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Changes and Challenges of the Iraqi Media

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ABSTRACT

Iraq is a relatively small country but with a rich history that goes back to more than five thousand years ago (Simons, 1994). The ancient Greeks called it Mesopotamia, the land between the two rivers, which is often referred to as the Cradle of Civilization or the Cradle of Mankind. The ethnic makeup of the people of Iraq is Arab, Kurds, Turkoman, Assyrians, and others while the religious composition consists of Islam (Sunni & Shi'i), Christianity, and others. The Iraqi population is about 25 million people with the majority of them is under the age of 25. The official language of the country is Arabic while Kurdish is the primary language in the Kurdish areas. Other languages exist therein such as Turkish, Assyrian, and Armenian.

Recently, the National Communication and Media Commission, which is the first Iraqi independent regulatory body, reported that there are about "80 radio stations and 21 TV stations on the air inside Iraq" as well as a number of newspapers (Al-Qazwini, 2004, p.2). This prodigious number of broadcast and print media comes quickly on the heels of 35 years of dictatorship when the Iraqi media were stifled and the dignity of the Iraqi media practitioners was degraded. Essentially, this paper examines the changes

and challenges that Iraqi media have encountered. The analysis will cover three major eras. Era I (Before 1958) deals with the monarchy; Era II (1958 – 2003) focuses on the media under military discipline; and, Era III (2003 to Present) discusses the media after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Changes and Challenges of the Iraqi Media

Background

Iraq is a country with a rich history that goes back to more than five thousand years ago (Simons, 1994). The ancient Greeks called it Mesopotamia, the land between the two rivers, which is often referred to as the Cradle of Civilization or the Cradle of Mankind. As Simons stated.

Here it was that the first cities were born, writing began, and the first codified legal systems were established. Here it was – through such ancient lands as Sumer, Akkad, Babylonia, and Assyria – that the vital cultural brew was stirred, the quite remarkable concoction from which Western civilization would emerge. (1994, p. 79)

Iraq is relatively small and it equates to slightly more than twice the size of Idaho. Its total area that includes land and water is estimated at 437,072 square kilometers, which is about 168,754 square miles (Iraq: World Factbook, 2004). As of July 2004, the Iraqi population was roughly estimated to be 25 million with the majority of them under the age of 25. The ethnic makeup of the Iraqi people is Arab (75-80 percent), followed by Kurds, (15-20 percent), while the remainder consists of Turkoman, Assyrians, and others. The religious composition consists of Islam, which is the primary religion of Iraq that includes Shi'i and Sunni, Christianity (3 percent), and other religions. About 60-65 percent of the Muslims are Shi'as as are most of the population in Iran; meanwhile, the rest of the Iraqi Muslims are Sunnis and that includes Arab Kurds, Turkomans, and other minorities. The official language of the country is Arabic while Kurdish is the primary language in the Kurdish areas. Other languages exist for minorities such

Turkish, Assyrian, and Armenian. The literacy rate is 40.4 percent for the total Iraqi population, 55.9 percent of those are males while 24.4 percent are females (Iraq: World Factbook, 2004).

It has been estimated that there are about 675,000 telephone lines in use, 20,000 cell phones, and 25,000 Internet users. The Internet country code of Iraq is .iq. The nation uses satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (1 Atlantic Ocean and 1 Indian Ocean), 1 Intersputnik (Atlantic Ocean region), and 1 Arabsat (inoperative), coaxial cable and microwave radio relay to Jordan, Kuwait, Syria, and Turkey. Recently, the National Communication and Media Commission (NCMC), which is the first Iraqi independent regulatory body, reported that there are about “80 radio stations and 21 TV stations on the air inside Iraq” as well as a number of newspapers (Al-Qazwini, 2004, p.2). This prodigious number of broadcast and print media comes quickly on the heels of 35 years of dictatorship when the Iraqi media were stifled and the dignity of the Iraqi media practitioners was degraded. Essentially, this paper examines the changes and challenges that Iraqi media have encountered. The analysis will cover three major eras. Era I (Before 1958) deals with the monarchy; Era II (1958 – 2003) focuses on the media under military discipline; and, Era III (2003 to Present) discusses the media after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Era I: Before 1958

