Politainment in Egyptian and German Newspaper: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

In the 90s of the past century, there was like never before a great political and entertaining communication. A new reality of the political content is becoming obvious through a form of a public and mass media delivered communication in which political actors, themes, processes and meaning, identities are created. This new reality constructs the sphere in which normal citizens realize politics and where citizens are becoming more and more part of the political culture. Politainmnet has gained importance in the age of mediatization, digitalization, globalization, and Americanization of politics. TV shows and tabloids were first to include Politainment. Conventional formats of political magazines and news programs needed to change to win more attention.

Keywords: Politainment • Mediatization • Digitalization • Media

Introduction

Politainment is according to Prior (2003)- the entertaining shocking or scandalous aspects of politics, soft news offers people an alternative that maximizes their utility because it combines entertainment and information. Politainment reports on lifestyle, wardrobe, scandals of superstars, and glamorous politicians. Several new news formats blend information and entertainment emerged in the two past decades and are labeled soft news and contrasted to more traditional hard news formats. Because citizens have no direct contact with the complicities of political life and systems, politainment would make political life gain more sense and easy to be realized. Politainment helps citizens focus on political themes and construct a model of perception and meanings that are used by everyone. It enhances and strengthens the political norms and that could help to create a political culture. Do you know about the concept of Mediokratie from Thomas Mayer? The colonization of the politics system by the media system...Mayer is the perfect counterpart of doerner´s politainment concept [1].

The studying of Politainment started with the term infotainment which means the combination of information with entertainment. The study of the political «infotainment» in specific emerged at the end of the 90s. Academia started with television studies and moved to studies on journalism and the Internet. Scholars were interested in analyzing how reality is represented as a "show" and the preferences of readers and their choice of news [2].

As media plays two important roles which are informing about politics and entertainment, the term Politainment emerged to combine both roles and functions of the media. It is a hybrid format like Infotainment (a mix of Information and entertainment); Reality soaps (a mix of Reality and fiction); Faction (a mix of fact and fiction); Doku-Soaps (a mix of documentation and soaps); Edutainment (a mix of education and entertainment); Infomercials (a mix of news and commercials) and Advertorials (a mix of advertisements and editorials) [3].

Politainment includes two subterms: political entertainment and entertaining politics. Political entertainment is defined as the way the entertainment industry tackles political topics in various entertainment formats [4].

While entertaining politics refers to "how political actors capitalize on their celebrity …. to enhance their images and to promote certain issues". Entertaining Politics "transforms statesmanship into showmanship"; it is "where the wall between fact and fiction has come down" [5].It also means that the important political events, decisions, and are turning to be "useful subjects for anecdotes" [6]. Politicians feel to present themselves as entertainers. Lack of time to give readers all the information they need, as well as the appealing format of political programs, has helped in the creation of Infotainment and Politainment. The conventional formats of political magazines and news programs fall back and needed to change over the years to win more interest and attention. Politicians as well try to win readers and audiences by acting as entertainers or as media activists [7].

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Politainment has changed the nature of popular culture and made it include political topics and helped to create new formats in the media [8]. Scholars argued about the effects of Politainment on audiences and readers. While some see Politainment as disabling the readers from getting true information about political issues leading to wrong political decision making, others consider Politainment a way of catching the attention of readers to often neglected political issues [8].

Literature Review

Supporters of Politainment see it having the capability to reach a huge number of audiences aside from their level of education encouraging them to debate and discuss in public. Citizens who have no direct contact with politics would find a help in Politainment to understand and realize politics especially the less educated. Politainment could enhance and strengthen political norms and help to create a political culture and democracy. The disadvantages of Politainment are the unequal division of the presence of participants and opinions in the media influenced by money, power, and reputation. Political data is shortened, emotionalized and personalized. Politainment could lead to an emotionalized society standing in the way of development and political knowledge especially in developing countries like Egypt. Jones questioned if politainment is a step back of modernity and a lack of differentiation by describing the role of the yellow press in transitions from authorization to democracy on the case of Jordan [9].

