From Media Revolution to Street Revolution

Twenty Years of Arab Commercial Satellite Television

NORTHWESTERN

UNIVERSITY

IN QATAR

Preface

These proceedings are the result of a symposium titled 'From Media Revolution to Street Revolution: Twenty years of Arab Commercial Satellite Television' hosted by Northwestern University in Qatar. The aim of the symposium was to bring together media scholars and professionals to develop a framework for teaching and researching media in the Arab world.

The symposium involved six scholars based in the United Kingdom, France, the United States and Qatar as well as two television research professionals working in Jordan and Qatar. Discussions also involved members from Northwestern University and Education City.

Participants exchanged experiences, comparing country-specific contexts, and identifying research and teaching achievements and shortcomings. Emphasis was placed on the important work of researchers and professionals in the region as agents of change and development. For some, it was the first time they had come face to face to hear how researchers can inspire practitioners, and how professionals can play an active role in addressing the research and teaching of Arab media in regional and international settings.

The material contained in this publication aims to highlight and reflect the various contributions. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Northwestern University concerning the media status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its media institutions.

The choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this report aims to reflect consensual opinions. However, these proceedings do not necessarily represent the participants, their employers or Northwestern University in Qatar and does not commit them, their employers or the University.

Northwestern University in Qatar has been implementing outreach programs with the objective of contributing and strengthening its bond with regional media, to reinforce its belief in local partnerships, and to encourage and promote scholarship on the Arab world.

Overview

The Medill School of Journalism and The School of Communication at Northwestern University in Qatar collaborated for a two-day meeting on the twentieth anniversary since the start of commercial satellite television in the Arab world.

The meeting included a full day symposium, which featured presentations by leaders in the field and was followed by a public discussion event including practitioners from the Arab commercial satellite television industry. The idea for this symposium echoed a general belief that it is time to look back and look forward at our mission as educators and researchers interested in the region. It is also a great time to examine the impact of satellite television but also look at issues related to media professions, research agendas, and collaborative works.

Convened against the backdrop of the Arab Awakening, this symposium focused on changes in the media environment, the role of media education, and what implications the current uprisings have on research. In this context, can we speak of a homogenous 'Arab' media or is it more rigorous to refer to a multiplicity of heterogeneous local, regional, cultural, state, private 'Arab' media? If the environment is increasingly fragmenting, then how are Arab media defined, taught and researched?

Themes that emerged from the various sessions and events highlighted the challenges of a hybrid and constantly changing media environment for teaching and research. Additionally, the sessions explored the role of traditional, social and alternative media, collaboration between corporate and academic research, the emerging generation of media producers and the future of Arab media in an environment of converging media platforms and mixed organizational structures.

Convening objectives

The full day, invitation-only symposium was held on the campus of Northwestern University in Doha, Qatar.

Established scholars and researchers[1] participated in discussions on teaching and researching of Arab Media. The participants who have individually and collectively shaped how Arab media is interpreted and defined were joined by a number of observers from the Doha professional and academic community.

The discussions were divided in four thematically organized sessions and involved presentations and discussions. The objectives were:

- o To internationalize the scope and goals of studying the regional and global role of Arab media.
- o To explore various approaches to teaching and researching Arab media.
- o To expand the boundaries of the notion of academic/corporate research.

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[1] For a full list of participants and their biographies please consult appendix A.
[2] Bourdieu, P. (1995). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Teaching Arab Media

The events of 9/11 led to a renewed interest in Arab media. Academic institutions developed courses on Arab media as a window to understanding and evaluating Arab public opinion. This session highlighted experiences in teaching Arab media to undergraduate and graduate students. It involved comments from professors working in the US tradition as well as others teaching in the United Kingdom and France.

Participants offered comments on the following themes and questions:
- Theory and practice, how do we strike the right balance?
- When teaching Arab media, should the focus be on the regional experience or use a comparative approach, and is it related to European/American models?
- Are there any textbooks especially dedicated to the study of Arab media?

Participants agreed on the need to avoid theories of Arab exclusionism and essentialism. There was an agreement between academics and professionals that media in the Arab world is increasingly integrated in global media. Consequently, there is no need to advocate theories that may treat the Arab world as exceptional. Instead, there needs to be an emphasis on media studies, cultural studies, theories of popular culture and interdisciplinary approaches.

