

# The Press in the Grand Maghreb: Past and Present

*Dr. Abderrahmane AZZI*  
*Institute of Information and Communication*

The present study is an attempt to trace the rise, the development, and the recent presse phenomenon in the Grand Maghreb (\*) (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya). The press in the GM (\*\*), particularly the print media, has witnessed great social and historical moments, all of which once incorporated into a unified approach represent the unique characteristics of press in this part of the world. The press in the GM can generally be divided into major historical periods. The first period extends from the age of colonialism in the first half of the 19th century until the thirties of the 20th century. This period was characterized by the introduction and the growth of colonial papers whether owned by French (or Italian in the case of Libya) authorities or privately owned by French or European settlers, eventhough there were between now and then papers which belonged to "local" individuals or groups (religious or others). The second period starts from the thirties of this century and ends up when the states of the GM gained independence during the sixties of this century. This period saw both the continuity of colonial press and the rise of nationalist press pertaining to different nationalist parties struggling to advance the cause of independence beginning from the late twenties of the 20th century. The third period begins at the years of independence and extends to the present time. This period gave the press new dimensions and functions, among of which the advancement of government economic, social and cultural policies or what was called at that time media's participation in national development.

The method used in this study is descriptive and analytical, briefly combining historical factors (without being historicity) and current data whenever possible (without being statistics) of press development in the GM. The shortcomings which may or have to appear in this study pertain to the difficult nature of the subject and lack of litterature on press in the states of the GM, eventhough there are some serious

---

(\*) The term "Grand Maghreb" is used to include the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Other terms which take some cultural historical, and political configurations are often used to describe this part of the world. For example, the terme "North Africa", commonly used in Western media and literature, carries geographic denotations at the expense of cultural and historical considerations. The term "Maghreb Arabia" (western Arabia) is used in relation to "machrek Arabia" (eastern Arabia) and emphasizes cultural bonds among people in these countries, etc.

(\*\*) abbreviation of Grand Maghreb.

attempts which have been made on press history on each state apart from the GM put together such as the studies of Ihaddaden <sup>(1)</sup> and Habari <sup>(2)</sup>.

The press in the GM, as mentioned, was introduced by European settlers in the early years of colonialism. That is, the press, as Ihaddaden puts it, is an imported phenomenon <sup>(3)</sup>. The first newspapers such as *Al Mubashir* of Algeria (1847), *Al Raid Al Tunisia* of Tunisia (1861), and *Trables Al Gherb* of Libya (1866) were founded to communicate with the local population on colonial administration's intentions at that time (the 19th century). Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia were under French colonialism for more than a century. Algeria, for instance, was considered to be an integral part of France for years. The term "Algérie Française" (French Algeria) was common in French literature, particularly during the war of independence (1954-62). The French influence in these countries even after three decades of independence (1960-90) still is evident and high. Today, many important dailies in these countries are published in French; *El Moudjahid* (320,000 in circulation) <sup>(4)</sup> in Algeria, *Le Matin* (50,000) <sup>(5)</sup> in Morocco, and *La Presse de Tunisie* (30,000) <sup>(6)</sup>. The print media published in Arabic are nonetheless witnessing and not without difficulty great gains both quantitatively and qualitatively, i.e., *Al Massa* (80,000) <sup>(7)</sup> in Algeria, *Al Alam* (45,000) <sup>(8)</sup> in Morocco, *Al Sabah* (35,000) <sup>(9)</sup> in Tunisia, and *Al Fajr Al Jadid* (10,000) <sup>(10)</sup> in Libya.

The current press system in the GM shares some characteristics of the authoritarian press theory. That is, the press, electronic and print, performs functions under government control and restriction, none of the four countries enjoys press autonomy from government. The little autonomy which may exist applies mainly to print media, even though the current situation including that of Algeria indicates that there is a tendency for the press to slowly move away from complete government control. The private and independent press lacks journalistic traditions and is subject to political pressures from government and economic restraints from the social and economic shortcomings of the environment in general.

The GM has moderate level of literacy (above 50 percent) <sup>(11)</sup> and newspaper circulations, except and to some extent that of Algeria, are low (10 to 30 copies of daily papers per 1,000 people) <sup>(12)</sup>. The press usually directs itself to the urban elite which is heterogeneous and exhibits different modes of norms, habits, tongues, and sensibilities, although the electronic media (radio and television) have reached almost every part of the GM.

A review of literature on international communication shows that there is little written about the press in the GM. Lowenstein's survey, known as the Press Independence and Critical Ability (PICA), gives different appreciations of press freedom in the countries of the GM. Morocco is ranked among countries that are free with many controls, Algeria among the countries whose press is controlled with high degree, Tunisia among countries which have controlled press system with low degree, and Libya among countries unranked for reasons of insufficient information <sup>(13)</sup>.