Dörner`s researches are milestones in the field of Politainment studies. In his research in 2002, he compared Politainment in German and US media and concluded that Politainment forms the main forum for transmitting the political culture, traditions, and norms. Politainment depicts –according to Doerner- what is "normal" and what is "abnormal", and what is "us" and "them" [10]. In another study, Doerner links politainment to culture. Politainment could work against "fragmentation in socially differentiated societies" and could help to produce a "societal agenda-setting". These effects of Politainment could help viewers transform their media-experiences in a communicative and interactive practice.

Politainment in news media content

The development that media content has witnessed over the years has led to new content in which private life, intimacy, and fears have become more relevant. New characteristics of the media content appeared such as the simplification whether in the selection process of the content or in the writing process. Identification, where famous and known people and events are the news, became more relevant as well. Sensationalism raised as a result of Politainment raising questions the news factors and the selectivity criteria of the news among reporters, how reporters perceive their roles and what news factors affect readers the most [10].

When studying Politianment, one could apply the categories of political media content which include political actors, themes, processes, meanings, and identities. And because Politainment includes entertainment as one of its main components, it is necessary to analyze the main characteristics of entertainment. According to Schmidt (2012) these characteristics are firstly changed (action, tempo , surprise, diversity , lively), secondly no-worries (amusement ,

fiction, sympathy ,happy –end , lively) , thirdly something interesting (provocation, spectacular , suspense , emotionality , erotic , attention) and fourthly understandable (on (cognitive level friendly , sympathetic on emotional level, and conventional on behavioral level). Baum created a soft news index items for entertainment shows, Personality magazines, tabloid newspapers, and TV news magazine shows. The variables are: media consumption; SES demographics (Education, Age, Family income) as well as political engagement (party identification, personal importance of political news).

Boulevard press is per definition a newspaper or a magazine in which all or most of the stories are comments with sensationalism, suspense, dramatization, emotionalization and a maximization of appeals. Reporters in boulevard press create their own language and their own terminology. They normally publish short texts with short sentences and a lot of repetitions. This medium uses lots of headlines with lots of question marks, big photos and pictures and lots of citation quotes. Basic and background information, as well as graphics, are absent. The role of boulevard press is mainly to lead the public opinion and not to give orientation [11].

Entertainment is closely connected to humor. Koeningsloew ???? differentiated between six types of humor: critical humor, humor for everyone, humorous stories, human humor, guerilla humor and humor between friends. In her study, she defines political humor in an entertaining context a variation between the classical entertainment shows in which guests and anchors do political humor or visual collage or video smashups that are spread via emails, blogs or social networking sites.

This political humor has gained enormous importance in the last few years because of medicalization, digitalization, and globalization as well as the Americanization of politics. The role of humor could be divided into two pairs: differentiation and identification as well as control and resistance. This means that humor from one side differentiates the group from another and helps explaining norms and habits and from the other side practices resistance against the pressure of the group. Therefore, it should help in the integration process of a certain group. Political humor plays as well the role of political criticism. The main media formats that include critical political humor are according to news satires, satire magazines, cabarets as well as cartoons. Authors, anchors, and journalists do this humor and it is mainly aggressive, actual, controversy and targets elite audiences [12].

According to literature, I extracted some of the categories that could be applied to the study of Politainment in the news. Doeveling und Hoffman, 2007 discussed emotionalization, hybridization, privatization, and intimitation as forms of media content categorized entertainment with a changing situation, a no-worries one that is interesting (Provocation, spectacular, suspense, emotionality, erotic, attention), understandable, friendly and conventional the boul evardization of the press with the presence of headlines, quotes, repetition, pictures, creative language, and short texts that are dramatized and emotionalized. Boulevard press lacks depth, background, and basic information as well as info graphs and charts.

I conclude that when talking about Politianment media content, the researcher deals with Shortened, Emotionalized and personalized data. Accordingly, these three categories are the coding categories I

have used in my analysis of Politainment in the sample of the study that is defined as follows:

1- **Personalization:** the focus on the personal aspect of the political media content, the privatization of the media content, the creation of intimacy in political media content, the identification by using famous people and events as a source of information.

2- **Emotionalization:** the focus on the emotional aspects of the political media content, the use of Provocation, the creation of sympathy with the political actors and political events, the dramatization of the political events, the sensationalism in the political media content.

3- **Tabloidization:** the focus on characteristics of the tabloid press, the boulevardization of the media content, the simplification of the media content in the writing and the selection process, the use of slang to create a unique language.

