

## **SELF-REPRESENTATION AND FOREIGN REPRESENTATION OF THE ‘ARAB WORLD’ - AND GULF COUNTRIES IN ENGLISH- SPEAKING COMMUNICATION MEDIA**

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***-Abstract-***

*This article focuses of the intercultural communication in business communication in contrastive studies of Western and Arab countries. We describe the characteristics of the Western countries and their business attitude in contrast to the Arab countries and their business attitude regarding their self-representation and the representation by exterior cultures. So we will demonstrate with cases of business institutions and educational institutions focusing on intercultural business communication the assets and values necessary for the establishment of intercultural business communication as a field of study and intercultural business communication as a business.*

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- 1. Introduction: Intercultural Communication Research of the Communication Characteristics of the ‘Arab World’ and the Gulf Area Culture vs. Western World**
  - 1.1. Intercultural Communication Research**
  - 1.1.1. Research: Interculturality as a Mind Concept: Mapping the ‘Arab World’ in the Globalized World**

### **Introduction to the Research Methodology of Comparative Cultural Studies:**

#### **Research on Business Communication**

The presentation of business communication of different cultures is often described in professional writings of the business communication industry advising how to maintain etiquette in business communication, when participants from more than one culture are involved in the communication. So the documentation about intercultural business in various cultures is based upon the professional writings of this business aiming to increase the performed business communication between two cultures. This article aims to look at a practical way regarding the question how to deal with another culture. Another area contributing to the research about business cultures is the research done by

various researchers and institutions. Also here we find a meta-level of discourse that introduces set values and binary structures as a structure for the analysis. The parameters of this research approach are binary opposite structures. The contrastive analysis of the parameters of the values allows the interpreter to compare two cultures regarding one value. Hooker (2008) wrote in *Cultural Differences in Business Communication* that “there is no better arena for observing a culture in action than business. Cultures tend to reveal themselves in situations where much is at stake, because it is here that their resources are most needed. Marriage, family obligations, and such stressful experiences as illness and the death of a loved one bring out much of what is distinctive and fundamental in a culture. The same is true of business, because economic survival is at stake.” Recent political developments in the Arab world were described by Harrigan (2011), Woltering (2011), Ebdadawi (2011), Cavatorta (2011), and Gabiri (2011). El Alaoui (2011: 5) examined cultural trends and developments within the Arab and Muslim world and attested “that the cultural sphere in these nations informs the political sphere.” Business Communication serving as a medium for understanding and managing communication in different business cultures is a practical application of communication for specific purposes presented in the business industries. Halualani (2011) developed a critical intercultural framework. Durant and Shepherd (2009) discussed culture and communication in intercultural communication as major influences on contemporary societies. Cammett (2010) wrote *Globalization and Business Politics in Arab North Africa: A Comparative Perspective*. Jammal (2010) discussed German –Arab business relationships in *Trust and Culture. Conceptualization and Intercultural Training Implications in German-Arab Business Relationships*. Fraser and Schalley (2009) stated that many disciplines describe themselves as studying 'communication' as focused of the aspect of intercultural communication. In *Popular Culture and Political Identity in the Arab Gulf* the ambivalent perception of the area between a backwards region defined by tribalism and cosmopolitanism that has undermined traditional culture is described. (Alcharekh; Springborg 2008: 9-10) Torstrick and Faier (2009) discussed culture and customs of the Arab Gulf states. Al-Omari (2009) published a guide for business people in the Arab world. Halaf (2009) wrote the reader *Arab Society and Culture*. Torstrick (2009) published the book *Culture and Customs of the Arab Gulf States*. Baumann (2007) demonstrated the differences between Western and Arab business behavior. Noack (2007) wrote the guide *Doing Business in Dubai and the United Arab Emirates*. Perry (2006/7) in *Shari'ah, Islamic Law and Arab Business Ethics* (2006/7) discussed the influence of the religion of business behavior in the Arab world.

Baaghil (2007) published *Eccentric Marketing: Awakening the Arab Business World to the Benefits of Branding*. Shair (2006) published *Out of the Middle East: The Emergence of an Arab Global Business*. Terterov (2006) published *Doing Business with the United Arab Emirates*. Salzman in *Arab Culture and Postcolonial Theory* mentioned that “Arab culture, originating in Arabia, is grounded in Bedouin culture” with a system of security based “upon an ingenious system of deterrence”. (2007: 837) Rosen (2005) in *What We Got Wrong: How Arabs Look at the Self, their Society, and their Political Insitutions* discussed how the Arabs look at their failure to keep pace with the economic, political, and scientific innovations. Cooper and Momani (2008) discussed the new Arab business class in the Gulf countries Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait (2008). Salzman in *Arab Culture and Postcolonial Theory* mentioned that “Arab culture, originating in Arabia, is grounded in Bedouin culture” with a system of security based “upon an ingenious system of deterrence”. (2007: 837) Haleem (2006) discussed the relation between Islam and the Arabic language. Allen (2010) described tribalism in the Arab World. Sabry (2010), Aksikas (2009), Noland and Pack (2007) wrote about the modernization process in the Arab world.

### **Methodology:**

#### **What Can Comparative Cultural Research Say about a Culture? And What Not?**

##### **The Establishment of Cliché, Stereotype, and Self-Establishment**

In the prospect of the *Department of Intercultural Communication* (2011) of *Anglia Ruskin University* the term ‘intercultural communication’ is defined as follows: “Intercultural communication is defined as situated communication between individuals or groups of different linguistic and cultural origins. This is derived from the following fundamental definitions: communication is the active relationship established between people through language, and intercultural means that this communicative relationship is between people of different cultures, where culture is the structured manifestation of human behavior in social life within specific national and local contexts, e.g. political, linguistic, economic, institutional, and professional. (...)” (*Prospect of the Department of Intercultural Communication*) The results of comparative cultural research depend on the chosen parameters, e.g. the values in the research analyzed here as parameters for comparative cultural research. The selection of the parameters and the interpretation of the selected parameters is of course now depending on the decisions of the researcher. So the statements about a culture are always punctual and refer to one selected parameter. The existence of