The Rugh's classifications of the Arab press (the mobilizing system, the loyalist system, and the diversity system) are represented in the GM. The mobilizing system, in Algeria and Libya, is characterized by a high degree of government control over the press. The press in these countries went through the process of nationalization during the early years of independence and then became an instrument for government policies. The loyalist system in Tunisia makes the press support the

government in spite of the fact that a great part of the press is privately owned. The diversity system in Morocco insures some degree of freedom in criticizing the government <sup>(14)</sup>.

The PICA survey can be criticized on many grounds. The survey relies on the concept of freedom which is a controversial term and presents serious difficulties in cross-cultural comparison. In addition, the concept of freedom was viewed mainly in terms of media's relation to government. That is, the press system is considered free in so far as such system is not controlled by government whereas journalism practices in different cultures shows that press control can be exercised by either government (as in authoritarian states) or corporate and financial interests (as in the Western world).

Rugh's study, on the other hand, is probably the most extensive and comprehensive analysis of the Arab press in general. The author was able not only to describe thoroughly the different aspects that shaped the development of the Arab press but to develop a theory which gives the Arab press a unique position in relation to the existing theories of the press, namely the authoritarian, the libertarian, the communist, and the social responsibility <sup>(15)</sup>. Rugh's study, however, was partly simplistic and contains generalities which do not reflect the diversity and the complexity of the many facets of the press in the GM. I outlined, in a lengthy review <sup>(16)</sup> of Rugh's study, basic critics of Rugh's approach in terms of form and content, among of which the dominance of one variable in the analysis of the Arab press (media's relation to government); the inability to uncover the depth of cultural bonds that unify regional groups of states within the Arab World such the group of the GM, the eastern Arabia, the Gulf states, etc.; the omission of the Palestinian press, the simplification of some historical events, etc.

Literature by non-Westerners on press development in the countries of the GM is skimpy. Ihaddaden cites a dozen of studies done on press history in Algeria <sup>(17)</sup>, most of which tend to be descriptive and historical such as the one conducted by Zoubir Seif el Islam <sup>(18)</sup>.

### The Press in Morocco

The first newspaper appeared in Morocco was a Spanish paper called *The African Liberal* which was published in the town of Sebta around 1820. The first paper in Arabic language *Al Maghrib* (Morocco) appeared in 1886. Tafasca notes that the number of paper appeared in Morocco between 1820 and 1912 exceeded 50 titles, most of them were owned by European settlers and published in French or Spanish language <sup>(19)</sup>.

Contemporary press which uses modern techniques of journalism in Morocco goes back to the thirties of this century with the rise of nationalist parties <sup>(20)</sup>. Significantly, that modern history can be traced precisely to War World II <sup>(21)</sup>. In 1944, the Istiqlal Party, which led the country to the independence, started its own two papers; *Al Alam* in Arabic and *l'Opinion* in French. The two papers were anti-French colonialism and advocated the Arab nationalism in Morocco. The French-owned company, Mas Group, had few important newspapers which survived the transition to independence. The two biggest dailies of the company were *La Vigie* and *Le Petit Marocain*. The two papers, according to Rugh, were more informative than politically oriented and tended to concentrate on local news and Morocco's relations with France <sup>(22)</sup>. Tafasca, on the other hand, argues that the two papers were very loyal to the French administration in Morocco <sup>(23)</sup>.

On attaining independence in 1956, a great number of newspapers reflecting different party affiliations appeared. The authorities in Morocco did not interfere in a significant way to put an end to the openly competing political factions as it happened in most authoritarian countries. That is, the press could survive the transition period and keep its diversity. The press legislation of 1958 reflected somewhat the desire of different political parties to preserve the right and the freedom of expression<sup>(24)</sup>. Although the press in Morocco enjoys a low degree of control, the government does exercise restrictions on the press. The government in 1959 suspended all publications of the Istiqlal Party and arrested the chief editor and the managing director of *Al Tahrir* for "an offense against the political and religious institutions of the Kingdom." The same incident was repeated in 1965 when the government suspended *La Nation Africaine*. The paper was accused of publishing "an anti-monarchical quotation from a nineteenth-century Egyptian philosopher"<sup>(25)</sup> during a parliamentary discussion on a press code cancelling the government's power to suspend or ban a newspaper. The government in 1971 also banned *La Vigie Marocaine* and *Le Petit Marocain* (owned by a French company) for the reason that they were against the kingdom.

Today, there are a dozen of dailies in Morocco. *Le Matin*, a private newspaper, is the largest newspaper in the country. The dailies in Morocco generally are privately owned and have a relatively moderate rate of readership. The press in Morocco can be divided into three types: the pro, the critical, and the anti-government newspapers.

The pro-government dailies are represented by five dailies: *Le Matin* and *Maroc Soir*, owned by Ahmed Alaoui, a former minister and a relative of the King, *Al Mithaq Al Watany* and *Al Maghrib*, owned by Ahmed Osman, the Prime Minister, and *Al Anba'*, published by the Ministry of Information. The dailies, critical of the government, are *Al 'Alam* and *l'Opinion*, of the Istiqlal Party. The anti-government dailies are *Al Muharrir*, of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, and *Al Bayan* (one edition in Arabic and another in French), of the Progress and Socialism Party. The anti-government dailies are more likely to suffer from government restrictions than others<sup>(\*)</sup>.