Politainment: A new Public Sphere?

The question that Poitainment raise is whether we can still talk about the classical definition of politics about the state, the political system, and the public opinion? Or is a search for a younger definition mandatory? Will Politainment lead to a more transparent and more democratic system? Or will it lead to a more emotionalized decision-making process? This paper seeks to answer the question of whether Politainment helped to create a new public sphere. A new relation between the public and the private sphere.

As Politainment includes personalization and the focus on intimacy and private aspects in the public media, it is suggested that a new relationship between the public and the private sphere is existent. Back in history, private issues of politicians were only discussed privately or in yellow and boulevard press. What we witness nowadays with Politainment in conventional press assures a mix between both private and public sphere. Information about political should aim at having cognitive effects like understanding political events, changing behaviors, giving insights, leading to a growth of knowledge through a process of learning and education. On the contrary, entertainment should recall feelings normally accompanied by less information unlike the informative role of media. The usage of entertainment media differs from political content. It differs in format, expectations, and gratifications. There is no doubt that the boundaries between the political and the entertaining have been broken and a Politainment is created even in the most conventional and traditional outlets, the daily print newspapers.

As suggested by Habermas, public sphere mediate between the state and the private individual. The question this paper is seeking to answer is whether there is a transformation in the structure of the public sphere. Variety of social changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth century led to theories of an effective bourgeois public sphere equals middle-class men (private individuals) engaged over key issues of mutual interests and concerns. This has led to the creation of a space in which both new ideas and the practices and discipline of the rational public debate are cultivated the so-called new public spaces. Leads to the formation of a zone of mediation between the state and the private individual.The public space is riven with contradiction and conflicting tendencies and characteristics.

In a book entitled "After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere", the phenomenon of the rise and fall of public spheres is discussed. Media discourse is changing from playing a role to deliver political and economic sphere to the private sphere [13]. The new role is that the media discourse is taking a political and economic sphere and mixes it with the private sphere and blends both spheres together. Thus information comes from the political and economic sphere and there becomes mixed with the private sphere. It is then recreated and reconstructed and then back to the private sphere then back to the public sphere. The public sphere then becomes the intersection between the political economic and private. Instead of a one –way down information flow from the political and economic system through the media discourse to the private sphere, Politainment has succeeded to create two-way information from the private into the political and economic.

It is especially important to study the new public sphere, especially in newspapers. It is known that communication of newspapers deals normally with a one-way communication where recipients do not have the capability to directly influence the content (a unidirectional communication).

Problem statement

In this research, Egyptian and German newspapers will be compared and analyzed in their relation to Politainment. These newspapers represent two different cultures, two different societies with different political, economic and social characteristics that are reflected in the media content. The questions this paper seeks to answer are whether conventional media like daily newspapers include Politainment and to what extent. And whether culture affects Politianment? This paper seeks to answer whether there is a change in the media landscape in Egypt and Germany and a change in the classical definition of Politics. Are conventional media outlets changing nature into less conventional? Is Politainment moving from the TV shows and tabloids to the conventional print newspapers? Is there a new public sphere in which the private sphere is mixed with the political in both Egypt and Germany?

Research questions:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of Politainment in Egyptian Newspapers?

RQ2: What are the characteristics of Politainment in German Newspapers?

RQ3: What are the similarities and differences between Egyptian and German Newspapers?

Article 1: As seen in story 1 published in Al-Masry Al-Youm, the political event is personalized. The focus on the media content is not about the political role of US president Donald Trump but on his private and personal and private life. Here, the metaphor of the crazy is recalled to describe Trump. The headline of the story could be translated from Arabic as:

"Trump: "I sometimes tweet when I am in bed … and I disagree with Feminism".

The main theme of the story is trump`s opinion and lifestyle. The news story is summarizing an interview with US president Trump held by ETV the British TV channel. In the news report, the focus is on the

unprofessional, stupid and different aspects of the president`s actions and ideas. The story focuses on how the US president asks others to spread what he would like to spread. He says he likes to use Twitter to announce his decisions and criticize his enemies. In the story, the food trump eats is discussed. His answer is that he eats good and healthy food from the best chefs. Answering a question about Women, Trump answers that he supports and respects women. In the last part of the story, he explains how British people like him and how popular he is among Britons. The story is accompanied by a photo of Donald Trump that depicts him angrily [14].