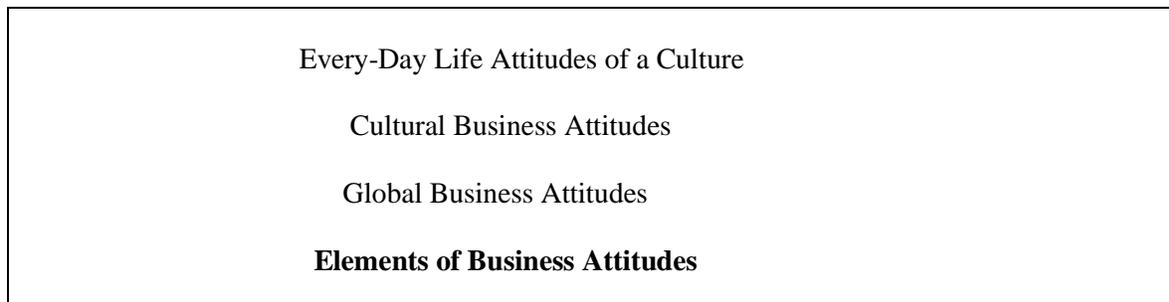
a value does not say anything about the culture in general or the concrete business attitude. The value can or cannot be important for the processes of business communication. Besides the parameter based analysis of values in business communication the descriptive and advisory activities of the commercial professional communication institutions are another access to dealing with different cultural business communication forms. Here the description of behavior, cultures, and ethics are assisting the communication with a foreign culture. 'Do's' and 'don't' are here common as advices. The advices are not regarding specific business activities, but refer to any casual or business situation in the foreign culture. The side-effects of comparative cultural description are the generalizations of the mentioned culture in form of clichés, stereotypes, and self-establishment of cultural values in case the describing person is from the same culture examined in the comparison. Clichés, stereotypes, and self-establishment of cultural values are the results of generalizations in the analysis and description of cultures. Their existence arises from the need that general statements are deducted from the parameters serving as values and from the descriptions of cultural habits made in the professional institutions dealing with business communication. So these generalized statements are the basic ground for the description of a culture in relation to their business communication habits and the difference to another culture that has a different set of values.

### **Values as Research Tool in Comparative Business Communication**

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Case studies of the contribution of professional and educational institutions for the application of intercultural communication studies will exemplify the binarity. The self-representation and the representation of the other culture we will exemplify with cases of business institutions and educational institutions that focus on intercultural business communication. We demonstrate here the assets and values which are necessary for the establishment of both intercultural business communication as a field of study and intercultural business communication as a business. The contrastive analysis of the parameters of the values allows the interpreter to compare two cultures regarding one value. Both the self-representation of a culture and the representation of the other culture is based upon specific assumption about the culture we will call in the following text claimed value. Such a value can be theoretically negative or positive, they are in general positive qualities, since it is uncommon to formulate negative values. The research about intercultural communication is in many cases a descriptive study of cultural habits unique to the way business

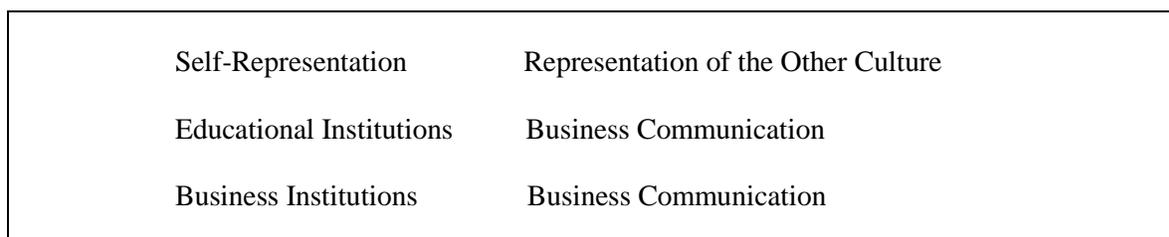
communication is performed in a culture. It often overlaps with the every-day life of this culture and commonly shared global business attitudes.



### Illustration 1. Claimed Values

#### **Claimed Valued of Intercultural Studies Critically Discussed in Postmodernity**

Claimed values are in many research approaches binary assumptions. They derive from binary structures of opposed values. As such they are from a postmodern perspective not accepted, since here ambivalence and polyvalence is the predominant type of cultural representation. For example Hograefe's study is based upon the selection of one value with has a pendant, e.g. masculinity vs. femininity.



### Illustration 2. Forms of Representation

The binarity of values we discuss in the following part. The binarity of values is an assessment tool based upon the existence of a value  $x$  or the opposite of the value  $x$ ,  $-x$ . Besides the existence of the value  $x$  or its opposite the value  $-x$ , a non-existence of both values or the existence of both values,  $x$  and  $-x$ , is possible. The values are abstract and the interpreter of the culture must decide if they exist or not. A set of sub-values is a helping tool to decide if the value  $x$  or  $-x$  exist in a society. So a culture can be classifies as a masculine culture or a feminine culture, a culture with none of these values at all, or is a mixture of both values. This is an example for the establishment of values in

cultural comparative research studies. The meta-level of discourse is created by the setting of parameters, which aim to be universal. We can distinguish the following binary opposites:

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Collectivity	Individuality
Absolute Truth	Relativity of a Position
Absolute Values	Relative Values
Repetition	Discourse
Personal Power	Representative of Power

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### **Illustration 3. Oppositions of Eastern Arab and Western Values**

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#### **Presentations in Professional Business Communication and Definitions of Business Communication**

In the professional writings of business professionals that claim to serve with their services as support for companies dealing with international business partners. Here the 'foreign' culture is described with its main cultural features and customs and the advice is the imitation following 'if you are in Rome, do as the Romans do' to the extent of the acceptance of the other culture. Business Communication is on the professional website *Effective Business Communication. Negotiating, Making Presentations, Managerial Communication, Cross-Cultural Communication* that serves as a platform for professional business services defined as "any communication used to build partnerships, intellectual resources, to promote an idea, a product, service, or an organization – with the objective of creating value for your business". (*Effective Business Communication*) The website also mentions:

"Effective communication helps you:

- anticipate problems
- make decisions
- coordinate workflow
- supervise others
- develop relationships
- manage knowledge, ideas and creativity
- create a clear vision and energize employees
- promote products and services"

(*Effective Business Communication*)

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#### **The Principle "If you are in Rome, do as the Romans do, but only as far as they let you" of Business Communication Professionals vs. Value Comparison in Research**