Newspapers existed in Iraq from the middle of the eighteenth century and four newspapers were published in Iraq during the 19th century (Davis, 2003). Az-Zaoura, one of the names for Baghdad, was considered the first newspaper that was published during the 19th century (Reporters, 2003). Restrictions on the press were lessened at the turn of the twentieth century while the Ottoman Empire was on the decline. Between 1908–1914, 61 newspapers were established in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, al-Najaf, and other Iraqi cities while published in Arabic, Arabic and Turkish, and Arabic and French (Davis, 2003). Among such publications were dozens of dailies, weeklies, and literary magazines, including a satirical newspaper Habez Bouz that was very popular. Iraqis also enjoyed having access to most publications

from the Arab literary world. There was a popular saying across the Middle East that “what is written in Cairo, is printed in Beirut but read in Baghdad” (Reporters, 2003, p4).

During the 1920s, more than 105 newspapers, which advocated various perspectives, were found in Iraq subsequent to the establishment of the Iraqi monarchy in August 1921 (Davis, 2003). Most of those newspapers called for immediate independence for Iraq, the evacuation of British troops, and the development of a democratic and participatory Iraqi state (Davis, 2003). Among the most powerful newspapers were *Dijla* (Tigris) in 1921, *Alam al-Arabi* (The Arab World) and *al-Misbah* (The Light) in 1924, and *al-Sahifa* (The Newspaper) in 1927 (Davis, 2003). Although newspapers were faced with censorship and closed down periodically, most often they were reopened under a different name.

On October 13, 1932, Iraq became a sovereign state and it was admitted to the League of Nations (Iraq: Historical setting, 2004). With the sovereignty, Iraq had to deal with the social, economic, ethnic, religious, and ideological conflicts. Although political activities existed before World War II, they were banned during the war in the interest of national security. During the government of Tawfiq Suwaidi (February-March 1946), political parties were permitted to organize. Subsequently, six political parties were formed within a short period among which were the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Independence Party (IP) the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), and the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party (ASBP). The parties disseminated their critical views of the government through their newspapers such as *Sawt al-Ahali* (Voice of the People) of NPD, *Ittihad al-Sha’b* (Union of the People) of ICP, *al-Istiqlal* (The Independence) of IP, and *al-Afkar* (Ideas) of ASBP (Davis, 2003). The Monarchy kept closely monitoring the press, in general, and the political press in particular. Despite such scrutiny, several journalists challenged the system by criticizing the authorities (Al-Farhan, 2004). Such journalists were penalized by short imprisonment or shutting down their newspapers. Although the primary target audiences for the political press were the Iraqi literates, their messages were disseminated among the illiterate as well who

were often the patrons in coffee houses. The newspapers were read aloud for such people. So, the newspapers played a significant role in the lives of the Iraqi society, the literate as well as the illiterate.

The broadcast media also had its share in participating in such a political movement despite the fact that they were owned and controlled by the government. Radio began broadcasting in Iraq in 1936 and it was considered the medium of the common person regardless of literacy. Iraqis were able to receive radio signals from other Arab countries such as Egypt that helped to enrich Iraqis political perspectives. “The Baghdad radio stations and the press played an active role in the intellectual emulation of that period, primarily by promoting Arab nationalist ideology” (Reporters, 2003, p. 4). By that time, democracy and liberalism had established some roots in the Iraqi society to the extent that no government (between 1921-1958) dared to strangle the press and impose total censorship (Al-Farhan, 2004). Iraq was the first Arab country to have a television system that was launched in 1955 for the wealthy and upper class in Baghdad. The programs were chiefly American and British that were devoted to entertainment. Still, television broadcasts carried political overtones despite censorship. For example, the broadcast of a play at a Baghdad theater attended by King Faysal and Crown Prince Abd al-Ilah was abruptly interrupted following negative references within the dialogue of the play to the monarch in 1956 (Davis, 2003).

