering, writing, searching and daily practices. Online journalism affected their writing style, validity, reliability, and credibility via up-to-date information. But even today, traditional practices remain essential for many journalists in Kuwait.

All interviewees agree that censoring the Internet through the blocking of online sites will not be effective, but there must be laws to regulate the misuse of this new technology. Therefore, the findings from the interviews support the H3, which stated that online journalism helps minimize the self-regulation of the local press and forces the local press to address issues that previously were not allowed to be published.

When addressing the notion of press freedom, all interviewees agree there is no absolute press freedom in any country (Asante, 1997), including Kuwait, because the press is a social instrument (Merrill, 1989) that ought to serve the society as a whole not the individual per se. Islamic laws and the Kuwaiti constitution are the most influential factors affecting the perception of press freedom among the interviewees. Kuwaitis adhere to Islamic laws regardless of whether or not they meet the Western's standards of press freedom; similarly, the Kuwaiti constitution also outlaws any criticism to Islam or the Emir. These kinds of limitations prevent an ideal press since the press freedom is closely related to the social context in each society (Hocking, 1947, p. 194). The interviewees do support the existence of state power to regulate the press, but disagree on the amount of control to prevent government's restraint over the press in order to practice the right to report, to comment and to criticise the government (Hachten, 2005).

Furthermore, as demonstrated by the democratic-participant media theory (McQuail, 2005; Caton-Rosser and McGinley, 2006) that each citizen must have the right

to access, to report, and to use communication tools to socially interact with each other; online journalism eased the barriers to create this kind of public forum “public sphere” in cyberspace, giving Kuwaitis the opportunity to exchange ideas and information with others and interact with the local press.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion & Limitations

### 8.1 Introduction:

In February 2007, online freedom in the Middle East faced a major setback when the 22-year-old Egyptian blogger, Abdel Karim Suleiman, was convicted and jailed four years for insulting both the religion of Islam and President Hosni Mubarak in his weblog (<http://karam903.blogspot.com>) (Haines, 22/2/2007). In 2006, a widely known discussion forum with 90,000 members called *Siblat Al-Arab* (<http://omania.net/>) in Oman, one of the Persian Gulf States, was indirectly forced by the government to terminate and the manager was indicted on six counts for violating the press and publications law. However, the court later found the manager Mr Said Al-Rashdi not guilty on all accounts (Alhusayni, 7/5/2007). In Saudi Arabia, Fouad Al-Farhan, a 32-year-old blogger, was detained for questioning after using his weblog to express his personal views regarding the corruption in the Kingdom and to call for political reforms (Soares, 3/1/2008).

Likewise, in Kuwait, an online version of weekly newspaper *Alshaeb* published an article of some irreverent comments that the Editor-in-chief, Mr. Jasim M. Boodai of *Alrai*,<sup>164</sup> a local newspaper, made when he met with members from the U.S. Congress describing the Emir of Kuwait as well as some comments that he made attacking Saudi Arabia (*Alkhaleej Alemaratiya*, 1/5/2006). The meeting was broadcasted on YouTube<sup>165</sup> and only the *Alshaeb* newspaper commented on the video. Apparently the Minister of Information of Kuwait then decided to send the Editor-in-chief of the *Alshaeb* newspaper,

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<sup>164</sup> After passing the 2006 press law, *Alraialaam* newspaper changed its name to *Alrai*.

<sup>165</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AZgSoYI5N8>

Mr. Hamid BuYabis, to the public prosecutor<sup>166</sup>. A Kuwaiti online forum called *Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya* (<http://secularkuwait.org/vb/>) decided to terminate and publicly claimed that its members no longer had the time to operate the forum (Secularkuwait, 11/2/2007). However, according to other weblogs and some local columnists, this action was in response to the Kuwaiti Government's pressure<sup>167</sup>. In March of 2007, the acting Minister of Information in Kuwait, Bader Alhumaidi, decided to suspend a television show entitled, "*Diwaniyat Al-Esbo'e*," which actually discussed the activities of the youth and weblogs. This actually led several columnists<sup>168</sup> to publicly express their disapproval of this action and as a result, this prompted a new local and online campaign called "*Min Ajil Alhuriyyah 36 Lil Kuwait*" (For the Sake of Freedom...36 For Kuwait)<sup>169</sup>. The aim of the campaign was to advocate for freedom of speech. In 2008 the publisher for *Alaan*, Mr. Saad Bin Taflah Al-Ajmi, which is the first Kuwaiti electronic newspaper, was accused and indicted in court for publishing online articles that seemed to violate the press law of 2006<sup>170</sup>. Coincidentally, the case was dismissed due to the fact that electronic publications were not covered under the 2006 press law and given that the Newspaper's server were physically located in the U.S. In the end, the case was set aside because existing Kuwaiti legislation did not yet account for these legal shortcomings<sup>171</sup>.

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<sup>166</sup> On 3/5/2006, *Alraialaam* published a clarified article regarding the interview written by the Editor-in-Chief.

<sup>167</sup> See Chapter 6 section 6.4.2.2 & section 6.4.4 .

<sup>168</sup> See for example the articles for Abdul Lateef Al-Duaij in *Al-Qabas* newspaper 19 & 20-3-2007 and Dr. Sajid Alabdali in *Alrai* Newspaper 20-3-2007.

<sup>169</sup> Article 36 of the Kuwaiti Constitution stated that "Freedom of opinion and of scientific research is guaranteed. Every person has the right to express and propagate his opinion verbally, in writing, or otherwise, in accordance with the conditions and procedures specified by law".

<sup>170</sup> See Chapter three sections 7.2 & 7.3 about the new 2006 Press and Publication Law.

<sup>171</sup> <http://www.alaan.cc/client/pagedetails.asp?nid=7658&cid=30>.

Although these are only a few examples of online journalism sites that have been under attack by local governments that desire to control the content, messaging, and delivery of online journalism in the Middle East, there are many more which cannot be mentioned here. In fact, the above anecdotal examples illustrate how much online journalism has impacted the freedom of individuals in the Arab and Gulf States, which compelled many governments of these countries to negatively react against this new technology and view it as a threat to their stability and control. Even if the effect of online journalism was not academically studied or tested, especially in the Persian Gulf region, it is clear from this study that online journalism did bring enhanced freedom of the press in cyberspace.

Therefore, this study sought to examine whether or not online journalism has an effect on the local freedom of the press in Kuwaiti. It is not enough to examine the association between online journalism and the local freedom of the press in Kuwait. We must also investigate the particular ways in which online journalism is affecting the local freedom of the press. In an effort to address these basic questions, this study sought to test four carefully crafted research questions and four hypotheses to address these issues. As stated in Chapter Four, Kuwait was chosen as a case study because there are no specific obstacles to access and use the Internet in Kuwait. Similarly, the features and characteristics that exist in Kuwait are prevalent in other Gulf States and some other Arab countries; therefore, the results of this study may be justifiably generalized outside the borders of Kuwaiti.

## **8.2 Research Overview:**

The Internet is no longer used only as a communication tool as it was when it was first introduced; the functionality of the Internet ushered in the freedom of expression and freedom of the press (Stevenson, 2003). Online journalism is one of the features of the Internet that is affecting the local freedom of the press. In an effort to measure the effect of the Internet on local freedom of the press, online journalism was selected to represent the Internet. As stated in Chapter Three, any news content exclusively written, reported, produced, or distributed online is part of online journalism. In this study, online journalism is defined based on the characteristics of personal online writers, weblogs and forums. For many years, scholars and academics have regarded the freedom of expression and freedom of the press as one concept irrespective of the differences because their main objective was to be free from governmental censorship. Thus, the ease and functionality of the Internet and the availability of simple programs to design personal weblogs encouraged users to be active participant in cyberspace (Shah et al., 2005; Deuze, 1999). In fact, these characteristics of the Internet helped to drastically increase the amount of users in Kuwait and in the Gulf State region in a short period.

Democracy is what most people in the Gulf States are aiming for, but due to the nature of the Arab tribal political systems that exist in the region, the elements of democracy are considered separately. The freedom of the press is one element of democracy that most Gulf States desire to achieve, and online journalism is one of many ways that encourage freedom of the press. Each Gulf State has its own legislative and regulatory policies on the press and political systems that may limit or encourage censorship of the freedom of the press. As a country in the Gulf States region, Kuwait has some of the most liberal laws governing the freedom of the press. Since the 1960s, Kuwait

has constantly experienced a growing and enhanced sense of press freedom, which evolved and reached its peak during the 1970s. However, the freedom of the press in Kuwait reached its lowest point during the 1980s, ending with limited government censorship and practice of self-censorship in the local press. Many factors affect the freedom of the press in Kuwait; such as the perception of the Royal Family, the Kuwaiti political system, the Kuwaiti National Assembly, and recently, the introduction of online journalism in the Kuwaiti society. By the end of 1990s, online journalism in Kuwait started to play a more important and prominent role in many local newspapers. In fact, online journalism became part of the daily practices of the local press and topics published online were discussed at daily meetings of many local newspapers.

The number of Internet users in Kuwait has steadily increased ever since it was introduced to the public in the mid 1990s, which mainly consisted of younger users who exhibited a propensity for self expression without a traditional and cultural fear of government retribution. After the Constitutional and Electoral Constituencies' issues in 2006, Kuwaiti online journalism dramatically increased among its citizens. These two issues, which were considered taboo "red lines" in the local press in terms of pushing the envelope for enhancing the freedom of the press, were not only freely discussed and analyzed online, but online journalism also became an instrument in influencing public opinion and the decisions within the Kuwaiti government. All local newspapers including the new organizations that were established after the passage of the 2006 Press and Publication Law developed their own online versions of the local print version using identical contents (repurposing and shovelware) printed locally.

The majority of local journalists and columnists indicated that they engage in online searches for information and ideas related to their work. Many bloggers started to report

local events online and discuss stories published locally with other online users. Local columnists actually started their own Web sites publishing their local articles, banned articles, or articles written only for the online domain. The increasing amount of users gave online journalism a stronger role to enhance the freedom of the local press, especially among the journalists and the columnists.

During the 1960s, several attempts were made to measure the freedom of the press throughout the world. Today over 100 organizations seek to measure and protect the freedoms of the press; even though there is no unified and accurate measure of press freedom most of the generally accepted measurements utilized by scholars and academics give reliable and valid results in outlining freedom of the press (Becker et al., 2007). Although different definitions of the freedom of the press exist, all definitions seem to have at least two conditions: 1) removing government restraints; and, 2) the role of freedom of the press<sup>172</sup>. This study seeks to measure the effect of online journalism on the local press freedom using local journalists, local columnists, press practitioners, a government official, a politician, and online content. To examine the association between online journalism and the freedom of the press, three tools were used to measure the effectiveness of online journalism on the local press: 1) questionnaires, 2) online content analysis, and 2) interviews. The results of three tools indicate there is an online effect on the local press freedom, but the level of effectiveness varies.

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<sup>172</sup> See Chapter Two section 2.2.2 regarding the definition of freedom of the press.