The term 'Arab World' was used in Western research. The concept of the 'Arab world' and the 'Arab Nation' is a concept created in the Arab countries. It ignores the often tribal culture and the

tribal system that is often continued in the governmental structures of these countries. Arab states of the Persian Gulf have been influenced by the cultures of India, Persia, and East Africa. Both the self-representation of a culture and the representation of the other culture is based upon specific assumption about the culture we will call in the following text claimed value. Such a value can be theoretically negative or positive; the values are in general positive qualities, since it is uncommon to formulate negative values. The research about intercultural communication is in many cases a descriptive study of cultural habits unique to the way business communication is performed in a culture. It often overlaps with the every-day life of this culture and commonly shared global business attitudes. The outcomes of this study demonstrate that the Arab institutions involved in intercultural studies create a vision of the self-representation and establish an image of the Arab culture. Among them are Pan-Arabism, the Arab Nation, and positive attitudes of them. On the contrary, the Western institutions aim to represent the other culture from a neuter perspective aiming to describe the business attitude of the other culture. The principle "If you are in Rome, do as the Romans do, but only as far as they let you." is useful as a summarization of the advices of professional business communication services for the support of business activities in a different culture.

#### **1.1.1.1. Research and Theories of Cultural Communication and Arab Business Behavior**

##### **Hofstede's Parameters of the Four Dimensions**

##### ***‘Power Distance’, ‘Individualism’, ‘Uncertainty Avoidance’, and ‘Masculinity’***

The binary structure of values of communication in a cultural analysis is for example practiced in the distinction of 'high context culture' and 'low context culture' or in the cultural communication analysis done by Geert Hofstede using the four dimensions ‘Power Distance’, ‘Individualism’, ‘Uncertainty Avoidance’, and ‘Masculinity’ that have opposite counterparts. Also other contrastive approaches for the categorization of cultures will be discussed. Hofstede's four dimensions are:

Power Distance  
Individualism  
Uncertainty Avoidance  
Masculinity

Of course these are compound criteria that implement the opposition of two aspects: ‘Power Distance’ consists of the oppositions of ‘farness’ and ‘nearness’. ‘Individualism’ consists of the

oppositions of ‘individuality’ and ‘group socialization’. ‘Uncertainty Avoidance’ consists of the oppositions of ‘certainty’ and ‘uncertainty’. ‘Masculinity’ consists of the oppositions of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’. The ‘power distance’ “relates to the degree of equality/inequality between people in a particular society. A country with a high power distance score both accepts and perpetuates inequalities between people. An example of such a society would be one that follows a caste system and in which upward mobility is very limited. A low power distance indicates that a society does not emphasize differences in people’s status, power or wealth. Equality is seen as the collective aim of society and upward mobility is common.” (*Kwintessential*) ‘Individualism’ “focuses on the degree to which a society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships. If a country has a high individualism score, this indicates that individuality and individual rights are dominant. Individuals in these societies tend to form relationships with larger numbers of people, but with the relationships being weak. A low Individualism score points to a society that is more collectivist in nature. In such countries the ties between individuals are very strong and the family is given much more weight. In such societies members lean towards collective responsibility.” (*Kwintessential*) ‘Uncertainty avoidance’ “concerns the level of acceptance for uncertainty and ambiguity within a society. A country with a high ‘uncertainty avoidance’ score will have a low tolerance towards uncertainty and ambiguity. As a result it is usually a very rule-orientated society and follows well defined and established laws, regulations and controls. A low ‘uncertainty avoidance’ score points to a society that is less concerned about ambiguity and uncertainty and has more tolerance towards variety and experimentation. Such a society is less rule-orientated, readily accepts change and is willing to take risks. (*Kwintessential*) Masculinity “pertains to the degree societies reinforce, or do not reinforce, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control, and power. A high masculinity score indicates that a country experiences a higher degree of gender differentiation. In such cultures, males tend to dominate a significant portion of the society and power structure. A low masculinity score means a society has a lower level of differentiation and inequity between genders. In these cultures, females are treated equally to males in all aspects of the society.” (*Kwintessential*)

### **1.1.2. The Middle East Culture as a Feminine Culture and its Characteristics vs. Machismo as Masculinity of the Arab Culture**

*Kwintessential* wrote on Hofstede's dimensions of 'masculinity': "From Hofstede's research Japan was found to be the world's most masculine society, with a rating of 95. Sweden was the most feminine with a rating of 5. Other examples of 'masculine' cultures include the USA, Germany, Ireland and Italy. 'Feminine' cultures include Spain, Thailand, Korea, Portugal and the Middle East." (*Kwintessential*). Individualist cultures include the United States and much of Western Europe, where personal achievements are emphasized. Collectivist cultures, such as China, Korea, and Japan, emphasize the group such as the family and at work this manifests in a strong work group mentality. (*Kwintessential*) Uncertainty avoidance is one of the five intercultural dimensions developed by Hofstede. In essence this cultural dimension measures a country or culture's preference for strict laws and regulations over ambiguity and risk. (...) Generally speaking Protestant countries and those with Chinese influences score low. Catholic, Buddhist and Arabic speaking countries tend to score high in uncertainty avoidance. Have a look at the map of uncertainty avoidance scores. (*Kwintessential*) Hooker wrote in *Cultural Differences in Business Communication*: "The historical source of Latin American machismo is Arab culture, by way of the northern African influence on Spain. It remains very much alive in Arabic-speaking countries today, particularly in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region. Warm personal greetings and ceaseless courtesy are a must in business dealings. (...) An impractical proposal or a questionable statement should be ignored or smoothed over, so that no one appears foolish. The goal is to protect the male ego. Flattery that strikes Westerners as obsequious is perfectly appropriate, particularly where superiors are concerned. Power distance is very much part of the picture, and honorific terms and titles are expected (...)." (Hooker) So both masculine and feminine aspects are present in the Gulf Arab culture. In *Managing Machismo: U.S. Women vs. Foreign Men Abroad* in the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written: "Honor is the primary male virtue in machismo cultures. The very word virtue comes from the Latin for manhood (*vir*). Toughness and capacity for violence can be part of machismo, but only in service of an honorable cause, such as protecting one's family. Machismo evolved in treacherous environments where courage and a code of honor were necessary survival traits for men, and successful cultures have a way of making virtues out of necessities. The sense of honor and self-respect can be very finely tuned, which may create the impression that men are thin-skinned. In any event, it is essential to respect this sensibility. This becomes a particularly delicate issue when there are problems in the company, and so much as mentioning the problems may cast aspersions on managers who could be held responsible for them." Here is written about female