Broadcasting in Morocco generally is government owned and controlled, except for the radio station (Midi 1) and a local TV station in the city of Dar Al Baida. Journalism education in Morocco is offered at the 'Institut Supérieur de Journalisme', created in 1977. The institute, located in Rabat, offers a two-year program which is both theoretical and practical<sup>(\*\*)</sup>.

The distribution of Foreign press in Morocco is extensive. The number of foreign newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals that are distributed in Morocco today is 1021 titles. Most of this press comes from France (653 titles) followed by Egypt (74 titles) and then comes Lebanon, Spain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Germany (the Western part), England, and Syria. The countries that contribute with less than 10 titles are Qatar, United Arab Emirates, the United States, the Soviet Union, Portugal, Holland, and Switzerland.<sup>(26)</sup>

---

(\*) The press law in Morocco provides fines and prison for "offenses against the royal family, the public peace, the moral and unity of the armed forces and police, and external security."

(\*\*) Some theoretical courses include: history of mass communication, mass media law, economics of mass media, sociology of mass communication, advertising and public relations, etc.; and some practical courses include: techniques of reporting, editing, photography, etc.

## The Press in Algeria

The press in Algeria appeared during the early years of colonialism. Ihaddaden describes different types of press affiliations during the 19th and the 1st half of the twentieth century; a) the official or the government press (French administration) which was first directed to settlers, soldiers of the expedition, etc. and later to local population (indigènes) to provide information on government policies, i.e., *Al Mubashir* which started in 1847; b) the colonial press which reflected the views of the French and other European settlers; c) the press of locals (la presse indigéno-phile) which belonged to local individuals or groups such as *Al Haq* which appeared in 1893 in the city of Annaba and *Al Misbah* which began in 1904 in the city of Oran; and d) the nationalist press brought about by the rise of nationalist parties beginning with *Al Ouma* in 1930 <sup>(27)</sup>.

The press in Algeria has witnessed significant growth beginning with War World II <sup>(28)</sup>. This is due to many factors, among of which the development of nationalist press, the increasing number of European settlers, etc. In the 1950's, there were eight daily newspapers in the country. The two biggest were *La Dépêche Quotidienne* controlled by the great land-owner and politician Henry Borgeaut, and *l'Écho d'Alger* owned by Vicomte de Serigny, a land owner and businessman. Both newspapers advocated French Algeria (l'Algérie Française).

The nationalist movement had only weeklies: *Algérie Libre*, organ of the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLD), *La République Algérienne*, voice of Ferhat Abbas' Democratic Union for Algerian Manifest (UDMA); *Al Bassair*, published by Ulema, the Muslim cultural organization; and *Liberté*, an underground paper of the Communist Party <sup>(28)</sup>.

These weeklies became underground when the French administration suppressed them in 1955, as the seven-year for independence was beginning. The National Liberation Front (FLN), regrouping all nationalist organizations, started publishing its own paper *El Moudjahid* in 1956, which was also circulating clandestinely in the country.

The Arab press, during the colonial period, witnessed many forms of restrictions and suppressions and, thus, was not able to flourish and grow. In fact, "a large group of French settlers living in Algeria gained control of the economic, political, and cultural life so thoroughly that the Arab press was not able to grow." <sup>(29)</sup>

The country got independence on July 5, 1962. During the period between July and November 1962, a number of newspapers of diverse political orientations and interests appeared. The National Liberation Front brought to Algiers *El Moudjahid*, which was published as a weekly in Tunis; the communist-backed *Alger Republican*, banned in 1955, reappeared and the Algerian Peoples' Party (PPA) started to publish its organ. This period did not last long. In November 1962, The Algerian Peoples' Party and the Communist Party were banned in an important step towards establishing a one-party system. As a Result, the newspapers of both parties were forced to close. Between November 1962 and August 1963, the national Liberation Front reinforced its position in the country and created three newspapers and ten magazines to spread its political orientation and create acceptable conditions for the one-party system. In August 1963, the parliament, representing delegates from the National Liberation Front, proclaimed Algeria a one-party state. As a result, the press lost its diversity. on september 17, 1963, the political bureau of the National

Liberation Front announced the nationalisation of *La Dépêche d'Alger*, *l'Écho d'Oran*, and *La Dépêche de Constantine*. At the same time, the Algerian Press Service (APS) news agency was set up. The only paper which was not affected by the process of nationalisation at the time was *Alger-Republicain*. The newspaper survived until June 19, 1965 when a new government was set in place.

The foreign press, particularly the French, had a wide circulation in Algeria at that time (see Table 1). The last decision to organize the structure of the Algerian press was the creation in January 27, 1966 of a national company (société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion) with the objective of monopolizing editions and importations of all kinds of publications<sup>(30)</sup>.

