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City University - London
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**The Media in Transition:
The Rise of An 'Independent' Press in Post-Invasion Iraq and the
American role in Shaping the Iraqi Press 2003 – 2005.**

Research Conducted by
Haider S. Kadhum

October 2012

Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for degree of Doctor
of Journalism

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Abstract:

This thesis covers the situation of the Iraqi press landscape after the toppling of Saddam's regime on the 9th of April 2003. In particular, it attempts to disclose American interventions in the work of the Iraqi press in the period 2003-2006. It examines three main aspects of these interventions, as briefly summarized below: press legislation; planning and construction of new press entities; and attempts to influence pro-American press coverage following the invasion.

Within a few weeks of the fall of Saddam's regime, Iraq witnessed the launch of many newspapers, after many decades of government oppression and censorship. The phenomenal mushrooming of Iraqi local newspapers was used by the U.S government as an indication of success in democratizing a country in which the local press had suffered from the oppression of different military governments, and finally of Saddam Hussein and his notorious son Uday. However, this thesis shows that the flood of newspapers caused anarchy in the press market. As a result there was confusion among many readers about the credibility of the new press, because of the lack of professionalism in its coverage.

- The existing, laws active in Iraq restricted the freedom of the press, and there was a need to establish a new legal framework for the media. The U.S Army's first reforms abolished several articles of the press laws. This study shows, however, that these reforms had questionable practical effect. The reforms abolished laws relating to the Ba'ath regime and Saddam Hussein, which were in fact already redundant, given the collapse of the regime. Meanwhile other articles in the Iraqi penal code, prescribing measures to punish newspapers, journalists or editors, were left intact when they should have been changed or cancelled. In addition, the Coalition Provisional Authority added an article that gave the head of the CPA the right to close or to punish any media entity if they violated certain conditions.

- The thesis shows that the Americans' early plans to shape the Iraqi press were mostly motivated by the need to create a press friendly to the American occupation, and to confront anti American messages or campaigns. The Department of Defense handled the early plans to "build" such media entities, but the Pentagon was not successful, as the main contractor was oriented more towards information control, and lacked experience in building media

organizations. As a result of this the U.S plans for the Iraqi media in general stumbled, and did not make the expected progress.

- American intervention in the Iraqi press was not limited to attempts to create an official “friendly” press, but extended into persistent efforts to influence the local “independent” press. This thesis uses evidence based on original interviews with leading figures from the Iraqi press to build up a detailed picture of these attempts. Different American military units or institutions used different procedures to pass messages that were directed to helping polish the image of the American soldiers, and at the same time demonize their “enemies”. One of these procedures was to create friendly “independent” newspapers, covering certain events that would show the U.S Army as helping to establish new public services. The other favoured procedure was to bribe local journalists to cover such events and publish them in existing newspapers, or to pay newspapers to publish articles written by American soldiers and then translated into Arabic.

Introduction:

The dramatic change in Iraq after the 2003 invasion affected almost every aspect of daily life in Iraqi society, including the print media. This study will highlight changes in the national, regional and specialist Iraqi press. Its primary objective is to trace how, and to what extent, a form of free press - press produced by independent national journalists for national consumption - has been able to develop in Iraq. Giving a background account of the situation of the print media during Ba'ath Party rule and Saddam Hussein's national regimes, it discusses the developments that took place after the 2003 American invasion. It explores the factors that affected the expansion of the Iraqi press after the invasion, and presents evidence of attempts to influence, manipulate or directly control the Iraqi print media. This thesis investigates the American-sponsored Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and the cluster of associated companies and organisations, that were heavily involved in Iraqi press development after 2003.

The thesis starts with a brief historical survey of Ba'ath Party rule in Iraq, from after the 1968 coup up to 2003, in order to provide a background picture of the Iraqi press at the time of the invasion. The study then examines in depth the state of the press under the regime of Saddam Hussein, from his ascent to the presidency in 1979 up to his dispossession of power in 2003. It also covers the phenomenal rise of Uday Saddam Hussein's interests in the media, and his role in shaping the Iraqi print press, and the Iraqi media more generally.

The central part of the thesis explores the press explosion after 2003, and analyses its phenomenal expansion thereafter in depth. The main chapters are particularly concerned with examining the role of the American occupying powers - military and civilian - in relation to the establishment of a post-Saddam press that would combine freedom of expression with the promotion of positive accounts and reports of the intervention in Iraq by external powers. The tensions inherent in this agenda for Iraqi press development have already seen several phases of experiments in the short history of the post-Saddam media in the period covered by the research (2003-2006). To establish a broader historical perspective for the Iraqi case, the thesis suggests two previous twentieth century experiences that can be related to the situation in Iraq. The first of these is the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989, and its effect on the press, especially in the smaller countries of Eastern Europe where local dictatorships had a tight control over national press – which could be related to Iraq's experience during the Saddam era. The second example is found in the late 1940s, when

international conflict produced situations of occupation, and of political restructuring and re-education, probably more directly comparable to the case of Iraq in 2003. The American Occupation of Japan, and of part of Germany, after the Second World War have clear parallels with the American situation in Iraq after 2003. Both sets of experience, from the 1940s and the 1990s, have been proposed as points of comparison for the still-evolving situation in Iraq. In my introductory survey of this scholarship, I will discuss to what extent such comparisons cast a helpful light on the interpretation of American interventions in, and attitudes towards, the national media following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime.

Chapter analysis:

The first chapter establishes the background of modern Iraqi press history, drawing a picture of the press and the media during the Ba'ath Party era. It discusses the circumstances Iraqi journalists were confronted with after the Ba'ath Party coup in 1968. The chapter gives an account of Ba'ath Party newspapers, representing the government, and investigates those of other political parties, such as the Communist Party and the Kurdish Democratic Party. The conflict of interests between these main parties affected the development of the Iraqi press in the first decade of Ba'ath government. The chapter draws a picture of how several important political events in this period affected the freedom of Iraqi newspapers and their journalists.

The second chapter presents the situation of Iraqi newspapers during Saddam's era. The chapter highlights Saddam's concerns about the media, and his monopoly over the press. The chapter discusses the effects of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and the rise of a new generation of journalists who served in a newspaper which represented the Iraqi army. More importantly, the chapter investigates the rise of Uday Saddam Hussein, and his domination over the Iraqi press, and the media in general. This part of the thesis documents Uday's behaviour, and his abusive actions towards many Iraqi journalists when he became the head of the journalists' syndicate. This section draws on eyewitness accounts from many journalists. The chapter also covers what was called at the time the "weekly newspaper-magazine phenomena", and the daring style of such papers in criticising the Iraqi government, while preserving certain taboos. Overall, the chapter offers a detailed and holistic picture of the situation and of some of the principal characteristics of the print media during Saddam's ruling years.

The third chapter covers the early preparations for the United States' campaign against Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion. This campaign aimed to demonise the Ba'ath

Party regime and to present it as a rogue state, which threatened international peace. The chapter highlights the United States' efforts to finance exiled newspapers and to unify the work of different Iraqi opposition movements. Next, the chapter discusses the early stages of the war, through presenting the rival propaganda campaigns of the Iraqi government, and of the United States and its allies. The chapter explores both sides' propaganda techniques, and the people that led such campaigns. It covers the last few days of the official Iraqi newspapers until the fall of Saddam's regime on 9 April 2003. The chapter discusses the hopes of Iraqi journalists for freedom and a healthy journalistic environment, and also covers the early launch of the first "official" national newspaper in Iraq under the American occupation.

The fourth chapter covers the new press, launched after the fall of Saddam's regime. It draws a picture of how new publications, established by different individuals, political parties and others, flooded the market to the extent that many journalists called it "press anarchy". It also covers technical challenges that the new publications had to confront, such as the issue of distribution, the newspapers' financial resources, and the importance of advertisements for these publications. The chapter discusses the characteristics of the new press, discussing both their common bases, and the differences between them. This chapter differentiates between the various types of print media, in line with the motivation of those launching the publications, the language of the newspapers, their ownership, and other issues.

The fifth chapter, "Publishing Legislation", discusses the legal framework of the Iraqi press, and the Iraqi Media Network. It starts with the preparations for a new press framework drawn up by the Americans and their allies and advisers before the launch of the invasion, and traces how these were later formalised by the American authority in Iraq or by Iraqi government orders. The chapter sets these measures in context by discussing the previous press legislation of the Saddam era, and explores what parts of this framework the new authorities left intact, without any reform. It goes on to discuss extensively the introduction of new "prohibited actions" for the press, through order 14, which was introduced by order number 2 in June 2003. The chapter examines the Iraqi penal code, which the Americans did not alter, and which contained a large number of articles punishing publishing crimes. These punishments could range from fines imposed either on writers or on publications, to long-term sentences of imprisonment. The chapter presents cases where the American authority used order number 14 to close down several newspapers. Besides these instances of formal legislation and direct political control of the press, the chapter discusses the security situation and how it affected press freedom indirectly but

significantly during this period.

The sixth chapter covers the United States' plans for how they would handle the Iraqi media after removing Saddam's regime. It discusses how initial American plans for the Iraqi media differed, covering in succession the plans proposed by the State Department, the Pentagon, and finally the recommendations of the United States' Institute of Peace. The chapter discusses the launch of the Iraqi Media Network by the Pentagon, through a sole contract handed to the company "Science Application Information Corporation" (SAIC). This company had no previous experience in building a media organisation, but had previously specialised in the "control" of information released via the media. The criticisms directed towards the network are covered, in addition to the interventions of the CPA - the American authority in Iraq.

The seventh chapter investigates the propaganda campaigns practised by the different American stakeholders in Iraq. The chapter covers US army psychological operations, using evidence collected through numerous interviews conducted with Iraqi journalists. The research presents an example of a US financed newspaper, Wassit Al Aan, through an interview with the editor-in-chief, and analysis of the majority of the publication's back copies. This chapter also discusses the Baghdad Press Club, formed under the supervision of the American army in Iraq, where journalists were "rewarded" for positive coverage of certain events related to American army activities. This chapter includes exclusive interviews with the head of the club and a journalist who was an active member. It covers a newspaper bribery scandal, showing how the Pentagon had commissioned a company to plant certain kinds of stories in the Iraqi press, and presents the company's techniques and the mechanisms of this process. The final phase of this chapter covers the reaction of the United States' government towards the scandal, and the way it was dealt with officially.

In the last chapters (eight and nine) of the thesis, the chronological and institutional survey of the main sequence of chapters is complemented by a set of "case studies" that illustrate the situation of the press in Iraq after 2003 in closer detail. Chapter eight offers a detailed analysis of the development of individual newspaper titles in the months and years after the invasion. The two highest distributed newspapers in Iraq have been chosen for discussion: Al Sabah; and Azzaman. The analysis covers in detail the formation, contents, and framework of both newspapers, and provides an overview of each newspaper's credibility. Following this chapter's tightly focused discussion of specific newspaper titles, chapter nine turns to the realities of the

journalistic experience as regards the “new” Iraq. In a personal reflection, I comment on my own experience, working as a journalist and news media gatherer in Iraq. I provide individual examples of the many problematic situations I have had to deal with. While these are in many ways representative of typical journalistic challenges in reporting from this sensitive region, in this chapter I offer analysis of my experience from my own point of view.

Finally, chapter ten presents the Conclusion to this thesis. It provides a summary of the questions posed by the research, the findings that have been established in the course of the investigation, and points towards areas which will benefit from future research in directions indicated by the results of the present study.

Methodology:

This study aims to give an in-depth picture of the Iraqi press after the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime on 9 April 2003, and of its transition from a state-controlled to a "free" press. The research closely interrogates the American role in the rise of Iraqi newspapers in particular, and the Iraqi media in general. In many cases, its findings demonstrate that the role practised by the occupiers could be described as part of the psychological warfare that would be practised by any occupying power. The thesis aims to answer many questions related to the Iraqi press under the American occupation from 2003-2006, but mainly:

- What was the situation of the Iraqi press under Ba'ath Party rule and under Saddam's regime?
- How did that regime use the Iraqi press?
- How did the press change and expand after the 2003 invasion?
- Why did so many new newspapers appear in Iraq after the 2003 invasion?
- Why did many of these newspapers not last for long?
- How can we classify the post-2003 Iraqi press?
- What kind of laws and regulations did the American-sponsored CPA introduce in order to deal with the new press?
- How did the CPA use these legal tools to deal with the Iraqi press?
- What role did US institutions and individuals play in determining the collapse or survival of Iraqi newspapers and magazines after the invasion of 2003?
- What plans did the Americans have to shape the Iraqi state media?
- What kind of psychological operations did American institutions employ in Iraq to achieve full domination of the press, so as to win the hearts and the minds of the Iraqi public?

Methodological Approach

This thesis adopts a qualitative approach to answer the research questions outlined above. The qualitative approach has been chosen as a method to obtain a useful perspective on social realities or phenomena that are not easily observable - especially needed when analysing a situation that has been characterised by such extreme changes as those experienced in Iraq since 2003, which have included, but are not limited to: invasion and violent regime change; extreme civil unrest, including some phases of effective civil war; and the complete restructuring of political, military and governmental institutions.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), "Qualitative research involves the studied

use and collection of variety of empirical materials - case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; cultural texts and productions; and observational, historical, interactional, and visual text - that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand." In this study, a range of qualitative data has been gathered, to build a complex, holistic picture of the field of Iraqi newspaper and press development, by:

1. Studying certain academic theses, books, papers, articles and special reports related to the Iraqi media before and after the 2003 invasion. These included academic, governmental, press and other materials published both in print and electronic forms, and in both languages, Arabic and English.
2. Examining certain categories of Iraqi prints and newspapers, and collecting different kinds of materials related to these publications.
3. Analysing specific events that had an impact on the Iraqi press.
4. Conducting 40 qualitative interviews, to gain information about publications and on relevant journalistic, political and institutional practices.
5. Analysing over 100 editions of individual newspapers, including both the different official newspapers published under Saddam's regime and newly published titles from after the 2003 invasion.

As this list indicates, data collection was a prerequisite for examination of the press in Iraq under the rule of the CPA. The research questions then demanded two key elements of data collection and analysis: the examination of many newspapers; and interviews with key respondents. Using this qualitative approach, the study sampled certain kinds of publications, practices and parties, to reach a realistic conclusion about the American role in the Iraqi press.

In beginning the work of accumulating and studying appropriate data for the research, the first stage of enquiry began with analysis of the newspapers that were launched after the 2003 invasion. It proceeded to an investigation of the factors that helped many of the selected newspapers to survive, and to analyse why, in comparison, several others folded. In this analysis, a focus on the content of certain newspapers led to the identification of the permissible statements and specific terms used within them: e.g. the use of the terms "Iraqi resistance", "terrorists", or "militant groups" by different newspapers to describe the same group of people. These terms

could give an indication of the degree of adherence to press guidelines, and the strategies with which editors and journalists were able to circumvent restrictions for the purpose of freedom of speech. Secondly, besides the work on actual titles and on individual copies of the selected newspapers, the study also proceeded by conducting a large number of interviews with the following groups of respondents: editors and other members of the Iraqi media organisations; journalists; officials of the Iraqi government and of the CPA in Iraq. Using these primary resources, different aspects of the Iraqi press, and of the factors shaping its development, could be investigated, using the first-person interviews to sketch the landscape of the Iraqi press after the 2003 invasion.

In many cases, the two methods of interview, and the collection of printed materials were pursued in tandem, to provide complementary insights into the phases of Iraqi press development. For instance, close analysis of individual publications was required to build up a picture of American intervention in the Iraqi media in general, and particularly in the press. The bimonthly newspaper Baghdad Al Aan (Baghdad Now) was selected as an example of the American army's attempts to influence the opinion of the Iraqi public. Despite the huge number of copies produced, several of which are discussed individually, this newspaper had little impact and low readership. To understand better why this was the case, this newspaper, which had the largest print-run in Iraq's history, was also covered for this study through an exclusive interview with its former editor. Similarly, American methods for paying journalists to cover certain stories for the American army were revealed by exploring the formation of the Baghdad Club for Journalism, notionally an association for local Iraqi journalists "sponsored" by the occupying forces. Interviews with the head of the club and with one of the active members revealed a clearer image of the club's activities, and the degree of attempted manipulation of information by its military sponsors. To complement the testimony of how individual reporters were supported by US funding, the study also analysed a sample publication fully funded by the Americans in Iraq, Wassit Al Aan newspaper. As the findings demonstrated, the newspaper flourished as long as American funding continued, but did not maintain any subsequent sustainability.

Besides these examples of direct intervention in the Iraqi press scene by the occupying authorities, the research also required analysis of home-grown titles from after 2003. The study chose to focus on the two Iraqi newspapers which had, and continue to have, the highest readership in the country - Al Sabah and Azzaman.

Once again, the data used to understand the development of these titles over time was collected both by examination of the publications themselves, and through conducting interviews with their editors and journalists. Using such evidence, the study was able to establish classifications for these newspapers, and the Iraqi print media more generally, according to the motivation behind each publication (political, regional, financial, and so on). Through interviews with the editors of both newspapers, this study was also able to develop a clear understanding of each newspaper, the context it was published in, and the purpose it served during the period of time covered by the research.

Difficulties

This study is reflexive, drawing on first-hand knowledge and experience observing and analysing the Iraqi press. Although I am an Iraqi national, who until 2005 was working as a journalist in Baghdad, I have faced many difficulties in undertaking this project. In many cases, potential Iraqi informants refused to be interviewed, because many did not want to reveal their former relationship with the United States. In other cases, interviewees would refuse to answer certain questions about their association with the Americans or, previously, with Saddam's regime. Most of the informants who agreed to be interviewed were concerned about the way the information would be used, and wished that it should not be published in any newspaper or website in Arabic. Others tried to use the interview to defend their cooperation with the Americans, claiming that the main aim was to build a "free" Iraqi press. One of the key players who refused to be interviewed or to answer my questions (sent via an associate we had in common) was Saad Al Bazaz, the owner of the Azzaman newspaper. The probable reason, I have come to understand, was that Mr Al Bazaz was reluctant to reveal any damaging information about his relationship with the British Ministry of Defence. Like Mr Al Bazaz, many potential interviewees declined my invitation to discuss their part in the "new" Iraq, as nowadays it is considered a stigma to have been part of any American project, and Iraqis may consider that individual a "traitor".

There were also problems in gaining access to the American army's media unit. I contacted the American Embassy in Baghdad both officially and non-officially to request information from this unit. Through official means, I received an email from the embassy requesting that I submit the questions to them for a written response. Although I provided the embassy with my questionnaires in January 2011, I have

received no answers in the twelve-month period since. Through non-official approaches, I established contact with different media officers, but they too could not provide any answers to the questions raised, giving a range of reasons, one being that the member of staff concerned had left service in Iraq, another that the related papers were currently classified information. I received similar answers, or simply no response at all to my e-mails, from most of the companies and individuals who had worked with the Americans in Iraq, whom I attempted to contact. These included the Al Fawares group, Harris Corporation, and The Lincoln Group, and the office of the current US chief of staff, General Martin Dempsey.

Despite the ongoing violence in Iraq and the danger of visiting some places in the country - particularly those of interest to a journalist - I have continued my regular visits, roughly every six months since 2007. These visits have not been easy, as Iraq had no air service between Baghdad and any other European country until 2009. It was a requirement to fly to another country in the Middle East to enter Iraq.

Another significant factor which should be considered as having affected my ability to conduct research, was the continuing violence towards journalists in Iraq. Many journalists were either too scared to talk; had left the country to live in exile; or were killed, such as Dr Abdul Rahman Al Issawi, who launched many newspapers, but was assassinated along with his family by militants in 2007.

Literature Review:

The transition the Iraqi press went through, from being a propaganda tool under Saddam Hussein to a “free” media after the 2003 war, is the question which this research aims to address. The press plays an essential role in any society, including in Iraq, and is considered a crucial index of the degree of freedom or democracy in a given country or region. Newspapers have grown up as a powerful institution in what could be called “western civilization”. Criticisms of the role of any national or local press generally focus on the challenges of working as independent organisations, free from the interests of the political or business groups (Hardt, 1979). The Iraqi press has repeatedly tried to achieve independence, but it has always fallen under the influence of ruling regimes. Even after 2003, it appears difficult to consider it a “free” press, given the importance of the various bodies that directly influence its output. These include the American military and civilian authorities; religious, ethnic and political influences; and financial organisations.

The most readily available English language study of the history of the Iraqi media that covers the whole period of this thesis is Noor Al Deen’s 2005 article, “Changes and Challenges of the Iraqi Media”. In this short journal article, she offers an informative overview of some of the key factors that have influenced the development of the modern Iraqi press, both before and after 2003. However, this short work does not explore how and why certain newspapers were censored after the 2003 invasion. Additionally, it does not provide a clear picture of the Iraqi press after the 2003 invasion.

LR1: Iraqi Press History: From the Ottomans to the Fall of Saddam

Much has been written on the formation of Iraq, and on the turbulent history and politics of the country from the nineteenth century Ottoman occupation through to the formation of Iraq as a modern state (Tripp, 2002). Some of these studies explore how the British as an occupying power fabricated Iraq (Dodge, 2003). The role of this typical occupying power bears much similarity to the role of the American occupation of Iraq, both politically and also in their plan for the press. The press existed in Iraq, as in any part of the Middle East, from the nineteenth century (Ayalon, 1995). The year 1869 witnessed the launch of the first Iraqi newspaper, Al Zawra (one of the names for Baghdad). The restrictions imposed on the press were declining at the beginning of the twentieth century, as there were many changes in the Ottoman Empire, such as the constitutional revolution in 1908. In a few years, approximately 61 newspapers were launched in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Najaf, and other Iraqi

cities. These newspapers “were variously published in Arabic, in both Arabic and Turkish, and in both Arabic and French. Among such publications were dozens of dailies, weeklies, and literary magazines, including a satirical newspaper, Habez Bouz, that was very popular ” (Noor Al Deen, 2005, p.3.).