virtue (*ird*) in Islam: “Female virtue implies both spiritual and sexual purity. A woman is born with it. It is the spiritual counterpart to physical virginity, and thus subject to similar behavioral restrictions. Both *Ird* and virginity are intrinsic to being female. A woman must preserve both. That is a sacred duty, for once lost, neither can be regained. Thus every woman has two lifelong tasks. The first is to guard her own *ird*. The second is to actively place herself under the additional protection of socially appropriate men (i.e., members of her family).“ In the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about male honor (*sharaf*) that this is “an outward reflection of male behavior. Unlike *ird*, however, it can be lost and then regained. A man can gain or lose *sharaf* through acts of bravery, cowardice, generosity, inhospitality, etc. A proverb declares that each man wears *sharaf* upon his shoulders, like a brightly colored, tightly woven, constantly glittering cloak, for all of his (male) peers to admire. Without his cloak, he becomes an object of their scorn. He must, therefore, behave in such fashion as to retain both his own honor and that of his extended family. (...) Male honor, therefore, carries with it the obligation of lifetime protection of female kin, thereby preserving the collective *sharaf* of the extended family to which they all belong”. (*Encyclopedia of Business*)

### **1.1.3. Professional Communication Services.**

#### **Interculturality as Business: Western Companies**

Hantarry wrote in *US Firms 'Need to Study Arab Culture*: “US firms aren't getting the best out of their Bahraini staff because they don't understand them, according to a specialist. Gulf Air IT infrastructure head Dr Jassim Haji (...) reached this conclusion in his dissertation on the obstacles faced by foreign companies operating in Bahrain. The study, believed to be the first of its kind in the region, focuses on US companies employing Bahrainis whose national culture governs their daily routine. (...)” (Hantarry) From an U.S. perspective Emery wrote in *Arab Culture and Muslim Stereotypes*: “Arab values are significantly different than Western stereotypes. Arabs consider hospitality, generosity, good manners, loyalty, honor, reputation, respect for elders, love of children and unconditional support of family and friends to be essential traits. These ideals are shared by the collectivist cultures of Africa, Asia and the Middle East that focus on the group: the nuclear and extended family, friends and coworkers, community and nation.” (Emery) On the website of *World Business Culture* that offers intercultural commercial services was written: “When working in the global commercial environment, knowledge of the impact of cultural differences is one of the keys

to international business success. Improving levels of cultural awareness can help companies build international competencies and enable individuals to become more globally sensitive.” (*World Business Culture*) This company offers country profiles of different countries in order to support foreigners doing business in these cultures. *World Business Culture* states: “Each country profile contains information on a range of topics of immediate commercial relevance to anybody working in a global organization or studying international trade. The information contained in this site has been compiled by some of the world's leading experts on global business culture who have many years of practical international experience.” (*World Business Culture*) Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel wrote in *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*:

“We believe that the ability to communicate effectively with people from other cultures and co-cultures benefits each of us as individuals and has the potential to benefit the nearly seven billion people with whom we share this planet.” (Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel)

An advertisement of *Cultural Detective® Facilitator Workshops* of the *Intercultural Communication Institute* mentions the following services for intercultural issues:

“Global business community benefits from dynamic training tools Cultural Detective®, a series of values- and situation-based tools to develop intercultural competence, are available via site license or download.” (*Intercultural Communication Institute*)

## **2. The Communication Characteristics of the Arab World and the Gulf Area**

### **2.1. Communication in the Arab World. Defining Communication in a Diverse Region from the Arab Perspective of Communication**

Arab states of the Persian Gulf have been influenced by the cultures of India, Persia, and East Africa. *Promoting Intercultural Dialogue for Gulf Countries and Several African Countries (Sharjah-United Arab Emirates)* was a conference on interculturality. Participants from all GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates together with several other Arab and African countries will take part in this training workshop. (Conference Announcement *Promoting Intercultural Dialogue for Gulf Countries and Several African Countries*) Hamada wrote on the global culture perspective: “The modern vision of the global village comes from the communication theory. Marshall McLuhan focuses on the rise of (and consequences of) electronic communication and rapid transportation, and

their effects on culture. The electronic communication allowed people from different corners of the globe to simultaneously experience the same culture.” (Hamada)

### **2.1.1. Self-Establishments of Arab Clichés**

As a sociological term, ‘Arab’ is a synonym for a bedouin or nomad to Ibn Khaldun regardless of racial, national, or linguistic distinctions. Ibn Khaldun mentions that the Arabs are a ‘natural group’: “The Arabs are a natural group in the world. We have mentioned in the previous section that the inhabitants of the desert adopt the natural manner of making a living, namely, agriculture and animal husbandry. They restrict themselves to the necessary in food, clothing, and mode of dwelling, and to the other necessary conditions and customs. They do not possess conveniences and luxuries beyond (these bare necessities). (...) Compared with sedentary people, they are on a level with wild, untamable (animals) and dumb beasts of prey. Such people are the Arabs. In the West, the nomadic Berbers and the Zanatah are their counterparts, and in the East, the Kurds, the Turkomans, and the Turks. The Arabs, however, make deeper excursions into the desert and are more rooted in desert life (than the other groups), because they live exclusively on camels, while the other groups live on sheep and cattle, as well as camels. It has thus become clear that the Arabs are a natural group which by necessity exists in civilization.” (*Muqaddimah*)

### **Case I Al-Shammari 's Contrastive Types of Knowledge Marketing of the American, European, and Arab Culture**

Al-Shammari (2008: 44-63) wrote in *Toward a Knowledge Management Strategic Framework in the Arab Region* in the *International Journal of Knowledge Management* about the different approaches to business in the American, European, and Arab culture:

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>American</i>
Motto	I succeed, therefore I am
Mentality	Performanism
Ideal-type	Knowledge as resource
Embodiment	Knowledge base
Mechanism	Knowledge economy
Aim	Near-term gains
Focus	Explicit-objectified knowledge
Strategy	Leverage
Process	Re-using
	Rationality
Means	Technology