**Table 1**

**Circulation for French Press in Algeria during the period of transition 1962-1965 (\*)**

<b>Dailies</b>	<b>1963</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>15.7.65</b>	<b>December 1965</b>
France Soir .....	6.000	13.000	15.500	17.000
Le Monde .....	7.000	10.050	8.800	9.000
Le Figaro .....	3.500	5.000	3.600	3.600/4.200
Combat .....	350	350	450	350
Paris-Jour .....	1.000	1.125	1.350	1.350
<b>Weeklies</b>				
Paris-Match .....	11.000	11.000	12.500	12.500/13.000
France Dimanche .....	-	-	-	10.500
Salut les Copains .....	-	-	-	10.500
Jours de France .....	7.000	7.000	6.500	6.500
Le Canard Enchaîné .....	-	-	-	6.000
L'Express .....	1.700	1.000	2.000	3.500
Le Nouvel Observateur ..	1.200	1.100	1.200	2.000
Le Nouveau Candide ....	1.800	1.800	1.800	2.300
Marie-Claire .....	-	-	-	6.500
Modes & Travaux .....	-	-	-	2.500
Confidences .....	-	-	-	1.700
Ici Paris .....	-	-	-	900
Lui .....	-	-	-	500
<b>Monthlies</b>				
Selection Reader's Digest .	-	-	-	4.000
Constellation .....	-	-	-	4.500
<b>Sport</b>				
L'Equipe (daily) .....	-	-	3.200	2.400 per week
France Football (monthly)	-	-	-	2.800
Football Magazine .....	-	-	-	900
But et Club .....	-	-	-	450

(\*) Unpublished document.

Ihaddaden notes that the press in Algeria since the independence can be divided into three periods. The first period 1962-1965 is characterized by a) the creation of new daily newspapers owned by the government such as (*Ach.chaab* (Peuple) (\*) in 1962, *El Djourhouria* (Republique) (\*\*)) and *An.nasr* (Victoire) (\*\*\*) in 1963, and *Alger ce Soir* in 1964; b) the nationalization of colonial press; and c) control of national press. The second period 1964-1976 saw the increasing number of newspaper circulation in general. The printings of *El Moudjahid*, for example, went from 66,400 in 1965 to 140,000 in 1975. The whole printings of daily newspapers grew from 113,000 to 227,000 during a ten-year period; and c) the third period which begins from 1976. This period is singled out by the development of the diffusion of the press and the increasing awareness of government officials of the important role that the press can play in society in general <sup>(31)</sup>. This period saw also the expansion of electronic media, particularly the use of television.

There are many social and political factors both internally and externally which gradually prepared the way for a significant process of change in terms of content control and media structure beginning with the 1980's. The well-publicized events of October 1988 have accelerated the process of historical evolution in the world of mass media. The law of political association, 1989, has opened the way for a multi-party system. Hence, the press as a dependent variable has moved to the age of diversity, particularly in the arena of print media. Today, there are more than fifty recognized political parties in Algeria, and each party seeks to acquire its own means of information and communication especially a stable and well-established newspaper.

The current map of print media reflects basically the significant developments occurring at the social, economic and political levels. The government papers (dailies) are represented by *Al Massa* (circulation of 80,000), *Horizon* (260,000), *Al Djomhouria* (60,000), and *An Nasr* (65,000). The party papers, although not regularly published, are very diversified and represented by: *El Moudjahid* (320,000) and *Ach Chaab* (90,000) of the National Liberation Front (FLN), *Al Monqid* (\*\*\*\*) of the Islamic Front of Salut (FIS), *l'Avenir, Mustaqbal*, and *Asalo* (\*\*\*\*\*) of the Assembling for Culture and Democracy (RCD), *Al Taqadoum* of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), *Al Manbar* of the Popular Association for Unity and Work (APUT), *Sout Ach.chaab* the Avant-Garde Socialist Party (PAGS), etc. The independent papers are quiet few, among of which *Al Khabar*, *le Jeune Independent*.

There are a number of important weeklies in a form of magazine or tabloid such as *El Moudjahid*, organ of the National Liberation Front, *Algérie Actualité*, which tends to have liberal stands on economic and political affairs, and *Revolution Africaine* which generally takes leftist orientation in the coverage of national and international events. *Revolution Africaine* was founded in 1963 to cover Africa's struggle for political, economic, and cultural independence. It was established as an international weekly and the government hoped that it would circulate throughout French-speaking Africa, but it did not for political and economic reasons. Here, one can also add the recent competing weekly *Hebdo* (1990).

The Algerian Press Service (APS) was first established in Tunis in December 1962 as a medium to spread the NLF's view in the struggle for independence of

---

(\*) in the city of Algiers, (\*\*) in Oran, and (\*\*\*) in Constantine.

(\*\*\*\*) published in Arabic with two full-pages in French.

(\*\*\*\*\*) published in Berber.

