

Contemporary Issues in

ISLAMIC COMMUNICATION

Editor

Mohd Yusof Hussain



IIUM Press

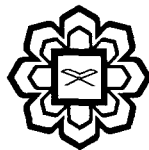
International Islamic University Malaysia

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Islamic Alternative Press: The Case of *Harakah*

CHE MAHZAN AHMAD

Introduction

Discussions on journalism, nowadays, are coalescing on aspects 'from the people,' that is addressing issues on participatory communication. In lieu of the above, suggestions for 'democratic participant' type of journalism that is concerned for the 'involved audiences' are gaining ground. Here, 'commoners' are expected to be active in 'strengthening of democratic processes and institutions, and the redistribution of power' (Servaes, 1999: 93). Whilst, efforts for the re-production and re-presentation of voices of shared interests besides multiple interpretations and evaluations are seen as commendable actions. In societies where journalistic works are regulated and filtered, for example via certain dominant' traditions, prescribed laws, rules and procedures, the above proposal of participation is considered as 'a dangerous' suggestion. Ironically, most 'praetorian' states with the above 'bodyguard' mentality are participants of the UNESCO's forums on democratisation of communication.

The arrival of computer technology such as internet makes participatory communication for a greater democracy reaching a new level of height. Supposedly, journalism in this new terrain is polyphonic, in styles, contributions and perspectives. In this new order, participatory communication could take new practices, perhaps by being 'different' to the dominant ideological framework. Here, *differre* should be read as an issue of giving other perspectives or voices to be heard or answered. Downing (2001) described the above 'questioning perspective on the hegemonic processes' in multi-realities of a social life as 'alternative' action *vis a vis* the mainstream media: an engagement of counter-information that express an alternative vision to hegemonic politics, priorities and perspectives; a