(Al-Shammari)

**Illustration 4. Knowledge Marketing. The American Style**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>European</i>
Motto	I practice, therefore I am
Mentality	De(Constructivism)
Ideal-type	Knowledge as power
Embodiment	Knowledge agent
Mechanism	Knowledge discourse
Aim	Legitimacy
Focus	Situated-constructed knowledge
Strategy	Politicization
Process	Enacting Identity/meaning
Means	Participation Negotiation

(Al-Shammari)

**Illustration 5. Knowledge Marketing. The European Style**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Arab</i>
Motto	I codify, therefore I am
Mentality	Functionalism/Incrementalism
Ideal-type	Knowledge as forgotten resource
Embodiment	Knowledge system
Mechanism	Knowledge outsourcing
Aim	Diffusion of environmental pressures
Focus	Explicit-structured knowledge
Strategy	Ad hoc
Process	Buying

(Al-Shammari)

**Illustration 6. Knowledge Marketing Dimension. The Arab Style**

Al-Shammari developed in *Toward a Knowledge Management Strategic Framework in the Arab Region* a model of Arab Islam-oriented communication stating that "the final framework concludes with a proposed a three-layer KM framework. The first layer includes KM drivers (market liberalization, technological advancements, and customers' preferences); the second, KM processes (knowledge strategizing, sourcing, composing, sharing, and using)." (Al-Shammari) Al-Shammari wrote on the 5 pillars of Islamic communication:

"Knowledge Environment in the Arab Region  
The framework is composed of the following five 'pillars:'

An economic and institutional model that provides incentives for the efficient creation, dissemination, and use of knowledge to promote growth and increase welfare;

An educated and skilled population that can create and use knowledge;

An innovation system of firms, research centers, universities, consultants, and other organizations that can tap into the growing stock of global knowledge, adapt it to local needs, and transform it into products valued by markets;

A dynamic information infrastructure that can facilitate the effective communication, dissemination, and processing of information; and

An intangible component that makes a society function efficiently and move forward, such as the capacity to formulate a vision, the level of trust and self-confidence, and the appropriateness of guiding values."

(Al-Shammari)

## **Case II Zaharna's Study *Bridging Cultural Differences*:**

### ***American Public Relations Practices & Arab Communication Patterns***

Zaharna's study *Bridging Cultural Differences: American Public Relations Practices & Arab Communication Patterns* concluded that "for the Arab culture, emphasis is on form over function, affect over accuracy, and image over meaning. An awareness of these cultural differences can help facilitate client relations, media training, and message appeals." (Zaharna) Zaharna wrote here that "the Arab and the American culture have two distinct perspectives for viewing language and, as a result, two differing preferences for structuring persuasive and appealing messages." (Zaharna) Zaharna wrote that "not only do the two cultures differ in how they view the role of language, they also exhibit distinct preferences for one particular rhetorical device over another in designing persuasive messages." (Zaharna) Zaharna in his study *Bridging Cultural Differences: American Public Relations Practices & Arab Communication Patterns* wrote: "Repetition in Arabic is a decidedly positive feature. It is not uncommon to find a string of descriptive phrases or words all referring to one phenomenon." (Zaharna) Zaharna mentions that "because of the powerful group experience in the oral tradition, a speaker seeks to engage the imagination and feelings of the audience. It is not uncommon for an Arab speaker to use metaphors that may seem outlandish to an American." (Zaharna)

## **Case III The Example of Idealizing Research at Universities in the Gulf**

Hamada from the *United Arab Emirates University* wrote in *Global Culture or Cultural Clash: An Islamic Intercultural Communication Perspective* that the religious belief can form a basement for a Islamic intercultural communication perspective Hamada calls the ‘Third Way’:

“From the Islamic intercultural communication perspective, Islamic world communication values provide a "Third Way" based on peaceful and democratic coexistence among different global cultures. The "Third Way" also opposes the principles of both global culture and cultural clashes.”

(Hamada)

In this writing the dogmatic religious position is promoted as an alternative to existing communication styles. The missionary interest of this writing is obvious replacing academic scholarship against a set of beliefs derived from the religion. Hamada also wrote: “The Islamic perspective provides Third Way based on a harmonious mix of global communication values to safeguard a peaceful, tolerant, diversified and democratic intercultural communication. In no other intercultural communication perspective, can people interact and communicate peacefully, freely, fairly, and tolerantly as in the Third Way.” (Hamada) Hamada wrote about the ‘Third Way Perspective’ of the Arab world consisting of a mixture of religion and world: “The alternative, or as I would like to call it "the Third Way" can contribute a great deal to the global civilization in general, and the intercultural communication in particular. Its notion of a balance between *din*, religion, and *dunya*, the world, is a worthy one.” (Hamada) Another representation of a religious Islamic ideological concept as contrastive communication theory to Western theories is Ayish (2003). Aran writers tend to describe the Gulf Arab states as a kind of highly developed world culture under the leadership of traditional tribal culture and the Islamic religion. Odhabim and Nicks-McCaleb wrote in *Intercultural Engagement in the Arabian Gulf Region* as researchers from the *Higher Colleges of Technology of Abu Dhabi Men’s College*:

"Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) represents a world-class metropolis with a high-tech infrastructure where the indigenous population represents less than 1/5th of the inhabitants."

(Odhamin, Nicks-McCaleb)

Odhabim and Nicks-McCaleb wrote in *Intercultural Engagement in the Arabian Gulf Region* that “the United Arab Emirates (UAE), represents a unique area of the world where intercultural communications is not only inevitable but also undergoes a dramatic and sustained series of changes as the country deploys its oil wealth to create a technologically advanced society while

maintaining a long and proud cultural heritage. What 25 years ago was a homogenous tribal-centric system has now evolved into an emerging world-class metropolis with a high-tech infrastructure where the indigenous population represents less than 1/5th of the inhabitants.” (Odhamin, Nicks-McCaleb) The writer Al Khatib wrote in *Cultural Diversity Encourages Interaction in UAE News* published 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2010:

"Dubai: In a country known for its cultural diversity, the UAE provides its residents with constant access to a multitude of nationalities, but has this broken cultural barriers and reduced stereotyping in society? (...) According to Mahboub Hashem, mass communication professor at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), “people socialise with similar others because they share common elements with fewer unknowns. If you don't know the person, you might not feel comfortable so self-disclosure doesn't take place, which is vital for successful communication.””  
(Al Khatib)

Durant and Shepherd (Durant, Shepherd: 158) wrote in *'Culture' and 'Communication' in Intercultural Communication* on the meaning of interculturality that "we can now reflect a little more deeply on what is signified by the 'inter' in intercultural communication. This 'inter' element of the phrase may even be of greatest interest, since the 'cultural' element serves primarily as reference to the context in which something interesting is going on between two entities."