After World War I, Iraq fell under British occupation. The occupiers supported the establishment of many daily newspapers in Arabic (Ayalon, 1995). Some newspapers were financed by the mandatory power and voiced a pro-British position, supporting the various versions of treaties proposed by Britain to the antagonistic nationalists (Ayalon, 1995). But the expansion of the press also reflected the growth of nationalism during the 1920s and 1930s. “The founding of As-Sahifah (“The Journal”) by Husayn Rahhal, Mohammed Ahmed Al Sayyid and a group of leftist thinkers in 1924, Al Ahali (“The Public”) in 1932, Sawt Al Ahali (“Voice of the Public”) in 1934, and the Iraqi Communist Party’s Kifah Al Sha’ab (“The People’s Struggle”) in 1935 created a core of nationalist newspapers” (Davis, 2005, p.75). Newspapers like these attacked the British role in Iraq and some of them called for the immediate evacuation of British troops (Davis, 2005). But they were also the means to introduce new ideologies, and played an essential role in forming revolutionary movements. Batatu demonstrates the importance of the press in Iraqi political development in his comments on the Communist newspaper, As-Sahifah, launched on 28 December 1924: "This was a paper of a new type, the first of its kind in the Iraq of the Twenties. Unlike the other Iraqi papers, it sought not a livelihood, but the conversation of men. Its preoccupation was not with news or *belles-lettres*, but with ideas. It focused on social problems and dealt only marginally with political issues. In a period when the free expression of opinions was fraught with risks, it did not hesitate to attack the deeply ingrained beliefs and prejudices of the people. These things gave As-Sahifah a character all its own, and marked the opening of new perspectives in the mental life of Iraq" (Batatu, 1978, p.394). The newspaper folded in 1927.

Following the fall of the monarchy in July 1958, the Iraqi media continued to suffer from state censorship, under the control of military regimes. Their professional prejudice led the military governments to view journalists as “irresponsible and almost traitorous, since they are continually criticising” (Janowitz, 1977, p.164). Journalists and military regimes hold different attitudes about freedom. The military in general tends to have “specific and firm” thinking about the right order of society. It offers no room for discussions, criticism or debate, and everything is dealt with by a “firm hand” (Shils, 1962). The military dictatorships of the Ba’ath regime, and

specifically of Saddam Hussein (1979-2003), imposed their control over the Iraqi media and public communication (Isakhan, 2008). Saddam Hussein, like other dictators, knew well that if the press was deprived of freedom of expression this would give him a free hand to take other freedoms from society. So the message of such leaders was clear: "If the press is to be tolerated, it must obey, otherwise it must pay the usual price which military officers demand from recalcitrant subordinates" (Shils, 1962, p.42).

The Iraqi press forms part of the mass media in the Arab world, which William Rugh, in a 2004 study, classified into four types: Mobilisation, Loyalist, Transitional, and Diverse. Kim and Mariwan Hama-Saeed (2008) consider that the Iraqi media under the Ba'ath regime were types of the "Mobilisation" press and "Loyalist" press, based on Rugh's classification. A "Mobilisation" press is the kind that mobilises government ideology and is one of the government's instruments used to promote its own ideologies among the population (Rugh, 2004). A "Loyalist" press is that which supports all authority viewpoints without discussing them, and may be privately or government owned or run. Rugh's "Transitional" and "Diverse" types of press, being more "free" than the other two, would not have been permissible under the Saddam regime. The Iraqi press was a state-controlled propaganda machine that was intended to achieve certain political goals (Kim, and Hama-Saeed, 2008). During Saddam Hussein's reign, the state ran and controlled most media outlets. The press was used to serve and promote public support for the government's policies. Kim and Hama-Saeed (2008) claim that the propaganda press in Iraq was run on a model similar to the Marxist-Leninist press system of the Soviet bloc countries, with which Saddam Hussein was, in fact, closely allied (Kim, and Hama-Saeed, 2008).

LR 2: A Collapse of Dictatorship Means More Free Press

The situation of Saddam's regime was similar to the autocratic regimes of Eastern Europe and elsewhere. The collapse of the communist regimes in east European countries in the 1990s is thus an experience that may be related to Iraq's own experience following the events of 2003.

The overthrow of the communist governments has not resulted in creating a viable Fourth Estate in much of the former Soviet bloc (Lawson, 2005). Their experience has proved that the end of dictatorship, and the absence of the censorship of the totalitarian regime, does not necessarily lead to a free, pluralist or independent press (Lawson, 2005). As Mondak argues, "the crux of the problem in many post-

communist states is that media lack independence and professionalism ... such media must be counted as part of the problem, not part of the solution” (Lawson, 2005, p.2).

The successful revolutions of 1989 were considered to be a “victory of liberal values over authoritarianism”, while the years after proved that the absence of communism did not mean that the people would get democracy, of which a free press is an essential part (O’Neil, 1996). O’Neil (1996) raises the need for societies to be built (or re-built), demolishing the old state structures that served to centralise political power. The challenge is to find what to replace it with, and to agree in advance about the form and shape of such replacement (O’Neil, 1996).

Both the Iraqi press, and the press in Eastern Europe, are parts of a media system emerging from a long period of authoritarianism (O’Neil, 1996). In both cases, the monopoly of information access suddenly collapsed, to be replaced with a diverse expansion of the press, in which different kinds of publications, newspapers, and magazines appeared overnight. In Eastern Europe, some of these publications emerged after years of publishing in exile, revealing the crimes of the past and the history before communism. These new emerging publications also discussed their expectations about their countries’ futures. These discussions appeared suddenly and loudly in the public domain, after years in which such debates could only be conducted as private talk in small circles, or among the ruling party’s top commanders. The vast quantities of information presented after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe could be considered to constitute an overload: “The expansion of press freedom took place in a period of real transition, where old rules had lost their legitimacy and new ones had not yet been promulgated to take their place” (O’Neil, 1996, p.2).

Although the Eastern European case provides some useful comparisons for the Iraqi situation, it is also important to note several significant differences between the two experiences. The political changes in Eastern Europe came from inside the countries concerned, while the situation in Iraq came as the result of a foreign invasion. The emerging pictures from Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries, show that democracy is not an item which can be shipped over in tanks, but is the choice of the people, and they must genuinely want it. The media role here can be an assisting factor by supporting and promoting it (Merrill, 2009).

The collapse of Saddam's dictatorship promised Iraqi journalists freedom from the heavy government censorship they had endured for decades. They were hoping to create a free press that could tackle different issues without fear of intervention from any authority. Benjamin Isakhan (2008) observed that post-invasion Iraq witnessed a large range of media projects, representing different political, religious and ethnic groups, all attempting to be free from any government influence. There were, however, numerous internal and external obstacles to face. For instance, Isakhan has cited interventions in the Iraqi media outlets attributed to regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. He asserted that, both before and after the invasion, these neighbouring countries have funded and supported, perhaps hosted, many media outlets aiming to send specific messages to the Iraqi public, to drive them towards specific political agendas (Isakhan, 2008). In addition, many Iraqi politicians, mainly those who came from exile, tried to find a foothold in the crowded political scene after the 2003 invasion. There were numerous different attempts among many parties to control the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people under the occupation: "The actors on the new media scene include returning Iraqi exiles, British and American officials, Iraqi former political parties, and various indigenous Iraqi religious and secular groups" (Najjar, 2009, p.256). In the view of Al Mijawi (2009), in such an atmosphere, sectarian, religious and ethnic media outlets should flourish in Iraq or any similar mixed society, if there is an absence of regulating national bodies or institutions. The differences between communities will always appear as prominent topics in such publications, as a means of seeking popularity within their own community readerships. On the other hand, such commentary will also become a means of increasing political and sectarian divisions, and can harm national unity. Al Mijawi believes that "unified" media can be helpful in a situation like Iraq's, through preaching unity and loyalty to the country instead of emphasising sectarian or ethnic differences (Al Mijawi, 2009).

Ibrahim Al Marashi (2007) returns to the Eastern European paradigm as a potential model for the Iraqi case. He refers to Izabella Karlowicz's work on media development in the post-conflict Balkans, where she recommends a development plan in three phases: "set up, implementation and capacity building". Al Marashi suggests that this Balkan framework could be applied in Iraq: "While the post-war Iraqi media have passed the "set up" phase, there are still some important recommendations that can be made that were ignored in the first phase" (Al Marashi, 2007, p.129). In Iraq, as in the post-conflict Balkan states, a great deal of the printed press emerged from, or established close ties with, political parties. These partisan

newspapers published material serving the political agenda of the different factions, while simultaneously accusing independent editors and journalists of being Serb collaborators (Berman, 2006).

In order to create liberal media, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in Bosnia felt compelled to take the media out of the control of the hard-line, sectarian political parties. This process was necessary to democratise the media, which played an essential role in democratising the country, and promoting co-existence and reconciliation among different ethnic communities. In order to achieve what the OHR had commissioned, a team was formed to introduce a regulatory framework that would help to introduce Western democratic press standards, forming an Independent Media Commission, IMC (Haselock, 2010). The process required immediate action, but unfortunately the hesitancy of the OHR to implement serious restrictions in the early stages of the post-conflict era allowed the Bosnian media to undermine the implementation of the Dayton Agreement (Berman, 2006).

By contrast, the initial reformers were much more effective in Kosovo in 2000. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) introduced a comprehensive regulation framework plan, similar to the one established in Bosnia. The framework would be granted “the power to censor material judged dangerous or incendiary”. The regulations put in place a system for media penalties - from fines to closing down media outlets if they violated established reporting standards (Berman, 2006). Much of the UN’s concern lay with tackling hate speech in the Kosovar media, fearing repetition of the Bosnian or the Rwandan experience. The Deputy for the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), in charge of democratisation, stated on 16 February 2000: “We cannot tolerate hate speech anywhere in society—whether it is on the radio, in the classroom, in a newspaper, or at a political rally” (Haselock, 2010).

Media regulation expert, Simon Haselock, referred to an incident in which a Serb working for the UN was killed, after a newspaper published his picture and accused him of killing Albanians. The editor of the newspaper was considered to have behaved in an irresponsible way, and may have to face prosecution. Haselock referred to the complaints system on media violations that was introduced by the UN after this case, which helped to prevent any further incitement (Haselock, 2010).

This incident shows the scale of damage that the media can cause in a fragile

society, but it also shows how important it is for regulators and media experts to react quickly to defuse any attempt to spread hate speech. In a 1995 report about the role of the media in the Balkan war, the United Nations envoy, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, said that media outlets should be considered guilty of involvement in inciting community hatred. However, the lack of a tradition of independence, together with low standards of journalism, made the media fall prey to political pressure (UN/UNESCO, 1997).

The experience of Bosnia and Kosovo showed that in the future, media reforms would need to be implemented in any place where the preconditions of free liberal media norms did not exist: such reforms would have to concentrate on creating these norms and on preparing the basis for such norms to be respected (Berman, 2006). In comparison to the situation in Bosnia and Kosovo, the post-war Iraqi media should have had a better chance of being democratised, because the ethno-sectarian media had not established any monopoly or base in the country. The whole breakdown of the previous system was more complete in Iraq. There would have been justification for introducing regulatory measures in Iraq immediately after the war, as Iraqi society did not have the required liberal norms. This could have been justified during the stage of democratisation of the society. Such regulation could have been changed or cancelled when traditions of an independent and professional press began to become established among journalists, and when threats posed by hate speech had been dramatically reduced or eradicated. Such strict measures would have helped to create an environment that accepted the necessary preconditions for independent, professional journalism (Berman, 2006).

Media experts are always hesitant to approve any media regulation and they prefer no regulation, as is the case for many democratic societies around the world. But the principle of non-regulation in a non-democratic country, formed of many communities, can make media a weapon of struggle among the different factions, even deepening the division among communities.

In Iraq, the Bush administration did not follow the Clinton administration in the way it had dealt with media projects in the post-conflict Balkans through using the State Departments. Instead, the Defence Department was in charge of post-war Iraq, which led many experienced media development groups and experts to lose interest in taking part in the US media project (Rohde, 2005). The majority of NGOs that had been engaged in both Bosnia and Kosovo did not offer their services in Iraq. Such absences could be related to safety concerns as many of these NGOs did not want

to deal with the DoD, reluctant to be considered as part of their military operations (Berman, 2006). The US followed the model they had used following World War II in Germany and Japan in their approach to stabilising post-war Iraq. It was the first time in 50 years the US Defence Department had tackled such a mission (Rohde, 2005). But for a long time the coalition provisional authority did not impose any licensing or monitoring on media in Iraq, unlike the strict licensing and monitoring system that had been used in Germany by OMGUS (Office of Military Government, US) (RAND, 2003).

In Iraq neither the CPA nor any previous authority provided sufficient training to journalists to learn to do their job responsibly. In addition, political parties with their large funds were allowed to control the media market – different to what the Alliance had established in post-war Germany, when the political parties were not allowed to have their own media outlets. The situation in Iraq declined into chaos, and in the final analyses, the US media project was considered by many a complete failure.

The former navy officer and UN official Simon Haselock (2010), who was appointed as the head of the advisory media team in Iraq after the invasion, wanted to repeat his experience of the Balkans in Iraq. But he says this was not possible, nor was it the intention of the occupying power. “At no time was this more apparent than when this author visited the Pentagon to discuss the framework with Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld’s aide, Larry Di Rita, who said, “Forget how you did it in the Balkans, the Pentagon is in charge, and they intend to do things their own way”” (Haselock, 2010, p.9).

Another issue that affected the freedoms of the newly launched Iraqi press, is the largely Muslim, conservative society in Iraq. This created another kind of censorship, sometimes explicit, but also sometimes tacit, or even unconscious. Trevor Mostyn’s “Censorship in Islamic Societies” (2002), offers a history of various aspects of censorship in Islamic societies, culminating in an analysis of the current political direction of censorship and the control of freedom of expression. Included in his analysis is a discussion of censorship in the media. However, as his main interest is in fundamentalist Muslim societies, his focus leans towards censorship in the Iranian media and in Saudi Arabia. However, this is still relevant to my work, as I will highlight how the growth of various indigenous Islamic factions have also played an essential role in shaping the new spectrum of newspapers and their content in Iraq.

LR 3: Building the Media Post-Dictatorship: International Precedents and Comparisons

As an occupation power, the United States has been the main player on the Iraqi media scene. The American administration in Iraq demolished the previous propaganda machine - the Ministry of Information - after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime on 9 April 2003, but the Pentagon subsequently established a new network of media outlets. In *The Index on Censorship*, Rohan Jayasekera (2003) stated that the US army's objectives in Iraq were similar to those it held in Germany after the World War. Jayasekera argued that, at the end of the Second World War, the "Psychological Warfare Division (PWD) provided 'consolidation propaganda', designed 'to gain the cooperation of the German population in restoring essential services, and to create a public opinion favourable to post-war Allied aims'". There was a similar target for the US army in Iraq (Jayasekera, 2003). Simon Haselock (2010), commented that the only previous experiences, which could be considered similar to Iraq, were those of post-war Germany and Japan. The media policy in both occupied Germany and Japan was designed to support political aims, starting by dismantling the previous state propaganda systems, then creating new public media services, and introducing new training for the journalists of both countries to gain sufficient experience to follow the model of "liberal journalism" (Haselock, 2010). This included freedom of speech and the firm separation between covering the news and commenting on it. Haselock commented that this "was essentially a policy of imposition underpinned by the power of an occupying army and designed to achieve political outcomes" (Haselock, 2010, p.3). According to Haselock the US authorities in Iraq had no clear template or framework to follow in developing media outlets in occupied territories, other than the experience in post-war Germany and Japan. It should be noted that in this discussion, Haselock, despite his experience in putting together the framework of the media plan for the Balkans, discounted the media approach of organisations which had more recent experience in drawing up plans for media development, such as the UN, and other NGOs such as IREX and Internews.

3-1 America Designs the Rebirth of the German Press

Throughout modern history, governments in major conflicts, such as World War II, have used mass communication as an offensive weapon in the field of psychological warfare (Hardt, 1979). The Second World War provided clear examples regarding the use of the media in general as part of psychological warfare. All parties in the conflict used the media as a tool in this major international struggle.

In post-war Germany, the United States concentrated on dealing with the heritage of the Nazi regime. The administration of the American occupied areas of Germany intervened both in the education system, and the media (RAND, 2003). In occupied Germany, the Americans used the press as a tool to promote their ideologies and perspectives in the country by controlling press output. In a report on the German press in the US occupied area, published in 1948 by the Military Governor's office, the US military admitted that the press they handled was not free, but claimed that it was a "nearly" free press. The report tried to emphasise that the ultimate goal that the Americans wanted to achieve was to create a free press (Germany. The US army, Office of Military Government for Germany (US) 1948). After the Germans' surrender, the Americans and the allied forces initially decided to wipe out all "Nazi propaganda" press, because the Nazis had already crushed all the opposition press. More than 1,500 different publications, which had been published right up to Victory in Europe day, were suspended or abolished. This was done through law number 191, of May 1945, which closed all existing German information services (Germany. The US Army, Office of Military Government for Germany (US) 1948).

Law 191 was introduced by the Allied Control Council - the joint allied body, responsible for the administration of the occupied territories. Peter J. Humphreys (1994) notes that the law deprived the defeated Germans from having any public communication (Humphreys, 1994). In the beginning, the only available press was military publications, which formed the only means of communication between the military government and the German people. The allied forces had started a group of weekly or bi-weekly newspapers which were called the "Army-Group Newspapers" ("Heeresgruppenzeitungen"). Each of the occupying allied forces launched their own publication in the zone they occupied. So in the four occupied zones of Germany, there were different publications: The Neue Zeitung for the American zone; Die Welt for the British zone; the Nouvelles de France for the French zone; and the Tagliche Rundschau for the Soviet zone (Humphreys, 1994). The common concept for these newspapers was to persuade the Germans of their war guilt in general, but they did not discuss the future of Germany (Humphreys, 1994). The Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS), was in charge of licensing and monitoring the new press and other media outlets. The Americans also intervened in appointing the staff of these outlets, as the journalists were required to have anti-Nazi backgrounds (RAND, 2003).

Jessica Gienow–Hecht (1999), demonstrates that the Americans and the Russians used the same policies to control the German press, by issuing laws preventing it from directing any criticism against occupation troops: "The Information Control Division (ICD) enforced the Directives No.4 and No.40 of the Allied Control Council, which forbade any criticism of the occupying powers" (Gienow–Hecht, 1999, p.96). To guarantee full control of the press, the US started to look for people who could help to impose the occupation policy. The US military began to employ editors and publishers on the basis of their opposition to the Nazi regime and Nazi ideology (Germany. The US Army, Office of Military Government for Germany (US), 1948). The military government finished their procedures for taking over the German press by imposing a licensing system. The military government used this system to control the press by giving licences to the "right" publications. The writer of the 1948 report on German newspapers also referred to more than 54 German publications that had been licensed by the US military by that time. The report emphasised that the military government had put in place strict laws for these publications, threatening them with prosecution if these were violated.

The main points that might cause the revocation of publication licences, and prosecution of editors and writers if they published anything referring to or potentially encouraging the following actions, were as follows:

- a. Incites riots or resistance to military government, jeopardises the occupying troops, or otherwise endangers military security.
- b. Propagates former national socialist or related "voelkisch" ideas, such as racism and race hatred or propagates any fascist or anti-democratic ideas, or any militarist ideas, or pan-Germanism or German imperialism.
- c. Constitutes a malicious attack upon policies or personnel of military government, aims to disrupt unity among the allies, or seeks to evoke the distrust and hostility of the German people against any occupying power.
- d. Appeals to Germans to take action against democratic measures undertaken by military government.

(Quoted in Germany. The US Army, Office of Military Government for Germany (US). 1948, p.17).

The report also shows that the new political parties in Germany were not permitted to have their own press. The military government justified this ban by saying that the

German print media did not yet constitute "a solid nucleus of independent press", and also that the German economy was still too weak to tolerate any expansion in printing equipment (Germany. The US Army, Office of Military Government for Germany (US), 1948).

The starting conditions for the rebirth of the German press were very poor in general, despite the great need for news, as both Humphreys and H. Meyn have argued (Humphreys, 1994). By 1948 the American army had closed all of its other publications, and "Die Neue Zeitung" was the only military publication left, with two editions, one in Munich and one in Berlin (Germany. The US Army, Office of Military Government for Germany (US), 1948). Humphreys considers the role of the Americans' Neue Zeitung to be significant, setting out a principal example of a new democratic press system. In the first edition of Neue Zeitung, on 18 October 1945, General Dwight Eisenhower wrote an article saying that this newspaper would be a "symbol" for the German press, for its "objectivity, respect for the truth and the high journalistic standard" (Humphreys, 1994, p.27). Neue Zeitung represented an Anglo-Saxon press style of democratic reporting. It added a new tradition to the German press by starting a political section, and more importantly, a separate section called "Das Freie Wort" (Free Speech), which reflected readers' opinions through the letters they sent to the section. Neue Zeitung and other licensed newspapers received generous financial support from the Americans. The main reason for this support was to protect these newspapers from market competition (Humphreys, 1994).

Rohan Jayasekera (2003) comments that the post-World War II German media were indeed heavily controlled by one of the US army generals, Major-General Alexis McClure, who had been responsible for psychological operations during the war. Jayasekera quotes McClure telling vice-president CD Jackson in July 1946: "We now control 37 newspapers, six radio stations, 314 theatres, 642 (cinemas), 101 magazines, 237 book publishers, 7,384 book dealers and printers, and conduct about 15 public opinion surveys a month, as well as publishing one newspaper with 1,500,000 circulation ... [we] run the Associated Press of Germany and operate 20 library centres .. This job is tremendous". Although a truly free press did gradually emerge as part of the post-war reconstruction of institutions in what would become the German Federal Republic, McClure's comment reveals the heavy extent of American control of press and public information resources of all kinds in the years immediately following the war.

Jayasekera (2003), finally asks, whether it was the US aim to repeat McClure's strategy in post-war Iraq (Jayasekera, 2003). The preceding outline of American policy towards the German press outlines a number of strategies employed by the American occupation of Germany in the late 1940s, to control and shape the emerging post-war media. As the findings of this thesis will suggest, the literature on efforts to rebuild the German press post-World War II may indeed be usefully related to the American efforts in rebuilding the Iraqi media.

3-2 Japanese Press and the Control of the American Censors

Japan was another country occupied by the United States following the Second World War, and which offers relevant examples of how the victorious Americans, who had a far freer hand in Japan than in occupied Germany, handled the "democratisation" of the press, in a Far Eastern country with a culture and traditions very different to those of Western Europe and the US.

The Japanese press had well-established democratic institutions in the early 1930s. Susan J. Pharr and Ellis S. Krauss (1996), state that although restrictions on the press had never been lifted, the Japanese press enjoyed some space of freedom before the Pacific War in 1937. From the beginning of the war in 1937, all public communications were put under police control, which lasted till the end of the war in 1945. During that time, the press was used as an instrument of state policy, especially where their views resonated the views of the military more strongly (Pharr, and Krauss, 1996). Anne Cooper-Chen and Miiko Kodama (1997), note that there were more than 1,200 newspapers by 1937, but because of the Japanese government's policy this number fell dramatically to 104 by 1940, and to 54 by 1942. American bombers destroyed many printing works, but remarkably a number of publications survived (Cooper-Chen, and Kodama, 1997). Despite the destruction of Japan during the war, and the shortage of printing paper, a good part of Japan's publication industry remained intact, more than enough to make a good start at the end of the war (Mayo, 1991).