Article 2: In letters-to-the-editor published in Al-Ahram newspaper, one of the letters is entitled "Trump`s Kindergarten". This story explains how the US has changed the UN from being an international organization for peace and justice to a nursery or kindergarten owned by Donald Trump. In this nursery, all presidents obey Trump because he is the director, stubborn , and dominant. This story is commenting on the Veto of the US on UN`s decision on Jerusalem as the capital of Israel [15].

Article 3: Story 3 is a column published in Al-Ahram newspaper and an example of personalization of political stories in order to make them more attractive to the reader. This column entitled: "Sultan Erdogan in Sudan" explains the relation between Egypt, Sudan, and Turkey on the river Nile. It is quoted that "the Ottoman Sultan Erdogan has some invasional dreams to rebuild the glory of Sultan Seleem and Mohamed Elfateh and the glory of the Ottoman State and to invade the Arab World again. This paragraph explains how the author uses metaphors to describe Erdogan as a king and as crazy."Since the waves of breakage in Iraq, Syria and the foreign invasion, Sultan Erdogan is having a crazy dream about the rebuilding of the Ottoman Empire. Time has changed and people have changed but the weird thing is that Erdogan jumps on Qatar and threatens the Arab Gulf countries with his troops and invades Sudan (the strategic depth of Egypt and its main African security. We find that the Sultan waves with Rabaa (Symbol of the Muslim Brotherhood) to confirm that he is the first defender of the Muslim Brotherhood then he occupies Swan Island in a weird conspiracy with president Al-Bashir [16].

Article 4: This news story includes Emotionalisation to create entertainment. The story, published on page eight in the international news in Al-Ahram, is tackling the effects of publishing the book "Fire and Fury" on Trump. Using the headline "A new bomb in the face of the US-president", an emotionalized language is used and exaggerations are created. The story discusses the personal and private aspects of Trump`s life that were uncovered in the new book. His wife, his daughter and his son are the main actors in this story. Family interventions in Trump presidency, for example, how his son would take the Russians who participated in the meeting to meet his dad in Trump towers; and how Trump`s daughter is trying with her husband to become the first female US president. The continuous tackling of scandals and insider news in politics create politainment. (agencies, Fire, and Fury in Trump`s White House... A new bomb in the face of the US President, 2018).

Article 5: The use of slang and inappropriate language used boulevard press as seen in Story 5. The headline of the story is "Trump answers the North Korean leader: "I Have a bigger nuclear bottom that yours". The story focuses on the political fight between US president and North Korean leader using a fight of words. Some tweets of Trump are selected to be published in the story for example:The North Korean leader has just said that the nuclear bottom is on his office. Someone in his weak and starving hungry system shall inform him that I have a nuclear bottom but its bigger and stronger than his and it works.Trump described the North Korean president before as short and the small rocket man that went on a suicidal mission while the North Korean described Trump as crazy, shoots rockets everywhere and should learn how to behave.

Article 6: An example for personalization of the political actors and events is the book review on Michael Wolf`s "Fire and Fury: inside the Trump White House". The author of this review focuses on Trump`s wife and kids as well as the several marriages he had. The focus of the story is also about Trump`s scandals, naked photos, and sexual relations. The story is divided into An introduction, trump`s elections, Trump and his wife Milania, His assistant Banon and trump`s first day in the presidency. A photo of the book cover, as well as a personal photo of trump, accompany the story published in Al-Masry Al-Youm [17].

Article 7: The use of boulevard language is common among stories published in Almasry Alyoum that include Politainment. In this news report entitled: "Abu Mazen attacks Arab countries about Jerusalem: Back off". And the sub headline: "A leader in Fath: we study taking away our approval To Israel". The use of the terminology "Back off" in newspaper headlines is very unfamiliar and tends to the yellow press language in Egypt. The use of the sentence "We said to Trump no and a million no and we will not agree on "The slap of the time".

Article 8: The use of the metaphor of the crazy is used to describe the US president Trump in Story 8. The use of superlatives in the German language to create a feeling of exaggeration creates Politainment. "Trump considers himself a very stable genius" is the headline of this story in which the main theme is how the US president refuses the accusations of the book "Fire and Fury" about his life [19].