Academics and professionals agreed on an educational objective of prescriptive as well as predictive research. Both undergraduate and graduate students should be encouraged to ask questions about how and why specific media related phenomena or events occur in the region. Participants stressed preparing the students in critical thinking and well as developing an ability to theorize by proxy.

It was also highlighted that journalism training is different from journalism education: Understanding the profession is different from an emphasis to develop professionals. In line with the discussion on developing student's professional skills, Bourdieu's 'social practice'[2] was invoked to suggest that theory and practice are not antagonistic.

The teaching of Arab media was compared to an exercise in *bricolage* (patch work). In addition to developing critical thinking/reasoning, curricula should aim to integrate the study of Arab media in other fields of inquiry particularly history, economics, sociology and anthropology. In fact, the interdisciplinarity of Arab media studies was emphasized. As an example, participants called for the need to

[2] Bourdieu, P. (1995). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

incorporate the democratic transitions taking place as part of understanding and analyzing the emerging media landscape. Teaching Arab media should then engage students in *media beyond media*, to locate meaning through introducing soft theories. Such teaching models would help students ask questions, develop outlooks and eventually understand texts in context.

Finally, there is a need to address teaching Arab media through the prism of who the students are and where they are located, to assist them in understanding Arab media historically and ethnographically, and to get them to question essentialist notions about Arab media. Although there are no textbooks dedicated for undergraduate teaching of Arab media, the participants shared enthusiasm about a qualitative and quantitative increase in books dealing with Arab media.[3]

Researching Arab Media

The satellite revolution of the 1990s has triggered an increased interest in the Arab media scene. Assessing and understanding the complexity of the Arab media landscape requires the use of various research methods and information sources. In two sessions, participants identified areas of possible cooperation or collaborations between corporate and academic research. They outlined past and current research projects while recognizing obstacles and shortcomings. Participants suggested ways in which academic institutions can develop research activities both quantitatively and qualitatively.

In an attempt to map out the field of Arab media research, academics and professionals discussed the following questions:
- What role should traditional research hubs in North America and Europe as well as emerging ones such as Education City in Qatar play in media research?
- Research on Arab media is coming from a number of fields of inquiry such as sociology, political science, anthropology and others. How do we increase inter-disciplinarity or multi-disciplinarity?
- Corporate research and academic research, where is the missing link?

Participants expressed three specific concerns about the state of Arab media research. First, they pointed to structural disconnect between academic institutions and professional media organizations. As a result, researchers lack access to media sources, have limited contact with media executives and an absence of transparent data related to investments, revenues and audience ratings.

Another area of concern relates to the prevalence of premature analyses, which often dominate the discourse on Arab media. They agreed for instance, that neither

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[3] For list of books by the symposium's participants please consult appendix B.

television nor social media generated the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Yet, the revolutions were uncritically branded as Facebook or Twitter revolutions ignoring historical, economic, cultural and social facets.

Similarly, they agreed that some research on Arab media resorts to replicated studies often with expansive or narrow scope of analysis and a lack of historicizing. This discussion also triggered recognition of the wide qualitative gap in research tools (statistical data, media access, archived material etc.).

There was an agreement on the need to institutionalize media research through partnerships and to encourage public scholarship. Additionally, a system of governance should be developed to encourage access to information. To that end, participants believe that the formation of associations and caucuses at major conferences are cornerstone activities. Additionally, participants emphasized that researchers should develop language proficiencies and be immersed culturally in the region.

Participants stated ways in which certain collaborations between academic and professional organizations in the region could be assisted. The goal is to develop a research culture. Research collaboration is not alien to the corporate world where the design, implementation and interpretation of research involve multiple stakeholders. The same goes for academic research where co-authoring, employing research assistants and peer reviewing are forms of collaboration. While academic institutions often suffer from limited resources (human and financial), corporate research requires highly skilled human capital for limited duration.

Such mutually rewarding collaborations would satisfy the escalating demands for empirically sound quantitative and qualitative research. Such requirements are getting ever more complex requiring highly specialized skills. At the same time funding organizations like Qatar National Research Fund are encouraging collaborations for 'measurable results' while media organizations are increasingly interested in research that goes beyond ratings and circulation numbers.