### 8.2.1 Questionnaires:

Journalists and columnists of the local press were surveyed to find out how online journalism has affected their professional practices and their perceptions of the freedom of the press. The journalists' questionnaire indicates that their practices have changed, but shows that online journalism did not *replace* the traditional practices. The technology of online journalism became a primary source of information and ideas for many journalists in Kuwait, but telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, and daily “beat” reporting remain widely used by journalists in the local press. Online journalism became an alternative tool to search for information, engage in e-mailing, validate and update news stories, and provided a way for journalists to follow-up on specific leads for their stories. Journalists also use the Internet and online journalism as a platform to communicate and receive feedbacks from end users, because the feature of the online communicability allows direct communication between the consumer and the author. The enhancement of the credibility of the local press was one of the positive results of online journalism’s effect on the practices and work of journalists, because journalists were able to check the reliability and validity of facts for their news stories. However, one of the negative outcomes of the functionality of the Internet and/or online journalism is the inclination that this new technology impresses upon the journalist to plagiarize, which has actually increased among journalists. Yet, one mechanism that has developed to address these challenges is the development of weblogs that actually monitor (watchdog) the local press and often expose their unethical journalistic practices, which in the case of Kuwait, has forced many local newspapers to suspend or fire their journalists and columnists.

The second questionnaire in this study was used to survey the local columnists. Results indicate that columnists, more than journalists, are affected by the Internet and

online journalism. In fact, the results of this study showed that columnist use the Internet as a source for ideas and information, to check facts, make interviews, and publish articles that would have otherwise been banned in traditional newspapers. Columnists also tend to be highly affected by online feedback they receive from readers and columnists and are more inclined to react to readers and even share their ideas in their writings. As online plagiarism was an issue for journalists, so too did it become an issue for local columnists, however, the monitoring done by weblogs of the local press forced many columnists to be more serious with the practice of online citations.

The functionality of the Internet and online journalism encouraged and exposed many journalists and columnists to find new sources for their stories, and to search out new ideas, which set the stage for various kinds of freedom that affected their perception of freedom and shaped the form and content of their online writings. The results of the study indicated that local columnists are more positive in their perceptions of online journalism's effect on freedom of the press than journalists. Apparently columnists have the 'courage' to write with more liberty than online journalists do. This may be due to the nature of the profession where journalists only report news and must adhere to the newspaper's internal policies, which is strongly connected with the 2006 press law. On the other hand, columnists have more opportunities to express their views, especially since they do not represent the views of the newspaper. At the same time, however, the opinion/editorial page is the designated space on many local newspapers to publish what they usually cannot report. In general, the officials of many local newspapers try to give the columnists more opportunities to express their views than journalists. The results from both questionnaires indicate that online journalism has affected the practices of journalists because it has allowed journalists to explore new ideas and provide a platform for two-way

communication, which positively affected the perceptions of the local freedom of the press. In addition, the results of this study indicated that columnists tend to have a more positive perception of online journalism's effect on the freedom of the press.

### **8.2.2 Online Content Analysis:**

The numbers of Internet users in most Gulf States has been steadily increasing since the introduction of the Internet during the mid 1990s. In general, the Internet became an open sphere for the sharing of information. But perhaps the most important tool is that it was used by end users to express their personal views in a free manner. What makes the Gulf States leaders in this matter is the irony that exists between the desire of these countries to obtain the latest Internet technology and the desire of the governments to censor individual speech and the freedom of the press. When freedom of speech and the press was regulated, cyberspace (online journalism) really became a substitute for the traditional public sphere. Since many countries in the Gulf State region do not practice a high level of freedom of the press, online journalism becomes a central forum for individuals to express their views and opinions. On the other hand, cyberspace brought further expansion and redefinition of public sphere that may be different from Habermas' ideal public sphere in relation to its setting and regulations (Kellner, 2000). It does bring forth the functionality of communication that encourages users to achieve specific goals and influences decision-making, especially during local disputes.

The second tool in this study that was used to examine how online journalism affected local press was online content analysis. As previously discussed, the 2006 Constitutional and the Electoral Constituencies' issues were an ideal setting to use content analysis to investigate the language and issues published online that transcend the generally

accepted standards of the local press. Codes of analysis were used to conduct the content analysis but the most significant codes addressed the affairs of the Kuwaiti Royal Family and the language used to discuss these two events.

The results of this study show that the freedom of expression of which online journalism excelled in transcended the generally accepted standards of practices of the local press in that many online journalists addressed the affairs of the Royal Family in an open manner. In other words, much of the critical language used to describe the affairs of the Kuwaiti Royal Family included harsh language, publishing the names of key family members, and accused high ranking government officials of causing corruption within the country. At the same time, online journalism provided the means by which the local press could be monitored, refuted, and criticized for inaccurate reports that were published locally. As a matter of fact, many banned articles of local columnists in Kuwait appeared online and were shared with thousands of readers instead of few hundred locally.

As previously stated, the Constitutional event in Kuwait was a testing ground for online journalism in the country. The disagreement within the Royal Family and the neutral position of the local press empowered online journalism to play a vital role in its ability to report and discuss the event freely online. The writings of Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim in his weblog "*Meezan*" really set the stage for Kuwaitis to openly and freely discuss and respond in writing to these historical events that did not previously exist locally. The language that Mr. Al-Jasim used was novel for traditional settings in the local press, especially with the events surrounding the affairs of the Royal Family. Identifying and accusing members of the Royal Family of corruption was implicit in the local press, but the functionality of online journalism really helped to make it explicit. The enhanced level of freedom brought about by online journalism encouraged more Kuwaiti

users to express their personal and individual views without fear of government retribution. Negative images of members of the Royal Family, as well as some high ranking government officials were published online for the first time, which ordinarily would have been censored in the local press outlets. Satirical cartoons of the Kuwaiti Royal Family and the political system in Kuwait was also part of the efforts of online journalism. The free and open writings and discussions used in online journalism efforts during the Constitutional event paved the way for a more explicit, defensive, and critical style and content during the Electoral Constituencies event. The local press industry in Kuwait was bewildered with how to deal with this new found freedom. Reactions varied among local newspapers with the *Alqabas* newspaper moving forward and supporting the online journalism movement, the *Alraialaam* newspaper taking a middle of the road position, and the *Alwatan & Alseyassah* newspaper actually starting a campaign against the youth movement and supporting the government position to censor and hinder the freedom of the press online.

The local disputes in Kuwait illustrate the effectiveness of online journalism in its ability to function as a sphere for the public dialogue (Al-Abdali, 21/1/2006; Alhamadi, 31/3/2007). These historical events show that the public sphere depends strongly on the communication network between the online and offline users. The Kuwaiti weblogs and forums were effective because there was accord among the members regarding the disputes, and perhaps more importantly, it allowed the unification between the offline and online users. This study showed that the Internet in Kuwait moved from a passive to an active and politically motivated mode whereby online users, which mainly consisted of youth, moved from cyberspace to the local street. The public, the government officials, the MPs, and even the local press recognized the youth movements' participation during the

political disputes. In this regard, online journalism changed from being passive news disseminators to being news producers and from passive discussions to active pressure groups. Online journalism became the shield against rumours and corruptions. As discussed above, online journalism proved to be a reliable source of information for news during the two events, as well as an effective tool that was used to communicate and consolidate public opinion. The public disputes during these events revealed an undiscovered and untapped resource that should not be ignored, nor underestimated for its active role in fostering political reforms.

The youth movement was not only new for Kuwait, but this movement was important for many Gulf States who view Kuwait as a positive representation of the press freedom in the Gulf region. Due to a general distrust of local media, many citizens of Gulf State countries sought out information on the Internet for information that is either censored or is never reported in local media. The Kuwaiti experiment has illustrated that the ability of the public to influence political outcomes and decisions of their government exists in cyberspace.

One important point should be noted concerning many of the weblogs in this study, which is that many members did adopt specific ideologies, such as liberalism, Islamism, or modernism; however, during the constituencies' issue these ideologies were set aside and an alliance was formed that combined all ideologies with one mission. For many years, online members have discussed various issues on cyberspace, but usually this was achieved in anonymity with online nicknames.

However, when the political disputes concluded, the activities of the weblogs returned to their passive mode. The weblogs were not updated, political issues were barely discussed, and their activities decreased. This passive mode forced many local writers to

encourage members of the youth movement to enhance their advocacy efforts to engage in the political process. Crises do create a ground floor for unexpected solidarity movements to rise up, especially among unheard online users, but only with the existence of well-organized communication process. Researchers and academic scholars (Hacker, 2002; Hill and Sen, 2000) have cautioned decision-makers about the challenge of relying only on the technological aspects of the Internet, while ignoring the effective online and offline users' communication after a crisis. As is the case with Kuwait, the activities started to fade as the political events started to disappear. The only way to have online journalism to encourage political activity and participation is to foster a mechanism for continuous communication between online and offline users, otherwise, these efforts and initiatives fade out as time goes by.

### **8.2.3 Interviews:**

The third tool that this study uses to measure the effect of online journalism on the freedom of the press is interviews with the local press, a former Minister of Information, and a Member of the Parliament. Interviews are used to collect in-depth and qualitative information about the function online journalism plays in affecting the local freedom of the press. Although disagreements remain among editors in the local press concerning the freedom of the press, they do agree that online journalism has changed some practices of local journalists while keeping traditional practices active. On the other hand, local columnists, the Kuwaiti Minister of Information, and a Member of Parliament positively agree that online journalism has affected the level of the local press freedom, which was apparent during the two historical events in 2006. The study shows that these individuals agree that the writings of Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qader Al-Jasim helped to enhance the

freedom of the press. The aggressive efforts of online journalism come to fruition when there is public disagreement regarding local issues. The online solidarity during the Electoral Constituencies compelled some local newspapers to react negatively to events that were reported online. The level of freedom that online journalism permitted online readers and authors challenged the political power of the Kuwaiti government and influenced public opinion. However, all the interviewees agreed that there should be legislation governing online journalism to prevent rumors and unethical news gathering and reporting. Regardless of the challenges associated with trying to control the information on Internet, the individuals interviewed for this study believe that the Kuwaiti government will not remain passive; it will definitely react to online journalism and try to create obstacles for its existence.

Kuwait is a constitutional emirate and Islamic state governed by mixed Western constitutional and Islamic laws, and these two sources of laws are the most influential factors affecting people's behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions (Rizzo, 2005; Meyer et al., 2007). Regardless of the interviewees' endeavor to have a Western model of press freedom, the Islamic religion and the Kuwaiti constitution, which is also influenced by Islamic values, remain barriers affecting press freedom's ideal existence. All the interviewees agree with John C Merrill's (1989) view that freedom should lack external restrictions, but disagree to on giving power to individuals to do what they wish. The morals and traditions of Kuwaiti society created different connotations of press freedom which has some concept of *Libertarian Theory* (Siebert et al., 1984) of free publication without government constrains and regulations, but more toward *Social Responsibility Theory* where the press is obliged to provide information and diverse views, but not necessary similar to Western' norms because societies do not have the same understanding of press freedom (Gunaratne,

2005). In Kuwait, press freedom does not discard the state present (*Democratic Socialist Theory*) switching the evil perception of the state toward libertarian and social responsibility (Picard, 1985) where individuals ought to serve the community and the government but not vice versa (Nawar, May-June 2000). This perception was present among the interviewees who demanded that the government should regulate and control press freedom in order to prevent the miss use of this right, especially in cyberspace.