Era II: 1958 – 2003

When the monarchy was toppled by army officers in a military coup in 1958 (July 14, 1958 Revolution), Iraq became a republic and General Abd al-Karim Qasim became the prime minister. After the 1958 revolution, about 15 daily newspapers appeared which supported various factions in Iraq such as the Communists, Democrats, Ba’athists, Islamists, Kurds, and others. Despite some censorship that took place during Qasim’s period, the press enjoyed freedom that “would have been unthinkable under the monarchy much less under Saddam and the Ba’ath” (Davis, 2003, p. 202). Among newspapers that existed during the Qasim’s period were Sawt al-Ahali (Voice of the People), Itihad al-Sha’ab (Union of

the People), and al-Muatin (The Citizen) (Iraqi Press, 2004). From 1959-1963, the government merely questioned editor-in-chiefs and temporarily withdrew the licenses of certain publications such as the Communist daily newspaper Itihad al-Sha'ab (Reporters, 2003).

Indeed, the broadcast media played a significant role in disseminating political messages to Iraqis after the 1958 revolution. Whenever there was a military coup in Iraq, the first thing that was done was to control the broadcast media even before the new regime gained full control over the previous regime or the rest of the country. By doing so, the masses tend to believe that the old regime had fallen and a new regime had emerged. Through the media, the Iraqi government was able to reach and mobilize the masses of the population. For instance, Colonel Abd al-Salam Arif, who co-lead the 1958 revolution with Abd al-Karim Qasim, used the broadcast media to urge the crowds to convene on central Baghdad during the early days of the 1958 revolution by calling on them to attack imperialism and its agents (Tripp, 2000). During the Qasim regime, Iraqi radio broadcasting went through a major expansion “when the new regime was engaged in propaganda battles with Egypt and Syria,” (Rugh, 2004, p. 185). Iraqi television was somewhat a novelty for the Iraqis when the 1958 revolution took place and people were fascinated with this new medium. Iraqi people like to be informed and entertained so television met such needs. No matter how destitute people were, they tried to buy a television set. Accordingly, Abd al-Karim Qasim’s regime took advantage of the potential for such a medium in the lives of Iraqis and employed it for disseminating political messages as well as information, entertainment, and education. Davis stated that television was used to rally support and “served as a symbolic substitute for the lack of participatory political institutions during Abd al-Karim Qasim regime” (2003, p. 185). Because the literacy rate was relatively low in Iraq, television was employed for teaching. Lessons were offered an hour before the regular program started and reinforced through situation comedies. The entertainment aspect of television covered a variety of programs such as situation comedies, plays, movies, concerts, and so forth. Overall, the broadcast media played an important role in influencing the average Iraqi.

Between 1958 and 1968, there were five military seizures of power in Iraq. On February 9, 1963, Abd al-Karim Qasim was assassinated by the army officers and members of the Ba'ath Party. Abd al-Salam Arif became president and Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr prime minister. Nine months later, Arif used the military to take complete control of the government and expelled the Ba'ath Party in 1963. Arif died in a helicopter crash in 1966, and his brother, Abd al-Rahman Arif became the new president. In 1968, Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr overthrew Arif and took control of the government that marked the reestablishment of the Ba'ath Party. After 1963, "intellectuals who supported democratic processes could no longer operate as a group and the print media was increasingly subordinated to the state" (Davis, 2003). Newspapers started to disappear gradually because the Iraqi governments were shutting down newspapers and revoking their licenses. By the time the Ba'ath Party assumed power in 1968, there was only one newspaper al-Thawra (The Revolution), which was the official Ba'ath Party's paper. The editor-in-chief of al-Thawra was Tariq Aziz who became the Deputy Prime Minister. In 1976, al-Jumhuriya (The Republic) was founded which was the official government paper (Hurrat & Leidig, 1994).