Following the discussions, three levels of collaboration were identified:
- Loose grouping: the development of forums, similar to this symposium, for the exchange of ideas and expertise.
- Informal links: the kind of links that would develop from meetings where sharing of insights, information seeking advice and resources would take place.
- Active collaboration: this could be inter-individual, inter-institutional and international and this is where Northwestern University in Qatar, participants believe, can play an active role.

The Future of Arab Media

This session addressed Arab media's traditional and emerging platforms. Participants considered the changes that took place since the start of commercial satellite television and then tried to outline possible paths for the changing media landscape. This session questioned the 'Arab' in Arab media and the various structural layers of state, mass, commercial, private etc.

This session provided an overview of the state of Arab television. Participants observed the definitional complexity arising from a loosely regulated industry with multiple local, regional and international players and the diversity of offerings, organizations and audiences. Topics and themes addressed in this session included:

- The history of Arab satellite television.
- Integration of Arab television globally and with other media.
- The geopolitics of Arab television.

In examining Arab television, participants noted that its history is not linear, organic or even systematic. They regretted that access to sources and archives are limiting research into the history of Arab television – one that spans over little less than 50 years.

Arab commercial satellite is at a particular historical juncture marked by changing access to technology, increased media literacies, changing audience demographics. The introduction of European-based commercial satellite television marked the first era with a breakaway from the stale didactic approach of state-owned terrestrial television. The second era witnessed the development of large networks with broad based audience appeal and high ratings. The current era could be described as that of post-network television with audience interest in IPTV and digital delivery platforms. For some, Arab television today is already a personal television where viewers have unlimited programming choice. For others, television remains an economic fixture in the Arab media landscape and it will remain the case in the foreseeable future.

Participants addressed the shortcomings in categorizing Arab television in models based on technology, state involvement, perceived freedoms or censorship. They also brought up challenges resulting from the integration of Arab television in global media with the introduction of format television, for example reality television, franchise channels such as CNBC Arabiya and foreign investments such the Murdoch–Bin Talal ventures.

It was also observed that television aesthetics are increasingly incorporating a global look and feel. At the same time, the interest of the major players has been in developing a media for pacification – avoiding contention. With few exceptions,

major industry players are aiming to attract the largest possible audience and consequently, are avoiding contentious and divisive programming.

Participants noted an increased push towards media integration: Newspapers investing in television stations and the latter developing internet-based programs. To illustrate this trend, two examples were advanced: Shankabout the BBC-funded web-based series that is trying to find its way to network TV and the appeal of YouTube distributed videos. Interestingly, it was observed that the aesthetics of low production amateur video is becoming more credible than the photojournalist's professional reports.

Concerning the issue of the geopolitics of Arab television, participants clearly referred to the re-claiming of state ownership of delivery platforms. The Arab collective ownership of satellite provider Arabsat has not succeeded in curbing the dominance of Saudi Arabia as its largest investor. As a result, Egypt's ownership of NileSat is serving an economic and political incentive for other Arab states, namely Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, to launch their own private delivery platforms.

Recommendations:

There are exciting and fresh takes on teaching and researching Arab media, from historical to technological to other traditional and non-conventional ways of how knowledge can be collected and shared. This is the start of a debate on Arab media's teaching curriculum and research agenda and is an area where roles of educational institutions and media industries become so important.

The notion of Arab media essentialism or exclusionism is critiqued for its inability to accommodate emergent forms of social and alternative media, and to explain the various ways in which Arab media are integrated in global media markets. However, the importance of Arab media in comparison to other transnational media should be re-considered by both academics and practitioners.

The Western interest in Arab media has not been matched by indigenous concern with updating curricula and fostering research culture. In spite of the dynamism of Arab television industries, teaching and researching of Arab media are often restricted by bureaucracies and outdated practices. Structures of partnership and collaboration have to be established and encouraged. These must benefit from international frameworks and indigenous experiences. They also have to include academics and practitioners, journalisms, filmmakers, artists and writers.