Islam plays a strong role in shaping the principles and laws of Kuwaitis and in most Muslim societies. Constitutions in Muslim countries, including Kuwait, guarantee freedom of speech, except for blasphemy that restrains this freedom (Hoffman, 2003). Article Two of the Kuwaiti constitution states that “The religion of the State is Islam, and the Islamic Sharia<sup>173</sup> shall be a main source of legislation” (Kuwait Constitution, 11/11/1962 ), combining religion and western laws in the constitution. Criticizing Islam or Islamic religious leaders such as the Prophet Mohammad is intolerable and considered blasphemy<sup>174</sup>; similarly, it is prohibited by law to criticize the Emir since he is considered the symbol of the state. Article 30 of the Kuwaiti constitution states that “Personal liberty is guaranteed”, and Article 35 affirms this right that “Freedom of belief is absolute” but “the State projects the freedom of practicing religion in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals”, at the same time, Article 37 states that “Freedom of the press, printing and publishing shall be guaranteed in accordance with the conditions and manner specified by law”, while Article 36 went further

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<sup>173</sup> Sharia is an Islamic law taken from the Quran, the Hadeeth (a collection of the practices and words of Prophet Mohammed), and from other religious sources such as judges' rulings from Islam's first centuries.

<sup>174</sup> The Muslim outrage over a Danish newspaper's publication of cartoons that betrayed the Prophet Mohammad in a humorous and unrespectable manner illustrates how Muslims perceive press freedom.

affirming the rights of civil liberty that “Every person shall have the right to express and propagate his opinion verbally, in writing or otherwise, in accordance with the conditions and procedures specified by law” (Kuwait Constitution, 11/11/1962 ). These constitutional Articles on one side protect individual civil liberties, but on the other side tie this right in accordance to religious morals, values, and public customs, giving the government the ability to construe the laws. Recently, *Alaan*<sup>175</sup>, the first Kuwaiti online newspaper, announced that it will not allow any publication from readers’ comments if they criticize Islam, the Emir’s self identity or using any provocative or shameful statements (Al-Barak, 7/9/2008). Islamists members of the Kuwaiti Parliament are applying pressure on the government to block YouTube and other Internet sites that blasphemies Islam (Sabri, 5/10/2008) while the Ministry of Information is seriously considering supervising online publications (Al-Dosiri, 5/5/2008).

On the other hand, the interviewees do believe that the characteristics of online journalism (multimedia, interactivity, hypertext and immediacy) brought a new environment of press freedom with more open and extensive discussions of issues that are still not allowed in the local press.

### **8.3 The Conclusion:**

The purpose of this study is to test the following question: does online journalism affect freedom of the press in Kuwait? Online journalism affected the perceptions of many journalists and columnists concerning the freedom of the press, but the effect of online journalism remains limited due to the provision outlined in the 2006 Press and Publication

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<sup>175</sup> In 2009, there are about six Kuwaiti online newspapers.

Law, as well as the indirect actions of the Kuwaiti government that seek to monitor and control online journalism at the local level. In relation to how online journalism affects the practices of journalists working in Kuwaiti local newspapers, it shows that there was an effect on journalists' practices especially for sourcing and researching, but it did not replace the traditional practices. Due to the nature of journalists' profession, which involves an adherence to reporting guidelines and the regulations of the provisions of the 2006 Press and Publication Law, the freedom of the press remains limited in the local news. This study shows that local columnists have more latitude in exercising their freedom of expression than local journalists.

The third question that this study seeks to test is: Does the perception of freedom in the local press differ between the local journalists and local columnists in Kuwait? The results of this study indicate that the journalists and local columnists differ in their perceptions of freedom of the press, because local columnists tend to represent their own personal views and not necessary the views, ideology, or policies of the local newspaper. Columnists, it appears enjoy greater liberty in what and how they approach their news stories, while journalists must adhere to the policies of the local newspaper and press law regulations.

The final question that this study addresses is how the content of online journalism (e.g., personal online writers, weblogs and forums) during the Constitutional issue (15-25/1/2006) and the Electoral Constitutional issue (1-25/5/2006) affected the level of press freedom in Kuwait? The results of this study suggest that online journalism was an instrument that permitted journalists and columnists alike to address issues that would have otherwise not have been reported in the local press. Many local newspapers started to offer up-to-date news and user feedback in their online version of print publication sharing,

which led to the development of two important features of online journalism: immediacy and interactivity.

This research aims to find the effect of online journalism on local press freedom, and perhaps the most important contribution this thesis had made to the academic literature is that it reveals that online journalism plays a significant role in enhancing the level of local freedom of the press, especially during the disputed local issues. Although there is much research that needs to be done on this issue, this study is innovative in that it examines the association between online journalism and the local press. The effect of online journalism was clear on local journalists and columnists' practices, and the explicit language that was used in cyberspace started to move to the local press. However, this effect is highly related to the government's (ruling family) openness policy and perception toward press freedom. The main principles of press freedom may remain unchanged, but the amount of space to practice it is widened. Perhaps, it is apparent that this online effect on local press has brought Kuwait to be number one (ranking 61) among Arab countries in 2008 report of Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Without Borders, 2008).

The significance of this research is demonstrated through addressing major issues in Arab society that play an important role in enhancing the elements of democracy in the Middle East. The research studied the association between a new and a practical technology (online journalism) with a theoretical concept (press freedom). In order to enhance the freedom of the press in the Arab countries, especially the Gulf States, we need to understand their traditional and religious values and norms. We can not apply the Western standards of press freedom to Arab societies. Muslims have different perceptions of press freedom where traditions and Islamic values play a strong role in shaping these perceptions. Ignoring the values and norms of Middle Eastern societies will bring more

barriers to understand the relationship between new technology and press freedom. The Arab governments may justify their actions to control online journalism as a way to protect their Islamic values and traditions, and when it comes to Islam, they may gain wide support from the public as previously happened in Kuwait. It is true that online journalism broadens the press freedom in Kuwait and other Gulf States but it is causing strong disparities between Sunnis and Shiites. The hidden identity of online users encourages inappropriate language that goes beyond local values and principles.

The spread of the Internet and the wide use of online journalism in the Gulf States brought a new area of research that needs to be properly addressed from all aspects. This research studied only one element of this research area and further studies are needed in order to have a clearer understanding of how online journalism can be effectively used to enhance the freedom of the press in the Middle East. Online journalism has affected the press freedom in Kuwait, but not as anticipated by many Western leaders and scholars.

#### **8.4 Limitations & Recommendations:**

Every study of this kind exhibits challenges that limit researchers in their ability to achieve the targeted goals of the study, and this study is no exception. Regardless of using both qualitative and quantitative methods in this research, there were some obstacles went beyond the researcher's ability to manage or control when conducting the three tools used in this research project. Obtaining addresses and e-mails of journalists and columnists was not always possible due to the confidentiality of the subject. In Kuwait, using postal services to send questionnaires is not practical because it is not guaranteed the recipients (journalists & columnist) will have them delivered to them, and if they do receive them, it is not guaranteed they will fill out the questionnaires and send them back. Therefore, the

only option is to visit the newspapers and disseminate the questionnaires among the journalists. Besides taking extra time and extra work, the researcher had to encourage the journalists to fill out the questionnaires since most of them did not perceive them as serious research work. The researcher had to send several e-mails to the columnists in order to encourage them to fill out the questionnaire, and some responses were either hard to read or were sent in a format that was not possible to open.

In an ideal setting it would have been very beneficial to conduct online and local content analysis to investigate the differences in the coverage that is provided on local news worthy events. But during the two selected historical events that this study used no Kuwaiti online newspaper existed. It would not be appropriate to compare the content of online journalism (e.g., online personal writer's weblogs and forums) with local press. Thus, interviews were conducted with local press officials to address this issue. However, it was difficult to make appointments with the officials at the local press due to their busy schedules. At the same time, it was also hard to communicate with the managers of online personal writers, weblogs, and forums. One interesting finding is that the participants still act unprofessionally with researchers.

Further studies that examine where Kuwaitis get their news during public disagreements would be extremely beneficial to the academic research. More studies are needed on how online journalism affects Arab user's perception of press freedom. Another event to be considered for further studies is the role of satellite television on local freedom of the press. News channels such as *Alarabia* and *Aljazeera* played an important role during the two events and researchers interested in this dynamic would contribute greatly to the scholastic work in this area. Regardless of the growing number of Internet users in Kuwait, online journalism does not remain a primary source of news for many Kuwaitis.

Satellite TV news are the main alternative news sources in Kuwait due their accessibility. Meanwhile, other cultural practices in Kuwait remain influential and worth studying. For example, Diwaniyas<sup>176</sup> are important places for news, ideas and discussions and can play an important role in the government decisions.

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<sup>176</sup> A Diwaniya is a place to discuss local issues, for entertainment, and for playing games such as cards. However, the Diwaniya can also be a source for rumors and false news.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 2.1: Freedom House Media Freedom Questionnaire

### Scoring Range:

The survey rates countries' performance on each methodology question on a scale of 0–7, with 0 representing the weakest performance and 7 the strongest. The scoring scale is as follows:

**Score of 0–2:** Countries that receive a score of 0, 1, or 2 ensure no or very few adequate protections, legal standards, or rights in the rated category. Laws protecting the rights of citizens or the justice of the political process are minimal, rarely enforced, or routinely abused by the authorities.

**Score of 3–4:** Countries that receive a score of 3 or 4 provide some adequate protections, legal standards, or rights in the rated category. Legal protections are weak and enforcement of the law is inconsistent or corrupt.

**Score of 5:** Countries that receive a score of 5 provide many adequate protections, legal standards or rights in the rated category. Rights and political standards are protected, but enforcement may be unreliable and some abuses may occur. A score of 5 is considered to be the basic standard of democratic performance.

**Score of 6–7:** Countries that receive a score of 6 or 7 ensure all or nearly all adequate protections, legal standards, or rights in the rated category. Legal protections are strong and are enforced fairly. Citizens have access to legal redress when their rights are violated, and the political system functions smoothly.

### Methodology questions:

#### 1. Accountability and Public Voice

##### A. Free and fair electoral laws and elections

1. Is the authority of government based upon the will of the people as expressed by regular, free, and fair elections under fair electoral laws, with universal and equal suffrage, open to multiple parties, conducted by secret ballot, monitored by independent electoral authorities, with honest tabulation of ballots, and free of fraud and intimidation?
2. Are there equal campaigning opportunities for all parties?
3. Is there the opportunity for the effective rotation of power among a range of different political parties representing competing interests and policy options?
4. Are there adequate regulations to prevent undue influence of economically privileged interests (e.g., effective campaign finance laws), and are they enforced?

##### B. Effective and accountable government

1. Are the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government able to oversee the actions of one another and hold each other accountable for any excessive exercise of power?
2. Does the state system ensure that people's political choices are free from domination by the specific interests of power groups (e.g., the military, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, regional hierarchies, and/or economic oligarchies)?
3. Is the civil service selected, promoted, and dismissed on the basis of open competition and by merit?
4. Is the state engaged in issues reflecting the interests of women; ethnic, religious, and other distinct groups; and disabled people?