When Saddam Hussein became the President of Iraq in 1979, the media that included newspapers, radio and television stations as well as press agencies became the privileged instrument in the hands of the ruling clique who utilized them to suppress freedom of expression. The totalitarian Ba'ath regime fully controlled the media and used them for the glorification of the figure of the dictator Saddam Hussein and his clan. "The war with Iran (1980-1988) served as a pretext for a complete take-over of the Iraqi media by the state" (Reporters, 2003). Saddam used his wars "to impose unprecedented constraints and ensured that all reports issued in newspapers and other outlets did not escape government censorship" (Al-Farhan, 2004). Reporters without Borders stated that

In 1986, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) passed an Order (number 840) signed by Saddam Hussein himself that imposes a death penalty on any person who insults or criticizes the President, his entourage, the Ba'ath Party, the RCC, or even the government. (Reporters, 2003, p. 5)

Journalists suffered all forms of brutal treatment at the hands of the Baathists and the media fell under severe censorship, restrictions, scrutiny, and persecution. According to International Alliance for Justice, “over 500 of them have been executed since 1968 and hundreds more have been forced into exile” (Reporters, 2003, p. 5). It is noteworthy that while Saddam suppressed freedom of expression at home and brutalized Iraqi journalists, he was extremely generous with non-Iraqi reporters who advanced what he stood for in other Arab countries...Saddam spent lavishly on the most eminent and credible pens in the Arab world to rally support for his power and policies. (Al-Farhan, 2004, p. 3).

The Iraqi media was tormented even worse when his older son Uday began to play a dominant role in the censorship and crackdown on the media in 1991. Uday became the head of the Iraqi Journalists' Union in 1992. The Iraqi Press Agency reported that about 50 journalists fled the crackdown of Uday in the year 2001 alone (Reporters, 2003). In a span of ten years, Uday usurped total control over the Iraqi media and made them the dissemination tool of government propaganda. Moreover, he headed Babil and al-Ba'ath al-Riyadi (daily newspapers), al-Zawra, Nabd al-Shabab, Sawt al-Talabah, and al-Rafidayn (weekly newspapers), and ran Voice of Youth Radio and Youth TV (al-Shabbab TV). A summary of the Iraqi media during the Ba'ath regime is displayed in [Table 1](#).

In addition to the total control that the Ba'ath regime exerted over the broadcast and the print media, the regime banned the household use of satellite dishes in 1993-94. The ban against owning satellite dishes was reinforced in 2002 when Saddam Hussein invoked religious justifications for it (Reporters, 2003). While most countries around the world strive to provide their citizens with the latest in technology, the Ba'ath regime deprived Iraqis from having such a necessity. For example, the Internet was introduced in 1999 in Iraq but the regime monitored its usage closely. All the information was censored through the government owned and controlled servers. Access to sites such as "Hotmail" was outlawed and anyone attempting to connect to his or her own online mailbox was subjected to fines (Reporters, 2003).

Era III (2003 to Present)

After the fall of Saddam Hussein, a media free-for-all emerged in Iraq and a number of media outlets were born as the mouthpieces of various political, religious, or ethnic groups. Piper (2004) indicated that out of more than 250 newspapers and magazines that appeared since the fall of the former regime, more than 100 titles are still being published. The majority of such publications are published in Arabic and they appear in a variety of offerings such as dailies, twice weekly, weekly, biweekly, monthly, bimonthly, and sporadically. The content of most of these publications is basically political; yet, other issues are also covered such as current affairs, domestic issues, features, entertainment, and sport (A new voice in the Middle East, 2003). Among such publications is al-Sabaah (The Morning) newspaper that was set up by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and sponsored by Iraqi Media Network. The Iraqi Media Network (IMN) was established in May 2003 by the CPA to replace the defunct Iraqi Information Ministry. It included a TV channel (al-Iraqiyah), two radio stations (Republic of Iraq Radio and Voice of Free Iraq) and a (al-Sabaah) newspaper (Media, 2003). Al-Sabaah is a daily newspaper that was launched in Arabic and English on May 15, 2003. It is one of the most popular newspapers in Iraq with about 10 million hits to its website per month. Another major newspaper is the London-based Azzaman (Time), published daily in Arabic, independent, and printed in Baghdad as well as in Basra. Al-Ahali and Iraq Today are two weekly newspapers published in Arabic and English respectively. The Iraq Press is an independent press agency that covers political, economic, cultural, and social affairs that are printed in Arabic and English (Iraqi Media, 2004). Several additional newspapers are published in Iraq such as al-Dimuqrati, al-Ittihad, al-Jihad, al-Zawra, Baghdad, Dar al-Salam, Nahrayn, Tareeq Ash-Sha'b, Turkomaneli, and Xebat as shown in [Table 2](#). Despite the availability of numerous newspapers, about 61 percent of the Iraqi people do not read newspapers and 74 percent of them do not trust any newspaper according to an Iraqi Center for Research and Strategic Studies survey (Results, 2003).