Participants also identified specific avenues for exploration:
- Focusing on the history of Arab media institutions. Localism, regionalism or globalism: Localism and globalism have been traditionally sidestepped in the study of Arab media. In contrast, the emphasis has been on a transnational pan-Arab media. The recent geo-political changes may require equal attention to local media as well as to the processes of integration with global media industries.
- Expanding the analysis of Arab media to non-traditional forms of media, particularly social, alternative and performative. Such areas have so far received little interest if any at all.
- Archiving Arab media's artifacts for research but also for future generations. With fifty years of national television and twenty years of commercial satellite television, there is an urgent need to consider archiving media artifacts both mainstream and alternative.
- Exploring tools to encourage creative and critical thinking, emphasizing media education in addition to media training.
- Re-conceptualizing the notion of Arab media to reflect the complexities arising from converging technologies, multi-national productions and different political economies.
- Examining historical, ethnographic and collaborative research opportunities.

Participants also isolated additional recommendations which require the attention of educational and media institutions:

- Mapping the field of Arab media research
- Teaching media through theory
- Engaging media students by media
- Developing research partnerships, authentication and institutionalization.

When the participants were convened in April 2011, the Arab media scene was in a state of flux as a result of the Arab Awakening. The story of the 1990s media revolution and its relationship to the street revolutions of 2011 is yet to be told. The proceedings of this symposium are intended to start a conversation about the state of Arab media, twenty years after the start of commercial satellite television. By focusing on areas of research and teaching, the symposium began a discussion to better understand Arab media's role in public life.

Appendix A: List of participants and biographies

Jawad Abbassi,
Arab Advisors Group
Jawad J. Abbassi founded the Arab Advisors Group (AAG) in 2001, and has 15 years of experience in the telecommunications, Internet and data communications fields. As General Manager, Abbassi directs the research and consulting activities of the AAG in addition to steering its marketing operations.

Hani al Shami,
Head of Research, Al Jazeera Networks
Former marketing instructor in the US, Hani is involved in commissioning, analyzing and presenting qualitative and quantitative research to Al Jazeera's Networks. His work focuses on providing research solutions that inspire managerial decisions.

Walter Armbrust,
University of Oxford
Walter Armbrust is a University Lecturer at the University of Oxford and the Albert Hourani Fellow of Modern Middle Eastern Studies at St. Antony's College. His research focuses on all forms of mass mediated popular culture in Egypt and the Middle East. He is currently working on a social history of mass media in Egypt.

Yves Gonzalez-Quijano,
Université de Lyon 2
Yves Gonzalez-Quijano is a professor/ researcher at the Université Lyon 2 and director of GREMMO (The research and studies group on the Mediterranean and Middle East). Since 2006, he is a blogger on the Arab World.

Marwan Kraidy,
University of Pennsylvania
Marwan M. Kraidy is Associate Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. Kraidy was previously a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the founding director of the Arab Media and Public Life (AMPLE) project at American University, both in Washington DC. Kraidy has written extensively on how local and national societies cope with cultural globalization.

Naomi Sakr,
University of Westminster
Naomi Sakr was previously a journalist, editor and country analyst. She worked at the Economist Intelligence Unit (1985-97) as a Middle East specialist and managing editor of political risk and economic forecast reports. Sakr became a Senior Lecturer at the University of Westminster in 2004, Reader in Communication in

2006, Director of CAMRI's Arab Media Centre in 2007, and Professor of Media Policy in April 2009.

Mohammad Zayani,
Georgetown University in Qatar
Mohamed Zayani is Visiting Associate Professor of Critical Theory at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. His research interests lie in the intersection between critical theory, cultural studies and media studies. He is a recipient of a Social Science Research Council grant and a Member of the UNESCO Advisory Committee of Experts on Cultural Diversity.

Joe F. Khalil, (Symposium convener)
Northwestern University in Qatar
An expert on Arab television production and programming, Khalil has more than 15 years of professional experience as director, executive producer and consultant. Khalil's scholarly interests revolve specifically around Arab youth, alternative media and global media industries. Khalil has authored a policy monograph on Arab satellite entertainment television and public diplomacy and is also co-author of *Arab Television Industries* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, with Marwan Kraidy). He is currently working on a book project based on his dissertation, *Youth-Generated Media in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia*, which examines alternative media cases in both countries.

Appendix B: Selected Books by the Symposium Participants

Armbrust, W. (1996). *Mass culture and modernism in Egypt*. Cambridge [England: Cambridge University Press.

Armbrust, W. (2000). *Mass mediations: New approaches to popular culture in the Middle East and beyond*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gonzalez-Quijano, Y. (2009). *Les Arabes parlent aux Arabes: La révolution de l'information dans le monde arabe*. Arles: Actes Sud.