##### C. Civic engagement and civic monitoring

1. Are civic groups able to testify, comment on, and influence pending government policy or legislation?
- 2i. Are nongovernmental organizations free from legal impediments from the state and from onerous requirements for registration?
3. Are donors and funders of civic organizations and public policy institutes free of state pressures?

#### ***D. Media independence and freedom of expression***

1. Does the state support constitutional or other legal protections for freedom of expression and an environment conducive to media freedom?
2. Does the state oppose the use of onerous libel, security, or other laws to punish through either excessive fines or imprisonment those who scrutinize government officials and policies?
3. Does the government protect journalists from extra-legal intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, or physical violence at the hands of state authorities or any other actor, including through fair and expeditious investigation and prosecution when cases do occur?
4. Does the state refrain from direct and indirect censorship of print or broadcast media?
5. Does the state hinder access to the Internet as an information source?
6. Does the state refrain from funding the media in order to propagandize, primarily provide official points of view, and/or limit access by opposition parties and civic critics?
7. Does the government otherwise refrain from attempting to influence media content (e.g., through direct ownership of distribution networks or printing facilities; prohibitive tariffs; onerous registration requirements; selective distribution of advertising; or bribery)?
- 8i. Does the state protect the freedom of cultural expression (e.g., in fictional works, art, music, theater, etc.)?

## **2. Civil Liberties**

### ***A. Protection from state terror, unjustified imprisonment, and torture***

1. Is there protection against torture by officers of the state, including through effective punishment in cases where torture is found to have occurred?
2. Are prison conditions respectful of the human dignity of inmates?
3. Does the state effectively protect against or respond to attacks on political opponents or other peaceful activists?
4. Are there effective protections against arbitrary arrest, including of political opponents or other peaceful activists?
5. Is there effective protection against long-term detention without trial?
6. Does the state protect citizens from abuse by private/nonstate actors?
7. Do citizens have means of effective petition and redress when their rights are violated by state authorities?

### ***B. Gender equity***

1. Does the state ensure that both men and women are entitled to the full enjoyment of all civil and political rights?
2. Does the state take measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that constitute discrimination against women?
3. Does the state take measures to prevent trafficking in women?
4. Does the state make reasonable efforts to protect against gender discrimination in employment and occupation?

### ***C. Rights of ethnic, religious, and other distinct groups***

1. Does the state ensure that persons belonging to ethnic, religious, and other distinct groups exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms (including ethnic, cultural, and linguistic rights) without discrimination and with full equality before the law?
2. Does the state take measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that constitute discrimination against ethnic, religious, and other distinct groups?
3. Does the state make a progressive effort to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that constitute discrimination against disabled people?
4. Does the state make reasonable efforts to protect against discrimination against ethnic, religious, and other distinct groups in employment and occupation?

### ***D. Freedom of conscience and belief***

1. Does the state accept the right of its citizens to hold religious beliefs of their choice and practice

their religion as they deem appropriate, within reasonable constraints?

2. Does the state refrain from involvement in the appointment of religious or spiritual leaders and in the internal organizational activities of faith-related organizations?
3. Does the state refrain from placing restrictions on religious observance, religious ceremony, and religious education?

***E. Freedom of association and assembly***

1. Does the state recognize every person's right to freedom of association and assembly?
2. Does the state respect the right to form, join, and participate in free and independent trade unions?
3. Are citizens protected from being compelled by the state to belong to an association, either directly or indirectly (e.g., because certain indispensable benefits are conferred on members)?
4. Does the state effectively protect and recognize the rights of civic associations, business organizations, and political organizations to organize, mobilize, and advocate for peaceful purposes?
5. Does the state permit demonstrations and public protests and refrain from using excessive force against them?

**3. Rule of Law**

***A. Independent judiciary***

1. Is there independence, impartiality, and nondiscrimination in the administration of justice, including from economic, political or religious influences?
2. Are judges and magistrates protected from interference by the executive and/or legislative branches?
3. Do legislative, executive, and other governmental authorities comply with judicial decisions, which are not subject to change except through established procedures for judicial review?
4. Are judges appointed, promoted, and dismissed in a fair and unbiased manner?
5. Are judges appropriately trained in order to carry out justice in a fair and unbiased manner?

***B. Primacy of rule of law in civil and criminal matters***

1. According to the legal system, is everyone charged with a criminal offense presumed innocent until proven guilty?
2. Are citizens given a fair, public, and timely hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal?
3. Do citizens have the right and access to independent counsel?
4. Does the state provide citizens charged with serious felonies with access to independent counsel when it is beyond their means?
5. Are prosecutors independent of political direction and control?
6. Are public officials and ruling party actors prosecuted for the abuse of power and other wrongdoing?

***C. Accountability of security forces and military to civilian authorities***

1. Is there effective and democratic civilian state control of the police, military, and internal security forces through the judicial, legislative, and executive branches?
2. Do police, military, and internal security services refrain from interference and/or involvement in the political process?
3. Are the police, military, and internal security services held accountable for any abuses of power for personal gain?
4. Do members of the police, military and internal security services respect human rights?

***D. Protection of property rights***

1. Does the state give everyone the right to own property alone as well as in association with others?
2. Does the state adequately enforce property rights and contracts, including through adequate provisions for indigenous populations?
3. Does the state protect citizens from the arbitrary and/or unjust deprivation of their property (e.g.,

Does the state unjustly revoke property titles for governmental use or to pursue a political agenda?)?

**E. Equal treatment under the law**

1. Are all persons entitled to equal protection under the law?
2. Are all persons equal before the courts and tribunals?
3. Is discrimination on grounds of gender, ethnic origin, nationality, and sexual orientation prohibited and prosecuted by the state?

**4. Anticorruption and Transparency**

**A. Environment to protect against corruption**

1. Is the government free from excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, and/or other controls that increase opportunities for corruption?
2. Does the state refrain from excessive involvement in the economy?
3. Does the state enforce the separation of public office from the personal interests of public officeholders?
4. Are there adequate financial disclosure procedures that prevent conflicts of interest among public officials (e.g., Are the assets declarations of public officials open to public and media scrutiny and verification?)?
5. Does the state adequately protect against conflicts of interest in the private sector?

**B. Existence of laws, ethical standards, and boundaries between private and public sectors**

1. Does the state enforce an effective legislative or administrative process designed to promote integrity and to prevent, detect, and punish the corruption of public officials?
2. Does the state provide victims of corruption with adequate mechanisms to pursue their rights?
3. Does the state protect higher education from pervasive corruption and graft (e.g., Are bribes necessary to gain admission or good grades?)?
4. Does the tax administrator implement effective internal audit systems to ensure the accountability of tax collection?

**C. Enforcement of anticorruption laws**

1. Are there effective and independent investigative and auditing bodies created by the government (e.g., an auditor general or ombudsman) and do they function without impediment or political pressure?
2. Are allegations of corruption by government officials at the national and local levels thoroughly investigated and prosecuted without prejudice?
3. Are allegations of corruption given wide and unbiased airing in the news media?
4. Do whistle-blowers, anticorruption activists, investigators have a legal environment that protects them, so they feel secure about reporting cases of bribery and corruption?

**D. Governmental transparency**

1. Is there significant legal, regulatory, and judicial transparency as manifested through public access to government information?
2. Do citizens have a legal right to obtain information about government operations, and means to petition government agencies for it?
3. Does the state make a progressive effort to provide information about government services and decisions in formats and settings that are accessible to disabled people?
4. Is the executive budget-making process comprehensive and transparent and subject to meaningful legislative review and scrutiny?
5. Does the government publish detailed and accurate accounting of expenditures in a timely fashion?
6. Does the state ensure transparency, open-bidding, and effective competition in the awarding of government contracts?
7. Does the government enable the fair and legal administration and distribution of foreign assistance?

(Source: Freedom House: Countries at the Crossroad 2007,  
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=38>)

**Appendix 2.2: Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans Frontiers)**  
**Questionnaire for compiling a 2007 world press freedom index**

**PHYSICAL ATTACKS, IMPRISONMENT AND DIRECT THREATS**

During this time, how many journalists and media assistants:

1. Were murdered?
2. Were murdered, with the state involved?
3. Were arrested or sent to prison (for however long)?
4. Are currently in jail and serving a heavy sentence (more than a year) for a media-related offence?
5. Were physically attacked or injured?
6. Were personally threatened?

Were any journalists (yes/no):

7. Illegally imprisoned (no arrest warrant, in violation of maximum period of detention, without trial or court appearance)?
8. Tortured or ill-treated?
9. Kidnapped or did any disappear?
10. Forced to leave the country because of pressure?

Over the period, was/were there (yes/no):

11. Armed militias or secret organisations targeting journalists (terrorist action, bomb attack, murders, kidnapping, direct threat etc)?
12. Journalists who had to be accompanied by bodyguards or use security measures (bullet-proof jackets, armoured vehicles etc) while doing their work?

**INDIRECT THREATS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Over the period, was/were there (yes/no):

13. Attacks on or threats against press freedom activists?
14. Surveillance of journalists (phone-tapping, being followed etc)?
15. Foreign journalists deported?
16. Journalists forced to stop working through harassment, threats or political pressure?
17. Problems of access to public or official information (refusal by officials, selection of information provided according to the media's editorial line etc)?
18. Restricted physical or reporting access to any regions of the country (official ban, strict official control etc)?
19. Problems getting journalist visas for foreign media (undue delay, demand to know names of people to be interviewed etc)?

**LEGAL SITUATION AND UNJUSTIFIED PROSECUTION**

Over the period, was/were there (yes/no):

20. Unjustified and improper use of fines, summonses or legal action against journalists or media outlets?
21. Cases of violating the privacy of journalistic sources (prosecution, search of premises, investigations etc.)?
22. Routine failure to prosecute those responsible for seriously violating press freedom (killers and kidnappers of journalists etc)?
23. Prison terms imposed for press-related offences defined by law?

### **CENSORSHIP, SELF CENSORSHIP**

Over the period, was/were there (yes/no):

24. An official prior censorship body systematically checking all media content?
25. Media outlets censored, seized or ransacked? (how many?)
26. Routine self-censorship in the privately-owned media? Give this a score from 0 (no self-censorship) to 5 (strong self-censorship)?
27. Subjects that were taboo (the armed forces, government corruption, religion, the royal family, the opposition, demands of separatists, human rights, etc)?
28. News that was suppressed or delayed because of political or business pressure?
29. Do the media report the negative side of government policies?
30. Do the media report the negative side of actions of powerful companies or their owners?
31. Do the media undertake investigative journalism?

### **PUBLIC MEDIAS**

Over the period, was/were there (yes/no):

32. A state monopoly of TV?
33. A state monopoly of radio?
34. A state monopoly of printing or distribution facilities?
35. Government influence on the state-owned media's editorial line in its favour?
36. Improper sackings of journalists in the state-owned media?
37. Fair opposition access to state-owned media?