One of the first concerns for the Americans, after the surrender of Japan in World War II, was to take over control of the Japanese media, according to William De Lange (1998). On 10 August 1945, the subcommittee of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee issued a paper entitled "Control of Media of Public Information and Expression in Japan". The paper suggested that during the first phase of occupation, Japanese media activities should be suspended, and its

facilities should be taken under the direct control of the Americans' military government. The second phase would be to relax this control, and gradually hand over to the Japanese (De Lange, 1998). The Americans announced a campaign to "demilitarise" and "democratise" Japan. "Democratising" the press was one of the issues that the Japanese and the Americans prioritised.

The first daily publication, which appeared under the American occupation, was the financial newspaper "Nikkan Kogyo Shinbun" (The Industrial Daily). This newspaper and other Japanese newspapers reappeared on the newsstands just one month after the end of the war (De Lange, 1998). In addition, within the first month, the Japanese Cabinet Information Bureau became officially associated with the occupation authorities in the implementation of their policies. One of the most important goals that the military government wanted to achieve was to use the Japanese press to play a supporting role in imposing its policies (De Lange, 1998). General Douglas MacArthur, as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, "embraced the broad categories of militarist propaganda, inaccurate statement, incitements to unrest or remarks disturbing to public tranquillity, and criticism of the United States, the allies, the occupation or General MacArthur. For internal guidance, there were detailed office manuals and elaborate key logs that extended and periodically updated the list of forbidden subjects" (Mayo, 1991, p.136-137).

In late September of 1945, McArthur instituted rules banning any material that might cause "unrest" for the occupation troops. The responsibility for monitoring the Japanese press was tackled by the Press Publication and Broadcasting Division, which acted as watchdog over the Japanese press. The division's main job was to prevent the media from publishing any materials considered harmful to the campaign of demilitarisation and democratisation in occupied Japan. The division had headquarters in three Japanese cities: Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoda. The censors and their support teams worked effectively to delete any "offensive" materials from newspapers and wire service copy. This also included censorship of films, plays, slides, lantern shows, paintings, cartoons, magazine and books (Mayo, 1991). Newspapers and other publications were all subjected to pre-publication censorship. The censors would mark the passages for deletion with red ink before giving the final proof to the editors. The Press Publication and Broadcasting Division also imposed restrictions to keep censorship secret from the Japanese public, and the editors were not allowed to mention anything about the censorship, which took place under their regulations (De Lange, 1998). However, Japanese editors and writers tried to protect

their articles from the censors' scissors by using euphemisms: "Euphemisms such as 'blue eyed national' were coined to protect the articles that recounted rapes and other crimes committed by American soldiers from the censorious eyes of those who were ultimately responsible" (De Lange, 1998, p.169). During the pre-publication censorship period, Japanese authors, editors, publishers, and foreign correspondents, were obliged to provide two copies of their work to the censors who would take the final decision about which one of the two would be presented to the public (Mayo, 1991). "During the first two years of the Press Publication and Broadcasting Division (PPB) operations, the bulk of Japanese books and periodicals were pre-censored, with a shift in September 1947 to post-censorship of books followed by magazines by the end of the year" (Mayo, 1991, p.137).

The censors were very keen to destroy the Japanese feeling of uniqueness, through raising questions about ancient works and poetry, which gave signs of ultra nationalism (Mayo, 1991). Certain topics were not allowed to be either mentioned, or discussed by the press. Literature concerning the atomic bomb represented one of these topics, for instance. This topic represented a lot of work for the Press Publication and Broadcasting Division's censors - they were generally deleting passages from articles and books if either happened to contain references to the atomic bomb attack. It was only in 1948 and 1949 that a few titles about the atom bomb appeared, and even after the "end" of the occupation, the bulk of publications continued to avoid the topic. "For Japan's literary world, censorship remained very much a fact of life, as did thought surveillance. It affected words and themes, the internal flow of ideas and emotions and overall conceptualisation" (Mayo, 1991, p.152).

Pharr and Krauss (1996) analyse media operations' role in politics, and the effect of such media policies on the political behaviour of ordinary people. The Japanese press suffered from double censorship, both in direct cuts made to their reports and in limits on journalistic coverage for news. The press law was very strict about standards of exact truth in all correspondence, but also followed enforcement guidelines which forbade "publishing any item that might disturb public order or cause distrust of and dissatisfaction towards the occupation forces" (De Lange, 1998, p.168-169). On different occasions many newspapers were suspended or fined by the Press Publication and Broadcasting Division or by the Japanese Cabinet Information Bureau. The first suspension of distribution was for three newspapers, the Asahi Shinbun, the Mainichi Shinbun and the Yomiuri Shinbun, after they

published a picture of the Japanese Emperor Hirohito, standing next to the much taller, General MacArthur. The suspension was justified by fears of hostile feelings that might occur towards the Americans as a result of the picture. In another case, Asahi Shinbun suffered a twenty-four hour suspension for publishing an official report comparing the occupation forces to the Japanese army in the Philippines (De Lange, 1998).

The Americans' attitude toward communism also had a great effect on the Japanese press and its freedom of expression. The Communist Party organ "Akahata" was banned for 30 days. The ban was reinforced and all newspapers related to the Communist Party were suspended (De Lange, 1998). After the deterioration of the international political situation between the "Eastern Camp" led by the Soviet Union and the "Western Camp" led by United States, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers invented different roles for the Japanese press. More than 700 suspected communists were purged from different public communications corporations and newspapers (Komatsubara, 1971). "The red purge added the darkest page to the post war history of the Japanese press" (Komatsubara 1971, p.81). The Supreme Commander encouraged the establishment of new newspapers in order to discourage monopoly control of the press, but the true "renaissance" of the press started only after they lifted newsprint restrictions (Cooper-Chen, and Kodama, 1997, p.57).

3-3 Reconstruction in Post-War Iraq in Comparison to Post-War Germany and Japan

Following the fall of the Third Reich, despite Hitler's attempts to create a feeling of superiority based on certain notions of German race, the country had a long tradition of constitutional government and civic society which formed a good base for rebuilding democracy and for overcoming Hitler's attempts to stratify populations on racial lines. By contrast, the situation in Iraq was considerably different, and ethno-sectarian tension in fact increased after the invasion of 2003 (Stafford, 2008).

Although both Germany and Japan are larger than Iraq in size and population, both were developed countries prior to World War II, while Iraq was a developing nation. Moreover, violence in Iraq raised security costs, and there were many attacks on its infrastructure, whereas there were no comparable resistance movements in either Germany or Japan (Serafino, Tarnoff, and Nanto, 2006).

In planning for post-war national recovery, the US authority in Germany had a clear policy, and the US army clearly told the Germans: "We come as conquerors, but not as oppressors." Also, they decided not to deal with the anti-Nazi German exiles, who wanted to return and form a government. The US administration in Iraq labeled themselves as liberators, and the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq created the Iraqi Governing Council, whose members included recently returned exiles. Despite the claims it was the Iraqi leading body, in reality it was the cover the US administration needed to have for direct occupation. However, such recognition of the members of this IGC gave them legitimacy to play a significant role in Iraqi politics thereafter.

The Americans had made better plans for the future of Germany. For nearly two years before occupying Germany in 1945, the US army was distributing responsibilities among different departments to deal with the situations they were likely to find after crossing the German frontier. Training was provided to thousands of soldiers to run the military government in occupied Germany. In Iraq, things were opposite: plans were designed up to the very last moment, amid squabbling between the Pentagon and the State Department. Even after the occupation of Iraq, the US administration kept changing its plans, as for instance when they replaced Jay Garner after only a few weeks with Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, at the very top of the new administration.

The CPA almost immediately decided to dissolve the Iraqi army and to ban the Ba'ath Party - the pre-war ruling party. The CPA soon dismissed all civil servants from different government offices, as part of a process called, at the time, De-Ba'athification. Although De-Ba'athification was a term derived from the analogous De-Nazification policy in Germany, in 1945 pragmatic experience had quickly demonstrated that Germany could be rebuilt only with the help of people who had formerly been members of the Nazi Party. But none of this was clear enough to the CPA staff, nor to the subsequent Iraqi governments, in dealing with the catastrophic consequences of so-called De-Ba'athification in Iraq (Stafford, 2008).

Restoration of national infrastructure was also an issue that presented very different problems in Iraq by comparison to Germany. The amount of support that the US allocated for Iraq may explain its very different recovery from wartime destruction. A report to the US Congress claims that US aid (all grant assistance) to Iraq for the time period 2003-2006 totalled USD 28.9 billion. After considering inflation factors,

this amount is nearly the same as the total US assistance provided to Germany for the period 1946-1952.

In regard to rebuilding, the CRS Report to Congress on US Occupation Assistance made a direct comparison: “The amount and proportion of assistance for roughly equivalent infrastructure reconstruction in Iraq appears higher, probably about USD 11.5 billion. This would indicate that the actual (adjusted) dollar amounts of US aid for economic infrastructure reconstruction in Iraq thus far is roughly a third greater than that provided to Germany and perhaps more than double that provided to Japan. One explanation for the difference may be that aid for economic reconstruction in Germany and Japan consisted of financing through loans and grants in order to enable those countries to carry out their recoveries largely on their own. In Iraq, the United States is providing not only the material assistance, but also is paying for the necessary labor.” (Serafino, Tarnoff, and Nanto, 2006, p.7).

The report claimed that considerable parts of Germany’s infrastructure were left “surprisingly intact”. According to the report, some industries survived the destruction, such as the coal, iron, and steel industries, as they were relatively lightly damaged, while the public utilities suffered severe damage. But post-war Iraq’s experience was different, as the report says: “In Iraq, while US military action did little damage, by design, to much of Iraq’s economic infrastructure, it did damage Iraq’s electrical grid, which had an effect on the availability of water. In addition, Iraq’s infrastructure had greatly deteriorated over the previous years, especially in the period of sanctions imposed after the First Gulf War of 1990-91. The existence of an insurgency in Iraq which deliberately sabotaged the economy and reconstruction efforts is an important consideration in comparing Iraq’s economic reconstruction requirements with those of post-war Germany and Japan, which had no resistance movements” (Serafino, Tarnoff, and Nanto, 2006, p.9).

The report also referred to damage to the electrical grid caused by immediate post-war looting, saying that such looting “had reduced Baghdad’s power supply to one fifth its pre-war level, according to an internal Pentagon study (Serafino, Tarnoff, and Nanto, 2006, p.9).

Like Iraq, Germany had also suffered from looting, but in that case the US had enough soldiers to impose law and order in all major cities (Stafford, 2008). In Iraq, post-war looting spread on a vast scale because the US army did not have sufficient

forces on the ground. The looting did much to destroy whatever infrastructure had survived the war (Fallows, 2004). Looting also affected the capability to develop post-conflict broadcasting. It had led to the destruction of most major facilities, destroying video libraries, studios, and the basis of a broadcasting system (Price, Griffin, and Al Marashi, 2007).

3-4 Conclusion: From Germany and Japan to Iraq

The two previous American occupation experiences reviewed show factual evidence that the situation in Germany and Japan was similar in some phases to the situation in post-Saddam Iraq, but different in others. The policies and actions around press and propaganda carried out by the Americans during their occupation of Germany and Japan can be compared to American policy towards the press in Iraq. The American authorities in both Japan and Germany designed the laws that gave them the right to close any newspaper that might cause any problem for them. The American administration in Iraq did the same by introducing order 14, which gave any authority the right to close any newspaper. The study will explain this order, and explore the effects of this law on the Iraqi press (see in particular chapter 5). Through specific examples, the thesis will demonstrate how the Americans used order 14 to punish political movements by closing their publications.

LR 4: US Plans to Dominate the Iraqi Press: Discussing Developments Since 2003

The American Administrator of Iraq, Paul Bremer, signed a decree to abolish the Iraqi Ministry of Information, and dismiss all its employees, within a few weeks of capturing Iraq. Based on previous experience in Germany and Japan, the Americans planned to fill the gap left by the collapse of the official press through creating their own means of communication with the public. They did not, of course, use exactly the same approach as that of sixty years earlier. Unlike what happened in late 1940s Germany, they did not prevent political parties from running their own newspapers. Indeed, all political parties started to publish their own newspapers after the toppling of Saddam. The Americans likewise did not practise any form of pre-censorship in Iraq, as they had done in Japan, and they did not set up a licence system for Iraqi newspapers as had happened in Germany. The Americans wanted to show the world a tangible difference between themselves and Saddam's regime. Khalil (2006) observes that, at the end of any conflict, there will be an opportunity to lay the foundations for a free, democratic and diverse media landscape; but in the case of Iraq, the US planners were thinking of monopolising the information spectrum with

the help of a “friendly” Baghdad government, as Joyce Battle has documented (Battle, 2007). However, their plans lacked any consideration of the presence of any independent media, or of any other means for communicating information, such as the Internet (Battle, 2007).

David Miller (2004), discussed how information policy became a “weapon” of war that was considered as “full spectrum dominance” in the official US strategy. Miller refers to two US military experts’ indications about such strategy, those of Jim Winters and John Giffin. Miller quotes Winters and Giffin: “We think of dominance in terms of ‘having our way’ – ‘Overmatch’ over all operational possibilities. This connotation is ‘qualitative’ rather than ‘quantitative’. When dominance occurs, nothing done, makes any difference. We have sufficient knowledge to stop anything we don’t want to occur, or do anything we want to do” (Miller, 2004). In Miller’s analysis of this strategy, he sees two elements that were new in the US information dominance, in comparison to traditional concepts of propaganda. Miller considers “the integration of propaganda and psychological operations into a much wider conception of information war”, to be the first element; while the integration of “information war into the core of military strategy”, is the second element (Miller, 2004). Miller, and many others, quote US army Colonel Kenneth Allard, a strategic expert, who observed that the 2003 attack on Iraq “will be remembered as a conflict in which information fully took its place as a weapon of war” (Miller, 2004). Miller however argues that even if the US and UK had massive resources with which to attempt “information dominance”, other parties successfully prevented their achievement of this goal: “if they are faced at every turn by resistance, and in the end, is the only thing which can stop the US achieving final information or full spectrum dominance” (Miller, 2004).

Public diplomacy and propaganda have many common bases with the armed forces during peacetime. During a war, both governments and armies will mobilise campaigns to attempt to influence both supporters and enemies. For a long time, before the 9/11 attacks, many Western governments, including the US government, had neglected such warfare messages; but after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, these messages were sharpened through the Internet and satellite television, as well as more traditional media (Hachten, and Scotton, 2007). Such efforts could be considered part of American propaganda in occupied Iraq.

In Iraq, the US army launched big “public diplomacy” campaigns to gain support of the locals, following the traditional concept of conquering armies. Ron Schleifer (2005), says that the US army’s standard Psychological Operations Manual

concentrated its discussion on winning the battlefield victory. It failed to go beyond that to discuss points such as how to consolidate the new regime's control after victory. But in Schleifer's view, the situation was different in Iraq, as the US army took control of the country's communication systems to be used as a means to send specific information to the Iraqi people, and to counter anti-American rumours on the street (Schleifer, 2005). The theorist Jacques Ellul (1966) argued that propaganda can influence public political and social activities, so that propaganda can accordingly be divided into political propaganda and social propaganda. Either official or unofficial bodies may perform propaganda efforts, whether in political or social propaganda (Ellul, 1966). In Scot Macdonald's classification, propaganda messages can be divided according to the propaganda source. Scot Macdonald (2007), calls it "White Propaganda" when the source is known, which is mainly the case with official sources. For such propaganda, it is clear who, and what, is communicating the message. In "Black Propaganda", the source is deliberately concealed, or the recipient of the propaganda is lead to believe the source to be someone else. This kind of propaganda is used in undercover psychological operations. Finally, "Grey Propaganda" stands in between these two, which means that the source may be ambiguous. Such propaganda is also designed to mislead. Macdonald (2007) says: "Black propaganda is more difficult to create than white propaganda, because white propaganda can contain mistakes and still be effective, since it is known to be from a foreign source, whereas black propaganda cannot contain certain types of errors" (Macdonald, 2007, p.33).

The Americans set up and ran the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), and its publication *al Sabah*, as the medium to transfer such propaganda messages, and to be effectively the official newspaper of Iraq. *Al Sabah* could be considered similar to the German *Neue Zeitung* in the aftermath of the Second World War. The paper received American support in several forms (as later chapters in this thesis will show). It received financial backup from the Americans, and was run by an exiled Iraqi journalist, who was working for an American broadcast service. Psychological warfare in Germany and even Japan had been made more effective as the implementers of these plans shared a cultural background for Germany and Japan, but this was not the case for Iraq (Schleifer, 2005). The Iraqi Media Network failed to convey the message of the allied forces, although this did not stop attempts to influence the public through "the military and CIA media networks, mobile printing outfits, loudspeakers, and broadcasting units" (Schleifer, 2005, p.3).

The role of the US military in the media project in Iraq is investigated by Peter Cary

(2010). Cary refers to the massive, USD 200 million budget, released between 2003 and 2005, to build a national media in Iraq, which he believes cannot be considered a classic “media development” of a kind that would be undertaken by any known media development organisation. Rather, Cary (2010) describes the project as designed to influence public opinion, to improve security and to deal with anti-American messages. US army officers were involved directly in the process of shaping or directing this media project, and much of what has been done is still considered secret, classified information which cannot be made public at this stage. It is known, however, that private contractors, commissioned by the US army or the US government, played a major role in shaping the media environment in Iraq (Cary, 2010).

Orayb Aref Najjar (2009), described the American public diplomacy in the Iraqi press as a “failure” of the US media plans in Iraq. Najjar argues that many accumulated factors led to the “failure” of the American media project, and offers a list of seven key points:

1. Pre-planning for Iraqi media reform in Washington rather than in the Arab world.
2. The clash of multiple authorities over the question of Iraq’s media needs and who is best suited to address them.
3. Imperial arrogance that has led to the exclusion of well-known and seasoned Iraqi and Arab media professionals from much of the decision-making process.
4. The privatisation of media development, along with a lack of oversight regarding the millions of dollars awarded to private, mostly United States, consulting firms, having very little media experience to begin with.
5. A lack of knowledge regarding Iraqi and Arab media environments, leading to an underestimation of existing Arab media capacity and appeal.
6. A failure - refusal - to differentiate between free media with content designed wholly by Iraqis, and PR media designed to place US actions in Iraq into a favourable light, not least by planting “good news” when deemed necessary.
7. The positioning of the needs of the occupation over the needs of Iraqis, which has led to excessive legislation in the name of so-called security and the establishment of additional layers of media regulation that have hampered freedom of press.

(Najar, 2009, p.30)

Furthermore, Najjar confirms that general mismanagement destroyed the reforming mission of the Iraqi media in general, and affected the future of the new media in post war Iraq (Najjar, 2009). These factors, together with other mistaken policies, handicapped the American efforts to develop the media sector in Iraq. The fatal mistake of the Pentagon was to contract a company “inexperienced” in media development to build media project, SAIC (Rohde, 2005). The first year of the project was nearly a “complete failure”, because of “the Pentagon’s focus on only reforming the state-run broadcaster and the CPA’s efforts to influence Iraqi media network coverage” (Rohde, 2005, p.29). The second year, however, was better, as the Americans contracted the Harris Corporation, which demonstrated more experience than the first company, SAIC.

The “failure” of the Iraqi Media Project led by the Americans was not a result of bad management, but unspecific development plans, and associated corruption, contributed to its poor outcome.

Chapter 1:

The Iraqi Media Under The Ba'ath Party 1968-1979

1-1 Introduction: Media in Totalitarian Regimes

Many totalitarian regimes have used the press to market revolutionary ideas. Ruling parties or individuals have jumped to power through undemocratic means - often through military coups. According to Rugh (2004) a ruling group, even if they have power, do not have the legitimacy and the stability which they need for their complete authority. They therefore use newspapers as a way of communication to influence people, and will often gradually terminate all private media outlets, so that all communication falls under government control.

1-2 Iraq in the Ba'ath Era

On the morning of 17 July 1968 a military coup overthrew the regime of President Mohammed Abdel-Rahman Arif. The Ba'athists did not declare at first that they were partners in the coup because of their bloody reputation after the 1963 coup. When the situation stabilised, Ahmed Hassan Al Baker, the conservative Ba'ath Party leader, became the President of the Republic, while military officer, Abdul Razzak Al Naif was appointed prime minister and Ibrahim Al Dawood became defence minister.

The Ba'ath leadership planned to get rid of Al Naif and Al Dawood as soon as possible. This was achieved before the end of July. Saddam Hussein, the young radical Ba'athist, led an internal coup against Al Dawood and Al Naif on 30 July 1968. After isolating the prime minister in his offices, he entered, pointed his gun and gave Al Naif a choice between death or exile. He chose the later. The Ba'ath Party's success on 30 July proclaimed that internal coup on their partners as the completion of their "revolution" on 17 July 1968 (Saleh, 2008).

1-3 The Ba'ath and the Iraqi Press

After the summer coup in 1968, the Iraqi press entered the second Ba'ath era, carrying the legacy of little press independence from the previous regime, which had ruled modern Iraq since 1921 (Saleh, 2008). The ousted regime had nationalised the press a few months before the coup. Due to this

nationalisation, there were no independent newspapers, and the Ba'athist government effectively had the entire print media working for the benefit of the regime, as part of their propaganda machine. Newspapers stressed that the "revolution" was open to all political parties and that the new regime was looking forward to the participation of all effective powers in governing the country. In addition, other issues were raised like economic difficulties, and the importance of finding a solution to the long-term Kurdish "insurgency" peacefully and democratically as this problem was threatening national unity (Kadham, 1997).

Despite these assurances, it was rare for the government to license any new newspapers. The well-known journalist and Ba'ath supporter, Qassim Hamoudi, got the privilege of establishing the Al Huriya newspaper, which was issued in early September 1968 (Hasson, 2008), although it was shut down after less than a year.

1-4 Official Press

The Ba'ath regime kept the same newspapers as were published earlier, with the addition of the Ba'ath Party's press; this will be explained later.

1-4-1 Al Jumhuriya Newspaper

This was the official newspaper, which had started publishing at the beginning of the Republican era in 1958. It continued to be published under the authority of the Ba'ath, but under new management and presenting ideas consistent with the new regime's ideology (Saleh, 2008).

1-4-2 Al Thawra Newspaper

On 18 August 1968, the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party published its first newspaper edition under the name Al Thawra. It was headed by Tariq Aziz and was published in a tabloid size despite the fact that rest of the country's newspapers were broadsheets (Batti, 2010). A big budget was allocated to it, with huge buildings and a large printing house, bringing on board Iraqi and Arab writers who declared their ideas and thoughts in support of the Ba'ath Party. Many of them had been communists before.