Gonzalez-Quijano, Y., Varin, C., Centre d'études pour le monde arabe moderne (Beyrouth)., & Groupe de Recherches et d'Études sur la Méditerranée et le Moyen Orient (Lyon). (2006). *La société de l'information au Proche-Orient*. Beyrouth: Université Saint-Joseph

Kraidy, M. (2010). *Reality television and Arab politics: Contention in public life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kraidy, M., Khalil, J. F., & British Film Institute. (2009). *Arab television industries*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sakr, N. (2007). *Arab media and political renewal: Community, legitimacy and public life*. London: I. B. Tauris.

Sakr, N. (2004). *Women and media in the Middle East: Power through self-expression*. Library of modern Middle East studies, 41. London: I.B. Tauris.

Zayani, M., & Sahraoui, S. (2007). *The culture of Al Jazeera: Inside an Arab media giant*. Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co.

Zayani, M. (2005). *The Al Jazeera phenomenon: Critical perspectives on new Arab media*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Appendix C: A Timeline of Arab Television [4]

Date	Event
1954	• Morocco launches the first government-owned terrestrial channel.
1956	• Terrestrial broadcasting in English begins in Libya.
1959	• First commercial terrestrial channel in is launched in Lebanon. La Compagnie Libanaise de Télévision (CLT) (May 28).
1961	• Kuwait launches its terrestrial channel (January 15).
1962	• Second commercial terrestrial channel in Lebanon Télé-Orient begins broadcasting (June 1). • Algerian Television begins terrestrial broadcasting (October 28).
1963	• Saudi Arabia launches its terrestrial channel from Riyadh and Jeddah. • Syria launches its terrestrial channel. • Sudan launches its terrestrial channel (November 20).
1964	• The British Forces establish and supervise the Yemeni terrestrial channel (September 11).
1966	• Tunis starts terrestrial broadcast (May 31).
1967	• Arab Israeli war ends with Israel expanding into Sinai and the West Bank. • First Arab interest in owning satellite technology during the Arab Ministers meeting in Tunisia .
1968	• Jordan Television is launched (April).
1969	• Establishment of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU). • Abu Dhabi Television starts broadcasting and also Emirates TV, the national channel starts broadcasting. • Dubai Television is launched.
1970	• ASBU establishes the committee to study plans for satellite broadcasts. • Qatar establishes its terrestrial television (August 15).
1971	• ASBU recommends the launch of an industrial satellite for educational and information purposes.
1972	• Saudi Arabia provides satellite feed of the Hajj ceremonies.

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[4] This compilation is based on original work prepared and published in Kraidy, M. M., & Khalil, J. F. (2010). *Arab television industries*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

1973
- The October war, led by Egypt and Syria against Israel
- OPEC hikes oil prices
- Bahrain Television launches its terrestrial channel 44.

1974
- Sultanate of Oman launches its satellite television 1974 (November 17) using IntelSat.

1975
- The Lebanese war begins.
- Saudi Arabia begins receiving satellite transmission.
- Abu Dhabi Television starts broadcasting in color using PAL (January).

1976
- April 14th – Establishment of the Arab Satellite Communication Organization (ASCO) with the Arab League States as members and the mandate of preparing for the first Arab Satellite.
- Saudi Arabia begins television transmission in color.
- Benzert in Tunisia witnesses the fist calls for a pan-Arab satellite during a meeting of Arab ministers.

1977
- Télé-Liban is born (June13) when the Lebanese government intervened and organized the merger between La Compagnie Libanaise de Télévision (CLT) and Télé-Orient and their media representatives Advision and Télé-Management.

1978
- Kuwait launches channel 2 with programs and news in English (December)

1979
- Egypt and Israel sign a peace treaty, leading to Egypt's expulsion from the Arab League.
- Iranian Islamic Revolution, spurring Islamist politics around the Arab world.

1980
- Dubai Channel 33 was originally launched in 1978 and transformed to address English-speaking expatriates in the Gulf region.

1981
- French Aerospatiale is contracted to manufacture ARABSAT's satellite.

1983
- Saudi Channel 2 is launched (August 9) focusing on English-speaking programs.

1985
- The launch of ARABSAT's satellite (1A) on February 8th and (1B) (June 15).
- Dubai Sports Channel begins terrestrial and satellite broadcasts (December 2).
- Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation is launched after five years of planning and production (August 23).