### **ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRESSURE**

Over the period, was/were there (yes/no):

38. Use of withdrawal of advertising (government stops buying space from some papers/broadcasters or pressures private firms to boycott media outlets)?
39. Undue restriction of foreign investment in the media?
40. A licence needed to start up a newspaper or magazine?
41. Strictly-controlled access to journalistic profession (compulsory certificate or training, membership of journalists' institute etc.)?
42. Serious threats to news diversity, including narrow ownership of media outlets? Give it a score from 0 (no threat) to 5 (very serious threat)?
43. A government takeover of privately-owned media, either directly or through firms it controls?
44. Independent or opposition news media (not including media outlets in exile)?

### **THE INTERNET AND NEW MEDIA**

Over the period, was/were there (yes/no):

45. A state monopoly of Internet service providers (ISPs)?
46. ISPs forced to filter access to news, cultural, social or political Web sites (not including pornography or gambling Web sites)?
47. Web sites shut down after pressure on ISPs?
48. ISPs legally responsible for the content of Web sites they host?
49. Cyber-dissidents or bloggers imprisoned (how many?)
50. Cyber-dissidents or bloggers harassed or physically attacked (how many?)

*Is there any point not included in this questionnaire that might be relevant to assess the situation of press freedom in your country? Please mention them.*

*If there are questions you are not sure about (the accuracy of your answer or the applicability of the questions to your country) please list them and say why (lack of data, ambiguous questions, wording of them that does not apply to the situation in your country, etc.)*

(Source: Reporters Without Borders 2007, [http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id\\_article=24046](http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=24046))

## **Appendix 2.3: Media Sustainability Index (MSI – Europe and Eurasia 2008)**

### **Methodology:**

IREX prepared the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a tool to assess the development of independent media systems over time and across countries. IREX staff, USAID, and other media development professionals contributed to the development of this assessment tool.

The MSI assesses five “objectives” in shaping a successful media system:

1. Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.
2. Journalism meets professional standards of quality.
3. Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.
4. Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.
5. Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.
- 6.

These objectives were judged to be the most important aspects of a sustainable and professional independent media system and served as the criteria against which countries were rated. A score was attained for each objective by rating seven to nine indicators, which determine how well a country meets that objective. The objectives, indicators, and scoring system are presented below.

The scoring is done in two parts. First, a panel of experts is assembled in each country, drawn from representatives of local media, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, and media-development implementers. Panel participants are provided with the objectives and indicators and an explanation of the scoring system. Each panelist individually reviewed the information and scored each objective. The panelists then assembled to discuss the objectives and indicators, and to devise combined scores and analyses. The panel moderator, in most cases a host-country media or NGO representative, prepares a written analysis of the discussion, which is subsequently edited by IREX representatives.

The panelists’ scores are reviewed by IREX, in-country staff and/or Washington, DC, media staff, which then score the countries independently of the MSI panel. Using the combination of scores, the final scores are determined. This method allows the MSI scores to reflect both local media insiders’ views and the views of international media-development professionals.

## 1. Objective & Indicators

### Objective #1: Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information

Indicators
1. Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
2. Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
3. Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
4. Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
5. State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
6. Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
7. Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
8. Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
9. Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

### Objective #2: Journalism meets professional standards of quality

Indicators
1. Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
2. Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
3. Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
4. Journalists cover key events and issues.
5. Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
6. Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
7. Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
8. Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

**Objective #3: Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news**

<b>Indicators</b>
1. A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
2. Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
3. State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
4. Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
5. Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
6. Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
7. A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

**Objective #4: Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence**

<b>Indicators</b>
1. Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
2. Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
3. Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
4. Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
5. Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
6. Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
7. Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

## Objective #5: Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media

Indicators
1. Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
2. Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
3. NGOs support free speech and independent media.
4. Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
5. Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
6. Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
7. Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

### 2. Scoring System

#### A. Indicator Scoring

Each indicator is scored using the following system:

**0** = Country does not meet the indicator; government or social forces may actively oppose its implementation.

**1** = Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator; forces may not actively oppose its implementation, but business environment may not support it and government or profession do not fully and actively support change.

**2** = Country has begun to meet many aspects of the indicator, but progress may be too recent to judge or still dependent on current government or political forces.

**3** = Country meets most aspects of the indicator; implementation of the indicator has occurred over several years and/or through changes in government, indicating likely sustainability.

**4** = Country meets the aspects of the indicator; implementation has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion, and/or changing social conventions.

#### B. Objective and Overall Scoring

The averages of all the indicators are then averaged to obtain a single, overall score for each objective. Objective scores are averaged to provide an overall score for the country. IREX interprets the overall scores as follows:

**Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):** Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

**Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):** Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

**Near Sustainability (2-3):** Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

**Sustainable (3-4):** Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

(Source: IREX:MSI Europe and Eurasia 2008, [http://www.irex.org/programs/msi\\_eur/2008/meth.asp](http://www.irex.org/programs/msi_eur/2008/meth.asp))

## Appendix 2.4: Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

### ***How does CPJ investigate and classify attacks on the press?***

CPJ's research staff documents hundreds of attacks on the press each year. Each case identified as a violation of press freedom is corroborated by more than one source for factual accuracy, confirmation that the victims were journalists or news organizations, and verification that intimidation was the probable motive. CPJ defines journalists as people who cover news or comment on public affairs in print, in photographs, on radio, on television, or online. Writers, editors, publishers, producers, technicians, photographers, camera operators and directors of news organizations are all included. CPJ classifies cases according to the following definitions:

#### **Abducted**

Seized and detained by a non-governmental entity. CPJ has determined that a credible claim of responsibility has been made.

#### **Attacked**

In the case of journalists, wounded or assaulted. In the case of news facilities, damaged, raided, or searched; non-journalist employees attacked because of news coverage or commentary.

#### **Censored**

Officially suppressed or banned; editions confiscated; news outlets closed.

#### **Expelled**

Forced to leave a country because of news coverage or commentary.

#### **Harassed**

Access denied or limited; materials confiscated or damaged; entry or exit denied; family members attacked or threatened; dismissed or demoted (when it is clearly the result of political or outside pressure); freedom of movement impeded; detained for less than 48 hours.

#### **Imprisoned**

Arrested or detained by a government entity for at least 48 hours.

#### **Killed**

Murdered in retribution for, or to prevent, news coverage or commentary. Also includes journalists killed in crossfire or while covering dangerous assignments.

#### **Killed (Motive Unconfirmed)**

The motive for a journalist's murder is unclear, but there is reason to believe it may be related to his or her professional duties. CPJ continues to research the reasons for the crime and encourages local authorities to pursue their investigations.

#### **Legal Action**

Credentials denied or suspended; fined; sentenced to prison; visas denied or canceled; passage of a restrictive law; libel suit intended to inhibit coverage.

#### **Missing**

Vanished. No group has taken responsibility for the journalist's disappearance; in some instances, feared dead.

#### **Threatened**

Menaced with physical harm or some other type of retribution.

(Source: CPJ: [http://www.cpj.org/development/about\\_cpj.html](http://www.cpj.org/development/about_cpj.html))

## Appendix 3.1: Blogger's Code of Ethics

In 2003, CyberJournalist.net sets Blogger's Code of Ethics guidelines for the webloggers to choose for their practices in order to practice ethical publishing and increase their trustworthiness among online readers (<http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php>).

### A BLOGGERS' CODE OF ETHICS

#### **Be Honest and Fair**

Bloggers should be honest and fair in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Bloggers should:

- Never plagiarize.
- Identify and link to sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Make certain that Weblog entries, quotations, headlines, photos and all other content do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of photos without disclosing what has been changed. Image enhancement is only acceptable for technical clarity. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Never publish information they know is inaccurate -- and if publishing questionable information, make it clear it's in doubt.
- Distinguish between advocacy, commentary and factual information. Even advocacy writing and commentary should not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish factual information and commentary from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.

#### **Minimize Harm**

Ethical bloggers treat sources and subjects as human beings deserving of respect.

Bloggers should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by Weblog content. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of information is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects, victims of sex crimes and criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

#### **Be Accountable**

Bloggers should:

- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Explain each Weblog's mission and invite dialogue with the public over its content and the bloggers' conduct.
- Disclose conflicts of interest, affiliations, activities and personal agendas.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence content. When exceptions are made, disclose them fully to readers.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors. When accepting such information, disclose the favors.
- Expose unethical practices of other bloggers.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

What do you think? Is there anything you think should be added, changed or removed? Post your comments below.

## Appendix 4.1: Journalists' Questionnaire (English):

### Online Journalism & Press Freedom

**Dear Journalist,**

As part of my PhD study at the University of Stirling in Scotland, I am researching the effect of online journalism on press freedom in the state of Kuwait. In order to explore this subject, I need your assistance by completing this questionnaire accurately. Your help is highly appreciated. Your responses will be most valuable because no earlier research has focused on this area. Regardless if you don't use the Internet at work or at home, your responses remain important for my work. All responses will remain confidential to be solely used only by the researcher and his supervisors. Thank you for helping me with my study. If you have questions, please be free to e-mail me: [dashtialy@yahoo.com](mailto:dashtialy@yahoo.com)

**Ali Abdulsamad Dashti**

#### Section 1: Introductory questions

##### 1 In what media do you currently work? (Please tick what applies)

- 1-  Newspaper: 1-  Kuwait Times 2-  Arab Times  
3-  Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 2-  Magazine: Please specify (weekly, monthly, local, special interest etc) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3-  Other print media: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 4-  Radio: Please specify (AM, FM, commercial, etc) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5-  Television: Please specify (government, private, other satellite stations, regional etc) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6-  Online media: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 7-  Freelance: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 8-  Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section 2: Your journalism experience

##### 2 How long have you worked as a journalist?

- 1-  0 to 2 years 2-  3 to 5 years  
3-  6 to 10 years 4-  More than 10 years

##### 3 Which Department do you work now?

- 1-  Local 2-  University Affairs 3-  Entertainment  
4-  Sports 5-  Politics 6-  Editing  
7-  Online Publishing 8-  Columnist 9-  Administrator  
10-  Financial 11-  Other - please specify \_\_\_\_\_

##### 4 What media have you worked for before?

- 1-  Newspaper 2-  Radio 3-  Television  
4-  Magazine 5-  Public Relations 6-  Online journalism  
7-  Other \_\_\_\_\_

*Next Page*



22 **If “yes”, what was this training?** \_\_\_\_\_

23 **Do you receive reader feedback via the Internet (this includes e-mail)?**

- 1-  Yes
- 2-  No, although my e-mail address is available to readers
- 3-  No, I do not disclose my e-mail address to readers

24 **How does this compare with other means of feedback (phone calls, letters etc)?**

- 1-  Less feedback via the Internet
- 2-  About the same amount of feedback via the Internet and other means
- 3-  More feedback via the Internet
- 4-  I do not receive reader feedback

25 **For what purposes do you use the Internet? (Tick all that apply)**

- 1-  E-mail work colleagues
- 2-  Interview via e-mail
- 3-  Online publications
- 4-  Discussion groups
- 5-  News stories
- 6-  Media Releases
- 7-  New sources or experts
- 8-  Interacting with readers
- 9-  Different views to add to a news story
- 10-  News images or video
- 11-  Preliminary research
- 12-  Information and/or quotes
- 13-  Searching your news outlets’ archives
- 14-  Searching other news outlet’s archives
- 15-  Verifying facts
- 16-  Keep up with breaking News
- 17-  Interacting with sources
- 18-  Reading articles
- 19-  Investigative
- 20-  Follow up specific news
- 21-  Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