A prodigious number of radio and television stations started to broadcast after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime. “The National Communication and Media Commission (NMC) estimates that after seventeen months of unregulated media growth there are now about 80 radio and 21 TV stations on the air inside Iraq” (Al-Qazwini, 2004, p.2). The NMC, which is composed of a chief executive officer and three commissioners, was launched in April 2004 as the first independent regulatory body to oversee all forms of electronic communications (including voice and data telecommunications), radio and television broadcasting, as well as information and Internet services (Whitfield, 2004). The NMC was set to act as an advocate for media freedom and independence and to work closely with Iraq’s journalists’ associations, international media development organizations, and other relevant bodies in advancing professional standards and ethics (Whitfield, 2004).

Among the TV stations are al-Iraqiya (terrestrial, operated by Iraq Media Network), Al-Sharqiya (private, broadcasts terrestrially and via satellite dishes), Kurdistan Satellite Channel (operated by Kurdistan Democratic Party), and KurdSat (operated by Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) (Country profile, 2004). Al-Iraqiya is Iraq’s only nationwide terrestrial TV channel and can be received without difficulties. It was estimated that it could cover 74-95 percent of cities such as Baghdad, Ramadi, Fallujah, Najaf, and Basra; meanwhile, the reach is far less in the northern cities such as Sulaymaniyah (26 percent) and Erbil (9 percent) (Iraqi media developments, 2004). This channel is run on contract by the U.S. broadcasting equipment manufacturer Harris Corporation and a Lebanese partner (Feuiherade, 2004). Al-Sharqiya is the first private national channel and it maintains that it is not tied to any political, ethnic, or religious group. The channel offers a variety of programs that include entertainment and news such as dealing with political, economic, and social conditions (Al-Qazwini, 2004). Al-Hurra TV is a US government-funded satellite TV channel that was launched in February 2004 and it can be received throughout Iraq and other Arab countries (Iraq media dossier, 2004). This Arabic-language commercial-free channel is basically a 24-hour news and information channel. A second channel called al-Hurra Iraq, which targets Iraqi

viewers, was added in April 2004 (Al-Qazwini, 2004). Other TV channels such as Kirkuk TV, Kurdistan TV, Mosul TV, and so on are found locally in other cities.†

Equally important, there is a rapid mushrooming of external TV channels from neighboring countries, broadcast terrestrially and via satellite dishes that are accessible to Iraqis. For instance, the Iran-based 24-hour news al-Alam TV terrestrial channel in Arabic transmits to the southeastern region of Iraq where the population is mostly Shi'a. Additional Iranian TV channels are Sahar Universal Network 1 and 2 (satellite TV, viewable across Iraq), al-Thaqalayn TV (religious programs), Resistance Channel (al-Estiqamah broadcasts in Arabic), and the Tehran-based state-run Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran TV (broadcasts daily to Iraq) in Arabic (Iraq media dossier, 2004). Satellite viewers are also able to receive channels such as the 24-hour news Qatar-based al-Jazeera (the largest and most controversial Arabic news channel in the Middle East) and the 24-hour news Dubai-based al-Arabiya (one of the top choices for the Iraqis). The Iran-based terrestrial TV channel, al-Alam, is in direct competition with the Iraqi terrestrial channel al-Iraqiya while al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya compete with the satellite channels such al-Hurra as well as al-Sharqiya.