1-4-3 Alef Ba Magazine

This magazine was launched before the coup in 1968, but continued publishing until 2003. Alef Ba was one of the most prominent magazines published during the Ba'ath Party ruling era. It covered news in depth, and ran daring cartoons in addition to "investigative" journalism reports. It was published in 52 pages, eight of which were in colour, but the biggest change happened in 1978 when the administration increased the pagination to 72. The magazine sold well, with newsstands running out of copies in a few hours (Al Bakri, 1994).

During the 1980s circulation rose to 250,000 copies, but then declined dramatically in the 1990s due to sanctions and paper shortages.

1-4-4 Baghdad Observer

This was an English language daily newspaper published by Al Jamahir House. The editor was Jalal Abdel Kader, and it was published by Najji Sabri Al Hadeethi (Batti, 2010).

1-5 Newspapers of Trades Unions and Other Organisations

The new regime launched many newspapers and magazines, published on behalf of trades unions and mass organisations. It was the government's plan to control all sectors of society and to promote the policies of the ruling Ba'ath Party. The magazines of these organisations included titles like Sawt Al Talaba ("The Students' Voice"), Al Maraah ("The Women"), Waaee Al Omal ("Workers' Awakening"), Sawt Al Falah ("Farmers' Voice") and Al Mussawer magazine ("The Photographer"). In addition, state institutions launched dozens of magazines. Others were published by the Arab organisations and associations hosted by the regime in Baghdad (Saleh, 2008).

Many sports newspapers and publications were published, examples being Al Malaab ("The Stadium"), Al Jamhour Al Riyadhi ("The Sporting Public") and Al Malaaeb newspaper ("The Stadiums"), a football association journal. All of these newspapers stopped publishing after the launch of Al Riyady ("The Sportsman") by the Ministry of Youth (Hasson, 2008). Few publications were licensed between 1969 and 1970. Al Rassed newspaper was an "independent" newspaper, while Althaqafa Al Jadida magazine represented

the Communist Party (Hasson, 2008).

1-6 The Parties' Press:

The parties participating in the National Pan Arab Front in Iraq launched their own press in 1972. The Ba'ath authority behaved as if the press were its own, and the other parties' press were not allowed to criticise government policies or to form any real opposition. Under this understanding, the Ba'ath Party allowed the other parties to publish their newspapers:

- Tareek Al Sha'ab: representing the Iraqi Communist Party, (but was shut down in 1979 when they banned the party).
- Al Taakhi: representing the KDP, which later on became Al Iraq newspaper, one of the official political daily newspapers in Iraq.

These limited publications, Iraqi Radio and TV, and the Iraqi Press Agency represented the prominent media outlets in Iraq at that time. Despite censorship, the look and content of the press improved, compared to the previous years of the Iraqi press. There was a great focus on the appearance of each newspaper, its editorial direction and the distribution of articles. The materials were informative and in addition, the technical and creative skills had improved (Al Dahan 2006).

1-6-1 Al Taakhi Newspaper

Having been shut down less than a year after the Ba'ath coup, the paper was published again after 11 March 1970, which established the basis of the coalition between the ruling Ba'ath Party and the KDP led by Mulla Mustafa Al Barazani. Al Taakhi newspaper was issued in Arabic and it was the KDP's main mouthpiece (Saleh, 2008). The newspaper began to criticise the government after a Baghdad-sponsored assassination attempt on Al Barazani. Journalist Hassan Al Alwai remembers this incident, saying: "The newspaper launched a campaign on the planners of the assassination and the newspaper mentioned Saddam Hussein indirectly" (Al Alwai, 2010). The newspaper was closed down again in 1973 when Barazani resumed his insurgency against the central government in the north of Iraq in the wake of the assassination attempt.

1-6-2 Al Iraq Newspaper

When the coalition between the Ba'ath Party and the KDP ended, Al Taakhi

newspaper closed, but the government replaced Al Taakhi with Al Iraq newspaper and a new management. Al Iraq used the same facilities as Al Taakhi, but with views that reflected those of the ruling party especially in relation to the Kurdish issue. Al Iraq newspaper continued until the 2003 invasion (Saleh, 2008).

1-6-3 Al Fekar Al Jadid

After the announcement of the National Action Charter in 1972, which led to the coalition between the ruling Ba'ath Party and the Iraqi Communist Party in 1973, the weekly newspaper Al Fekar Al Jadid was launched on 18 June 1972, as an Arab Kurdish cultural newspaper, and had a role in reflecting the Communist Party's opinions and political views (Saleh, 2008). It was a test balloon launched by the Communist Party to check what freedom the ruling party would grant to a communist cultural organisation. In reality the result showed that there were not many choices available on both sides, either for the communists who wanted to have their own publication or the Ba'athists who needed the support of the communists at that time. The newspaper was licensed as a cultural newspaper, but its contents covered a range of cultural, political and strategic issues (Al Aassam, 1984). Abdul Razak Al Safi, editor of Tareek Al Sha'ab said: "Al Fekar Al Jadeed newspaper was issued in special circumstances while the nationalisation of oil procedures was still ongoing, and we supported the government in facing the foreign companies. However, we heard criticisms of our intervention in this debate, saying that our newspaper is cultural and not political" (Al Safi, 2010).

1-6-4 Tareek Al Sha'ab Newspaper

On the 16 September 1973, the first issue of Tareek Al Sha'ab was published. A week prior to that date, a trial issue numbered zero was published to assess what people, journalists and professionals thought about the design, the look and the page divisions of the newspaper (Al Aassam 1984). Like any political or party newspaper, Tareek Al Sha'ab was the mouthpiece of the Iraqi Communist Party. Its price was 25 Fillss (The equivalent at the time of five pence) and included an advertising supplement of four to eight pages. The newspaper was printed in photo offset and written in red, the colour of the party. Unlike previous communist newspapers, it printed the two slogans of the party at the top of its first page. The first was "A free country and happy people", and the other was for the International Labour and Communist

Movement: "Workers of the world unite." Next to both of them appeared the name of the editor and the owner, who were among the leaders of the party (Al Aassam 1984). The staff at the newspaper were mainly Communist Party members who took on other party tasks. Other journalists joined the editorial team of Tareek Al Sha'ab from Al Fekar Al Jadid, following the closure of the newspaper's Arabic section.

The first edition of Tareek Al Sha'ab was printed on a small, old printing press from the World War II era. This press had at one time been used to print the secret newspaper of the German Communist Party at that time. It was given as a gift to the Iraqi Communist Party in 1959, and the newspaper's first issue was just eight pages long. When a German delegation came to visit Iraq and saw the machine, they asked to take it and put it in the museum of the former German Democratic Republic and sent back a new printing press to replace it. The newspaper, which was published every day except Saturday, was considered as one of the most sophisticated Iraqi newspapers of that time. Sections were divided using a professional page layout. It launched specialised pages on workers' and farmers' lives, popular issues, cultural and women's pages. The party offices used to provide the newspaper with articles from Communist Party members, friends and sympathisers. Journalists from within or outside the newspaper would edit these articles. The newspaper would use other Iraqi journalists living abroad or foreign journalists to get reports from all over the world.

Nidhal Al Laithi, one of the reporters who worked in the newspaper offices at that time, said: "These offices used to gather all submitted works from students, engineers and others. The articles then would be fixed and corrected by the editors to make them suitable for the newspaper. These articles used to represent the public interests and got a lot of attention; in addition this procedure created a significant staff of journalists" (Al Laithi, 2010). However, like other daily newspapers in Iraq, they also relied heavily on the news provided by the Iraq News Agency. In addition to the supplied news, the translation section and listening department made a great contribution to the newspaper by providing press material translated from foreign newspapers or transcribed from the radio. Tareek Al Sha'ab also published government activities and formal speeches, like any other

government newspaper. This policy was considered wrong by its editor, Al Safi, who said: "It was a commitment which we made, but we did not need it, and we should not have done it in the first place" (Al Safi, 2010).

Al Safi recalls the decision of one of the paper's managers not to cover a statement by the then Vice President Saddam Hussein, by not printing the newspaper that day. But the editor received a phone call asking him to submit a written explanation of why the newspaper had not been printed and had not published the Vice President's statement (Al Safi, 2010).

1-7 Press and Publishing Laws

Before the Ba'ath Party coup in 1968, the ruling regime in Iraq justified the decision to nationalise the Iraqi press under law number 155 in 1967, on the following grounds that: "The on-going battle by the Arab nation against the Zionists and colonial forces, requires directing the press in Iraq to serve Arab interests and to raise it up to the level of battle and to block all roads and gaps in front of the intruders. It was felt that a general corporation should be created to regulate the press and publishing, to launch newspapers and political circulations. This would guarantee that those newspapers would produce the right views and those wise criticisms which help the state to protect its construction in these abnormal circumstances which our nation is experiencing."

Under this law, the government cancelled the privileges of all Iraqi independent and public newspapers. The Arif government established the General Foundation for Press and Printing which was responsible for issuing all political publications, printing and distribution (Al Dahan, 2006).

This decision helped the Ba'ath regime to control the press, although initially the regime emphasised freedom of speech and expression. But in practical terms, it was adding new laws to restrict press freedom. On 5 January 1969, the official Al Waqaaeaa newspaper issued the text of press law number 206 of 1968, which remained active until the fall of Saddam's regime on 9 April 2003. Law 206 of 1968 contained 35 articles on organising press and printing work. The law limited the approval for a licence to launch a newspaper to the Information Minister. For political publications, the Minister was obliged to

submit a proposal to the Revolutionary Command Council as it was the only authority that could grant any political newspaper a licence (Al Bakri, 1994).

In late 1974 pre-censorship of the Iraqi press was removed. It was replaced by self-censorship, which was managed by the editors at any Iraqi publication.

1-8 Constraints on Freedom of Journalism

When Al Taakhi newspaper closed down, oppressive practices escalated against the only non-Ba'ath Party newspaper - Tareek Al Sha'ab. The situation in Iraq was beginning to deteriorate, particularly after the withdrawal of the Iraqi Communist Party from the Front Secretariat meeting and their decision to abandon any joint ventures with the ruling party in late October 1978. Prior to the disbanding of the Front, the government exerted pressure on the communist journalists and those who were not members of the Ba'ath Party but were employed by media institutions affiliated to the government. Indeed many were forcibly transferred outside these institutions as a means of pressurising them and to clear all publications of non-Ba'athists. The Pan-Arab Media Bureau headed by Saddam Hussein and his Deputy Tariq Aziz carried out these actions.

According to several accounts by Iraqi journalists, by mid-1977 a campaign was initiated by the ruling authority to carry out a purge of journalists who did not support the regime, from all government media institutions, and transfer them to non-media related posts. Al Jumhuriya newspaper was served with a decree issued by the Revolutionary Leading Council signed by Saddam Hussein, stipulating the transfer of 14 journalists to other non-media oriented institutions. The journalist Mohamed Aref, who was one of those affected by this decision, stressed that although his editor, Saad Qassim Hamoudi (who was also one of the leading figures in the Ba'ath Party), was reluctant to use the new decree, he was forced finally to implement it. Aref said, "I published some articles in Tareek Al Sha'ab newspaper, which I think contributed to my being transferred to the General Post Depot Company. I was deliberately transferred again thereafter. The target was to distance any journalist who might be considered affiliated to the current Communist Party. I decided soon after that to leave the country and watch how things would pan out" (Aref, 2010).

Aref was one of a large group of journalists who were forcibly transferred from media institutions. These transfer practices subsequently had an impact on the media landscape in Iraq. Some of the editors objected, such as the head of Alef Baa magazine at the time, Hassan Al Alwai. He said: “There was a resolution passed by the leadership of the Ba’ath Party to transfer all non-Ba’athists working under the auspices of the Ministry of Information – which included socialists and Pan-Arab nationalists” (Al Alwai, 2010).

Al Alwai stressed that he refused to implement this procedure and was personally summoned by Saddam Hussein who demanded an explanation and questioned whether his actions were an open act of disobedience to orders. “I replied to Saddam saying that it was the strangest order to be issued by the government and the party, and the most damaging one for the government and its interests. Charge a Ba’athist for working in a Communist or Pan-Arab nationalist party because he is offering a service to that party. But why charge a communist intellectual who has come to work in a newspaper that was owned by the government or the Ba’ath Party? That was an inconceivable notion to me!” (Al Alwai, 2010).

Al Alwai also reiterated to Saddam the role of gatekeeper that “editors” would play in filtering and foiling any attempts by non-Ba’athists to pass on destructive notions through their writings and contributions, whilst pointing out that journalists who were members of Communist or Pan-Arab nationalist parties represented the intellectual elite who had no equal amongst Ba’athists members. “Saddam admired my take on this issue and said: ‘Indeed! We ought to follow this plan,’ yet without deferring his rule on their transfer. This was typical of Saddam, who never turned back once he made a decision” (Al Alwai, 2010).

Yet, the restrictions on non-government newspapers continued. A memo from the Iraqi Communist Party Central Committee sent to the Authority Leadership dated 28 September 1978 revealed the reality of what the Party’s newspapers had endured. The newspaper was prevented from distribution in several counties and provinces. It was banned from sale in bookshops and in the Southern part of Iraq, in places like Basra, Nasseriyah and Amara. The Communists were banned from selling it. It was also banned from offices,

institutions, universities and factories. Those who carried a copy of the Communist newspaper were hounded and violated. Indeed, many drivers distributing the newspapers were arrested and forced out of their jobs. In addition government bureaus were incited against the Tareek Al Sha'ab newspaper (Al Aassam 1984). Al Safi, the editor of Tareek Al Sha'ab stresses that: "We used to suffer so much harassment that it was no longer possible to distribute the newspaper directly. We were only able to distribute it through official trustees after getting security clearance. The situation further escalated in 1978, when they banned the newspaper from reaching the Southern provinces, so we began distributing it secretly there" (Al Safi, 2010).

After the issue of five warnings, the newspaper editor, Abdul Razak Al Safi, was called by the Secretariat of the Progressive National Front, Naim Hadad. The Secretariat demanded the withdrawal of the Iraqi Communist Party's statement, which called for democratic changes. "I objected and said that it was out of my jurisdiction, and asked why, if the Communist Party had a limited influence, did they continue to ally with it?" (Al Safi, 2010). The fifth warning was the last that the government made against the Tareek Al Sha'ab newspaper on the 5 April 1979. Before the legal action was delivered, two remaining editors of the newspaper were kidnapped, which forced the final editor of the newspaper to go into hiding to escape police harassment (Al Aassam, 1984).

"By the second half of 1978, I felt things were becoming confrontational and I was under surveillance 24/7. I was harassed incessantly so I decided therefore to leave Iraq. I joined my brother at a funeral, then slipped out with a friend, escaping the watchful eye of the surveillance. I contacted the party leadership and left Iraq using a fake passport," Abdul Razak Al Safi recounts (Al Safi, 2010). The Tareek Al Sha'ab newspaper stopped printing, but resumed publication clandestinely on 4 October 1979. It was printed in four small pages, hand-written and with limited distribution to members of the Communist Party who in turn photocopied and distributed it to others.

Ba'athist journalists working in government institutions at the time had another take on the story to their counterparts working in Tareek Al Sha'ab newspaper. Dr Sabah Yassin (2010), the ex-editor of Al Thawra newspaper, recalls that the newspaper was the cause of problems. He said:

“When the announcement of the Front was first made, the publications issued by the Front carried out serious intellectual efforts to bring closer their points of view on national matters. Only in more recent years of the Front’s existence and in view of the disputes amongst its members, some of the Front’s newspapers were transformed into forums for incitement and stirring up trouble” (Yassin, 2010).

Dr Sabah Yassin reiterates the tight control with which the government and the Ba’ath Party gripped the media: “After the disbandment of the Front and the cessation of non-Ba’athist newspapers from print, the government was now in sole control of media and newspapers in Iraq. There were no longer any opposition or private newspapers. No individuals or people were able to publish any print other than the government” (Yassin, 2010).

1-9 Brief about the Press under Ba’ath Rule

Although the press developed both in content and artistic execution compared with printed materials of the past, it did not enjoy any freedom of speech (Kadham, 1997). This was despite the fact that such freedoms were set out in article 26 of the Iraqi constitution of 1970, which stated that the constitution guaranteed freedom of expression, publishing, meetings, demonstration and of forming political parties, unions, and societies which should not be in conflict with the law. The government said it would work to create the suitable environment to practise these freedoms, matching the advanced national lines of the revolution (Al Bakri, 1994).

The Iraqi press was a univocal press representing the Ba’ath Party. It was widely used to serve the authorities by influencing the Iraqi people to support the main goals of the Ba’ath Party. This was mentioned by Latif Nessaif Jassim, the Minister of Information: “The revolutionary press and its culture were the human resources and technical facilities which were the tools that the Ba’ath Party, and which the Party would use to make general opinion support our main goals” (Al Dahan, 2006). Dr Hashim Hassan explains that: “The press in Iraq from 1968 until 1979 was full of the Arab Ba’ath Socialist Party’s ideologies. The main tool for the policy to implant that ideology in the press was the ministry of information, which intervened in every subject and chose the terms which suited Ba’ath ideology” (Hassan, 2010).

The newspapers were able to publish some articles from time to time criticising public services, such electricity or water, but the main blame would be directed towards the bureaucracy, not the leadership. This kind of freedom was limited and it was controlled so as to serve the “revolution and its activities” (Al Dahan, 2006).

Government policy succeeded in preventing the people from accessing all sources of Arab or international information except that which matched the policy of the government (Zayeer, 2008). The next chapter presents how the Iraqi press witnessed further great changes after the strong Vice President, Saddam Hussein, assumed the role of President.

Chapter 2:

Iraqi Media under Saddam 1979-2003

2-1 Introduction

In July 1979 Saddam Hussein was appointed as the President and the leader of the Ba'ath Party, taking over from his predecessor Ahmed Hassan Al Bakr after the latter had officially "stepped down" making way for his strong deputy. Saddam Hussein demonstrated his feelings about the connection between the media and his Party by saying: "Our media is part of our credo and that of the country. Its methods are part of the revolutionary methods and principles of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party." It was this stance, which made the party leaders place Iraqi media within a specific and inescapable intellectual and ideological framework influenced by the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (Al Dahan, 2006). But how did this "our media" serve the ruling party? How did Saddam and his family use the press? What kind of media did Iraq have between 1979-2003?

2-2 Saddam Hussein and the Media

Saddam became the Head of the National Information Bureau in 1973 and continued in this role until the fall of his regime after the US invasion in 2003. Saddam Hussein attended meetings held by this bureau on a regular basis. When he was Vice President, according to several journalists' accounts, he would actively contribute to decisions of the activities and direction of the bureau and the discussions that took place in the weekly meetings it held. Hassan Al Alwai, also a regular attendee, confirms this: "Saddam used to attend the bureau's meetings punctually at 10am every Thursday and listened to everyone for the entire four hours of discussions on the current affairs nationally and internationally and the news agenda for the coming week" (Al Alwai, 2010).

Saddam continued to head the Culture and Information Bureau even after becoming the number one figure in the country. His personal visits became sporadic, but his bureau continued its work with unabated vigour. "It was only natural that Saddam should secure this important role for the media. If an unheard-of journalist mentioned him in a line or two, he would contact him and encourage him, regardless of who it was and what side he was affiliated to. I do not believe that during this phase, any writer who wrote anything about Saddam would have gone unnoticed without being personally contacted by Saddam," Hassan Al Alwai said (Al Alwai, 2010). Amir Al Hilo, the former editor-in-chief of

Al Qadissiya newspaper, stated that a group of agents from the Iraqi intelligence service would visit the printing presses, seizing random copies of the newspapers to forward to Saddam's personal secretary: "Saddam used to read all newspapers on a daily basis and would make comments directly to them, making decisions for them about newspaper's pages" (Al Hilo, 2010).

2-3 Features of an Era

The press adopted the policy of spreading the Ba'ath ideology as the "sole ideology" across various fields: culture, media and education, linking all forms of media to the Ministry of Information and Culture. All publications stressed their total devotion to Saddam Hussein. Both the Ministry of Information and the Ba'ath Pan-Arab Bureau played a major role in drafting the media policy in the country. All publications continued to print large sized pictures of Saddam on their front pages, posed in various guises and attires: military, tribal, modern, wearing a hat, wearing Kufiya or without. They published his pictures from the point when Saddam came to power in 1979 until the fall of his regime (Saleh, 2008). These published pictures of the President were distributed by his Press Office to all print newspapers every evening or early morning. In the event of the pictures not arriving, the editors would resort to searching the archive for an appropriate image to match the content of the news item.

In addition, those editors were the gatekeepers, responsible for every word published in their newspapers. On their shoulders fell the task of pleasing the leadership. "There were red lines imposed on us, lines which we must not cross. The fact was that any critical news item relating to Saddam Hussein, or to any and all rulings passed by him, or to his policies, was forbidden, non-negotiable and must not be discussed. Everything else however could be discussed with relative freedom" (Al Hilo, 2010).

2-4 The Iraq-Iran War and the Launching of Al Qadissiya Newspaper

The outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war on 23 September 1980 marked the beginning of a new phase in Iraq. Media was employed for war propaganda and as a means to manipulate and fight back at the propaganda of the Iranian enemy. The newspapers allocated a lot of space to covering war operations and the attacks on the frontline. There were no "scoop" stories in Iraqi newspapers, as coverage was no longer spontaneous, but was reserved for official announcements or relevant events. Regional or international newspapers would

have covered most events before they found their way into the Iraqi press. This was due to instructions from the government to have all news sourced from one single source. The President insisted on news coverage: "It is vital that the public in Iraq is aware of events every hour and on the hour because we stand by truth," said Saddam Hussein (Hassan, 2008).

The "truth" reported however, was well-refined war propaganda, as Dr Sabah Yasin, the ex editor-in-chief of Al Thawra newspaper, insists: "Media mobilisation played a major role in Al Qadissiya War, 'the Iraq-Iran war'. Little at the time was known about what is called civil and military censorship. The editor-in-chief was in charge and acted as the monitor at that time. No news item about the progress of war was allowed publication unless announced by the official spokesman for the general headquarters of the armed forces. As for life on the frontline, newspaper correspondents out on the battle frontline were reporting for their daily newspapers. This was also the case with radio and television" (Yasin, 2010).

During this time military newspapers flourished such as Al Yarmouk, a weekly, which covered the war and offered a daily supplementary called Al Qadissiya, which later became a daily newspaper on 14 November 1984 (Hassan, 2008; "Al Qadissiya", 1982). The editor of this newspaper was Brigadier Mohammed Younis Al Ahmed, who was behind its transformation from a newspaper supplement to a daily newspaper.