26 **from the above, list your top 5 uses of the Internet? (Use the number in front of each sentence in Q25)**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_

*Next Page*

*The following statements try to determine in what ways the online journalism enhances the local press freedom. Please respond by adding (✓) in the right space for each question.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
27 By helping journalists gain wider access to diverse points of views					
28 By helping journalists gain wider access to news sources					
29 By helping journalists write freely about political subjects					
30 Uncensored online journalism broaden the local press freedom					
31 Well-known individuals publish sensitive political issues online encouraged others to publish similar issues locally					
32 Online journalism gave the impression that sensitive issues can be published locally					
33 Online journalism improves the coverage of news story events in the local press					
34 Online journalism increased the credibility of news in local press					
35 Online journalism helps neutralize the stories and makes them acceptable to publish in the local press					
36 Online journalism has no effect on enhancing the local press freedom					

37 If you have other opinions different from the above list, please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
*The following statements try to determine how Internet affects journalists. Please respond by adding (✓) in the right space for each question.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
38 Internet helps expose me to various information					
39 Internet encourages me to write freely					
40 Internet will eventually become journalists' medium of choice for information gathering					
41 Internet is where I check the accuracy of news stories					
42 The Internet is the place where I share my writings & ideas with others					
43 My superiors at work always encourage me to check the Internet for information					
44 I express my opinion freely on the Internet than on my local newspaper					
45 I will always check the Internet for news & ideas					
46 I am very concerned for the feedback in the Internet					
47 Internet provides credible information					
48 I search the Kuwaiti weblogs for disputed local issues					

*Next Page*

*The following questions try to determine how journalists rate the credibility of Web site information. Please respond by adding (✓) in the right space for each question.*

How would you rate the credibility of	Always credible	Mostly credible	Sometimes credible	Rarely credible	Always Not credibility	Don't Know
49 Government Web sites						
50 CNN news Web site						
51 BBC news Web site						
52 Aljazeera news web site						
53 Al-Arabia news Web site						
54 Elaph news Web site						
55 Alwatan news Web site						
56 Alqabas news Web site						
57 Al-Seyassahnews Web site						
58 Alanbaa news Web site						
59 Alrai (Al-Raialam) news Web site						
60 Al-Talea news Web site						
61 'Meeza' Mohammad Abdulqader Al-Jasim's Web site						
62 Al-Shabaka Al-Libraliya weblog						
63 Sahat Al-Safat						
64 AlOmah Dot Org						

#### Section 4: Personal Information

**65 Your Name:**

(Optional, but all responses will remain confidential.)

**66 Your Contact Information:**

(To be used only if I need to clarify your responses. Leave blank if you do not wish to be contacted.)

**67 Your gender?**

1-  Male

2-  Female

**68 Nationality:**

1-  Kuwaiti

2-  Non Kuwaiti

**69 Your Age:**

1-  18 – 24

2-  25 – 30

3-  31 - 36

4-  37 – 40

5-  41 and older

☺ **The End** ☺

**Thank you for your help**

## Journalists' Questionnaire (Arabic):

### الصحافة الإلكترونية وحرية الصحافة

أخي الصحفي / أختي الصحفية ،،،

تتناول رسالة الدكتوراه التي أقوم بإعدادها بجامعة سترلنج (Stirling) في سكوتلندا تأثير الصحافة الإلكترونية في حرية الصحافة بدولة الكويت ، وأتمنى مساعدتي من خلال ملء هذه الإستبانة بعناية علماً بأن جميع المعلومات سوف تكون ذات قيمة كبيرة وحتى لو لم تكن تستخدم الإنترنت في مجال عملك الصحفي، تظل إجابتك مهمة في هذه الدراسة ، وسوف أتعامل مع المعلومات بغاية السرية، وسيقتصر استخدامها على الباحث فقط في أمور تتعلق بدراسة الدكتوراه وإعداد البحوث. وإذا كان لديك أي استفسار يمكنك الاتصال بي عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني: [dashtialy@yahoo.com](mailto:dashtialy@yahoo.com)

ولكم مني جزيل الشكر والامتنان

علي عبد الصمد دشتي

#### الفقرة الأولى: معلومات وظيفية

في أي مجال إعلامي تعمل حالياً؟ (يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- 1- صحفية: الرجاء اختيار الصحيفة:  -1 جريدة الأنباء  -2 جريدة القبس  -3 جريد الطليعة  
4- جريدة الراي (الرأي العام)  -4 جريدة السياسة  -5 جريدة الوطن  -6  
7- Kuwait Times  -7 Arab Times  -8  
9- غير ذلك الرجاء تحديد:  -9

- 2- مجلة: الرجاء كتابة أسم المجلة (أسبوعية ، شهرية ، محلية ، خليجية ، متخصصة... الخ)  -2  
3- غير ذلك من المطبوعات:  -3  
4- الإذاعة: (AM ، FM ، حكومية ، خاصة... الخ)  -4  
5- التلفزيون: (حكومي ، خاص ، محطات إعلامية خليجية... الخ)  -5  
6- إعلام إلكتروني: الرجاء تحديد الجهة  -6  
7- إعلامي حر: الرجاء تحديد الجهة  -7  
8- غير ذلك: الرجاء تحديد الجهة  -8

#### الفقرة الثانية: خبرة صحفية

(2) ما هي مدة عملك صحفياً؟

- 1- سنتين أو أقل  -1  
2- 3 إلى 5 سنوات  -2  
3- 6 إلى 10 سنوات  -3  
4- أكثر من عشر سنوات  -4

(3) في أي مجال إعلامي تعمل حالياً؟

- 1- قسم المحليات  -1  
2- الصفحة الجامعية  -2  
3- قسم الفنون  -3  
4- القسم الرياضي  -4  
5- قسم السياسة  -5  
6- قسم التحرير  -6  
7- قسم الصحافة الإلكترونية  -7  
8- كاتب صحفي  -8  
9- مسئول في الصحيفة  -9  
10-  -10  
11- غير ذلك  -11

(4) في أي مجال إعلامي عملت سابقاً؟

- 1- صحيفة  -1  
2- إذاعة  -2  
3- التلفزيون  -3  
4- مجلة  -4  
5- علاقات عامة  -5  
6- إعلام إلكتروني  -6  
7- غير ذلك  -7

تابع



23) هل تستلم ردودا من القراء عن طريق الإنترنت؟

- 1-  نعم  
2-  لا ، بالرغم من وجود البريد الإلكتروني للقراء  
3-  لا ، أنا لا أعطي البريد الإلكتروني للقراء

24) كيف تختلف الردود عبر الإنترنت عن الردود الواردة عبر وسائل أخرى (مثل مكالمات هاتفية ، رسائل، شخصيا...الخ)

- 1-  ردود الإنترنت أقل  
2-  نسبة ردود الإنترنت تساوي نسبة الردود من وسائل أخرى تقريبا  
3-  ردود الإنترنت أكثر  
4-  لا أستلم أي ردود من القراء

25) لأي غرض تستخدم الإنترنت؟ (يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- 1-  تبادل رسائل البريد الإلكتروني مع زملاء العمل  
2-  عمل مقابلات عن طريق الإنترنت  
3-  نشر مقالات أو مواضيع في شبكة الإنترنت  
4-  مناقشات جماعية  
5-  مواضيع إخبارية  
6-  نشرات دورية إعلامية  
7-  الوصول إلى مصادر جديدة أو خبراء  
8-  لتبادل وجهات النظر مع القراء  
9-  آراء أخرى لتضاف للخبر  
10-  للحصول على صور إخبارية أو فيديو  
11-  بحث أولي في الموضوع  
12-  الحصول على معلومات أو اقتباسات  
13-  البحث في أرشيف الصحيفة  
14-  البحث في أرشيف الصحف الأخرى  
15-  التأكد من مصداقية المعلومات  
16-  الحصول على الأخبار العاجلة  
17-  للتبادل مع المصادر  
18-  قراءة المقالات  
19-  القيام بتحقيقات إخبارية  
20-  متابعة خبر معين  
21-  غير ذلك الرجاء حدد

26) من القائمة السابقة ، حدد خمسة من أكثر استخداماتك للإنترنت؟  
(اختر الرقم الذي أمام الخيار في سؤال 25)

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_  
4) \_\_\_\_\_  
5) \_\_\_\_\_

تابع



الأسئلة التالية لمعرفة كيف يقيم الصحفي مصداقية شبكات الإنترنت الإخبارية. الرجاء وضع علامة (✓) في الخانة المناسبة.

لا أدري	غير صادقة أبدا	نادرا صادقة	أحيانا صادقة	غالبا صادقة	دائما صادقة	كيف تقيم مواقع الإنترنت التالية؟
						49) مواقع الإنترنت الحكومية
						50) موقع ال CNN الإخباري
						51) موقع ال BBC الإخباري
						52) موقع الجزيرة الإخباري
						53) موقع العربية الإخباري
						54) موقع إيلاف الإخباري
						55) موقع صحيفة الوطن الكويتية
						56) موقع صحيفة القبس الكويتية
						57) موقع صحيفة السياسة الكويتية
						58) موقع صحيفة الأنباء الكويتية
						59) موقع صحيفة الراي (الراي العام) الكويتية
						60) موقع صحيفة الطليعة الكويتية
						61) موقع "ميزان" للكاتب محمد عبد القادر الجاسم
						62) منتدى الشبكة الليبرالية
						63) مدونة ساحة الصفاة
						64) منتدى الأمة دوت أورغ

الفقرة الخامسة: معلومات خاصة

65) الاسم: \_\_\_\_\_ (اختياري ، ولكن يبقى سرىا)

66) معلومات للاتصال: \_\_\_\_\_ (فقط لتوضيح بعض الإجابات)

67) الجنس: 1- ذكر  2- أنثى

68) الجنسية: 1- كويتي  2- غير كويتي

69) العمر: 1- 18 - 24  2- 25 - 30  3- 31 - 36

4- 37 - 40  5- أكبر من 40

⊙ نهاية الاستبانة ⊙  
لكم جزيل الشكر والتقدير

## Appendix 4.2: Columnists' Questionnaire & E-mails

### First e-mail sent to columnists (English):

Dear Columnist,

As part of my PhD studies at the University of Stirling in Scotland, I am researching the effect of online journalism on free press in the state of Kuwait. In order to explore this subject, I need your assistance by completing this questionnaire accurately. Your help is highly appreciated. Your responses will be most valuable because no earlier research has focused on this area. Regardless if you don't use the Internet at work or at home, your responses remain important for my work. All responses will remain confidential to be solely used only by the researcher and his supervisors.