### **2.1.2. The Perspective of the Arab Culture from the Western Perspective as Cliché of the 'Arab World'**

In *Arab Cultural Awareness* prepared by the *Federation of American Scientists* the following “common misconceptions about Arabs” are mentioned in a brochure prepared and collected in *Intelligence-Related Resources of the United States Army*:

“All Arabs are Muslims, and all Muslims are Arab (...)  
The Arab world is backwards and uncivilized (...)  
The Arab world is one big desert (...)  
Stereotypes of Arab males: All are “oil-rich Sheiks” (...)  
Mad dictators. Various types of political systems in Arab world.  
Terrorists.  
Stereotypes of Arab women:  
All are oppressed by men (...)  
All are veiled (...)”  
(*Federation of American Scientists*)

In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about the definition the Arab world as a diverse region: “The very term "Arab World" is a

questionable one. An Arab is a member of a linguistic group—that is, one who speaks Arabic. The Arab World, then, can best be defined as the region in which people predominantly speak Arabic. Yet throughout what would be considered the Arab World, tens of thousands of people speak languages other than Arabic, ranging from the numerous dialects of Berber on the African coast of the Mediterranean to Kurdish and Armenian in southwest Asia, from Nuer and Dinka in the Sudan to Fula and Wolof in Mauritania, and so on.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about the modern Arab world: “The modern Arab World consists of between 19 and 21 nations. (...)” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) The company *Cultural Savvy* provides professional cultural services. Among their *Global Consulting Services* are the following services:

- Design global organizational processes and procedures that add value
- Align organizational vision and values across multiple cultures
- Manage global organizational change initiatives and projects
- Integrate new organizations and subsidiaries into a global culture
- Lead global teams to meet time-to-market requirements
- Create an effective multicultural workforce across geographies
- Maximize your global outsourcing and off-shoring partnerships
- Apply global best practices to meet your organization’s business challenges
- Develop the global mindset and competencies your executives need to be successful

(*Cultural Savvy*)

In *Mastering the Rules of the Game* the company *Cultural Savvy* writes about Arab customs: “Families and family values make up the core identity of Arabs and Muslims. Their world is based on patterns of behavior that reflect how their goals and orientations reflect these values. Families and other extended social ties provide a network in which Arab and Muslim business and social values interact. Business is based on trust and respect. Your ability to understand and respect how these networks operate will directly impact your effectiveness in dealing with Arabs and Muslims. Appropriate business behaviors, from general communications to negotiations and resolving conflict, are affected as much by how you are perceived as a person as by the service or product you are offering. (...)” (*Cultural Savvy*) In *The Secrets of the Arab Business World* the following clichés about Arab business attitude are listed in *Arab Business*:

Discipline: The Arabs are much disciplined and they are fully dedicated towards their business requirements. (...)

Hard working: The Arabs are extremely hard working and they have the power of working relentlessly to achieve their goals. (...)

Fighting spirit: The Arabs are known for their extremely high fighting spirit. They have a very strong attitude that makes them extremely patient and helps them to achieve their target in the end. (...)

The "Never say die attitude": The Arabs have a strong attitude that is rare with the people of other lands. This attitude works as an added advantage for the Arabs. They get more inspiration from this attitude.

(*Arab Business*)

### **‘Democracy’ or The Projection of Western Terminology to Phenomena in the Arab World**

An example of cliché-organized language is the use of the Arab clichés in an article like *The Arab Spring Is 2011, Not 1989* of the *New York Times Online* by Guéhenno. ‘Democracy’ in Arabic is a loanword. There is no equivalent in the Arabic language. An example of a text with cliché-organized language is the use of the Arab clichés in an article like *The Arab Spring Is 2011, Not 1989* of the *New York Times Online* by Guéhenno. Guéhenno writes that “the Arab revolutions are beginning to destroy the cliché of an Arab world incapable of democratic transformation. But another caricature is replacing it: according to the new narrative, the crowds in Cairo, Benghazi or Damascus, mobilized by Facebook and Twitter, are the latest illustration of the spread of Western democratic ideals; and while the “rise of the rest” may challenge the economic dominance of Western nations, the West will continue to define the political agenda of the world. In that optimistic scenario, 1989 and 2011 are two chapters of the same story, which connect in a self-congratulatory way the political appeal of democracy and the transformative power of entrepreneurship and new technologies. (...) In reality, the movements that are shaking the Arab world are profoundly different from the revolutions that ended the Soviet empire. The Arab spring is about justice and equity as much as it is about democracy, because societies in which millions of young men and women have no jobs — and millions live with less than two dollars a day — crave justice as much as democracy.” (Guéhenno) Faisal from *Arab News* (15 September 2011) wrote in *Once More into the Cliché*: “A few days ago I wrote an article in support of women's rights in Saudi Arabia and it touched specifically the issue of women driving cars. As a result of the article, I received much attention from the Western press. They wrote about my article, some wanted to interview me on radio and TV so I would elaborate on the issue I wrote about. I got messages of interest in me through Twitter and e-mail. (...) It seems to me that we in the Arab world are constantly being put in boxes filled by clichés. We are heard or noticed in the West only when we

conform to or appear in those convenient images the West has made of us in its collective mind. Millions may die in our region, thousands may end up maimed, imprisoned or refugees and none of those really attracts the West's attention. Many Arab countries have been under brutal regimes for many years but the Western media condemn or praise a regime not on the basis of what it is doing to its own people but according to what suits Western interests — economic or strategic. And mostly you can never find anything wrong with Israel's brutality and oppression.” (Faisal) According to *DiploFoundation*, Arab culture is high context as Arab negotiators attach great importance to context, for example history, and make a sharp distinction between the way matters of state should be conducted and matters of commerce. The first is the realm of principle and morals, and the second, the realm of haggling. Arab negotiators attach high importance to creating bonds of friendship and trust between negotiators, and respect for the honor and dignity of negotiating partners. Less developed, traditional societies tend to give rise to a high context approach.” (*DiploFoundation*) According to *DiploFoundation*, the USA are a low context culture: “American society is typical of the low context approach of more developed countries. These cultures view negotiation as an exercise in collective problem solving: knowledge and expertise are applied to find mutually acceptable solutions to problems, and partners expect to adopt a give-and-take approach. Low context cultures subordinate history, personal honor and personal relationships for the purpose of agreement.” (*DiploFoundation*)