Algeria. On attaining independence, the APS was brought to Algeria and started a telegraphic service, followed in April 1963 by full telex facilities. The APS distributes in Arabic and French and preserves the monopoly of the distribution to all media in the country.

The electronic media is government owned. There is one TV channel and radio broadcasting which comprises four public channels in Arabic (channel 1), Kabyle (channel 2), French (channel 3), and an international channel in many foreign languages. The power of radio transmission has developed from 780 Kw in 1965 to 7,000 Kw in 1975. The number of radio receivers has increased from one million in 1965 to three millions in 1975 and then to three millions and a half in 1986. As for television sets, the number increased from 150,000 TV sets in 1965 to 500,000 in 1975 and to one million and a half in 1986. The government budget set for the sector of information and communication dramatically favors electronic media as opposed to print and other forms of communication. The part in the budget (both the functioning and that of equipment) allocated for TV and radio range from 68% to 96% of the whole budget dedicated to communication from 1966 to 1984. The APS agency comes second in importance with a share of about 15%. The print media comes last and receives only about 5% of the budget during the same period <sup>(32)</sup>.

The new technologies of communication is affecting dramatically the GM particularly Algeria in the area of broadcasting through satellites. The satellites signals carrying major French TV channels can be captured throughout the northern part of the GM and the phenomenon of 1.5-meter dishes that sit atop buildings and houses is apparent in the big cities of Algeria such as Algiers, Oran, Constantine, and Annaba. It is estimated that 1 in every 4 families is linked to a French TV channel or many French TV channels such as La 5, 6, 2, and Canal + through satellite broadcasting. The cultural and social impact of these signals can only be devastating even though studies on media's impact on the general audience are lacking.

The circulation of foreign publications, particularly French publications, in Algeria is significant. The economic crisis created by cuts in oil prices has affected somewhat the availability of imported publications beginning with 1985. (see Table 2 on foreign press in Algeria during recent years).

Journalism education was thought immediately after the independence at the Higher National Institute of Journalism (Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Journalisme), 1964. The institute was integrated in 1978 with the Institute of Political Science to form the Institute of Political Science and Information (ISPI). The two institutes were separated again in 1984 and journalism training is offered today at the institute of Information and Communication (ISIC). The program of study tends to be theoretical and closer to political science than to journalism field <sup>(33)</sup>



**Table 2**  
**Foreign Press in Algeria**  
(By number of imported copies) (\*)

Dailies	Country of origin	1983	1985	1986	1987 2 nd sem.	1988
L'Equipe	France	8.000	7.000	4.000	-	-
L'Humanité	"	3.000	3.500	10.000	1.500	3.000
Libération	"	4.000	7.000	4.000	500	500
Le Monde	"	4.000	13.000	5.000	8.200	-
Le Matin	"	27.000	20.800	18.000	25.000	19.000
Al Chark Al Awsat (Middle East)	pup. in London (Saudi Arabia)	-	-	-	2.000	3.000
Al Quabas	Kuwait	-	-	-	2.000	4.000
Okath	Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	3.000	2.000
<b>Weeklies</b>						
Le Canard Enchaîné	France	5.500	6.300	4.000	-	3.000
Femme d'Aujourd'hui	"	20.000	25.000	1.500	6.000	10.000
France Football	"	10.000	17.000	10.000	-	-
Nouvel Observateur	"	15.000	17.700	7.000	5.000	8.000
PTF	"	27.000	40.000	30.000	10.000	7.000
Al Mustaqbal	Liban	15.000	15.000	8.000	3.000	9.000
Qul Al Arab	Saudi Arabia	6.000	7.500	-	-	-
<b>Monthlies</b>						
Femme Branique	France	7.000	10.000	-	-	-
Maison Marie Claire	"	5.000	7.000	-	-	-
Le Monde Diplomatique	"	4.500	6.500	4.500	4.000	4.000
Mondiale	"	25.000	25.000	-	-	-
Science et Vie	"	12.000	12.000	20.000	10.000	20.000
Al Arabi	Kuwait	25.000	25.000	25.000	30.000	15.000
Al Jil	Pub. in Syprus (Palestinean)	5.000	15.000	20.000	10.000	15.000
Iftah Ya Samsam		2.000	20.000	-	-	10.000
Manar Al Islam		3.000	3.000	1.000	-	3.000

(\*) unpublished document.

### The Press in Tunisia

The history of Tunisian press goes back to 1818 when the first newspaper *Al Ra'id Al Tunisia* was established<sup>(34)</sup>. The press of French and other European settlers witnessed substantial growth during the late 19th century. Here, one can cite *Journal-Tunis* (1889), *l'Independent Tunisien* (1884), *Le Kara Kouz* (1884), and *Le Réveil Tunisien* (1886). There were some important papers which defended clearly the interests of the colons in Tunisia such as *l'Annexion* (1892), *La Tunisie Française* (1892), and *Le Colon Français* (1912). There were also in the same context papers which reflected the views of French settlers called at the time "Franco-Tunisien" and which lasted for a significant period of time such as *l'Observateur Tunisien* (1889) and *La Dépêche Tunisienne* (1889). *La Dépêche* ceased to appear only in 1962<sup>(35)</sup>.