2-5 Al Qadissiya Newspaper

The Al Qadissiya newspaper began expanding when several conscripted young journalists joined it. Al Qadissiya became one of the newspapers most in demand for its daring and up-to-date coverage of the war and publishing articles criticising the performance of some of the ministries who had succumbed to the Ministry of Defence's influence - then headed by Adnan Khairallah, cousin and brother-in-law of Saddam. This was confirmed by the deputy editor of the newspaper Amir Al Hilo, who said: "I exploited the fact that a large number of journalists were conscripted for military reserve service. I asked for their withdrawal from the army to work in the specialist press of the armed forces. They were the most capable and daring of journalists and the newspaper achieved huge success compared to other official newspapers, the likes of Al Thawra and Al Jumhuriya" (Al Hilo, 2010).

The media during this time was tightly focused on war propaganda. This is consolidated by what Latif Nassaif Jassim, the Iraqi Minister of Information said at the time, in one of his meetings with Iraqi journalists and writers: "Eight years of war, rapidly approaching the ninth, were fiercely tactical and mobilising. It was primarily an incitement to push people to the battlefield front lines" (Al Dahan, 2006).

But some exaggerations in the press led to other problems, which took the regime by surprise. "The media used to exaggerate sometimes about the number of Iranian war prisoners and casualties. This was the cause of a bigger problem with Iranians after the cessation of the war. The Iranians referred to the military announcements issued at the time, with exaggerated statistics of the Iranian war prisoners. These documents were used as a reference in their negotiations for the exchange of war prisoners," said Ma'ad Fayadh (Fayadh, 2010).

2-6 End of the Iraq–Iran War

On 8 August 1988 Iran agreed finally to UN Security Council Resolution 598 - first issued as long ago as 1986 - declaring both parties' cessation of hostilities. In the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein headed a number of meetings, which claimed an interest in moving towards a multi-party system in Iraq. However, Dr Saad Naji Jawad, professor of Political Sciences at Baghdad University, stressed that this was not genuine: "The leadership of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party issued two books which talked about democracy and a multi-party system in Iraq. But we had a shared sense that Saddam was not serious about it, as subsequent events revealed" (Jawad, 2010).

The government did not allow anyone to launch any new publications, keeping the space empty except for the government press.

2-7 Sports Newspapers

In the mid 1980s Al Ba'ath Al Riyadi newspaper ("The Ba'ath Sport") was launched. Uday, the son of the President, supervised this newspaper. It grew over the years and became a huge institution in itself, which included Al Rashid Sports Club and later the Sports Olympic Committee. Al Ba'ath Al Riyadi was first published on 2 June 1984 with the title carrying Uday Saddam Hussein's

name as the supervisor, and Al Rashid Sports Club as the publishing institute. It was a four-page newspaper, in large broadsheet format printed in a private publishing house. It was considered to be daring in the sports topics it addressed and debated, which was why it appealed to a large number of Iraqi youths who were passionate about sports. It would often sell out in the early hours of the morning. Not long after this paper was published, Uday personally headed the Olympic Committee. However, the newspaper continued to be critical of administrative corruption within the Ministry of Youth and the Olympic Committee in spite of Uday's position in it.

Abbass Al Janabi, who was the press secretary for Uday Hussein for a long period, stressed at the time that Uday was aware of the campaign that was taking place in the newspaper: "There was a pre-arrangement with Uday that 70% of the reports would attack officials in the Ministry of Youth and the Olympic Committee, whereas 30% of them would be personally initiated," said Dr Abbass Al Janabi (Al Janabi, 2010).

2-8 The "First Gulf War": Invading Kuwait and the Confrontation with US Forces in 1991

After the Iraq-Iran war, the print media continued its propaganda campaigns, now waging a campaign against the Gulf countries. Saddam had emphasised that Gulf countries such as Kuwait and the UAE were hampering economic growth in Iraq. In an unexpected move, in 1990, the Iraqi forces occupied Kuwait and stayed there. The UN Security Council issued blockade resolutions, which the Iraqi press challenged, stressing the ability of the Iraqi people to stand up and resist what had been imposed on them. The propaganda incitements used during the Iraq-Iran war continued, ensuring the trust of the Iraqi people in Saddam Hussein's and the Ba'ath government's ability to confront their opponents and succeed. By 17 January 1991, the United States began its operation to remove the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, starting its campaign by extensive shelling aimed at the civil infrastructure and later at military targets. There were attempts to actively stop Iraqi propaganda operations by confronting and silencing them, but the US failed to achieve this. The newspapers continued publication without interruption as Amir Al Hilo, the editor-in-chief of Al Qadissiya newspaper, confirms: "We continued with our work and the newspapers continued to be published, through our management

of the papers and through alternating locations. The newspapers never once stopped publication during the entire duration of the war” (Al Hilo, 2010).

Al Hilo reiterates Saddam’s interest in the smallest details of the newspaper production process during the war. He recalls being summoned once by Saddam Hussein’s private secretary regarding the size of headline at his newspaper: “The newspaper was about to be published when I received an order to publish one of the President’s speeches. I did not have a calligrapher available at the time and tried to use a section from the speech for the headline, only it appeared slightly smaller than the side title. Saddam sent his personal secretary to find out the reason for this, demanding from me a written explanation” (Al Hilo, 2010).

Part of the transformation that took place later, which had an impact on journalism in Iraq, was the Al Ba’ath Al Riyadi newspaper. The newspaper that was published by the Olympic Committee headed by Uday Saddam Hussein, had changed during the war into a political newspaper called Al Ba’ath Al Siyassi (“The Political Ba’ath”). It continued publication under this title throughout the duration of the war, 17 January - 1 March 1991 (Al Essawi, 2000).

2-9 Babil Newspaper: A Special Experiment in the History of Iraqi Press

After the end of the war, Al Ba’ath Al Riyadi newspaper returned to its normal sports coverage, but the idea of having a political newspaper was rooted in the mind of Uday Saddam Hussein. A few weeks after the end of hostilities, he launched a political newspaper, which was initially called Al Ba’ath, as a twin newspaper to Al Ba’ath Ariyadi. The first edition was published on the 24 March 1991. The newspaper, in four pages, described itself as a “general daily newspaper” being published by the Olympic Committee, with the five Olympic circles as logo. The head of the administrative council was Uday Saddam Hussein, while the editor-in-chief was Mudehir Aref whose editorial was entitled “A Newspaper for Everyone”.

In the second edition of the newspaper, the name of the Olympic Committee and the five Olympic circles were removed from the main headline, but the newspaper described itself as a daily political newspaper. The newspaper had the name Al Ba’ath until the fifth edition, but the sixth edition appeared with the

new name, Babil. The newspaper said that they decided to change the name in order to prevent the confusion which might occur between Al Ba'ath and Al Ba'ath Al Riyadi, while the name "Babil" was chosen to connect Iraq and the civilisation of Babylon, and more especially what that civilisation represented in the history of Zionism (Al Essawi, 2000).

Babil was published in the normal large size - first in four pages, then extended to eight, but it increased its pages according to the situation and the coverage. Latterly, the newspaper was published in tabloid size with the fixed number of sixteen pages every edition. On 9 November 1991 the newspaper was stopped because it did not have a licence to be published. This issue was sent to the parliament - The National Council - for a vote. The members' vote was "unanimous" to continue publishing Babil, which carried the title "Published by commission of the people" from that date onwards. The staff of the newspaper were mainly the journalists who had been working in Al Ba'ath Al Riyadi, but in many cases the editors would ask well-known writers to make some contribution to the newspaper by sending their work to be published in Babil (Al Essawi, 2000).

The Ministry of Information stopped Babil again at a later date after it had published articles criticising some ministerial performances. "Uday used Babil in his own private wars; the newspaper attacked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tariq Aziz personally, so it was shut by the Ministry of Information for three days" (Al Janabi, 2010).

Uday responded by stopping Babil for a week to put pressure on the Minister: Uday liked to show the Minister how powerful his newspaper was by publishing "hundreds of thousands" of requests to resume work again. The matter did not rest there. "Uday instructed us to lead an attack campaign on the Minister of Information, Abdul Ghani Abdul Ghafour, whom [sic] lost his position after a short time from the start of the campaign," said Abbass Al Janabi (Al Janabi, 2010).

This was not the only reason behind the confrontation between Uday and Abdul Ghafour. The real reason was the evaluation of a committee, which Abdul Ghafour had commissioned. The committee had fixed the rent for use of the machinery and studios which Uday's TV station, Al Shabab, was to pay

monthly to the Ministry, to a total price of USD 250,000. "When I told Uday about it, he got mad and then he went to see his father who ordered another committee to be formed, which reduced the evaluation to USD 6,000," said Al Janabi (Al Janabi, 2010).

Dr Hashim Hassan, who was one of the most prominent editors at Babil, confirms that Uday used the newspaper to attack his family members: "I was allowed to publish articles attacking the Minister of the Interior, Wattban Ibrahim Al Hassan, Saddam's half brother. He lost his position later" (Hassan, 2010).

The influence that Uday enjoyed gave the journalists a freedom to criticise the ministers and corruption in the public services. "Uday was very close to the decision maker, so he was a powerful man who could protect us, but at the same time he was the main source of information," said Abbass Al Janabi (Al Janabi, 2010). Uday built up a media empire, which included his own newspaper, radio and TV stations. "He was the only one who could publish anything without fearing any reaction" (Al Janabi, 2010).

The total circulation of Babil was 150,000 but it was later reduced to 30,000, while Al Ba'ath Al Riyadi was 250,000 and reduced later to 15,000, because of the UN sanctions.

2-10 Uday Saddam Hussein as the Head of the Journalists' Union

In the early 1990s, Uday tried to create his own authority, motivated by the fact that his father did not give him a senior position. Uday's role with the Olympic Committee was his only official position.

Uday assumed the position as the Head of the Journalists' Union from 1993 until 2003, but he was also the Head of the Cultural House which included many arts associations and cultural unions. In practice, the situation changed: many journalists were able to move more freely inside the official offices and ministries while before they had not enjoyed such freedom and influence according to one of the well-known journalists of that time, Ahmed Abdul Majid. "Uday managed to get some tangible support for Iraqi journalists. He was able to convince his father to give land to the journalists, while he managed also to reduce the pressure practised by the chief editors, who were appointed directly

by Saddam and who placed huge pressure on their staff before Uday became the Head of the Union”, Abdul Majid said (Abdul Majid, 2010).

Like the situation in any totalitarian regime, the press in Iraq was serving the regime, but Uday was looking to give more “freedom” to the press. Abdul Majid remembers, “In a meeting I attended with Uday, he confirmed that if he had the power he would let Iraq have a ‘free’ and liberal press and political parties, but they must be under his command” (Abdul Majid, 2010). Majid thinks that his point of view was more advanced than that of the senior officials in the regime. However, although Uday practised the role of “godfather” towards the press, he also practised punishments, which humiliated and insulted many journalists.

In 1993 there was an event which many journalists would not forget. They had all gathered for a meeting in one of the Iraqi theatres. The security guards brought in the Vice-Head of the Journalists’ Union and two other committee members, who had been accused of “betraying” the trust of the Head of the Union, Uday, and of the union’s members. When the spokesperson finished his declaration, a group of men started throwing bad tomatoes and eggs at the three “guilty” men.

Ebtissam Abdullah, the known writer and journalist, was there: “When they started throwing the eggs and tomatoes on Lutfi Al Khayat and Ahmed Sabry, I started crying, I thought that I might face the same situation and I could not take it any more. I started shouting ‘No, No’, and many other colleagues followed me shouting, and then they took them out of the theatre” (Abdullah, 2010). Lutfi Al Khayat died a month after that shocking event which affected everyone who attended that meeting including Ma’ad Fayadh. “I saw them being beaten later; that was the moment that I decided to leave Iraq” (Fayadh, 2010).

2-11 Advertisements

Because of this difficult situation, the government decided that all publications should be self-sufficient, and therefore the heads of all publications had to consider other sources of funding beyond the government. “The government orders were very clear, the government would pay the salaries of the staff of the four official newspapers but not the cost of the paper and printing materials which should be covered by each institution,” Al Janabi said (Al Janabi, 2010).

The only respite for those institutions were the advertisements. Advertisements were limited during the 1970s and the 1980s following the traditional idea that they would reduce the value of the newspaper, (Al Bakri, 1994) but advertising was a lifeline under the sanctions. Commercial advertisements flourished in the newspapers, especially when they became an essential source of money.

The newspapers witnessed new kinds of advertisements, the so-called “presidential greetings”. These greetings to the “beloved” President usually came from the heads of big companies, or from institutes’ directors who wanted to keep or inflate their positions (Al Raffideen, 2001; Al Raffideen, 2002; Uruk, 2003). This extortion to publish a greeting to the President became a phenomenon in the middle of the 1990s as the advertising agents started to target the owners of small businesses and shops. “There was no way to control such blackmail; when the name of Saddam or Uday were mentioned everyone would go silent, so these methods were widely used by the advertising agents to make a lot of money,” Al Janabi explains (Al Janabi, 2010).

2-12 The New Weekly Newspapers

In the middle of the 1990s a wave of weekly newspapers appeared. These newspapers were connected to the Journalists’ Union, and they were named as publications of the weekly newspaper committee, which was headed by Uday Saddam Hussein. All the weekly newspapers put Uday’s name on their headings as a mark of influence and protection from the anger of other officials. From the early days of their launch, these newspapers started to highlight the fact that they were different to other newspapers, claiming to have a margin of freedom much greater than the official newspapers. Like Babil, they were more daring than other newspapers. Their reports discussed issues which had never before been explored - especially the subject of corruption (Al Ruba’e 2007). Dr Hashim Hassan, chief editor of Nabdh Al Shabab, said: “Many journalists joined the weekly press. They took this chance to revive the principles of journalism and they managed to publish many reports. Those newspapers were popular and they exceeded the circulation of the official press. Many journalists were fooling the officials by criticising their ministries or directorates, who would then think it was under Uday’s instructions” (Hassan, 2010).

New newspaper titles appeared on the market. Many newspapers carried the

same titles of newspapers published before the Ba'ath Party coup in 1968 such as Al Zawraa, Nabadh Al Shabab, Al Etihad, Al Rafedin, Al Musawer Al Arabi, Al Eqteessadi and Sawt Al Talaba. There were also weekly newspapers launched in each province for example Al Tamim, Tekrit, and Al Basrah (Al Ruba'e, 2007). The weekly newspapers would cover all kinds of corruption in any ministry or by any minister, but without putting any blame on Saddam or his policies. There were other "red lines", which journalists knew they should not cross or even try to discuss, mainly concerning news about Iraqi oppositionists abroad. Nabadh Al Shabab tried to cross this line when it published an article about the exiled government headed by Chalabi. The newspaper published the picture of Chalabi and accused him of being traitor and an agent of the imperial powers (UK, USA), but this was not enough to protect the chief editor (Nabd Al Shabab, 1998). "The article generated huge arguments and we received a huge wave of criticism, but Uday took the responsibility for publishing that article. I was fired from my position as the chief editor of the newspaper and prevented from writing, then the security agency started chasing me," Hashim Hassan said (Hassan, 2010).

The new publications gained a large audience by publishing leaked news on topics important for Iraqis, such as land distribution dates, or news which might affect the economy. Many of the leaks turned out to be accurate. Uday's former press secretary, Al Janabi, confirms this fact: "Uday used to buy news resources, we could not say it was bribes, but we called it gifts, according to Uday's preference, so we had sources everywhere" (Al Janabi, 2010). After a while these newspapers started to cover Uday's activities on their front pages. "They were covering Uday in the same way as the daily official newspapers were covering his father's activities" (Abdul Majid, 2010).

2-13 Press and Freedom of Expression

Saddam said in his meeting with a group of Iraqi journalists in January 1980: "Write without limits or hesitation or fear for the possibility that the state might like or dislike your writings" (Al Bakri, 1994) but in practice it was very different. The laws and the instructions of the Pan-Arab Cultural and Information Office controlled what the journalists were writing about and the way it should be written, making all go through the views of the ruler. Everything would be considered as part of the national security of the country, so journalists were followed by security agencies who were monitoring their work all the time,

fearing the effect of their writing on their audience, especially anything which might be considered an attack or might oppose the regime's policies (Al Dahan 2006). Dr Hashim Hassan talked about the limited options journalists had at that time: "There were not many options, either you praised and got rewarded or you kept doing your job to report the news without even a hint of creativity" (Hassan, 2010).

2-14 Abuse, Imprisonment and Executions of Journalists

During Saddam's era there were 31 execution articles in the constitution, and many of them were used to persecute journalists and the educated elite (Al Windi, 2008).

The first event was in 1969, a few months after the Ba'ath Party assumed power. Two well-known journalists were arrested, then executed. Abdulaziz Barakat and Abdullah Al Khayat were accused of spying for the benefit of a foreign country. The Pan-Arab writer and the former chief editor of many official newspapers and magazines, Amir Al Hilo, doubts such accusations: "Spying was a ready accusation in the Ba'ath Party, many were executed because of such accusations and there was no evidence or proof except for the Ba'ath Party's claims" (Al Hilo, 2010).

Mohamed Aref remembers this event and says that such claims would be made against anyone who confronted the Ba'ath Party: "I remember that Barkat's family mentioned that Abdulaziz was executed because he published a book called 'The Black Guards' in reference to the first Ba'ath coup in 1963" (Aref, 2010). Other well-known journalists were imprisoned and sometimes vanished, like Aziz Al Sayed Jasim, who was one of the well-known writers and thinkers. This kind of practice forced many journalists to leave the country for exile (Saleh, 2008).

2-15 Iraqi Newspapers Before the American Invasion 2003

In the last few weeks before the war, the main subjects covered by the Iraqi newspapers were the UN Security Council discussions about Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and the inspectors' reports about disarming Iraq. The headlines challenged the "super power" to prove that Iraq had WMD and claimed that if they tried to attack Iraq they would lose their credibility first and ultimately the war. One of the headlines, which can be taken as an interesting

turning point, asked for CIA agents to visit Iraq and investigate the information they had about Iraqi WMD. This invitation was the last attempt by the regime to avoid the war and any possible confrontation. But the United States and its allies were not ready to change their plans for whatever Saddam's regime would offer, as they saw the regime as the problem that needed to be tackled. The next chapter presents the media campaigns of Saddam's regime and the US administration. It also presents the situation the Iraqi press found themselves in during and after the 2003 invasion.

Chapter 3:

The War Campaign and the Collapse of the Regime in 2003

3-1 Introduction

The United States initiated an official move against Iraq in 1998, when Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act, signed by President Bill Clinton. This law gave the US government permission to provide funds to Iraqi opposition movements to help to topple Saddam's regime using any available means, including media campaigning.

In preparation the US government launched numerous media campaigns aiming to gather support for political change in Iraq. Despite providing huge resources, this change did not happen and the media campaigns had no effect inside Iraq. During the 2003 invasion, US propaganda failed to make Iraqis rise up against the regime, while the Iraqi campaign led by the former Minister of Information succeeded in maintaining internal law and order in Iraq until the last moments of the Saddam regime. The Americans came to the country with plans designed in a few days before the beginning of the war. There were not enough troops to impose law and order. Because they kept changing their plans, they created confusion that later had a negative impact on the US occupation of Iraq. The confusion included the US plans for the media. This chapter will explain the US media campaigns to gain Iraqi support to change Saddam's regime. How did the US government use the media to achieve such a goal? What kind of propaganda did the US-sponsored media and Saddam's media use during this confrontation? What was the landscape of the Iraqi press after the war? Did the US prepare any plan for the Iraqi press after ousting the Iraqi regime?

3-2 The American Usage of Media Campaigns against Iraq

Previously, media outlets had been used as foreign policy tools during the Cold War between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. But they were also used widely against Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty which the US administration used to stop the spread of communism in Europe, had established a department for Iraq called Radio Free Iraq after the 1991 war (Isakhan, 2008). The US made a great effort to help mobilise the work of Iraqi oppositions. This included recruitment of Iraqis who could provide information to the American Intelligence, the Central Information

Agency (CIA).

Between 1992-1996, the CIA secretly commissioned Rendon Group to lead an operation to bring together a group of opposition players - to be named later as the Iraqi National Congress, INC, led by Ahmed Al Chalabi. The Rendon-INC's media campaign highlighted human rights abuses under Saddam Hussein's tyranny. One of the people who worked on that project, Francis Brooke, claimed that they were spending USD 40 million a year (Miller, 2004). The Rendon Group were making a healthy profit – up to 10% of the amount being spent per year. But after passing the Iraq Liberation Act, the resources being allocated to the Iraqi opposition increased to USD 97 million. This money was supposedly to help the INC to create programmes to administer Iraq during the transition period after the fall of Saddam, and then to prepare the ground for democracy in Iraq (Miller, 2004). The parties opposed to Saddam's regime received further support of USD 6 million to launch a television station - Al Hurriya ("The Freedom") - and a newspaper called Al Mutamar ("The Congress") (Isakhan, 2008). The editor-in-chief of Al Mutamar was Hassan Al Alawi, a well-known Iraqi journalist who described Al Mutamar thus: "It was a proper newspaper unlike the other opposition parties' newspapers in exile which were like leaflets. We were keen to make it close to Iraqis in exile and inside Iraq" (Al Alwai, 2010).

The newspaper, which was described by other journalists as being well designed, was printed and distributed in London and available in different places around the world, including the northern part of Iraq. The newsstands in the British capital London were getting the papers for free, and the owners of the kiosks sold it for one British pound sterling. The price varied from one country to another, but in Iraq the newspaper failed to pose a real challenge to the regime. Copies of the newspaper were available in the northern region of Iraq only, mainly because security checkpoints checked all material coming from this region. The circulation was nearly 70,000 according to Al Alawi: "This is a good rate of circulation for a newspaper in exile" (Al Alwai, 2010).

In parallel to the media effort, the political effort continued. The Congress allocated another USD 8 million to support opponents of Saddam Hussein in 1999. The fund was spent on bringing the opposition leaders together to work towards a single goal of "getting rid of Saddam Hussein's regime". Conferences and meetings were held in different places around the globe for opposition

leaders to plan their actions (Myers, 1999). The United Kingdom was part of an effort to start an extensive propaganda campaign to manipulate the Iraqi media landscape. The main aim of this campaign was to raise opposition to Saddam and to gain support from the Iraqi people for any American-British military action against Saddam's regime (Isakhan, 2008), similar to the American intervention in the Balkans.