Article 9: The story "The illness Trump: how psychologically stable is the US president really?" questions the mental and psychological health of Donald Trump. The personalization of the political is one of the characteristics of Politainment. The first paragraph of the feature explains that no one could be diagnosed as mentally sick from distance. Donald Trump could be a narcissist, and other things may be a little bit crazy but he is not by any means psychologically and mentally sick. Focusing on Personal aspects of the political figure and recalling the metaphor of the crazy, politainment is created [20].

Article 10: The exaggeration and the use of metaphors are obvious in the headline. In the story entitled: "Merkel`s Powerlessness" published in Sueddeutsche Zeitung, the metaphor of the weak is recalled. Metaphors of Merkel fainting are used to describe the political actions that she takes. Again here, the language of real life is transmitted into the political life creating emotions of surprise about the weird situation and sympathy towards the weak and fainting person [21].

Article 11: This story entitled "In the madhouse", the author of Sueddeutsche Zeitung has decided to recall the metaphor of the crazy to describe Trump. Using terminology that is not in their context and changing the logic, entertainment is created in the political content. The right headline would have been in the White House and

not the madhouse. This change has created a boulevardization in the story. The introduction of the story is "This is not the first time in which someone writes about the crazy conditions in the White House. But it is the first time that Washington is appealed that way. About a book and a president who considers himself a genius [22].

Article 12: The author of this article open up with the headline "Hampel hat ausgehamplet". Here, the author addresses the habits but also the name of a politician in a fairy-tale narrative. The story of the Hampelmann is very common in the cultural memory and describes a person that acts ridiculous and absurd. That attribution of a "Hampelmann" in the common sense is contrary to the expectation - a politician should act rationally and confident. The result of that mistake is following in the sub headline – Hampel got relocated from office. By covering a political issue by a metaphor of popular beliefs point to the concept of politainment [23].

Article 13: Story 13 explains how Democrats and Republicans are throwing responsibility to each other without reaching a solution in the Congress. The use of the language in the headline recalls the metaphor of the kid and imitates the way kids talk to each other. "Trump is responsible! No, Schumer is responsible!" puts the disagreement of both sides on political context in a new context which is the kids' fight in a playground for instance [24].

Article 14: In response for the statements of Trump about the Arab and African and the publishing of the book "Fire and Fury", the publisher of taz on the 8th of January has decided to publish the cover page with the title "White Trash House". Here, the author describes his opinion in the White House in the age of Trump. The story discusses the book Fire and Fury that is published about Trump in his oval office, his fights to get in power and his everyday life. The choice of the word "Trash" is a recall of boulevard press and a customization in the language to deliver certain messages [25].

Article 15: The changing of words and replacing words in also one characteristic of Politainmnet that can be found in this column. The author Hahn replaced the US with Trumpland to deliver a meaning about how the US president is changing the face of the US and turning it to his land. The use of emotionalization and the rise of fear appeals are also used. The use of the word "a small war" in the opinion piece published in taz entitled: "A small war in Trump`s land." The first paragraph of the opinion piece describes Trump recalling the metaph or of the dumb and using a boulevard language with the following words: "….The New Yorker Hotshot, who has the lust for power and who is in vain, but we know newly that he did not really want to be a president of the most powerful country on the planet" [26].

Article 16

A feature on US-Russian relationship published in Sueddeutsche Zeitung is entitled: "Simply shut your trap" or "Simply shut your mouth". The use of the boulevard press is repeated in the headline of this feature. Taking some street words and phrases into the language of journalism is applied. Even the sub-headline of the story could be translated into a boulevard use of words: "Donald Trump has one problem: when he thinks, he has to tell whether it is embarrassing, awkward or even wrong. This has made him land in numerous yelling or fighting. It will be really dangerous for him when he has to stand in front of an interrogation."The sub-headline recalls the metaphor of the crazy to describe Trump`s attitude and way of thinking. This sub-

headline recalls as well the metaphor of the kid who is unable to think of the word he says before saying them. The lead of the story describes a possibility of corruption of Trump tackling issues of scandals and gossips in the political issues.