1989
- Tunisia announces that the French channel A2 will be rebroadcast for 20 hours every day
- Moroccan government licenses private network broadcasting in Arabic and French. 2M International (later just 2M) was launched from Casablanca.

- Sharjah Channel (U.A.E.) launches a terrestrial broadcast.

1990
- Launch of Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC) (December 12).
- Saudi Television channels Saudi 1 and Saudi 2 are transmitted via ARABSAT

1991
- Bahrain TV broadcasts on a separate channel Star Television for 18 hours a day and then for 24 hours (November 15)
- Iraqi TV broadcasts on satellite using IntelSat
- Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) is launched from London (September 18).
- Hezbollah's al-Manar Television launches terrestrial broadcast from Lebanon (June 3).
- Télélumiere, a Christian channel, is launches terrestrial broadcast from Lebanon.
- Kuwait Youth and Sports Channel 3 are launched after the liberation of Kuwait (November 15).

1992
- The launch of ARABSAT's satellite 1C (February 26).
- Kuwait Channel 1 is launched on ARABSAT (July 4).
- Dubai TV becomes the first Arab channel to broadcast 24 hours/day on 6 satellites covering the world (December 6).
- The first Palestinian channels are launched al-Salam TV and Nablus TV.

1993
- Nile International TV is launched to commemorate the 6th of October celebrations.
- Kuwait Plus Channel is launched targeting Kuwaiti expatriate population in North America and Europe (November 1).
- Dubai Cable Vision Net (cable company) distributes programs across the U.A.E.
- Arab Radio and Television (ART) begins its broadcasts from Italy (October 18).
- Lebanon-based Future Television (FTV) launches its terrestrial channel 9February 15) and its satellite channel (October 29).

1994
- Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC) broadcasts for 24 hours a day.
- The Palestinian Authority launches its television from the Palestinian territories (June 6).
- The world's first digital producer and broadcaster Orbit Satellite and Radio Television Network is launched from Italy (May) with a decoder costing U.S. $10,000.

1995
- Sudan broadcasts via IntelSat (June 30).
- Sheikh Hamad bin Khalefa, Emir of Qatar, signs a decree ordering the establishment of al-Jazeera Channel.

1996
- The launch of ARABSAT's satellite 2A (July 9).
- The launch of ARABSAT's satellite 2B (November 13).
- The Egyptian Satellite Company is established to manage NileSat.
- Egyptian Satellite Channel 2 (ESC2) is launched (June 1).

- al-Jazeera Channel is launched from Doha, Qatar (November 1).
- The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI) begins broadcasting from Italy for 4 daily hours.

1997
- The launch of ARABSAT's satellite 2C.
- Iraqi Satellite Channel is launched on NileSat first then on ARABSAT (July 17).
- Arab News Network (ANN) from London using Hotbird Satellite (August).

1998
- The launch of ARABSAT's satellite 2D.
- Egypt launches its satellite NileSat 101.
- Egypt launches 20 specialized channels on beginning October (news, drama, entertainment, sports, family and children, culture, teletext etc.)
- ART launches the first Islamic free-to-air channel Iqra' (October 21).
- al-Jazeera Channel increases broadcasts 24 hours a day
- al-Andalous Channel is launched in the Andalusia province of Spain targeting Arab expatriates.
- Egypt Radio and Television Union launches Tanweer, a free-to-air Islamic channel.

1999
- The launch of ARABSAT's satellite 3A (February 26).
- Tunisian opposition channel al-Mustaqilla is launched from London's West End.

2000
- Egypt launches its satellite NileSat 102.
- Dubai Business Channel is launched as an independent project by the government of Dubai.
- Children channel Spacetoon is launched from Bahrain before relocating to Dubai (August 1).
- Hezbollah's al-Manar Television launches its satellite channel (May 25).
- TV shopping channel, Tamima TV is launched from Cairo.

2001
- Launch of the Arabic version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* on MBC.
- al-Mehwar channel launches from Cairo with private (79%) and public (21%) investments (May 31).
- Egyptian private Dream TV channels one and two launched (May 31).
- Establishment of Video Cairo Sat as a video news provider.
- Channel '2' is launched using a Bahraini leased channel before it re-branded as MBC2.
- Future Television (FTV) and Emirates Media launch Zein TV to broadcast from both Beirut and Dubai Media City (January 26) and closed down in 2003.
- The Iranian channel al-Alam is launched from both Tehran and Beirut (October 1).