3-3 The War Propaganda Campaign

The main propaganda campaign was launched when the US State Department supported a project called "General Diplomacy Group for Iraq". According to the American press, this body aimed to train the Iraqi opposition groups on how to respond to journalists' questions in a way that would support George W. Bush's plan to invade Iraq. Other media campaigns were carried out by research institutes and public relations companies and involved the recruitment of large numbers of researchers and writers, in addition to commissioning websites for the same purpose (Kadim, 2007).

The campaign had a broad focus on many different issues such as dictatorship, crimes against humanity, terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction. The scope depended on the resources that intelligence and opposition parties provided (Al Bayati, 2007). In a follow up investigation conducted by the US Congress after the war, it was revealed that 108 news stories were based on information provided by the INC's Information Collection Programme. This included President Bush's claims, which had suggested links between Saddam and Osama bin Laden, the Iraqi nuclear weapons programme and hiding biological and chemical weapons (Miller, 2004). The Secretary of the State at the time Colin L. Powell used some of these fabricated stories: On 5 February 2003, he presented a photograph of training camps inside Iraq, which purportedly belonged to Al Qaeda. But Mr Powell did not mention the location of the camps because they were in the northern part of Iraq, which was not controlled by Saddam's regime and was being protected by the American planes as part of the no fly zone area (Kull, Ramsay, and Lewis, 2003-2004). The minister also warned of the "danger", which Iraq represented, giving the example of the mobile biological weapons laboratories, later discovered to be a fabricated story by an Iraqi asylum seeker, a defector and engineer called Adnan Ihsan Saeed al Haideri (Al Bayati, 2007). The story appeared on the front page of the New York Times on the 20 December 2001. The INC organised interviews with Al Haideri

who was called “the curveball” by different media outlets (Miller, 2004). Iraq rejected the allegations saying that such laboratories did exist, but these were laboratories being imported through the UN and were used to check food quality not to manufacture biological weapons (Al Dulaimi, 2008).

These activities show a clear intention of the US administration to invade Iraq - aiming initially to get rid of Saddam Hussein's regime and then to draw a new map of the Middle East based on the “visions” of American neoconservative policy (Kagan, Schmitt, and Donnelly, 2000). One of the leading neoconservatives, Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Defence Secretary, organised a meeting with the Iraqi exiles to assist in planning a post Saddam government. One of the journalists who was part of this training programme was Dr Abbass Al Janabi: “This operation meant to demonise the Iraqi regime. Also, to prepare a group of journalists to lead the Iraqi media outlets after the fall of the regime. Many exiled journalists were being taken for training in the US” (Al Janabi, 2010).

On the other side, in late 2002, the Iraqi media was leading a propaganda campaign against the leaders of what was to become the coalition - especially George Bush and the UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Newspaper headlines referred to the “loyalty” of the army and the people to Saddam Hussein. Other headlines referred to the readiness of the armed forces for the battle to “defeat” their enemies (the Americans and their allies). The newspapers also covered the latest developments of discussions about the UN inspectors’ reports regarding Iraq’s arms programme and the UN searching process.

3-4 Beginning of the 2003 Invasion

On the night of 19 March 2003, the invasion started, with missile attacks directly targeting President Saddam Hussein - focusing on one of his farms in the Baghdad area, Al Dora, as he had been expected to be present there (Woodward, 2004). The American propaganda effort at the time was concentrated on sending specific messages to Iraqi people through radio and print material - which would be dropped from aeroplanes - instructing Iraqis to remain at home (Baltic Media Centre, Index on Censorship, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, and International Media Support, 2003). More than two million leaflets were dropped in Iraq on the 21 March 2003; most were thrown into areas that the Iraqi army was expected to be occupying, while some were dropped

over cities (Clark, and Thomas, 2005).

Other messages were broadcast through radio and TV stations using aeroplanes as transmitters, asking officers and soldiers to surrender (Westcott, 2003). The messages meant to paralyse the Iraqi resistance by concentrating on the huge technological gap between the Iraqi army and the capacity of the coalition forces. This was characterised by exaggerating the effect and destruction caused by the coalition forces' rockets, bombs, and missiles. The aim was to force the Iraqi soldiers to surrender even before the beginning of the battle (Al Bayati, 2007). The Americans used careful terminology, which reflected their "aim" to reduce the amount of casualties such as "surgical strikes" and "precision bombing" (Herman, 2005), while the name of the war was "Shock and Awe".

Inside Iraq, the media in general and the newspapers in particular confronted the American propaganda with challenging headlines in an attempt to give the reader "confidence in victory". The newspapers described the fighting of the US army as being erratic and far from disciplined after encountering strong resistance from the Iraqi forces (Al Joubori, 2005). Newspapers enjoyed reporting the fall of a US Apache helicopter, as such an event gave the media enough material for mocking US technology. Most of the Iraqi media and newspapers covered the story, which alleged that a simple farmer had shot down an advanced Apache using his old rifle (Al Samaraei, 2003). The Iraqi newspapers, in enthusiastic articles, urged the Iraqi forces and people to attack the American enemy, confirming that Iraqis would be the victors and the United States would be defeated in the end. Iraqi propaganda focused also on the civilian casualties as a way to demonise the coalition forces. One incident which was widely used involved a missile which exploded in a local market in Baghdad in the middle of the day and where the civilian casualties numbered nearly 50 dead ("Alef-Ba", 2003; Al Shama'a, 2003). The American and the British media officers denied the incident and claimed that it was an Iraqi missile, which missed its target. Although most of the western media echoed the coalition forces' point of view, Robert Fisk of the British Independent newspaper examined shrapnel from the location and found that it was clearly a US missile (Kumar, 2006).

Many Iraqi officials raised this issue in press conferences where they confirmed

that the US was breaching international laws and conventions, especially those which deal with armed conflict such as the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 - concerning the Laws and Customs of War. The former Iraqi Foreign Minister, Naji Sabri, often publicly repeated the message that America breached these conventions saying: "The aggression led to the death and injury of many civilians and displaced thousands of families from their homes, the war deprived the population of their basic needs and services such as transportation, telephone, electricity, all of these are war crimes and crimes against humanity and it is a human genocide, which is punishable under international law" (Al Joubori, 2005). Such statements would be covered by all newspapers, which also emphasised that America and Britain were two rogue states that were breaching international law, while the international community stood against the war. Newspapers would publish many statements from international figures, such the Pope John Paul II, to support this claim ("Al Qadissiya", 2003).

One of the old techniques used by the Iraqi media to confront US propaganda, was verbally undermining the enemy (America). The Iraqi officials started giving funny, humiliating and insulting nicknames to the US troops and the leaders of countries that participated in the invasion. The Iraqi press adopted these nicknames when referring to these groups or figures. For example, the US President George W. Bush was called "The criminal reckless Bush", while his Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld was branded "murderer". There were also other names meant to put down the enemy such as "mercenaries", "criminals", "outlaws", "foolish" and Ouloj[□] (infidels) (Al Joubori, 2005). Meanwhile, the American Office of Global Communications asked military spokespersons not to refer to Saddam's loyal troops as "Fedayeen" as it carries positive associations, they should be called "thugs", "death squads" or terrorists (Allen, and DeYoung, 2003).

3-5 The Iraqi Newspapers in the Last Days of the War

Iraqi newspapers were working until the last day of the war. According to one of the editors of the national Iraqi newspaper Al Jumhuriya, Dr Mohammed Bedawi Hassan Al Shamari, the newspaper editors were relying on news from agencies and other satellite channels such as Al Jazeera or CNN. "We took only what

* This was the same name which was given by the Sada Al Islam (The Islam Echo) newspaper to the British troops when they invaded Iraq during the First World War in 1914.

served the regime and the war purposes and I believe it was legitimate as we were facing a foreign aggression,” said Al Shamari (Al Shamari, 2011). According to Al Shamari, Al Jumhuriya newspaper was working normally throughout the whole war. Most of the published materials were propaganda and were part of the psychological warfare aimed at the enemy (the coalition forces). “Normally we printed 16 pages, while during the war we were publishing only 12 pages, all materials were related to the war,” said Dr Mohamed Bedawi Al Shamari (Al Shamari, 2011).

The editor-in-chief of the national magazine Alef Ba, Amir Al Hilo, described the contents of his magazine during the war: “We were covering only war activities, we did not cover any cultural topics because of the war” (Al Hilo, 2010).

The propaganda effort very much continued with the same momentum as before and the Ministry of Information kept working until they themselves were attacked by missiles on 30 March 2003. “The Minister of Information Mohammed Saeed Al Sahaf refused to evacuate the Ministry, he said that anyone who leaves the Ministry should carry a sign saying he/she is a coward. So people carried on working despite the great danger,” said Amir Al Hilo (Al Hilo, 2010).

Such steadfastness made many Iraqis trust in Al Sahaf - more than any news source. “None of the newspapers stopped; we were using the schools and we were running newspapers or magazines editorially from those places,” Al Hilo confirms (Al Hilo, 2010).

Warid Bader Salem, an Iraqi writer, recalls the headlines of Al Jumhuriya newspaper, which covered Al Sahaf’s statement: “Until the 8th [of April] all newspapers were available, and I passed by Al Jumhuriya newspaper where my friends were preparing for the next day’s edition with a big statement from Al Sahaf saying ‘Americans are burned at the walls of Baghdad’” (Salem, 2010). While Al Qadissiya newspaper’s editors were preparing the edition of the 9 April 2003, they learned some unexpected news. “We heard that the Americans were in the presidential palace but we did not believe it,” said Dr. Ahmed Abdul Majid, a former editor at Al Qadissiya newspaper (Abdul Majid, 2010). Dr Abdul Amir Al Shemari from Al Iraq newspaper described what happened on the 8 April 2003: “We were working in Al Iraq newspaper preparing the next day’s edition while the American troops were occupying Baghdad; when I told my colleagues, no one

believed me” (Al Shemari, 2010).

The propaganda efforts led by Al Sahaf inside Iraq were so successful, that it meant that Al Sahaf himself rejected the facts on the ground. “I told Al Sahaf that the American tanks were on the other side of the river, but he was not ready to believe me,” said Amir Al Hilo, Alef-Ba magazine’s chief editor (Al Hilo, 2010).

Al Hilo confirmed that Al Sahaf was inventing the news in the press conferences he conducted. “He did not have any source for the information; he was holding press conferences and he was saying whatever came to his mind” (Al Hilo, 2010). Al Sahaf was defiant in his claims that Iraqi forces were defeating the Americans and their allies. But most of what he said became a headline and was reported in the following day’s newspaper as solid fact. “The last headlines of the national newspaper Al Jumhuriya were quotes of Saddam’s speech and statements of the Minister of Information Al Sahaf, which denied the American claims to be in Baghdad,” said Dr Mohamed Bedawi Al Shamari (Al Shamari, 2011).

The French news agency AFP reported that many bought “souvenir copies” of the four official national newspapers on 8 April (Feuilherade, 2003), but a copy of Al Qadissiya newspapers shows it was printed on 9 April 2003. (“Al Qadissiya”, 2003).

3-6 The Fall of Saddam’s Regime

On 9 April 2003, Iraqis were following the war developments as the Minister of Information Mohammed Saeed Al Sahaf held his last press conference near the Palestine-Meridian Hotel in the central part of the Iraqi capital. He insisted that the coalition forces were “defeated”. In a few minutes, the whole scene changed: the American tanks appeared suddenly in Baghdad and moved into Al Firdous Square near the Palestine-Meridian Hotel. The coalition tanks and the American soldiers took over the whole area and the minister disappeared. In an orchestrated scene, one of the many statues of former Iraq dictator Saddam Hussein was toppled as a symbolic declaration of the fall of his regime - ending the Ba’ath Party ruling (Rutherford, 2004).

The fall of Baghdad to US forces spelt a phase of complete anarchy and chaos

for Iraq. Official offices and buildings were looted and burned on a large scale. Universities, hospitals, public libraries and archaeological sites suffered from this mass looting and destruction. Looters targeted everything they could grab from these sites including Saddam Hussein's palaces, his family villas and those of other senior officials who had fled. It was a quick collapse of the regime, which many observers did not expect (Dobbins, 2003). This situation broke up the Iraqi state, while the media outlets disappeared. There were no newspapers; official radio had fallen silent and TV signals suddenly ceased. On the morning of 10 April, Iraq woke up without the Republic's official newspapers: Al Jumhuriya, Al Qadissiya (the mouthpiece of the army), the Ba'ath Party publication Al Thawra newspaper and Al Iraq newspaper (Thamir, 2008).

The dissolution of the state institutions after the fall of the regime was an unexpected development as mentioned above, but it was also the moment that ended the heavy censorship of the media. The monopoly that Saddam Hussein's regime had on publications and other media outlets no longer existed. "When I saw the statue falling I did not believe it, I was wondering if it is a joke or it is not true, but I was happy that finally we could write what we want without fearing the regime," said Iraqi journalist and writer Warid Bader Salem (Salem, 2010). Meanwhile journalists who lived in exile did not believe that it could be the end of their suffering away from their country. "I was sitting watching on TV what was happening, when the statue toppled, I could not move, I was silent for a while, I can not describe how I felt," said Jumaah Al Hilfi, an Iraqi journalist who had lived in exile for two decades (Al Hilfi, 2010).

Suddenly access to information was not under the official control of security agencies anymore - it became available for everyone (Thamir, 2008). People suddenly found themselves able to access anything without fearing the reaction of the regime's agents. People, including journalists, were free to debate and to say what they liked about the fate of their nation (Price, Griffin, and Al Marashi, 2007). In few days, the controlled media propaganda system was replaced by many other outlets, satellite channels, printing presses, and foreign news, all of which became legal and available for all. Individuals were also able to launch any kind of privately owned media outlet (UNESCO-IREX, 2006). The media environment in Iraq had transformed from the most controlled regime's propaganda to one of the most diverse (Isakhan, 2009). Iraqi streets, bookshops,

kiosks, and newspaper sellers started seeing new publications which they had not heard of before. Titles like *Azzaman*, *Al Etehad*, *Al Taakhi*, were quite new for the young generation, but some of them were familiar to seniors, who knew them from before the Ba'ath Party assumed power 35 years before (Khudur, 2008). Many journalists were inspired by that moment and thought that the obstructions that had faced the Iraqi press throughout the years of the last century - especially the last three decades - had finally ended with the fall of Saddam's dictatorship and his one-party ruling regime. Many believed that there would be no "red lines" or instructions from a central unpredictable authority, which forced the media to move according to its wishes and objectives.

3-7 Iraqi Press Proliferates

The media landscape broadened dramatically and newspapers, magazines, and periodicals were launched by several different bodies. Political parties and religious groups, who were seeking to expand their base of supporters, launched many publications. A considerable number of those newspapers were issued in Kurdistan after 1991, but they moved to Baghdad after the collapse of the regime. At the same time many individuals aspired to establish influence in the new regime after years of deprivation from political activities. Other groups of rich merchants and tribal leaders, who were capable financially, launched newspapers hoping that their voices would be heard. For example, *Al Rabetah* ("The Connection") newspaper represented the national gathering for the sheikhs and tribal leaders in Iraq ("*Al Rabetah*", 2004). The occupation forces joined those groups by issuing their own publications or funding other newspapers (Al Azawi, 2008). Baghdad set the biggest example of media expansion, but other provinces witnessed the same phenomenon on a smaller scale. This flourishing media environment provided work opportunities for many writers, reporters, editors, photographers, administrators, technicians and many others who worked in the media field (Thamir, 2008).

Observers believe that this flood of publications was the result of pressure and the severe restrictions set up by the previous regime. But historians referred to many occasions where Iraq had witnessed such explosions in the number of newspapers at different stages of its modern history. This increase in the number of media outlets was usually associated with big political change. A clear example was the number of newspapers after the announcement of the Ottoman Constitution reforms in 1908. The same thing happened after establishing the

monarchy in 1921. Whilst in the wake of World War II until the end of 1954, when the government cancelled the licences of newspapers, the number of publications was 255 newspapers and magazines, conversely, the number of periodicals after the founding of the Republic in the 1958 coup reduced to just 65 newspapers (Al Azawi, 2008). Specialists considered this increase in the number of outlets as a healthy sign that the situation was moving towards a democratic and free society (Al Qazwini, 2004). But the dramatic increase in the number of publications in the whole country slipped into a media anarchy, which was expanding without any tangible plan (Al Khafaf, 2006). The journalist and Baghdad media college professor Dr Rasheid Hussein Alwan (2010) described the situation: "It was not the right environment for proper newspapers, it was not organised at all."

3-8 The Formation of the New Iraqi Press

The enthusiasm of the Iraqi journalists for building a free press was reflected in the newspaper market, which was showing vibrant journalistic activities. It matched the US administration's propaganda plan to leave the door open without putting any restrictions or conditions on starting new publications. The plan was to show the world one of the manifestations of "freedom and democracy", by suggesting that it broke one of the biggest constraints of the Ba'ath regime (Jasim, 2009). This started earlier when the British and the American forces began distributing the Azzaman newspaper to Iraqis after seizing areas under their control. The troops were also distributing flyers containing messages from the coalition leaders Bush and Blair.

The first issue of Azzaman entered Iraq on 8 April 2003 and it carried a small reference saying "Basra edition" under the title of the publication. The newspaper was distributed in Baghdad and Basra, Nassiriya and other southern provinces of Iraq (Al Mljawi, 2009). Azzaman was not left alone for long; quickly other newspapers of the Saddam oppositions moved into Iraq, especially those that were printed in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The mouthpiece of the Iraqi Communist Party, Tareek Al Sha'ab ("The People's Road"), was one of the early newspapers that hit the streets of Baghdad. "When the regime collapsed we moved to Baghdad, and we started publishing there," said Mofied Al Jazaeri, the editor of Tareek Al Sha'ab (Al Jazaeri, 2011). "Our newspaper was weekly instead of monthly. We were writing the material in Baghdad, then we printed it in Kurdistan, then we brought the copies back to Baghdad, but we thought it was

difficult, so we moved permanently to Baghdad” (Al Jazaeeri, 2011). Other newspapers decided to leave Kurdistan permanently and move into Baghdad, like Nedaa Al Mostaqbal newspaper (“The Future Call”). “When we launched our newspaper on the 20 April in Baghdad it was a daily publication, but was temporarily only four times a week,” said Ali Eijam the newspaper’s editor (Eijam, 2011).

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan gained control of the printing house of Al Iraq newspaper to launch their publication, Al Etehad (“The Union”) - it issued a green coloured edition number 539 from there (Taqai, 2007). “It was Al Iraq until the 8 April, but on the 10 April the newspaper was published as Al Etehad. It was in only twenty-four hours that the newspaper changed its political path,” said Dr Abdul Amir Al Shemari, a former editor of Al Iraq and later Al Etehad newspaper (Al Shemari, 2010). “Everything was available to launch Al Etehad: the whole press machines were ready, staff were ready, only two people were changed, the editor-in-chief and the directing editor,” Dr Abdul Amir Al Shemari added (Al Shemari, 2010).

The other major printing house for Al Thawra (“The Revolution”) newspaper was seized by the Iraqi National Congress, who then launched Al Moutamer[□] (“The Congress”) (Al Mijawi, 2009). Other local journalists and intellectuals initiated attempts to establish their own private newspapers. Publications from the neighbouring countries started appearing on the streets of Baghdad, such as the Saudi-financed newspaper, Asharq Al Awssat. In addition, Iraqi newspapers that had been printed abroad, such as Azzaman, established offices in Baghdad.

The new media outlets became an arena for political debates characterising people’s different views about Iraq’s post-invasion era. Political parties and individuals who were hoping to play political roles in the new Iraq launched many newspapers. There were also profit-driven newspapers that became popular as they used a tabloid style in their approach, for different issues in the country (Zanger, 2005). The financial value of these newspapers varied according to the publishers and the amount of funding the publication received. Not many were experienced in designing newspapers so it became a good business for those who were working for the former government newspapers. “We were designing

□ Al Mutamar Newspaper was a totally new publication and the previous London edition had no ties with the new one which was launched in Baghdad after the fall of Saddam’s regime.

several newspapers from our small offices. For example Hamid Al Gailani's office was in charge of 15 newspapers everyday," said Sabah Muhsin, a former graphic designer from Al Jumhuriya newspaper (Muhsin, 2011). In most cases newspapers were poorly structured, although there were a few adequate to good publications, reflecting the quality and experience of people who were entering the media field. "No-one was using computers to design a newspaper, but in September we started using computers in our design," said Sabah Muhsin of Al Destor (Muhsin, 2011). Most of the new publications' owners were non-journalists: they were traders, entrepreneurs or ambitious individuals (Jasim, 2009). These newspapers covered diverse news content such as religious, political, economic and cultural issues, which were mostly prohibited under the repressive regime of Saddam Hussein. Nearly 150 newspapers appeared on the market in quick succession, raising the hopes for more press freedom in Iraq (Hun-Shik, and Hama-Saeed, 2008).

3-9 Free Press or Media Anarchy?

A free press is one that enjoys the freedom to express and communicate ideas, freedom from prior restraints on publishing, and freedom from censorship. Press freedom comes as a result of freedom of speech, which is considered an essential element of liberal democracy. A free and pluralistic press would serve the public's right to access information related to different communities in their society. It would also assess the performance of government institutions, and would play the role of public watchdog and advocate (Article 19 and UNESCO, 2006). This free press would be expected to be a public platform for debate, but this in turn requires a certain standard of journalism that would hold journalists accountable if not followed. This press would be responsible for promoting tolerance and reconciliation between different communities within the same society.

The press has failed to meet these standards and requirements in some developing countries that experience conflicts. Besides Iraq, examples include the Balkans and Afghanistan (Sinjari, 2006). In order to attract readers and to stay in business, and because of a lack of professionalism, some newspapers in Iraq used sensationalist language in their coverage. Rumours were exaggerated and presented as hard facts on many occasions. This kind of irresponsible reporting made the public question the credibility of the newly launched Iraqi press. Such phenomena are considered by media experts to constitute media

“anarchy”. “Freedom-disorder” could mean the same thing: whether the press covers something, or avoids it, it would lead to the same result, as topics would not be read or believed by most of the public (Sinjari, 2006).

3-10 The US Project for Iraqi Media

As mentioned before, the American administration led by George W. Bush did not follow the previous Clinton administration’s model of managing post-conflict media in Bosnia or Kosovo when the State Department was in charge of the Balkans. Instead, the US strategic planners adopted a post World War II model of direct military administration, similar to the occupations of Germany and Japan, to stabilise Iraq. For the first time since 1953, the Department of Defence and the Pentagon were in charge of building or rebuilding everything in post-war Iraq including “free” media (Rohde, 2005). Part of the invasion plan was “how to deal with the media in Iraq after toppling the Ba’ath regime” (Kadim, 2007). Training programmes were designed and introduced for Iraqi journalists to help them to run different media outlets and to ensure that the media allied to the US after the removal of Saddam Hussein.