According to a survey that was conducted in seven urban Iraqi cities (Baghdad, Basrah, Fallujah, Erbil, Najaf, Ramadi, and Sulaymaniyah) on media usage and consumption, 93 percent of the Iraqis have access to television and 43 percent have a satellite dish at home (Results, 2003; Iraq: political, 2003; Media, 2003). Cities such as Erbil (73 percent) and Suleymania (60 percent) in the north and Ramadi (55 percent) in western Baghdad have greater access to satellite dishes. The survey results also demonstrate that the majority of urban Iraqis (62 percent) rely on television for information and news about Iraq. Other media were mentioned for obtaining news about Iraq such as foreign television (26 percent), newspapers (5 percent), Iraqi radio (2 percent), foreign radio (2 percent), and discussions with family members or friends (1 percent). Although people watch TV, about 29 percent of the Iraqi do not trust any television station while 6 percent do not watch any TV station (Results, 2003).

Republic of Iraq Radio, which was the first radio in Iraq after the fall of the Ba'ath regime, and Voice of Free Iraq are operated by Iraq Media Network. Other radio stations are Radio Nahrain (Basra, UK-sponsored), Voice of Iraq (Baghdad mediumwave, AM station), Hot FM (Baghdad FM music station), and Radio Dijla (Baghdad FM talk and music station) (Country profile, 2004). It is interesting to note that Radio Dijla (Iraq's first independent talk radio station) has become required listening for officials in Baghdad as the ordinary Iraqis inundate the station with phone calls to air their grievance and aspirations (Feuherade, 2004). Additional radio stations that are operated locally by various ethnic, religious, political factions are on the air such as Turkomaneli Radio (Kirkuk) that broadcasts on behalf of the Iraqi Turkoman Front, Voice of Freedom (Kurds) that broadcasts in Arabic and Kurdish and is operated by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Ashur Radio (Assyrian Democratic Movement), and so forth.

Countless external radio stations from the international media bombard the Iraqi airwaves. Most of these are broadcast on AM/Mediumwave stations and/or FM stations. The BBC Monitoring listed more than 100 international radio stations in its report (Media in post-war, 2003). More than one-third of such stations are received from Iran which are sponsored by Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). Other major international radio broadcasts such as BBC Arabic and World Service Radio, the Paris-based Radio Monte Carlo, Radio France Internationale, US Radio Sawa and US-sponsored Radio Free Iraq are also available in Iraq. Additional broadcasts are furnished by Polish Radio, American Forces Network radio, the US Christian broadcaster Fundamental Broadcasting Network (FBN), Broadcasting Service of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (BSKSA), Libya broadcasting, Syrian Arab Republic radio, Radio Kuwait, and Voice of Israel (Iraq media dossier, 2004).

According to a survey which was conducted by the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies, 38 percent of the respondents do not listen to any radio station and 53 percent do not trust what radio stations report about Iraq (Results, 2003). However, the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) indicated in their press release of November 2003 that 43 percent of the adult respondents in Baghdad listen to

Radio Sawa, 46 percent in Mosul, and 69 percent in Basrah (Media in post-war, 2003). Radio Sawa is a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week broadcasting network that covers news as well as an upbeat mix of Western and Arabic pop music. The survey also showed that Radio Monte Carlo enjoyed higher listenership (39 percent) than the British Broadcasting Corporation (30 percent).

CONCLUSION

The Iraqi media have been facing tremendous challenges when considering the rapid changes and expansion that took place in this field over the span of less than two years. Having so many media outlets nowadays is promising particularly after more than three decades of authoritative control, censorship, and persecutions during the Ba'ath regime. However, in its current chaotic state, the Iraqi media are predominantly a means for serving the interests of individuals who tend to have mainly political or economic motives. One of the challenges is that the Iraqi media need to seize the opportunity so that it can set the foundation for more responsible and professional media in the Iraqi society. The interest of the public should be of paramount importance. A sincere message of altruism should replace the egoism that ran rampant in the media for so long during the Ba'ath regime. The Iraqi people are desperate for such media as evidenced by the interest in Dijla Radio (Iraq's first independent talk radio station in Baghdad) where ordinary Iraqis inundate the station with phone calls to air their grievances and aspirations. It is equally important as well as promising to see that Radio Dijla has become required listening for officials in Baghdad.