## **2.2. Professional Business Communication and the ‘Arab World’**

### **The Construct of the ‘Arab World’**

In the article *Doing Business in the Arab World* in the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about the Arab countries: “Few areas have received more attention from businesspeople in the industrialized world in recent decades than the Arab World. (...) The significance of the current attention to the Arab World is that -in business terms at least- the Arabic countries are being viewed as a source of potential partners and as equals.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In the article *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* is also written about the area of the Arab world that “the geographic location of the Arab World, sitting at the crossroads of three continents, has helped to place it at the center of an increasingly integrated world economy.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) *Kwinessential* is a commercial business enterprise that writes about how they introduce they customers into the *Arab Business Culture*:

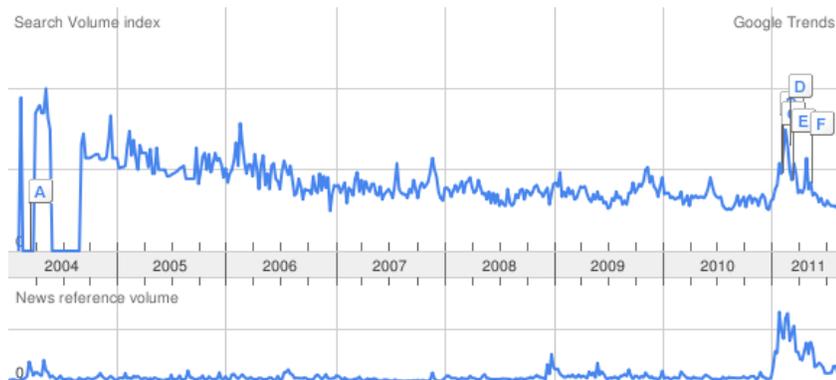
"All our cross cultural awareness courses are designed and run by top-flight professionals with experience of living and working in the Middle East. We cater to your every need, taking a 100% bespoke approach to all our intercultural awareness training. The results you want are the results we give you.  
(*Kwinessential*)

Two factors contribute to the establishment of the cognitive metaphor ‘Arab world’: On the one hand the relative discrepancy between the Western culture and the Arab culture, which is expressed in the cognitive metaphor used by the West and on the other hand the common features that connect Arabs with each other and distinguish them from other cultures. So the popularity of this metaphor can be explained by the acceptance of both societies. In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about the history of the expression ‘Arab world’ that it is “historical, as its members share certain common attributes of culture derived from a shared history. Most of the Arab World was united in a period ranging roughly from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries A.D. under an empire that at its height exceeded in size ancient Rome. The historic Arab Empire, however, included much of what is today no longer part of the Arab World.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) Besides the religion, the shared language is a feature of the consideration of Middle Eastern countries as a community described with the term ‘Arab World’. In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about the Arab language that it “is the foremost unifier of the nations of the Arab World. It is the official language of all of the Arab nations, by definition. Arabic is also an official language of the United Nations; it is a greater unifier of the Arab World than any other characteristic joining together such ethnically and racially diverse groups of people (...). (*Encyclopedia of Business*) The rhetorical construct of the ‘Arab world’ continues in descriptions like in the following section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about environment and technology in the Arab world: “The Arab World is at once resource poor and resource rich. (...) Ten of the Arab nations rely on petroleum for over 50 percent of their export revenues: Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*)

### **Media Use of the Term “Arab World’ Online in Google**

Google Trends compares the Google online users’ interest in topics (search volume index) and shows how frequently the topics have appeared in Google News stories (news reference volume). It

shows in which geographic regions people have searched for the topics the most. (*Google Trends*) The media use of the term ‘Arab world reflects events of international importance for the world news especially in English speaking countries. On the contrary, the French and German media are comparatively less influenced using the equivalent terms in German (‘*arabische Welt*’) and French (‘*monde arabe*’) as well as the Arabic equivalent (‘*العالم العربي*’). The most interesting aspect of the contrastive analysis in different regions and languages is that the term in the language (‘*العالم العربي*’) concerned is used relatively late since the year 2006. This provokes the idea that the term entered as a back translation into the Arabic language after the term had been established in the Western media. After 2006, the Arabic term seems to be frequently used as an established term in the Arabic news media. In all graphs the events of the so-called ‘Arab Spring revolution’ had a significant impact on the media use of the term ‘Arab world’ and its equivalents in the online media.

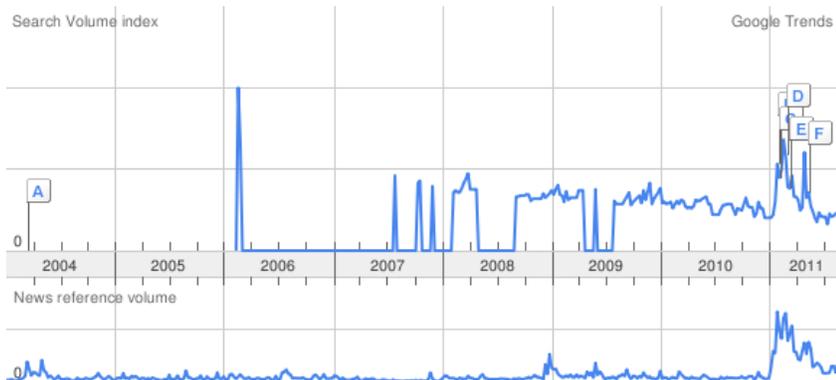


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**Illustration 7. Use of the Term “Arab World” in the News (2004-2011).**