*To facilitate the answer, you can color the answer or write in red then e-mail it back.*

Thank you for helping me with my study. If you have questions, please feel free to e-mail me: [dashtialy@yahoo.com](mailto:dashtialy@yahoo.com)

Sincerely,  
Ali Abdulsamad Dashti

### First e-mail sent to columnists (Arabic):

أخي الكاتب / أختي الكاتبة ،،،  
تتناول رسالة الدكتوراه التي أقوم بإعدادها بجامعة سترلنج (Striling) في اسكوتلاندا تأثير الصحافة الإلكترونية في حرية الصحافة بدولة الكويت ، الإستبانة هي إحدى الوسائل التي سوف أستخدمها لمعرفة رأي الكتاب والصحفيين بهذا الموضوع ، لذلك أتمنى مساعدتي من خلال ملء هذه الإستبانة بعناية علماً بأن جميع المعلومات سوف تكون ذات قيمة كبيرة ، وسوف أتعامل مع المعلومات بغاية السرية، وسيقتصر استخدامها فقط في أمور تتعلق بدراسة الدكتوراه وإعداد البحوث.

**لتسهيل الإجابة يمكنك تلوين الجواب أو الكتابة بلون أحمر ومن ثم إرسال الاستبانة عبر الإنترنت.**

وإذا كان لديك أي استفسار يمكنك الاتصال بي عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني:  
[dashtialy@yahoo.com](mailto:dashtialy@yahoo.com)

ولكم مني جزيل الشكر والامتنان

علي عبد الصمد دشتي

## Second e-mail sent to columnists (English):

Dear Columnist (printing his or her name),  
Last week, I sent you a questionnaire dealing with my PhD thesis. As part of my PhD study at the University of Stirling in Scotland, I am researching the effect of online journalism on free press in the state of Kuwait. In order to explore this subject, I need your assistance by completing this questionnaire accurately. Your help is highly appreciated. Your responses will be most valuable because no earlier research has focused on this area. Regardless if you don't use the Internet at work or at home, your responses remain important for my work. All responses will remain confidential to be solely used only by the researcher and his supervisors.

Thank you for helping me with my study. If you have questions, please feel free to e-mail me: [dashtialy@yahoo.com](mailto:dashtialy@yahoo.com)

Filling the questionnaire will not take more than 10 minutes.

Sincerely,  
Ali Abdulsamad Dashti

## Second e-mail sent to columnists (Arabic):

الكاتب / الكاتبة (طباعة الاسم) ،،،  
تحية طيبة وبعد ،،،

في الأسبوع الماضي أرسلت لكم استبانة تتناول رسالة الدكتوراه التي أقوم بإعدادها بجامعة سترلنج (Stirling) في اسكوتلاندا حول تأثير الإنترنت في حرية الصحافة بدولة الكويت ، الإستانة هي إحدى الوسائل التي سوف أستخدمها لمعرفة رأي الكتاب بهذا الموضوع ، ومساهمتم بملء الإستانة سوف يكون لها الأثر الكبير في إنجاح العمل علماً بأن جميع المعلومات سوف تكون ذات قيمة كبيرة وستعامل بغاية السرية وسيقتصر استخدامها فقط في أمور تتعلق بدراسة الدكتوراه وإعداد البحوث. ملء الإستانة لن يأخذ من وقتكم أكثر من 10 دقائق التي سوف وإذا كان لديك أي استفسار يمكنك الاتصال بي عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني: [dashtialy@yahoo.com](mailto:dashtialy@yahoo.com)

ولكم مني جزيل الشكر والامتنان

علي عبد الصمد دشتي

# Columnists' Questionnaire (English):

## Online Journalism & Press Freedom

### Section 1: Introductory questions

1 In what media do you currently work? (Please tick what applies)

1. Newspaper:

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| 1- <input type="checkbox"/> Alanba             | 2- <input type="checkbox"/> Alqabas    | 3- <input type="checkbox"/> Altalea                 |
| 4- <input type="checkbox"/> Alrai (Alraialaam) | 5- <input type="checkbox"/> Alseyassah | 6- <input type="checkbox"/> Alwatan                 |
| 7- <input type="checkbox"/> Kuwait Times       | 8- <input type="checkbox"/> Arab Times | 9- <input type="checkbox"/> The Daily Star          |
| 10- <input type="checkbox"/> Alam Alyawm       | 11- <input type="checkbox"/> Aljarida  | 12- <input type="checkbox"/> Alshahed               |
| 13- <input type="checkbox"/> Alwasat           | 14- <input type="checkbox"/> Annahar   | 15- <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify: |

2-  **Freelance:** Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

3-  **Other:** Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

2 How long have you worked as a columnist?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1- <input type="checkbox"/> 0 to 2 years | 2- <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 years       |
| 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 10 years | 4- <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 years |

### Section 2: Your Internet use (Note: The Internet includes e-mail)

3 Do you have Internet at home? 1-  Yes 2-  No

3-  I don't know

4 Do you have Internet at work? 1-  Yes 2-  No

3-  I don't know

5 How long have you been using the Internet for your work?

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1- <input type="checkbox"/> I do not use the Internet | 2- <input type="checkbox"/> Less than a year |   |
| 3- <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2 years              | 4- <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 years     | 5- <input type="checkbox"/> More than 5 years |

The following questions try to identify how often journalists use the Internet for a variety of journalism tasks. Please tick (✓) in the right space for each question.

How often do you ....	Daily or almost daily	At least once a week	At least once a month	Never
6) visit Web sites for writing purposes				
7) use e-mail for writing purposes				
8) seek out diverse views on a subject via the Internet before writing				
9) find new sources via the Internet				
10) respond to public feedback via the Internet				

11 Do you receive reader feedback via the Internet (this includes e-mail)?

- 1-  Yes
- 2-  No, although my e-mail address is available to readers
- 3-  No, I do not disclose my e-mail address to readers

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**12 How does this compare with other means of feedback (phone calls, letters etc)?**

- 1-  Less feedback via the Internet
- 2-  About the same amount of feedback via the Internet and other means
- 3-  More feedback via the Internet
- 4-  I do not receive reader feedback

**13 Do you use online readers' feedback or point of views in your writings?**

- 1-  Yes
- 2-  No

**14 For what purposes do you use the Internet? (Tick all that apply)**

- 1-  E-mail work colleagues
- 2-  Interview via e-mail
- 3-  Online publications
- 4-  Discussion groups
- 5-  News stories
- 6-  Media Releases
- 7-  New sources or experts
- 8-  Interacting with readers
- 9-  Different views to add to a news story
- 10-  News images or video
- 11-  Preliminary research
- 12-  Information and/or quotes
- 13-  Searching your news outlets' archives
- 14-  Searching other news outlet's archives
- 15-  Verifying facts
- 16-  Keep up with breaking News
- 17-  Interacting with sources
- 18-  Reading articles
- 19-  Investigative
- 20-  Follow up specific news
- 21-  Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**15 from the above, list your top 5 uses of the Internet? (Use the number in front of each sentence in Q25)**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_

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*The following statements try to determine in what ways online journalism enhances the local press freedom.*

*Please respond by adding (✓) in the right space for each question.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16 By helping columnists gain wider access to diverse points of views					
17 By helping columnists write freely about political subjects					
18 Uncensored online journalism broaden the local press freedom					
19 Well-known individuals publish sensitive political issues online encouraged others to publish similar issues locally					
20 Online journalism gave the impression that sensitive issues can be published locally					
21 Online journalism improves my writings in local press					
22 Online journalism has no effect on enhancing the local press freedom					

23 If you have other opinions different from the above list, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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*The following statements try to determine how Internet affects columnists. Please respond by adding (✓) in the right space for each question.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24 Internet helps expose me to various information					
25 Internet encourages me to write freely					
26 Internet will eventually become columnists' medium of choice for information gathering					
27 Internet is where I check the accuracy of news stories					
28 The Internet is the place where I share my writings & ideas with others					
29 I express my opinion freely on the Internet than on my local newspaper					
30 I will always check the Internet for news & ideas					
31 I am very concerned for the feedback in the Internet					
32 Internet provides credible information					
33 I search the Kuwaiti weblogs for disputed local issues					

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The following questions try to determine how journalists rate the credibility of Web site information. Please respond by adding (✓) in the right space for each question.

How would you rate the credibility of	Always credible	Mostly credible	Sometimes credible	Rarely credible	Always Not credibility	Don't Know
34 Government Web sites						
35 CNN news Web site						
36 BBC news Web site						
37 Aljazeera news Web site						
38 Al-Arabia news Web site						
39 Elaph news Web site						
40 Alwatan news Web site						
41 Alqabas news Web site						
42 Al-Seyassahnews Web site						
43 Alanbaa news Web site						
44 Al-Rai (Alraialaam) news Web site						
45 Al-Talea news web site						
46 "Meezan" Mohammad Abdulqader Al-Jasim's Web site						
47 Al-Shabakah Al-Libraliyya weblog						
48 Sahat Al-Safat						
49 Al-Ommah Dot Org						

#### Section 4: Personal Information

65 Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional, but all responses will remain confidential.)

66 Your Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

(To be used only if I need to clarify your responses. Leave blank if you do not wish to be contacted.)

67 Your gender? 1-  Male 2-  Female

68 Nationality: 1-  Kuwaiti 2-  Non Kuwaiti

69 Your Age: 1-  18 – 24 2-  25 – 30

3-  31 - 36 4-  37 – 40  
5-  41 and older

☺ The End ☺

Thank you for your help

## Columnists' Questionnaire (Arabic):

### الصحافة الإلكترونية وحرية الصحافة

الفقرة الأولى: معلومات وظيفية

(لتسهيل الإجابة يمكنك تلوين الجواب أو الكتابة بلون أحمر ومن ثم إرسال الاستبانة عبر الإنترنت)

(1) في أي صحيفة أو مجلة تكتب حالياً؟

- 1-  صحيفة: الرجاء اختيار الصحيفة:
- 1-  الأنباء      2-  القيس      3-  الطليعة
- 4-  الراي (الرأي العام)      5-  السياسة      6-  الوطن
- 7-  Kuwait Times      8-  Arab Times      9-  The Daily Star
- 10-  عالم اليوم      11-  جريدة الجريدة      12-  الشاهد
- 13-  الوسط      14-  النهار      15-  غير ذلك الرجاء التحديد:

2-  كاتب حر: الرجاء تحديده:

3-  غير ذلك: الرجاء تحديد الجهة:

(2) ما هي مدة عملك كاتباً؟

- 1-  سنتين أو أقل      2-  3 إلى 5 سنوات
- 3-  6 إلى 10 سنوات      4-  أكثر من عشر سنوات

الفقرة الثانية: استخدامات الإنترنت (الإنترنت يشمل أيضا البريد الإلكتروني)

(3) هل خدمة الإنترنت متوفرة في المنزل؟

- 1-  نعم      2-  لا

(4) هل خدمة الإنترنت متوفرة في مقر عملك؟

- 1-  نعم      2-  لا      3-  لا أدري

(5) متى بدأت تستخدم الإنترنت؟

- 1-  لا أستخدم الإنترنت      2-  أقل من سنة      3-  من سنة إلى سنتين
- 4-  3 إلى 5 سنوات      5-  أكثر من 5 سنوات

تابع

الأسئلة التالية تقوم بمعرفة مدى استخدام الإنترنت في الكتابة الصحفية. الرجاء وضع علامة (✓) في الخانة المناسبة.