The nationalist press advocating the independence of Tunisia appeared during the thirties of this century. Rugh notes that Habib Bourguiba started new era of Tunisian press by publishing *l'Action Tunisienne* in 1932 which advanced the doctrine of independence by mean of negotiation. The natinalist press, unlike that of Algeria and Morocco, did develop during the period of French colonialism (1881-1956) primarily because of a significant group of middle-class intellectuals could-maintain contact with the eastern Arabia (Middle East countries). The nationalist press, however, was not allowed to flourish, it was "controlled, censored, and restriced by the French administration." For example, *l'Action Tunisienne* was forced in 1933 to close along with other nationalist papers. The nationalist papers lived a long period of instability because of French intervention in its functions <sup>(36)</sup>.

There were during the era of independence (1956) many types of papers; nationalist, colonial, and imported. The paper *l'Action* became an organ of the ruling Destourian Socialist Party along with *Al'Amal* paper. Few colonial papers survived the transition period of independence. The leading French-Language paper, *La Dépêche Tunisienne*, was forced to close in 1962 for economic reasons.

The press in Tunisia during the time of Bourguiba (1956-1987) was loyal to and supportive of the government despite the fact that it is generally privately owned. It tended to be passive in its language, sensative to the political environment, and did not criticize the basic tenets of national policy and personalities at the top of the government. That is, the press in Tunisia had little diversity. As an editor put it at that time with some exaggeration: "the newspapers are so similar that they might as well be nationalized."

The press in Tunisia, according to its code, was free, but that freedom was limited in order to "protect society from anything injurious to tranquility, security and public order" <sup>(37)</sup>, and "to protect the state and the constituted agencies of government against anything liable to cause foreign or domestic disorders." The government has used the above argument to suspend or close a newspaper. The private press exercised self censorship and for that reason, the governement did not need to control private newspapers through its political agents or through press law. Private newspaper took policy statement made by the governement officials as a guide in their writings. The government, on the other hand, tended to establish good relationship with newspaper personnel and, sometimes, praised these newspapers for "balance" and "objectivity" in reporting events.

Generally, private newspapers were more "likely to criticize government services which the general public finds deficient, and print stories which put specific governement officials in a negative light" <sup>(38)</sup>. In 1971, the government suspended the Communist Party organ along with other papers of opposition parties, putting an end to party papers in Tunisia.

The press in Tunisia since 1987 is witnissing some relaxation as the country is moving gradually toward a multi-party system. There are two government newspapers in Tunisia, *Al'Amal* and *l'Action* and three private newspapers. *Es Sabah* was the most critical newspaper in the country before 1971. It supported, for a long time, the rebel secretary general of the Neo-Destour Party for his reforming program.

The map of Tunisian magazines and periodicals is wide indeed. The weeklies include *Al Sabah Al Ousboui*, *Assada*, *Al Sour*, *Al Ousbou Al Mosawar*, *Le Temps*

*Hebdomadaire*, and *La Presse Sport*. The bi-monthlies include *Al Rabat*. The monthlies and other periodicals include *Nissa*, *Ayam Jerba*, *Al Jil Al Ajyal*<sup>(39)</sup>, *Cetime*, *Revue Tunisienne de l'Energie*, *Reflets Portuaires*, etc.<sup>(40)</sup>.

The Tunisian press agency as well as TV and radio with its regional stations in Sfaqs and Al Monstir are government owned. There are actually many French companies which seek to open private TV and radio channels in Tunisia. The same pattern occurs also in the world or print media and advertising. The presence of foreign press in Tunisia is extensive. This includes most of the well-known French dailies and magazines. Other papers and journals come from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Soviet Union, England, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, China, Algeria, etc.<sup>(41)</sup>.

The press in Libya goes back historically to the late 19th century. The first paper *Trables Al Gherb* appeared in 1866. The references dealing with press development in Libya are very rare. However, one cannot exclude the fact that the Lybian press followed a pattern similar to that of most other countries of the GM. That is, the press introduced by the Italian settlers became the instrument of the nationalist movement beginning with the thirties of this century. The country after the independence (1952) was ruled by a monarchy until 1969 during the time of which the new regime took over all means of information in the country. The press circulation in Libya is very limited (64,000) in 1976<sup>(42)</sup>. Among the important dailies *Al Fajr Al Jadid* and *Al Ray* published in the capital of Tripoli. TV was introduced only in 1968. Today, there are about 500,000 radio receivers (1986) and 235,000 TV sets (1987) in the country<sup>(43)</sup>.

The overview of press development in the GM can provide some basis for comparison which puts such press in a new light in relation to other systems of communication in the world arena.