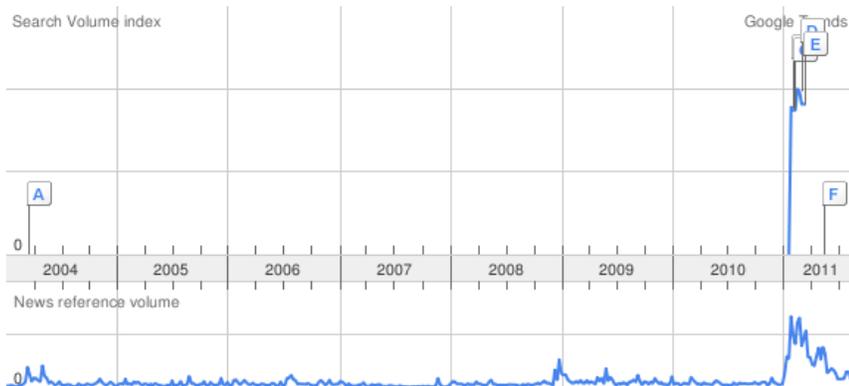
**Websites of all regions.**

**(Date of request: September 15, 2011)**



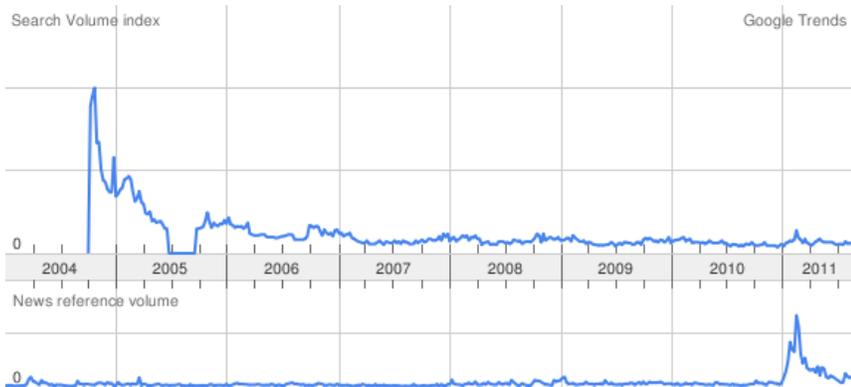
**Illustration 8. Use of the Term “Arab World” in the News (2004-2011).  
Websites in the USA.**

**(Date of request: September 15, 2011)**



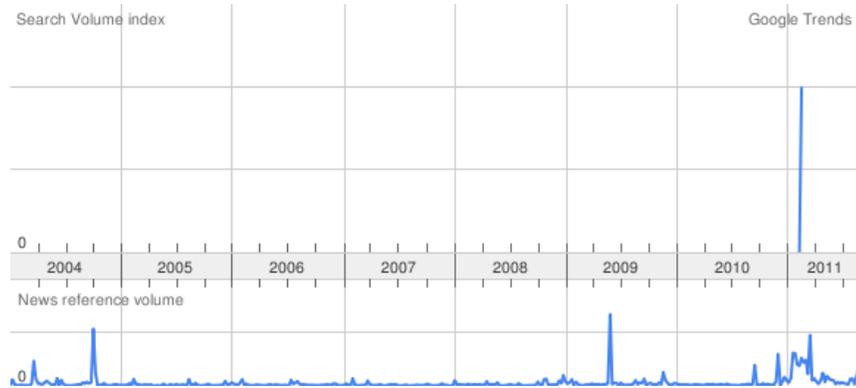
**Illustration 9. Use of the Term “Arab World” in the News (2004-2011).  
Websites in the UK.**

**(Date of request: September 15, 2011)**



**Illustration 10. Use of the Term “Monde Arabe” in the News (2004-2011).  
Websites in France.**

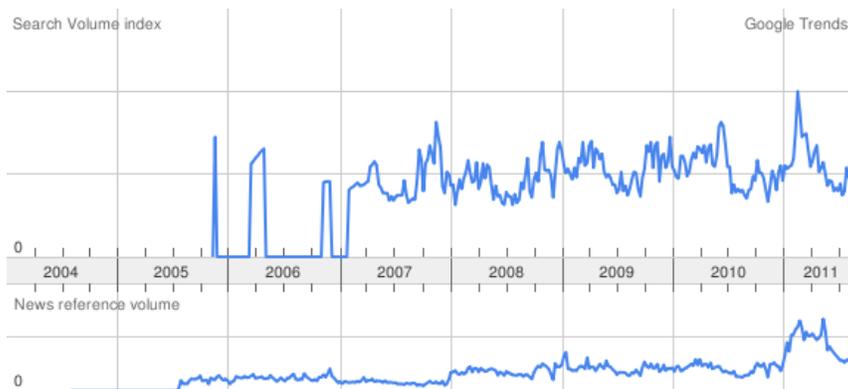
(Date of request: September 15, 2011)



**Illustration 11. Use of the Term “arabische Welt” in the News (2004-2011).**

**Websites in all regions.**

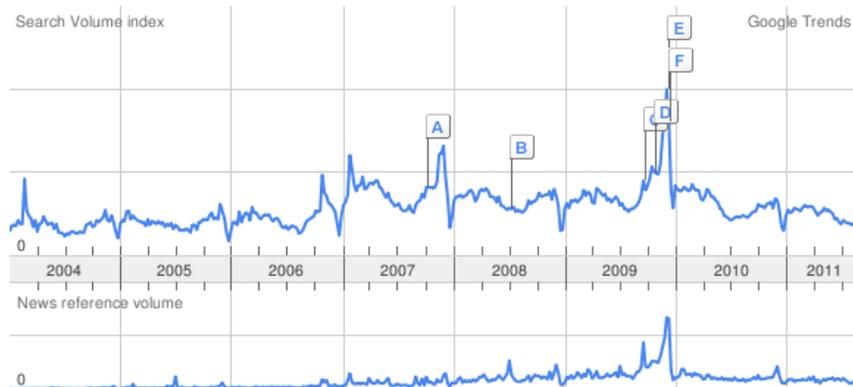
(Date of request: September 15, 2011)



**Illustration 12. Use of the Term “العربى العالم” in the News (2004-2011).**

**Websites in all regions.**

(Date of request: September 15, 2011)



**Illustration 13. Contrastive Term. Use of the Term “Climate Change” in the News (2004- 2011). Websites in all regions.  
(Date of request: September 15, 2011)**

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