With the end of the regime, the majority of reporters in Iraq were not prepared to handle the responsibilities of a free press (Schaper, 2003). The US claimed publicly that they were willing to rebuild Iraq’s national broadcasting system, including creating one national newspaper. The idea was to create a public broadcasting system, which included two television channels, two radio channels and a newspaper (Rohde, 2005). Media development experts raised their doubts about such mission saying: “Imposing a system like a Public Broadcasting Service in a country which was run by a savage series of dictators for a long time is impossible, it is a process which needs time and capable team to tackle such mission,” said Simon Haselock, a media expert and former UN spokesman in Kosovo (Haselock, 2011).

The talks, claims, and slogans about “Iraqis ruling Iraq” were not implemented and everything was controlled by the Americans’ advisers (Cockburn, 2006) within the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), which was a ruling body introduced by the Americans - responsible for rebuilding Iraq after the war. The head of ORHA was the retired general, Jay Garner, while the director of the Iraqi Media Project under ORHA was Robert Reilly (Schaper, 2003). Jay Garner and his team arrived in Baghdad on the 21 April 2003

escorted by many Iraqi and non-Iraqi advisors. On the 7 May, the US Ambassador Paul Bremer III, a former head of the National Commission on Terrorism, replaced Jay Garner, while ORHA was replaced by the CPA which was another ruling body to administer all affairs of the occupied Iraq (Polk, 2006).

George W. Bush titled Bremer as Mr “Can do” who “goes with the full blessings of this administration”. Bremer, a supporter of the neoconservatives, (Polk, 2006) explained that the aim of creating any interim authority such as the CPA, or any institution for governing Iraq, was to show the Iraqis and the world the seriousness of the US administration about leaving the country, and that it was not determined to stay in Iraq for long time (Kadim, 2007).

Paul Bremer took the Iraqis by surprise by offering resolutions which were similar to that which the allied forces agreed in occupied Germany after World War II. Many institutions were dissolved by CPA order number 2, starting from the Iraqi army and the security forces. They disbanded the Ministry of Information on 23 May 2003. This meant abolishing all media networks and all newspapers, which were issued before and during the former regime. Many experts agreed about the negative effect of this order on the media sector and on Iraq. One of the journalists affected by this order was Dr Eiman Abdulrahman. “It was a big shock for us when they dissolved the Ministry of Information because we were in an institution which was similar to any other institution like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we were part of the state not the government,” she said (Abdulrahman, 2010).

3-11 The First Iraqi “National” Newspaper

The US administration wanted to issue an official newspaper immediately after the collapse of Saddam’s regime. It was agreed with Hassan al Alwai - the head of the opposition’s newspaper Al Mutamar - to launch such a newspaper, but Al Alwai claimed it was his idea in the first place: “I was thinking of launching a newspaper a long time ago which was called to be called Sumer” (Al Alwai, 2010). The senior journalist wanted it to be called Al Kufa in the beginning, but he changed it to Sumer following a friend’s advice. “Before the war, Hassan Al Alwai visited me in London and he told me that he wanted to launch a newspaper called Al Kufa, so I said that Al Kufa represents a specific sector in

Islamic history (The Shi'a) and sectarianism is a big concern, so I suggested another iconic Iraqi name such as Sumer* and he agreed," said Ahmed Mehana, Al Alwai's editor for Sumer (Mehana, 2010).

Al Alwai went to Kuwait where he had meetings with Robert Reilly who was in charge of creating the media network in Iraq after the war. Ahmed Al Rekabi, who was working with Reilly and then became the Iraqi Media Network's television director, attended that meeting: "I met Hassan Al Alwai first in Kuwait where he was looking for a role in a media project, and then we met Robert Reilly. Hassan doesn't speak any English and I was translating to Reilly, so Hassan was asking for many expensive things, to which Reilly replied saying 'We are not Saudi Arabia'" (Al Rekabi, 2008). "After few meetings between Reilly and Al Alwai, they reached an agreement to publish Sumer after printing it in Kuwait," he added (Al Rekabi, 2008).

Sumer was a daily political publication with a printed slogan that said, "Iraq for Iraqis". The first edition was printed on 25 April 2003, in 12 pages, broadsheet size and printed on white paper. Only the first and last pages were in colour. The newspaper was printed in the Al Ressalah print house in Kuwait.

In the information column of page 11, Sumer described itself as a daily newspaper but it was initially published twice a week. The publisher and editor-in-chief was Hassan Al Alawi, while the managing editor was Dr Osama Mahdi. Sumer introduced itself in the first editorial as a newspaper without opinion or attitude. Sumer staff members were mainly Al Mutamar newspaper former cadres who had worked with Al Alwai. But many senior journalists wrote in the first edition such as Faisal Hassoun, a former chair of the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate; Jalil Al Attiyah the well-known Iraqi writer, in addition to two Jewish Iraqi writers - Mir Bassri and Samir Naqash (Khudur, 2008). But Al Alwai was less keen on doing his job as time went on. He recalls: "I noticed the anarchy and there was an occupation which I wasn't expecting. The Americans wanted the newspaper to be their mouthpiece, they wanted to know what we were going to publish and who would be writing, and they wanted to distribute it themselves, so I decided to leave," he said (Al Alwai, 2010). The senior journalist said that he was expecting a smooth transition – similar to those he had experienced in

*

Sumer is the name of an ancient civilisation that once inhabited parts of modern day Iraq.

the three previous military coups in Iraq, but this time he found a lot of obstructions: "When I arrived I discovered that I was not allowed to launch a newspaper in my name so I had to create a company in Cyprus to launch a newspaper in Baghdad which was something very odd" (Al Alwai, 2010). The newspaper stopped publishing after the 7th edition. "I met Hassan at the gate of the presidential palace and he told me that he was unhappy and he was leaving," Ahmed Al Rekabi said (Al Rekabi, 2008).

Al Alwai claimed in an interview conducted for this research, that he was the newspaper's owner and that he had decided to close it - an act which cost him a lot financially. However his colleague Ahmed Al Mehana said that the disagreements between Hassan Al Alawi and the new US administration of Iraq started when the CPA wanted the newspaper to be issued within Iraq, while Al Alawi insisted that the newspaper be issued from outside the country. "Al Alwai was supported by the coalition forces, but in Baghdad Hassan Al Alwai asked the Americans that Sumer's budget would be sent to his account in Cyprus and the newspaper would be printed in Kuwait and then the distribution would be in Baghdad," Ahmed Mehana said (Mehana, 2010). Al Mehana confirmed that the health of Sumer's editor was an issue, which made him hesitant to stay in Baghdad. "He was not keen on taking such adventures, because the health system in Baghdad was not great" said Ahmed Al Mehana (Mehana, 2010). Ali Eijam who was Baghdad correspondent for Sumer, said: "We were working normally and suddenly we were told that the newspaper was closing" (Eijam, 2011).

The US administration of Iraq had another arrangement with Ismael Zayeer who was asked to publish Al Sabah. The two plans conflicted with each other and the Americans wanted to stick with one of them, as will be explained below. "Hassan launched Sumer and Ismael Zayeer was asked to launch Al Sabah. One of these two newspapers should be closed down, and I think Ismael was willing to stay in Baghdad so his newspaper continued," explains Ahmed Al Rekabi (Al Rekabi, 2008). In another interview, Zayeer confirmed that Sumer was about to be Iraq's only national official newspaper. "After the second edition of Al Sabah, I received an order from the CPA to close the newspaper and I was fired. I asked why? The CPA said that the legal department was busy sorting out the problem with Sumer and Hassan Al Alwai because he complained that he was the one who had the

contract with the Americans to publish a national official newspaper, so they stopped me and I went home,” Zayeer said (Zayeer, 2011). But the situation changed suddenly. “Late in the evening of that same day, I received a phone call from the CPA asking me to come early next morning and I was told that Al Sabah should resume working as Sumer was being terminated. I was told that Hassan Al Alwai would be visiting me and I should give him a position in Al Sabah, but Hassan came and apologised because, I think, he got compensation from the Americans for them breaching the contract he had with them,” Zayeer said (Zayeer, 2011). Zayeer added, “Bremer and Garner did not like Sumer because it was not in touch with the people and they had to spend a lot to transport it by plane,” (Zayeer, 2011).

3-12 The American Plan to Create “Friendly” Media in Iraq

The American administration handed many projects in Iraq to the Pentagon. The American media project was highly motivated by a stated need to create a “friendly” local media environment. For this reason SAIC was selected to run the projects, on the basis that it had expertise in controlling the information that the public would receive. SAIC was concerned about the nature of staff who would be working on the project. For this reason, the selection process for potential candidates was influenced by the need to employ certain individuals who would defend the position of the United States by any means. The number of staff working on the project was limited and insufficient to undertake the massive job of building a media entity. The Americans’ plan to create a media entity was unrealistic and poorly designed. Meanwhile, the Iraqi press developed quickly and many newspapers were launched to flood the market with different kinds of publications representing different agendas. The next chapter explores the media chaos that followed, as Iraqis began to read new titles and new newspapers every day.

Chapter 4:

The Iraqi Press Under the American Occupation 2003

4-1 Introduction

The dramatic increase in publications, which was described as a press explosion, represented the new freedom that newspapers and other media outlets enjoyed after three decades of strict government control. Iraqi journalists began embracing the meaning of press freedom and implementing this freedom in their editorial judgements and journalistic activities (Hun-Shik and Hama-Saeed, 2008). Journalists reported freely on what was happening in Iraq. News and stories were covered based on facts not according to what the authorities wanted them to be shown as to the public (Hun-Shik and Hama-Saeed, 2008). But what kind of news did these newspapers cover? How were they distributed? What kind of categories could this new press be divided into? What were the main characteristics of these new publications? Why were the majority ethno-sectarian publications?

A few weeks before the American invasion, Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, said in an interview on American radio that: "The Iraqis are . . . by and large quite secular. They are overwhelmingly Shi'a which is different from the Wahabis of the peninsula, and they don't bring the sensitivity of having the holy cities of Islam being on their territory" (Cole, 2003, p.544). Many pundits tried to predict the future of Iraq, some saying that it would be another Vietnam, some that it would resemble Somalia, others the Balkans, but the closest parallel to what happened afterwards in reality is Lebanon. Although religious fundamentalists had previously existed in Iraq, American policy had a significant effect in paving the way to the "Lebanonization" of Iraq (Hirst, 2006).

After 2003, much of media outlets' ownership was in the hands of competing political factions, reflecting the country's conflicting sectarian agendas. Iraqi media outlets started to use inflammatory language, which led later to incitement to violence instead of preventing it. The religious motives and differences among communities played a significant role in the events that occurred after the US invasion of Iraq. In order to understand why so many of the media outlets were religiously motivated, there must be an understanding of such divisions among Iraqis, and how they were formulated.

4-2 Ethnic and Sectarian divisions

A few days after the US occupation of Iraq, a large number of Shi'a pilgrims marched to the holy city of Karbala, to mourn the 40th day of the death in a battle at Kerbala in AD680 of Imam Hussein, grandson of the prophet Mohammed. It was the first time in decades that the Shi'a were free to practise one of their rituals without fear of being persecuted by the authorities. But at the same time, the event found the Shi'a reviving a religious identity that would later be their political one also (Steele, 2003). Soon after the Americans gave their recognition to the powerful central authority for the Shi'a, which is known as the Al Hawza Al Ilmiya - the supreme seat of Shi'a learning - headed by Ayotallah Ali Al Sistani. Al Hawza was able to make people walk in millions towards the holy shrines just a few days after the occupation, and it was also able to retrieve many of the looted possessions after calls to people to surrender anything they took from government offices to mosques. These signs of their power to rally large numbers of the Iraqi population show that a great deal of the society is not "secular", indeed that the majority are religious to a degree the Americans had not previously understood.

The Americans did not understand that Al Hawza had become strong only in the absence of the authority of the civil powers, and because the Americans dealt with it as an authority. If the Americans had imposed an efficient government from the beginning, as in Germany, Al Hawza would not have enjoyed such power. Equally, if the looting had been dealt with strictly, people would have recognised the Americans' authority.

On the other hand, it would not be right to deny that Iraqi society had become more religious than it had been before 1991. But in order to understand this change, we need to know what had produced it. In the late 1970s the Ba'ath Party massively persecuted the religious Shi'ites of the south, fearing the influence of the Iranian revolution 1978-1979. One of the biggest Shi'a political parties, which suffered seriously from the regime's campaign of brutality, was the Al Da'wa Al Islamiyya Party. The party, founded by Mohammed Baqir Al Sadr in 1958, aimed at establishing a Shi'ite-dominated Islamic state (Cole, 2003, p.545). Saddam executed Muhammad Baqir Al Sadr and his sister, Bint Al Huda, in April 1980. This execution made many Shi'a sympathise with the Al Da'wa religious-political movement (Davis, 2008). During the war with Iran, many Al Da'wa party members fled Iraq, to Iran and other neighbouring countries. In

1982, a Tehran-based group of Al Da'wa members split and formed the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. In addition, there was the Al Dawa Movement, and the Sadr Movement, but the main party remained separate from these sub-groups. But in contrast with the new system based in Iran, the mainstream Najaf-based religious leaders in Iraq, Al Hawza, led by Abu Al Qasim Al Khu'i (d. 1992), preferred to separate religion from politics. (Cole, 2003)

After the First Gulf War in 1991, one of the events most significant to the shaping of Iraqi Shi'ite identity took place. On 1 March 1991, many Shi'ites in the south rose up against the regime. Although for a period they were able to control most of the southern part of the country, the regime moved swiftly to crush the uprising, in a particularly brutal way. Many were executed and buried in mass graves, while others were sentenced to death and hanged, or disappeared after being captured by the security agencies (Dawoody, 2005). For his part, Saddam consistently blamed the Shi'a for the uprising, saying that it was not a spontaneous Iraqi rebellion, but a plot sponsored by Iran. Following the First Gulf War, the situation inside Iraq changed very radically as a result of the collapse of the economy and the national education system following the imposition of the United Nations' punitive sanctions. Many Iraqis turned inwards to religion as a means to survive the hardships they were undergoing and the unpredictability of daily life (Davis, 2008). Increasing numbers started to go to the mosques to get food or medicine, and also moral support. In some cases however such charitable support was in fact politically motivated. Saddam himself became more religious, and displayed this publicly when, for instance, he later closed bars and nightclubs all over Iraq. He launched a so-called "faith campaign", and the government started to support at least some religious activities.

Under the sanctions, Islamic feeling was revived among many in the population at large. During the 1990s, Muhammad Sadiq Al Sadr (a cousin of Muhammad Baqir Al Sadr) started to gain popularity among much of the Shi'a youth. In 1999 Muhammad Sadiq Al Sadr was assassinated with his two sons by militants in the outskirts of Najaf. Accusations were made against the regime, while the regime accused a group working for Iran (Cole, 2003, p.553).

Outside Iraq, after 1991, the United States, and many neighbouring countries of

Iraq, started to support the anti-Saddam opposition parties. Many of these parties represented different political and religious agendas, but mostly they were based outside Iraq, claiming to have covert supporters inside (Davis, 2008). One of these was the Islamic Party, considered the Iraqi branch of the Muslim Brotherhood or MB (Al Ikhwan Al Muslimun), the most important mainstream Sunni Islamist movement in the Arab world. In 1991, the Brotherhood decided to re-establish the party within Iraq from the United Kingdom, using its old name “The Iraqi Islamic Party” (Fuller, 2003).

After the collapse of Saddam’s regime on 9 April 2003, the mosques became centres of power. The clerics started organising charity work in the neighbourhoods, such as cleaning the roads, organising traffic and preaching against the massive looting of government institutes. In the meantime many political parties, including the religious ones, started to return to Iraq. Many of these parties were either hosted or financed by neighbouring countries, mainly Iran and the Gulf states: Iran supporting Islamist movements among the Shi’a, while Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states sought influence among Sunni Islamists to confront the Iranian influence (Davis, 2008).

Religion thus became subject to power struggles among many factions to gain political influence. Religious ideas were widely used to mobilise and achieve political goals (Davis, 2008). But what about secular Iraqis? These were often torn between their belief and their background. For example, to be “Shi’a” or “Sunni” outside of any religious context is difficult, since it is primarily religion that would make you either Sunni or Shi’ite. If any “secular” Shi’a or Sunni were to ignore their religious or even tribal background as part of their identity, they would win little support, but if their self-presentation included their sect and maybe their tribe, they would gain the support of the community and the sect they belong to.

In the years following the invasion of 2003, divisions between Sunni and the Shi’a increased among both secularists and Islamists on each side (Fuller, 2003). This division came as a result of religious extremists’ attacks on both communities. The Shi’a were accused by radical Salafi Jihadists such as “Tawhid and Jihad” (which later became “Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia”) of being US collaborators, which made it legitimate to attack them. As sectarianism increased, many moderate Shi’a found it hard to be segregated from belonging

to their community. Non-radical Sunni experienced the same situation, when Shi'a militias were attacking Sunni neighbourhoods during the civil war following the bombing of the holy Shi'a shrine in Sammara in February 2006. Whereas in the past, religious parties had gained their popularity from opposing Saddam's regime, by the time of the first national elections in 2005 some Islamic movements were gaining popularity at the expense of national unity (Fuller, 2003). More importantly the American administration of Iraq gave legitimacy to such ethno-sectarian movements when they were part of forming the Iraqi Governing Council as will be explained later.

In a multi-ethno-sectarian society like Iraq's, the media would be expected to reflect the diversity of the population, and to be a platform for reconciliation. Instead, the ethnic and sectarian-oriented media that appeared and expanded after the war were raising fear among the community each was representing with regard to other communities within Iraqi society. The emergence of such media has deepened the political and sectarian disagreements among different communities at the expense of national unity.

4-2-1 Iraqi Newspapers: Different Names, Directions and Styles

Publications carried different kinds of names, new and old, serious and funny. Titles like Al Shahed ("The Witness"), Al Akhbar ("The News"), Al Haqiqa ("The Truth"), and others. Some of these newspapers were published with the same names as well-known newspapers published in the past during the monarchy and the first republic such as Al Manar ("The Beacon"), Al Belad ("The Country"), Habsboz (a funny Iraqi nickname), Azzaman ("The Time"), and other names (Al Ruba'e, 2007).

However, because of the return of religious political parties from exile and the ones formed inside Iraq, the printing market witnessed a relatively high stream of religious books, circulars and leaflets, and the newspaper market was no exception. For example, the newspapers Al Bassaaer ("The Foresight"), Anssar Al Hawza ("Supporters of Al Hawza"), Al Daawah ("Advocacy"), Al Bayan ("The Declaration"), Al Majles ("The Council"), Qamar Bani Hashem (nickname for Imam Hussein), Al Kufa (name for a city), Sawt Al Jumaah ("The Sound of Friday"), Al Wefak Al Islami ("The Islamic Harmony"), and others represented different religious Islamic factions (Al Ruba'e, 2007). These publications mostly

asked to make Iraq into an Islamic state, which was the same demand many of these publications made when they were published in exile (Batti, 2006). Competing ideas among political factions emerged in the pages of these publications, which reflected a conflict of ethno-sectarian agendas (Al Marashi, 2007). For example Al Saah, headed by Sheikh Ahmed Al Kubaisi, is regarded as a platform for Sunni Iraqis. A newspaper like Al Da'wa represented the Al Da'wa Party, which is an Islamic Shi'a political party. Al Adallah is the organ of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which is another Shi'a party.

Rohan Jayasekera of the London-based "Index on Censorship" gives a reason for this boom of publications: "Iraqi media became very sectarian very quickly, not only because of the political situation, but simply because of the income to sustain the media there; they became reliant on political factions, who have the money" (Jayasekera, 2011).

Al Da'wa and Al Adallah did not criticise either the other parties or the occupation forces, unlike the anti-occupation agenda, which was clear in the newspaper of the radical Shi'a cleric Muqtada Al Sadr, Al Hawza Al Nateqa ("The Spoken Hawza") (Al Mijawi, 2009).

The market also witnessed the emergence of community and ethnic newspapers such as the Turkman Daily newspaper, Al Tayef Al Mendaee ("Mandaean Spectrum") newspaper and Sada Al Saurian ("Al Saurian Echo") newspaper (Al Ruba'e, 2007). In addition to the political newspapers, there were specialist journals. Examples of arts newspapers included Addasat Al Fan ("Lens of Art") and Eyoon Al Fan ("The Eyes of Art"). Sports publications were represented by such publications as Al Kora ("The Football") newspaper, Al Alem Al Riyadhi ("The Sport World") newspaper, and Al Safer Al Riyadhi ("The Sports Ambassador") (Al Ruba'e, 2007). Some newspapers specialised in economy and industry such as Al Aswaq ("The Markets") newspaper (Al Aswaq, 2003) and Mujtama Al Aamal Al Iraqi ("The Iraqi Business Community") newspaper ("Mujtama Al Aamal Al Iraqi", 2005). Many newspapers were very well presented, but the majority repeated old stories or fabricated news stories. Meanwhile, the columns in many publications were used for insulting others or for raising prohibited issues from before 9 April 2003 (Jasim, 2009).

Dr Nabil Jasim (2009) said in his book, "Extracts from Iraqi Press History after 2003", that not many publications survived this "shallow" kind of journalism. He added that the formats of the majority of newspapers were poor in general and lacked institutional style. They relied on a very small number of people, sometimes only one person who was the editor, sub-editor, and writer (Jasim, 2009). "There were few professional newspapers, the Iraqi press was still immature which is clear on what kind of coverage we have had, also the effect of the old taboos which could cause trouble to the journalist and the newspaper," said Jumaah Al Hilfi (Al Hilfi, 2010). The majority of these newspapers did not follow a specific writing style or editorial guidelines. Internet plagiarism became common among those publications, which would publish any article from any website without mentioning the writer's name or checking the credibility of the website or the article (Jasim, 2009). Sabah Muhsin, the former graphic designer of Al Jumhuriya newspaper, launched a newspaper with his colleagues: "We were four journalists and we launched a newspaper called Al Iraqi depending on the Internet," said Sabah Muhsin of Al Destor (Muhsin, 2011).

The phenomenon of publishing leaders' pictures continued. Many publications were putting the picture of parties' leaders or religious figures at the centre of the front pages, while other newspapers printed pictures of tribal leaders (Baltic Media Centre, Index on Censorship, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, and International Media Support, 2003; "Al Fadeela", 2003). This was happening on an almost daily basis which was a tradition inherited from the newspapers of the former regime (Al Ani, 2008). Many of the newspapers that were launched did not have an office, a building or even a specific location. Most of the material for these publications was created from the homes or work places of the people who published the newspaper (Al Ruba'e, 2007).