2002
- al-Majd Company launches Islamic pay-TV channel group from Dubai, Riyadh and Amman (November 6).
- Taj TV is launched from Dubai Media City with expatriates particularly South Asians as target audience.
- Algerian al-Khalifa Group launches four channels (September) from

London and Paris. The channels stopped in August 2003.
- The Israeli TV launches Channel Three using Hotbird with Arabic or Arabic-subtitled programs (June 25).
- Melody Television's first channel, Melody Hits from Egypt.

2003
- Reality TV debuts in the Arab world to a mixed reception: shows like *'al-Hawa Sawa* (Together on Air) win big audiences, but protests force an Arab version of *Big Brother* off the air.
- al-Arabiya is launched few days before the invasion of Iraq (February 20).
- Mazzika Television's first channel is launched (April 1).
- Kingdom Holding launches the first two music channels Rotana Music and Rotana Clip from Beirut. The two channels inherited ART Music's library.
- The fall of Baghdad stopped the Iraqi Television (April 9).
- al-Jazeera Sports Channel is launched from Doha, Qatar (November 1).
- Heya TV is launched from Lebanon.
- CNBC Arabiya is launched from Dubai Media City under franchise from CNBC U.S. It is considered as the first dedicated business channel in the region and the first channel franchise.
- Miracle TV is launched as a Christian channel featuring Arabic programs and dubbed evangelical programs.
- Record Producer Suheil al-Abdul launches Nojoom TV a network of music video channels dedicated to Gulf musical genres.

2004
- Saudi Arabia launches a news channel called al-Ekhbariya (January 12) and a sports channel al-Riadiyah.
- The launch of Star Academy channel to become the first reality television dedicated channel.
- al-Hurra is launched from Virginia, U.S. (February 14) and supervised by the Broadcasting Board of Governors .
- al-Maghribiya is launched on satellite using Amazigh, Arabic and French languages from Morocco.
- Dubai Media Incorporated launches One TV, a free-to-air western entertainment channel.
- al-Aqariya Group launches channels al-Aqariya 1, al-Aqariya 2 and Real Estate TV from Dubai Media City .
- Newspaper al-Rai launches Kuwait's first independent satellite channel from Kuwait City.
- Islamic channel al-Fajr is launched from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

2005
- The Moroccan National Society for Radio and Television launches two terrestrial and satellite channels Arrabia (educational programs) and Assadissa (Islamic).
- The first independent Tunisian channel, Hannibal TV is launched.
- Dubai Media Incorporated launches Sama Dubai, dedicated to covering general entertainment, news and activities in Dubai.
- SMS based interactive chatting & games channel, TXT TV, is launched by MBC Group.

2006
- The Libyan Jamahiriya Broadcasting Corporation launches four channels al-Hedaya, al-Monowa'at, al-Nadi, Libya Sport.
- The channel i2TV is launched from Dubai Media City, focusing on new media and new technologies.
- Aviation Satellite Channel is launched from Jordan with only English broadcasts
- Hotel TV is launched from Egypt with only English broadcasts
- Turkish investors launch al-Aan (Now TV) from Dubai Media City.
- Middle East Luxury Group launches Fashion TV Arabia, a franchise of the international brand channels from Beirut.
- The first Arab channel dedicated to regional comedy, al-Funoon is launched from Kuwait City
- Takhayal Entertainment Group launches the Arabic franchise of the Food Network under the name Fatafeat TV from Dubai Media City.

2007
- Syrian independent channel, Addounia TV (the World) is launched from Damascus Free Zone.
- Russian ANO TV-Novosti launches Rusya al-Yawm (Russia Today) broadcasting in Arabic stressing a Russian perspective to world issues.
- Construction and Telecommunications Egyptian mogul, Nageeb Saweeress launches OTV from Cairo.

2008
- Arab information ministers adopt Arab Satellite Television Charter (ASTC) (12 February).
- Fox International Channels and Kingdom Holding launch Fox Movie

2009
- Qatar Foundation for Education Science and Community Develop ment launches second channel dedicated to children Bara'em (Buds).
- Number of Arab satellite television channels reaches 470 (April). Showtime and Orbit announce merger.