"The Trump-Russia affair: The man is hard and corruptible: Robert Mueller, the former FBI director, has to clarify whether Donald Trump and his team have contacts with forbidden contacts in Moscow during the presidential elections. Four former co-workers of the president have accused him. Now Mueller wants to speak up. But Russia wasn't allowed to be the most important " [27].

Article 17: In a feature published in Sueddeutsche Zeitung, the relation between the US president Donald Trump and the African leaders is described. "In Africa, Trump is through or in Africa they are finished with him" is the headline of the story. The author of this story Doerris uses a boulevard language to describe the worsened relations between African leaders and the US president. The story starts by describing how enthusiastic the leaders of the authoritarian countries of Africa were towards the new US president. Their attitudes have changed after his statements describing some states as "shithole countries"[28].

Article 18: "The double Trump" is another article that explains Trumps different positions towards Israel and Palestine published in Sueddeutsche Zeitung. According to this article, Trump took both Palisintians and Israelis by surprise when he agreed on the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The article also addresses the metaphor of playing a double game, which means to play out the rules to swapping the other players or the metaphor of double standards, say something in one way and acting in the opposite way. The ideal of European philosophy shows the dualism of mind and body and the rational subject based on the dominance of mind to act in the values of Immanuel Kant. To be double, means not only acting rational but also emotional and the consequences for politics can be bad. So I could say that this article is a personalization of the de-elucidated and schizophrenic subject of Trump column [29].

Article 19: The story with the headline "The damned duty of Merkel" embodies a personalization. The political system with all their different institutions is reduced to the person of Merkel. Merkel is a private subject and not treated as a political subject as for instance chancellor Merkel [30].

Article 20: In another article entitled "The Trump Shock", the US president hits the order frames of the global economy. Emotionalization is used in this article published in Sueddeutsche Zeitung. Here as well the private subject of Trump is addressed. The democratic and political institution of Trump like being the president of the USA is ignored [31].

Article 21: "The dream is over", this how Wetzel reduced political actors to dreamers and political action to a dream. This headline constructs an over-simplified image of a deeply differentiated and complex political system. It also addresses an emotional rather than rational action. This emotiopnalzation is rather related to the private subjects and should not be related to political institutions and actors [32].

Article 22: "Trump heatens up the atomic conflict with Teheran" explains how Trump has taken an emotional behavior instead of rational approach when interacting with political issues.

Article 23: "Away with Trump: New Yorkers reduce the name of the president from their homes" is another example of emotionalization. It is a human interest headline and sub headline. It explains how the people from New York like to reduce the name of Trump from the houses. It refers to Trump as a personal subject. The use of the imperative seems as if the author is addressing someone a person and not a political institution.

Conclusion

Bird (2009) has raised a question on whether journalism will keep working as it is, loses its audiences and clings into traditional norms of objectives suffering from declining readers or will it rather develop new ways of communication. This paper concluded that newspapers are moving towards Politainment in both Egypt and Germany. Politainment has moved from Talkshows and Entertainment soaps into the traditional old-fashioned newspapers. The language used in these prestigious newspapers have changed over the years as concluded by this paper. The similarities between German and Egyptian newspapers indicate an upcoming trend in traditional press. This trend could be described as the use of a more entertaining language in political stories using Personalization, Emotionalization and Boulevardization.

This paper also concluded that a difference in the freedom given to Politainment in German versus Egyptian Press. As known, media has generally been the first to push the boundaries of the news freedoms coinciding with the onset of liberalization and transition. It has stood at the forefront of popular struggles which influence and help to define the liberalization or transition.

Newspapers have worked to unveil state and regime abuses. The result of this paper showed that German press uses Politainment meore often compared to Egyptian newspapers. It also revealed that German Press has the freedom to use entertaining content on German politicians, the German councilor, for instance. This is not the case in Egyptian newspapers who only use Politainment on foreign politicians like the US president.

Further research should be conducted on other Arab newspapers compared to other Western newspapers to examine the results of this paper. Other newspapers in the Egyptian media landscape could be analyzed as well varying between governmental, partisan and private press. The ownership of these newspapers could affect the amount and the nature of the Politainment. I also suggest applying the elements of Politainment on newsmagazines like Der Spiegel and El Mosawer in order to examine whether this trend has reached newsmagazines or stayed in daily newspapers.

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