In order for the Iraqi media to reach their potential, the Iraqi media practitioners need to be given the opportunity of true leadership in the process of rebuilding responsible and professional media.

Undertaking such a challenge cannot be achieved without the help of others. For instance, the Iraqi intellectuals and the Iraqi media practitioners who fled Iraq due to the Ba'ath regime's persecution can be an asset to the Iraqi media. Their knowledge and expertise are invaluable in training Iraqi media

practitioners through short intensive courses, workshops, seminars, or even participating and offering guidance in day-to-day operations. Moreover, the help of the international community is critical so that the Iraqis can truly meet the challenge of rebuilding free, responsible, professional, and independent media.

Meanwhile, the independence of the Iraqi media cannot be ensured without privatizing the media. Such privatization needs to be achieved through the honest and open employment of market forces instead of patronage. Privatization of the Iraqi media is necessary so that the media can operate as an independent entity away from any form or shape of governmental control. Such privatization will place the media in a competitive business position that will lead to better news publications and newscasts while focusing on the overall public interest.

The Iraqi media have gone quickly and dramatically from dictatorship to free-for-all media and the situation is still evolving. Because the situation in Iraq is still emergent, one cannot predict what the future holds. Yet, guaranteeing freedom of expression, securing independent media, and developing professional media are three critical components for any democratic process to be complete. Perhaps the real challenge nowadays for the Iraqi media is to escape in part from the seemingly revolving door of draconian measures of the recent past by opening the door to a promising future of free expression via truly independent media.

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Table 1.
Iraqi Media during the Ba'ath Regime

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Media Type & Frequency	Media	Notes
Daily Newspapers	Al-Thawra, Al-Jumhuriyah, Al-Qadisiyah, Babil and Al-Ba'ath al-Riyadi	Babil and Al-Ba'ath al-Riyadi were headed by Uday Hussein. Al-Thawra - The Ba'ath Party's official newspaper
	Al-Iraq	Kurdish newspaper
Weekly Newspapers	Al-Zawra, Nabd al-Shabab, Sawt al-Talabah, Al-Rafidayn, Al-Iqtisadi, Al-Ra'y, Al-I'lam, Al-Ittihad, and Aleph Ba	Al-Zawra, Nabd al-Shabab, Sawt al-Talabah, and Al-Rafidayn were headed by Uday Hussein. Al-Zawra - The Iraqi Journalists' Union newspaper
Radio	Republic of Iraq Radio	Broadcasted in Arabic, Kurdish, and other languages.
	Voice of Youth Radio	It was run by Uday Hussein
	Holy Koran Radio	
	Voice of the Masses	Aimed at both Iraq and wider region
	Mother of All Battles Radio	Set up during 1990-91 Gulf Conflict
	Radio Iraq International	Broadcasted in Arabic, English, German, and French
TV Baghdad-based TV stations	Republic of Iraq TV	
	Iraq Satellite TV	
	Youth TV (Al-Shabbab TV)	It was run by Uday Hussein.

Sources. Guide, 2002. Hurrat, K., & Leidig, L., 1994

Table 2.
Sample of Newspapers in Iraq

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Newspapers	Language	Frequency	Affiliation
Al-Dimuqrati	Arabic	Weekly	Iraqi Rally for Democracy
Al-Ittihad	Arabic	Weekly	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
Al-Jihad	Arabic	Weekly	Islamic Da'wah Party
Al-Zawra	Arabic	Weekly	Iraqi Journalists Union
Baghdad	Arabic	Weekly	Iraqi National Accord
Dar al-Salam	Arabic	Weekly	Iraqi Islamic Party
Nahravn	Arabic	Weekly	Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq
Tareeq Ash-Sha'b	Arabic	Weekly	Iraqi Communist Party
Turkomaneli	Turkoman	Fortnightly	Turkoman Brotherhood Party
Xebat	Kurdish	Daily	Kurdistan Democratic Party

**Sources. Country profile (2004); Iraqi Media (2004);
Media (2003); A new voice in the Middle East (2003); New Iraqi press (2003).**