The press in the countries of the GM followed a similar pattern of historical development. The press was first introduced by European settlers during the early period of colonial period. Then, the press was used by the nationalist parties to advocate independence during the thirties, the forties, and the fifties of this century. Then, the press became a government tool to propagate economic, social, and cultural programs beginning with the first years of independence. Many social, economic and cultural factors both internally and externally have led the press, particularly the print media, to move toward a system of diversity reflecting different views that characterize political arena. This has been materialized during the 1980's in the type of party press and to a lesser extend independent privately-owned press.

The press system in the GM does not theoretically fit with the authoritarian press theory nor with the communist or the libertarian press theories. Here, one can suggest a type of theory which can be called the nationalist press theory, a theory which reflects a historical position of new emerging nations striving to preserve their own identity and occupy its place in the world economic and political system. The fact that the press especially the electronic media is government owned and controlled does not make it necessarily authoritarian for the national considerations of interests and pride tend to override particular privileges and benefits of a political class which happens to be in power. The authoritarian press system as it has developed during the 16th and the 17th century in Europe was closely linked to the personality of the King and his circle and national dimension was not apparent during that time. This is probably one reason which led to the decay of the Kingdom institution and the rise of the libertarian press system beginning with the 18th in Europe.

The press in the GM also is characterized by the phenomenon of bilingualism (Arabic and French). The press prints or broadcasts in both Arabic and French. This inherited historical fact can only have significant cultural consequences which hinder the nation's ability to preserve and develop its own identity (\*) and can distort communication in the nation in general.

The press infrastructure is moderately developed in the GM. The ambitious economic programs set up by the countries of Algeria and Libya during the 1970's have given these two countries some advantage in the area of media's basic structure, i.e., communication stations, printing house, etc. Nonetheless, the countries of the GM invested basically in the field of electronic media for many reasons among of which the existence of a significant rate of illiteracy and the possible fear of the power that the print media may have in changing people's attitudes and behaviors in general (see Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Communication Data in The GM**

Variable	Marocco		Algeria		Tunisia		Libya		
	Country	1976(**)	1986(***)	1976	1986	1976	1986	1976	1986
TV sets		522.000	1.2mln (1987)(****)	525.000	1.5mln	208.000	500.000 (1987)	10.000 (1975)	235.000 (1987)
Radio receivers		1.5mln	3.0mln	3.0mln	3.2mln	810.000	1.1mln	110.000	500.000
Number of daily papers per 1.000 people			12	13 (1977)	23		30	26	10
Telephones in use		325.000	325.000	297.689 (1978)	819.000	144.116	291.000		

(\*) Psychological studies have shown the significant relations between the processes of acquiring a language and the development of one's own identity.

(\*\*) In *the World Almanac*, News paper Enterprise Association, Inc. New York, 1982, pp. 515-585.

(\*\*\*) In *the World Almanac*, An Imprint of Pharos Books, A Scripps Howard Company, New York, 1990, pp. 686-760.

(\*\*\*\*) mln = million.

The press in the GM tends to be concentrated in the big cities of Rabat, Dar Al Baida, Oran, Algiers, Constantine, Tunis, and Tripoli. The regional press is rare or non-existent. There is little exchange between and among the countries of the GM in terms of print media, radio and TV programs, etc. The reader in any of these countries knows little about the happenings in other countries in spite of the fact that these countries share a common historical and cultural heritage. The experience of Maghreb Vision (during the 1970's) which linked Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia in relation to TV coverage of some sport and cultural events did not last for political reasons.

The current trend of the press in the GM is moving toward a system of diversity open to regional exchange among the countries of the GM. The relation of this press with the external world will be characterized by serious competition between the Arabo-Islamic culture generally reflected in the press published or broadcasted in Arabic and the Western mode of culture generally portrayed in the press that appears in French language. The first type is historically linked to the Arab and the Moslem world while the second tends to be influenced by the Western type of society in general. There is certainly a great need for further studies on the structure, the content, the audience, and the effect of the media in the GM in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the media in this important of the world.

**Table 4**  
**Daily Newspapers the Grand Maghreb**

COUNTRY:	Language of the paper	F <sup>st</sup> . Circ. 1979 (*)	First Pub.	
<b>MOROCCO:</b>				
Al Muharrir (the Liberator)	Arabic	40.000	1971	
Al 'Alam (The Flag)	Arabic	45.000	1944	
L'Opinion	French	45.000	1965	
Le Matin	French	50.000	1971	
Maroc Soir	French	35.000	1971	
Al Anba' (The News)	Arabic	07.000	1963	
Al Mithaq el Watani (The National P)	Arabic	05.000	1976	
Al Maghrib (Morocco)	Arabic	08.000	1978	
Al Bayan (The Dispatch)	Arabic	02.000	1972	
Al Bayan	French	05.000	1972	
		<b>1976</b>	<b>1989 (**)</b>	
<b>ALGERIA</b>				
El Moudjahid (The Rebel)	French	150.000	320.000	1956
Al Chaab (The People)	Arabic	40.000	90.000	1962
Al Nasr (The Victory)	Arabic	35.000	65.000	1963
La République	French	40.0000		1963
Al Massa (The evening)	Arabic		80.000	1985
Horizon (Horizon)	French		260.000	1985
<b>TUNISIA:</b>				
Al Sabah (The Morning)	Arabic	35.000		1950
La Presse de Tunisie	French	30.000		1939
L'action	French	27.000		1932
Le Temps	French	20.000		1976
Al 'Amal (Action)	Arabic	27.000		1957
<b>LIBYA:</b>				
Al Fajr al Jadid (The New Dawn)	Arabic	10.000		1972
Al Ra'y (The Opinion)	Arabic	06.000		1973
Al Jihad (The Holy War)	Arabic	05.000		1973