لا أفعله ذلك	مرة في الشهر على الأقل	مرة في الأسبوع على الأقل	يومية أو شبه يومي	كم مرة تقوم بما يلي:
				6) زيارة شبكة الإنترنت لأغراض تتعلق بالكتابة
				7) استخدام البريد الإلكتروني لأغراض تتعلق بالكتابة
				8) البحث في الإنترنت عن وجهات نظر أخرى قبل الكتابة
				9) البحث عن مصادر جديدة في الإنترنت
				10) الرد على من راسلوك عن طريق الإنترنت

11) هل تستلم ردودا من القراء عن طريق الإنترنت؟

- 1-  نعم  
 2-  لا ، بالرغم من وجود البريد الإلكتروني للقراء  
 3-  لا ، أنا لا أعطي البريد الإلكتروني للقراء

12) كيف تختلف الردود عبر الإنترنت عن الردود الواردة عبر وسائل أخرى (مثل مكالمات هاتفية ، رسائل ، شخصيا... الخ)

- 1-  ردود الإنترنت أقل  
 2-  نسبة ردود الإنترنت تساوي نسبة الردود من وسائل أخرى تقريبا  
 3-  ردود الإنترنت أكثر  
 4-  لا أستلم أي ردود من القراء

13) هل تقوم باستخدام ردود أو وجهات نظر من القراء عبر الإنترنت في الكتابة الصحفية؟

- 1-  نعم  
 2-  لا

14) لأي غرض تستخدم الإنترنت؟ (يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- 1-  تبادل رسائل البريد الإلكتروني مع زملاء العمل  
 2-  عمل مقابلات عن طريق الإنترنت  
 3-  نشر مقالات أو مواضيع في شبكة الإنترنت  
 4-  مناقشات جماعية  
 5-  مواضيع إخبارية  
 6-  نشرات دورية إعلامية  
 7-  الوصول إلى مصادر جديدة أو خبراء  
 8-  لتبادل وجهات النظر مع القراء  
 9-  آراء أخرى لتضاف إلى الموضوع  
 10-  للحصول على صور إخبارية أو فيديو

تابع

- 11-  بحث أولي في الموضوع  
 12-  الحصول على معلومات أو اقتباسات  
 13-  البحث في أرشيف الصحيفة  
 14-  البحث في أرشيف الصحف الأخرى  
 15-  التأكد من مصداقية المعلومات  
 16-  الحصول على الأخبار العاجلة  
 17-  للتبادل مع المصادر  
 18-  قراءة المقالات  
 19-  القيام بتحقيقات إخبارية  
 20-  متابعة خبر معين  
 21-  غير ذلك الرجاء حدد:

15) من القائمة السابقة ، حدد خمسة من أكثر استخداماتك للإنترنت؟  
 (اختر الرقم الذي أمام الخيار في سؤال)

- (1)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (2)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (3)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (4)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (5)  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### الفقرة الثالثة: الإنترنت وحرية الصحافة

الآراء التالية تتناول مدى تأثير الإنترنت في سقف حرية الصحافة المحلية. الرجاء تحديد مدى اتفاقك أو اختلافك مع كل من هذه الآراء بوضع علامة (✓) في الخانة المناسبة.

موافق بشدة	موافق	لا أدري	غير موافق	غير موافق تماما

تابع



الفقرة الرابعة: معلومات خاصة

(50) الاسم: \_\_\_\_\_  
(اختياري ، ولكن يبقى سرية)

(51) معلومات للاتصال: \_\_\_\_\_  
(فقط لتوضيح بعض الإجابات)

(52) الجنس:  -1 ذكر  -2 أنثى

(53) الجنسية:  -1 كويتي  -2 غير كويتي

(54) العمر:  -1 18 - 24  -2 25 - 30  
 -3 31 - 36  -4 37 - 40  
 -5 أكبر من 40

⊙ نهاية الاستبانة ⊙  
لكم جزيل الشكر والتقدير

### **Appendix 4.3: Questions for Interviews (English):**

1. Does the Internet affect press freedom in Kuwait?
2. Did weblogs, forums and other online media sites affect local press freedom during the constitutional and electoral consistencies issues in 2006? If so, what kind of effects.
3. During the two issues, was the level of freedom online more than the local press, and was it only temporarily or did it last longer, even after the two issues are over?
4. Were topics discussed online during the two issues reflected in the local press?
5. Did writers' personal Web sites (such as Mohammad Abdulqader site 'Meezan') help increase the level of press freedom in Kuwait?
6. In your opinion, do you think online political campaigns starts only if there is a disputed issue locally?
7. In your opinion, what do you think will be the government's reaction to the amount of freedom discussed online? Will the government move to apply new regulations to control this online freedom? What you think of criminalizing online publishing?
8. What is your opinion regarding the future of press freedom in Kuwait with the presents of online journalism?
9. Do new newspapers (*Annahar, Alam Alyawm, Alshahed...*etc) practice more press freedom than the old newspapers?

## Questions of Interviews (Arabic):

### أسئلة للمقابلات

1. هل للإنترنت تأثير على حرية الصحافة في الكويت؟
2. هل كان للمنديات والمواقع الإعلامية على الإنترنت أثر على حرية الصحافة المحلية أثناء أزمة الحكم ونببها خمسة في عام 2005؟ ما هو هذا التأثير وهل كان التأثير يختلف من كل أزمة (أزمة الحكم والدوائر)؟
3. هل كان سقف الحرية في مواقع الإنترنت خلال أزمة الحكم والدوائر أكثر من الصحف المحلية؟ وهل تعتبر مؤقتة وتنتهي مع نهاية الحدث أو تستمر حسب الأزمة؟
4. هل كان هناك انعكاس للمواضيع والمعلومات المطروحة في الإنترنت في الصحافة المحلية أثناء أزمة الحكم والدوائر؟
5. هل أثرت المواقع الشخصية (مثل موقع محمد عبد القادر الجاسم) على الإنترنت في رفع سقف الحرية الصحفية؟
6. باعتقادك كإعلامي هل الحملات التي تقوم بها المدونات أو المنديات أو المواقع الخاصة الكويتية هي حسب الحدث؟
7. باعتقادك ما هي ردة فعل الحكومة اتجاه ما يطرح في الإنترنت (وأقصد المدونات والمنديات أو ما يكتب من قبل محمد عبد القادر الجاسم)؟ وهل ستقوم بوضع قوانين لتقييد الحرية؟ وما رأيك في تجريم النشر الإلكتروني؟
8. ما هي نظرتك المستقبلية لحرية الصحافة في الكويت، خاصة مع وجود الإنترنت؟
9. هل تختلف الصحف الجديدة (الجريدة ، عالم اليوم ، النهار) بسقف حرية أكبر مع الصحف القديمة؟

**Appendix 5.1: Credibility of online newspapers among journalists**

<b>Journalists</b>	<b>Always credible</b>	<b>Usually credible</b>	<b>Sometimes credible</b>	<b>Rarely credible</b>	<b>Never credible</b>	<b>N = Total</b>
<b>Government sites</b>	43	57	69	18	3	190
	23%	30%	36.3%	10%	2%	
<b>CNN Web site</b>	48	84	47	7	1	187
	26%	45%	25.1%	47%	.5%	
<b>BBC Web site</b>	55	94	36	3	0	188
	29.3%	50%	19.1%	2%	0%	
<b>Aljazeera Web site</b>	24	76	67	16	7	190
	13%	40%	35.3%	8.4%	4%	
<b>Al-Arabia Web site</b>	24	85	59	9	3	180
	13.3%	47.2%	33%	5%	1.7%	
<b>Elaph Web site</b>	23	72	64	12	1	172
	13.4%	42%	37%	7%	.6%	
<b>Alwatan Web site</b>	35	67	56	15	7	180
	19.4%	37.2%	31.1%	8.3%	3.9%	
<b>Alqabas Web site</b>	30	92	47	5	1	175
	17.1%	53%	27%	3%	.6%	
<b>Al-Seyassah Web site</b>	21	63	53	24	13	174
	12.1%	36.2%	31%	14.8%	8%	
<b>Alanbaa Web site</b>	18	63	61	21	12	175
	10.3%	36%	35%	12%	7%	
<b>Alrai (Al-Raialaam) Web site</b>	22	78	58	6	8	172
	13%	45.3%	34%	45%	57%	
<b>Al-Talea Web site</b>	19	59	61	18	5	162
	12%	36.4%	38%	11.1%	3.1%	

### Credibility of online newspapers among columnists

Columnists	Always credible	Usually credible	Sometimes credible	Rarely credible	Never credible	N = Total
Government sites	1	9	25	16	6	57
	1.6%	15%	41%	26.2%	10%	
CNN Web site	13	24	15	5	1	57
	21.3%	39.3%	25%	8.2%	1.6%	
BBC Web site	17	29	11	3	1	61
	28%	48%	18%	5%	1.6%	
Aljazeera Web site	8	19	29	5	0	61
	13.1%	31.1%	48%	8.2%	0	
Al-Arabia Web site	5	28	20	5	2	60
	8.2%	46%	33%	8.2%	3.3%	
Elaph Web site	7	17	24	3	1	52
	13%	33%	46%	6%	2%	
Alwatan Web site	2	11	18	18	7	56
	3.3%	18%	30%	30%	11.5%	
Alqabas Web site	7	25	23	2	1	57
	11.5%	41%	38%	3.3%	1.6%	
Al-Seyassah Web site	2	12	24	10	7	55
	3.3%	20%	39.3%	16.4%	12%	
Alanbaa Wweb site	3	10	29	10	1	53
	5%	16.4%	48%	16.4%	1.6%	
Alrai (Al-Raialaam) Web site	2	23	26	5	0	56
	3.3%	38%	43%	8.2%	0%	
Al-Talea Web site	2	18	22	8	1	51
	3.2%	30%	36.1%	13.1%	1.6%	

## Appendix 5.2: Journalists & Columnists use of the Internet

Journalists		
Using the Internet for	N = 204	Percentage
Reading articles	137	66.2%
E-mail work colleagues	130	64.3%
Follow up specific news	127	61.4%
Searching your news outlets' archives	123	59.4%
New sources or experts	115	56%
Keep up with breaking News	114	56%
Searching other news outlet's archives	112	54%
News stories	109	53%
News images or video	106	51%
Information and/or quotes	104	50%
Verifying facts	99	48%
Preliminary research	96	46%
Different views to add to a news story	65	31%
Online publications	59	29%
Interview via e-mail	57	28%
Media Releases	52	25%
Interacting with readers	49	24%
Discussion groups	44	21%
Investigative	37	18%
Interacting with sources	36	17%
Columnists		
Using the Internet for	N = 61	Percentage
Reading articles	54	89%
E-mail work colleagues	46	75%
Verifying facts	42	69%
Searching your news outlets' archives	41	67%
News stories	40	66%
Follow up specific news	40	66%
Online publications	39	64%
New sources or experts	38	62%
Information and/or quotes	38	62%
Searching other news outlet's archives	38	62%
Keep up with breaking News	36	59%
Preliminary research	33	54%
Interacting with readers	27	44%
Different views to add to a news story	24	39%
News images or video	23	38%
Media Releases	20	33%
Discussion groups	19	31%
Interview via e-mail	10	16%
Interacting with sources	8	13%
Investigative	7	12%