(\*) in Rugh, pp. 10-104.

(\*\*) in Brahim Brahimi, p. 28.

## NOTES

- (1) Zahir Ihaddaden, **Histoire de la Presse Indigène en Algérie**, ENAL, Alger, 1983.
- (2) Habari Kebir, **La Presse Nationale Depuis l'Indépendance**, ENAP, rapport 1982.
- (3) Zahir Ihaddaden, "Evolution de la presse écrite en Algérie depuis l'Indépendance", **Revue Algérienne de la Communication**, n° 3, mars 1989, p. 10.
- (4) in 1989, see Brahim Brahimi, "Information Regionale et Presse Régionale en Algérie," **Revue Algérienne de la Communication**, n° 3, Mars, 1989, p. 28.
- (5) and (6) in 1979, see William Rugh, **The Arab Press**, Syracuse University Press, New York, 1979, pp. 7-104.
- (7) in 1989, See Brahim, p. 28.
- (8), (9), and (10) in 1979, see William, pp. 73-104.
- (11) and (12) in **The World Almanac**, An Imprint of Pharos Books, A Scripps Howard Company, New York, 1990, pp. 686-760.
- (13) Ralph Lowenstein, "Press Freedom as a Barometer of Political Democracy," in H.D. Fisher and J.C. Merrill, **International & Intercultural Communication**, Hastings House, Publishers, New York, 1978, pp. 142 à 143.
- (14) in Rugh.
- (15) Siebert, Fred S ; Peterson, Theodore; and Schramm, Wilbur, **Four Theories of the Press**, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago, 1979.
- (16) د. عري عبد الرحمن «الصحافة العربية : قراءة تقييمية في سألوث ويلم روف»، **الفكر العربي**، العدد 58، أكتوبر - ديسمبر 1989، 169 - 183
- (17) Zahir Ihaddaden, **La Presse Musulmane Algerienne de 1839 a 1930**, ENAL.. Alger, 1986, pp. 17-28.
- (18) الزبير سيف الإسلام . تاريخ الصحافة في الجزائر ، أجزاء 1 ، 2 ، 3 ، 4 ، 5 . المؤسسة الوطنية للعلوم الطبيعية ، الجزائر ، 1985
- (19) حمد عسك . «صوات الاتصال الانساني بالمغرب : ملاحظات حول الصحافة المكتوبة»، وتيفد غير منشورة ، الرباط ، 1984 ، ص 11
- (20) ن . م . ص 11
- (21) Rugh.
- (22) Ibid.
- (23) أحمد تفاسكا ، ص . 14
- (24) ن . م . ص 14
- (25) Rugh.
- (26) أحمد تفاسكا ، ص . 7
- (27) Zahir Ihaddaden, **La Press Musulmane**, pp. 11-15.
- (28) Rugh.
- (29) Rugh.
- (30) Rugh.
- (31) Zahir Ihaddaden, "Evolution du.....", pp. 21-22.
- (32) in Brahim Brahimi, p. 27.
- (33) د. عري عبد الرحمن «التكوين الاعلامي : التلافي . For a lengthy description of the program offered at the institute see . محمد عري عبد الرحمن ، المعهد العالي للصحافة الرباط ، 15 ، 16 ، 17 فبراير ، 1990
- (34) in Rugh.
- (35) Mohamed Hamdane "Historique de la Presse in Tunisie," **Revue Tunisienne de Communication**, n°9, Jan.-June, 1986, pp. 165-172.
- (36) in Rugh.
- (37) in Rugh.
- (38) Ibid.
- (39) نصف من الدوريات التونسية التي صدرت باللغة العربية سنة 1985 . المجلة التونسية للإتصال ، 9 ، 1986
- (40) "Présentation des périodiques en langue Française parus en Tunisie pendant l'année 1985." **Revue Tunisienne de Communication**, n° 9.
- (41) see . 89 ص . 1987 ، العدد 12 ، الإتصال . المجلة التونسية لعلوم الإتصال . الصحف والمجلات العربية الموزعة بتونس . المجلة التونسية لعلوم الإتصال ، 9 ، 1986
- (42) in **The World Almanac**, 1990, p. 557.
- (43) Ibid.