The Iraqi media experts attribute the increase in the number of publications to the low cost of starting or launching a newspaper or any publication. The amount of USD 1,000 was enough to publish a daily tabloid-sized newspaper of 16 pages. The publisher could put his/her name on the front page as the Chairperson of the Board or the General Director or publisher or the editor. Many had done this, but these publications existed for only a few editions (Al Azawi, 2008).

To illustrate the situation, for instance, Al Ahrar newspaper was a publication launched by Dr Abdul Jawad Al Karbalai in 1933 (Al Hassani, 1971), but it was re-launched by a trader in 2003. "I was in charge of Al Ahrar ("The Free People") weekly newspaper, which was launched by Mohamed Al Hamdani, who was a confectionery trader, on 26 May 2003, but the owner of the newspaper decided to close it because he considered it as a bad investment," recalls Sabah Muhsin of Al Destor (Muhsin, 2011). Al Ahrar described itself as an independent newspaper for "all Arabs" (Harmston, 2003), but after releasing a few editions like many other newspapers, Al Ahrar stopped.

There were many reasons for such a step - some publishers lacked the objectivity to build a journalistic name and in many cases it was an exciting venture for some individuals. Others wanted to bestow prestigious titles on themselves, for example the Chairman of the Board was often without a council or a management board. Sometimes the chief editor did not have any qualification or he/she had not ever written before. "Many traders like Mohamed Al Hamdani thought of having prestige in the society so he decided to launch a newspaper," explains Sabah Muhsin of Al Destor (Muhsin, 2011). There were also many newspapers that published lies and fabricated stories. These quickly disappeared, but this gave a negative reflection to the public, and credibility of the newspapers was damaged (Jasim, 2009).

Nearly 100 news publications and a handful of news broadcast outlets became available in Baghdad by the end of May 2003 (Isakhan, 2009). These numbers increased substantially throughout the year, all over Iraq. For example, in a small city like Najaf, there were more than 30 newspapers while the population was only 300,000 people (Whitaker, 2003).

4-2-2 Coverage of the New Press

The new publications mostly cribbed reports from the wires and major international and Arabic newspapers (Daragahi, 2003), but Saddam's pictures kept appearing on the front pages (Al Khalid, 2003). The new newspapers were obsessed with Saddam and the Ba'ath Party's ruling days. Articles about his atrocities and the discovery of mass graves filled the pages. Newspapers were breaking the old taboos about Saddam and his family. For example, one newspaper headline read: "Qussay Grabbed \$1 Billion and 70 Billion Euros

Before The War” (Daragahi, 2003). Others: “Saddam Entered Guinness Book of Records” and “Tariq Aziz Hungry and Dirty” (Al Aswar, 2003). Many newspapers, like Al Shahed, increased their circulation by using such headlines. “Al Shahed had great success because it was relying on exciting news and the scandals of the previous regime,” said Dr Hashim Hassan who was the chief editor of Al Shahed at the time (Hassan, 2010).

Newspapers started criticising the Americans and their plans in Iraq, but not in an overtly bold or challenging way. Al Ahrar (“The Liberal”) newspaper published a picture of the American President George W. Bush with a title, “Will you be the finest dream come true for all Iraqis as you promised or will you be occupier No 1?” (Al Ahrar, 2003). Al Adalah newspaper said in an article that Iraq would not gain security if the Americans stayed in Iraq. The article title read: “Security Has Become a Dream that will Never Come True” (Daragahi, 2003).

But the practices of the former regime were still affecting what journalists wrote and how they directed their criticism towards authority. The former exiled Iraqi journalist and the spokesman of the Iraqi Governing Council, Hamid Al Kifaey, described this kind of culture: “We don't have to criticise sacred values, especially in the beginning” (Daragahi, 2003).

The newspapers also contained entertainment content, but on the back pages. Stories of Arab and international celebrities were given part of the last page. Titles like “Sailor Sinbad Cartoon by Hollywood Celebrities’ Voices”, appeared in Al Sabbah Al Jadeed, and a picture of Brad Pitt topped the article (“Al Sabah Al Jadeed”, 2004). Another story: “An American Lady Celebrates Her 95th Birthday Riding Harley motorbike”, was located on the same page (“Al Sabah Al Jadeed”, 2004). Some reported bizarre stories such as the Al Thaqalain (Symbolic to Prophet Mohammed family) front page headline which read: “There is an Influx of AIDS Through Jewish prostitutes” (Oppel Jr, 2003), while Al Tajamu’a (“The Gathering”) newspaper headline was “Israel Trying to Get Back the Properties of the Jews in Iraq” (“Al Tajamu’a”, 2003).

Most of the newspapers, whether owned privately, by a political party or even the government, were recycling street rumours, conspiracy theories, and editorial comments that were predominantly not based on fact (Zanger, 2005). For example, Al Shams (“The Sun”) newspaper carried the title “Saddam in his

Sister-in- Law's Bed" ("Al Shams", 2003). Such provocative headlines helped those newspapers to hit sales peaks, but the circulation deteriorated and was soon unable to exceed more than a few hundred.

One of the factors which contributed to the failure of these newspapers, was a flood of big, state-backed or party newspapers, which began to offer more in terms of the number of pages, their appearance and cheaper price. Many newspapers that could not provide good content disappeared from the market. One strange factor, which affected circulation rates, was the number of pages. The newspapers that printed the largest number of pages compared to the lowest price possible would attract more readers. Readers were soon being drawn towards the government press as a "reliable" news source, unlike the private newspapers, which lost their credibility (Jasim, 2009). Most of the news pieces published by a large majority of the newspapers were highly opinionated - in a style normally used by columnists (Emara, 2009).

Most of these newspapers relied on new young writers who were not committed to any sort of party or authority. This helped to create a new generation of journalists, carrying different ideas and ready to break the inherited taboos (Sinjari, 2006).

4-2-3 Names and Titles Anarchy in the Iraqi Press

There have been some incredible paradoxes and ironic moments experienced by the Iraqi press after 9 April 2003. As mentioned before, many of the historical media names that had a memorable presence before the Ba'ath Party era began to reappear, but under new management that had no tie with the original founders of those newspapers. Iraqi law reserved the names for the concession owners, but when the Ba'ath Party closed those publications, these concessions were terminated. Azzaman ("The Time"), Al Hawadith ("The Events") ("Al Hawadith", 2003) and Al Manar were old titles, which reappeared, but the owners of the original concessions were either dead or their heirs were not interested in re-launching the publications. Some of these publications wanted to keep the connection with the original founder of the newspaper, like Al Manar. The newspaper referred underneath the title to its foundation by Abdulaziz Barakat in the middle of 1945 ("Al Manar", 2003). Such repetition of the old well-known titles was a clear attempt to attract readers' eyes by re-publishing familiar titles (Khudur, 2008). But for some families these titles became a historical

privilege and maybe legal heritage. In one event Dr Adnan Pachachi, a senior Iraqi politician, wanted to revive Al Nahdha ("The Renaissance") newspaper ("Al Nahdha", 2004), which was founded by his deceased father Muzahim Pachachi with Ibrahim Helmy in Baghdad in 1913 following the first Arab conference in Paris before the First World War. Dr Adnan Pachachi decided to re-publish Al Nahdha in Baghdad in late June 2003, as the mouthpiece for his political movement, the Liberal Democrats. However, another newspaper was issued under the same name, Al Nahdha, in Basra - it claimed under the title to be "the voice of the South" (Khudur, 2008).

The name of his newspaper was also an issue for Mr Hussein Sinjari, who published Al Ahalee ("The Public") newspaper in Kurdistan, which he launched in 2002 (Iraqi Centre for Information and Studies, 2008). When he moved it to Baghdad after the fall of the former regime, Al Ahalee was already the newspaper of the National Democratic Party, which had originally belonged to the founder of the party and the newspaper Kamel al Jadraji since the 1930s. The re-established National Democratic Party confirmed that it would not permit anyone to take the historical name of "Al Ahalee" to be the name of another publication. The party had already re-launched Al Ahalee to be its mouthpiece (Khudur, 2008; "Al Ahalee", 2004).

There were other similar clashes. There was more than one newspaper called Al Noor ("The Light"), Al Haqeqa ("The Truth"), Al Zawra ("The Heaven"), Al Khayma ("The Tent"), Al Akhbar ("The News"), Al Rassed ("The Observer"), and Al Raya ("The Flag").

To differentiate themselves from other newspapers, some added another word to the title such as Al Raya Al Iraqia ("Al Raya Al Iraqia", 2004). On the other hand there were many newspapers, such as Al Saah, which were split into two publications, so their readers would find two editions of the same newspaper. Edition number 14 of 18 June 2003 was issued in two editions, one of them read: "Al Saah: politically independent, mouthpiece for all Iraqis, issued on Saturday and Wednesday, editor and director, Neama Abdul Razak, issued by Al Mansur Publishing House"; while the other claimed to be "Al Saah: political newspaper, the mouthpiece of the United National Movement, published every Saturday and Wednesday. Chairman of the Board Dr Ahmed Kubaisi. Supervisor Dr Hashim

Hassan, editor-in-chief. Dr Abdel-Salam Al Samer”. Both editions had the same number of pages, colours, articles and design. “Many newspapers were splitting for many reasons, such as disagreements between the owners or the editors. Most of them would use the same name but they would add some words - like what happened with Al Shahed, when we launched Al Shahed Al Mustakil (“The Independent Witness”). But on other occasions the group who would leave the newspaper would insist on launching a newspaper with the same name like what happened with Al Saah,” said Dr. Hashim Hassan (Hassan, 2010).

There is no doubt that the troubles caused by this negative phenomenon serve only to confuse the reader, distributor and publisher (Khudur, 2008). Media experts criticised this phenomenon saying that it made it look as if the Arabic language has scarcely the vocabulary to choose an attractive new title (Khudur, 2008). The reason for this confusion was the absence of a responsible body or an authority to regulate the registration of the name of a media institution or a newspaper. In addition, the failure of the Iraqi Journalists’ Union to practise its role - as a result of the chaos that prevailed in all institutions of the Iraqi state - contributed to this situation.

4-2-4 Advertisements

Among the issues which handicapped the media sector in Iraq were illiteracy in business management, low professional standards and a lack of industry services and organisational skills. All of those factors needed to be overcome before it would be possible to build a strong free media foundation. Media outlets had been seen by society as propaganda tools, rather than businesses that could be supported by advertising (UNESCO-IREX, 2006). Most businessmen and even media professionals were unaware of the potential of advertising in generating income. There was a lack of understanding for the means to attract advertisers. In many cases the ministries, government institutes and even private companies would stop advertising in any newspaper that had criticised their performance, or published a story about corruption in their institution. In most cases newspapers became more dependent on political parties, government, or ethnic groups for sponsorship, instead of gaining financial security through commercial advertising (UNESCO-IREX, 2006). “The advertising market is not developed enough to think about sustainability for new entities,” said Jacky Sutton, director of IREX office in Baghdad (Sutton, 2011). Some independent newspapers attempted to establish financial revenue through advertisements.

The newspaper would assign editors to sell a specified number of advertisements or face redundancy. This kind of strategy led to a diminishment in editors' concentration and creativity - the newspaper might succeed in getting more advertisements, but it would lose out on quality. The owners did not differentiate between specialised employees in marketing, and journalists (UNESCO-IREX, 2006).

Government institutions and ministries started to rely on the "official" newspaper, Al Sabah, for advertising which was a heritage of protocol from the former regime. This was criticised by Al Mutamar newspaper saying that it was unfair to subsidise Al Sabah by giving it exclusive contracts for government advertising. This complaint highlighted how difficult it was for other newspapers to get advertisements, even for a newspaper like Al Mutamar, which was being backed by one of the political parties (Barker, 2008). However, publishing an official advertisement would put the newspaper under the influence of that government institute. "Since the main source of adverts was coming from the government, some newspapers were punished because they had published an article against a particular ministry or politician and even when they come to an advertising company like us, ministries would specify where their advert should be published or they could exclude a particular newspaper," said Hussein Ali, advertisement designer in Noor Al Sabah advertising company (Ali, 2011). This policy started affecting the size of the newspapers: "We were publishing in 12 pages because we didn't have financial support or revenues coming from adverts, because they commissioned people who are pro-government, pro-American or the ones they like," said Amir Al Hilo, the former Alef-Ba magazine editor and the current editor-in-chief of Al Eshteraki ("The Socialist") newspaper (Al Hilo, 2010).

Eventually, Iraqi ministries decided to launch their own publications, and they started using advertising space in those publications instead of in other national newspapers. Throughout Iraq's history, newspapers refused to publish "advertising" coming from the imperial or occupying powers, but after 2003 many publications printed advertisements commissioned by the CPA and the US army. "The public notices that condemning terrorism acts would be coming from the CPA or the US army and they would choose the companies or the newspapers they liked or those who they thought to be loyal, so it was up to them (army or the CPA) to choose who would publish these public notices," explains Hussein Ali, of Noor Al Sabah advertising agency (Ali, 2011).

Iraqi journalists confirmed that revenue generated from publishing public notices for the US army meant that the coalition fell into favour with some newspapers: "The Americans were trying to use these public notices as a means to gain the support of newspapers which were at the same time very keen on financial support. In order to convince the army to publish these adverts the journalist would present how much his newspaper was pro-American as he/she would get also some commission money on the whole deal," Ahmed Al Zubaidi said, (Al Zubaidi, 2011) a journalist at Al Qassim Al Mushtarak ("The Common Base") newspaper which was published in Baghdad ("Al Qassim Al Mushtarak", 2004).

4-3 Characteristics of the Press after 2003

There were many important issues in common among the huge number of newspapers, which were published after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime:

1. The financial situation of each publication or the entity it was representing was clearly reflected in the look of the newspaper. Some of them were elegant, with coloured pages, satin white paper, and professional graphic design, such as Al Hadath ("The Event") newspaper ("Al Hadath", 2003). The number of pages varied from eight to 12 pages containing different kinds of journalistic topics. Those publications were supervised by a professional cadre of writers and journalists, who had experience and skill. At the same time other newspapers were simple, printed on cheap paper and did not show professional journalistic values. They had low standards technically and editorially. Many grammatical and printing mistakes could be found on their pages - which demonstrated their lack of funding (Al Shimari, 2008). For example Sada Baghdad ("Baghdad Echo") newspaper numbered its edition on the 9 September 2003 as edition 6, but the newspaper gave number 6 as well to the edition that was published on the 24 September 2003 ("*Sada Baghdad*", 2003). Both copies were full of typing mistakes.
2. There was no official body to licence printed publications. Many Baghdad newspapers put in the heading "registered with the Journalists Syndicate Under [edition number e.g. 361]". So, a newspaper heading might read: "Al Manar Al Yawm, 2004, registered with the Journalists Syndicate, edition: 361". This kind of statement was endorsed to gain a degree of legitimacy (Al

Shimari, 2008). Newspapers in some provinces, however, received approvals for publishing from the local provisional councils (Jasim, 2009).

3. Most newspapers, including the official newspaper, Al Sabah, started either weekly or bi-weekly before becoming daily. Readers would find a note saying “published once/twice a week, temporarily” (Ashiraa, 2003). This would give the impression that the publication would be published daily after a while, but often this did not happen and the newspaper would later close due to lack of funding (Jasim, 2009).

4-4 Iraq’s Press Types

The print media that appeared after 2003 could be defined in terms of ownership: press owned by the Iraqi government; political religious/sectarian groups; ethnic political parties; and press owned by independent individuals or groups (Al Marashi, 2007). This classification could be narrowed in terms of freedom into “independent profit motivated press” and “politically motivated press”. The “independent profit motivated press”, which was being financed by Iraqi investors or private companies, enjoyed a large margin of editorial freedom and criticism. While, the other type of press, the “politically motivated press”, supported the attitude of the government, the political party or ethnic group it was representing, backing its ideology. In many cases there was a limit to the editorial freedom inside the publication. Such press would be used as propaganda tools for the government, party or the ethnic group and may have been used to attack other parties and individuals, spontaneously or following instructions. Images of certain government, party or ethnic leaders would be given space on the front page (Hun-Shik, and Hama-Saeed, 2008).

4-4-1 Politically Motivated Media

This type of press included:

1. The government or state press:

These are the publications published by the Iraqi Media Network, such as Al Sabah (“The Morning”) and Al Fayhaa (name of Basra city) (Al Ruba’e, 2007). These publications were not official according to the law, because they were published by “independent bodies”, but in terms of practicality these institutions and media outlets represented the official viewpoint (Jasim, 2009).

The government or state press can be divided into:

- A. The state-run newspapers: these are the newspapers or magazines

which the state supports being published. This group of newspapers were backed by money and influence because they reflected the view of the ruling authority. Al Jumhuriya ("The Republic") newspaper was an example during Saddam's regime, and Al Sabah ("The Morning") newspaper and Al Fayhaa an example after 2003 (Al Musawi 2008; "Al Fayhaa", 2004).

- B. The Official Newspaper ("Official Gazette"): the Official Gazette records the decrees, decisions, laws, minutes of Parliament meetings and statements issued by the governing authority of the state. In many countries including Iraq, legislation would be effective only after being published in the Official Gazette. This is a purely legal issue and content was published in a journal like Al Waqaa'a newspaper (Al Musawi 2008).

2. The partisan press

A huge number of partisan publishers invaded the market and demonstrated the competing ideas of the political parties. These represented different ideologies or different ethnic groups, and were desperate for power and position in the country (Al Qazwini, 2004). These kinds of newspapers had a blind loyalty to certain political parties or the ethnicity they represented (Hun-Shik, and Hama-Saeed, 2008). News coverage of the partisan press was focused on promoting their parties' ideologies and the views of the party or ethnic leaders in addition to covering their activities. As a political mouthpiece, these newspapers defended the actions or the decisions made by the parties and ethnicities they were representing, but at the same time attacked the opposition parties if there was a disagreement at any point (Al Ruba'e, 2007).

Publications of this type were funded by the party or the organisation which they represented. For this reason the partisan press continued whatever their losses, since each newspaper was sponsored by a party that needed the publication to serve its political interests. "The parties were using these newspapers to support their attitudes and decisions, so it not only lost credibility but professionalism," said Dr Rasheid Hussein Alwan (2010), a media professor from Baghdad University. "The readers were confused about certain issues, one newspaper praised and the other one criticised the same issue so the reader was puzzled about who to believe" (Alwan, 2010).

Ibrahim Al Marashi points out that various ethno sectarian styles evolved in the Iraqi Fourth Estate (Isakhan, 2009). There were newspapers being run or funded by ambitious individuals who aspired to become politicians, or ethnic and religious leaders and who wanted to gain some political influence (Coons, 2004; Fisk, 2003; Hun-Shik, and Hama-Saeed, 2008). This kind of publication could be considered in the same category - as partisan press - as it adopted a certain political agenda. But this kind of highly partisan press had a negative impact on the fragile post-war society (Al Qazwini, 2004).

4-4-2 Independent Profit Motivated Press

“Independent” was the most used and favourable term for new publications, even those that represented a political party or a certain group. The term “Independent press” has different meanings in different places in the world. In the West the press has long since gained its independence from government influence, it has fallen instead under the influence of big corporate businesses, and therefore “independent press” is considered as the alternative to the mainstream (i.e. corporate controlled) press, or as the press that covers areas which are being neglected. In this thesis, discussing the press in Iraq in 2003-2006, the expression “Independent press” is used to refer to the private sector press that is not influenced by any authority, i.e. the CPA or the succeeding Iraqi governments. For a long time, in the Middle East, much of the available press consisted of government-controlled newspapers, so alternatives would consider themselves, and would maybe be considered by the public, as “Independent” press. However, some newspapers would claim to be independent, but would be influenced by the government, and journalists would develop self-censorship and would still have to cover topics favoring the government.

In a democratic society an ideal press must be independent and free to take any editorial decision and able to resist external pressures. Such a press must be committed to the public interest, not to any policy of any party. To achieve such independence and freedom, the press must resist improper influence, and it must follow a culture of professionalism that ensures accurate, even-handed reporting (Berman, 2006). This research project considered the newspapers to be “independent profit motivated” if they were owned by the private sector, and not representing any political, ethnic or

religious group. Many newspapers were backed financially by political parties or religious sects and only claimed to be independent (Hun-Shik, and Hama-Saeed, 2008). The true independent publications are not associated with any third party, whether it is government or an institution with any political objective. However, in most cases these independent newspapers were subject to the interests of the funder, since they were not fully self-sufficient financially (Al Musawi, 2008). Those publications also made some revenue from commercial advertisements (Al Ruba'e, 2007). These journals often suffered from the pressures and threats by authorities. The options available would be, either to surrender to the pressurising current of the occupation authority or influential parties, or to stumble, suffer recession and reduce their effectiveness. Examples of this type of press are Azzaman ("The Time"), Al Mashreq ("The Sunrise"), and Al Mada ("The Range") (Al Khafaf, 2006).

The market also witnessed the flourishing of commercially motivated press and the "yellow" press** (tabloid style). Such publications were launched by journalists and businessmen for business reasons to make financial profits (Al Ruba'e, 2007). These publications had some success in the beginning, especially when covering the former regimes' scandals, but content was mostly rumours and news taken from the Internet. Al Yum Al Akiar ("The Other Day") newspaper reported that Saddam's intelligence service head would be leading the new intelligence service ("Al Yum Al Akiar", 2003). "In Al Shahed we were relying on the Internet and some reporters," said Dr Hashim Hassan who was the editor of the most successful tabloid Al Shahed (Hassan, 2010). The pages were full of reports of political or financial scandals, which helped achieve sales far higher than other newspapers (Thamir, 2008). Al Shahed was a great success in the beginning, but Dr Hassan, the editor of Al Shahed and Al Shahed Al Mustakil respectively, complained that independent newspapers could not compete with other politically motivated publications. "The whole market was corrupted by low priced newspapers which represented the political parties; unlike us they did not care about making any revenue or finding any resources since their main support was coming from the political party. For this reason independent newspapers like ours could not compete so they started to disappear day after day," Dr Hashim Hassan said (Hassan, 2010).

* Yellow press is representing the kind of journalism that aims to grab readers' eyes with exciting news and entertainment pieces, but usually not well researched or covering the facts as they are.

4-5 Newspapers Published by the US Army in Iraq

Between 2003 and 2005 the US led coalition “occupation” forces published many newspapers all over the country. The soldiers were distributing these free newspapers from the 9 April 2003 (Al Ruba’e, 2007). One of the best-known publications, issued by the US occupying forces in Iraq, was called “Baghdad Now” or Baghdad Al Aan.

4-5-1 Baghdad Now

Baghdad Now was a bi-monthly newspaper, tabloid size, printed with both colour and black and white pages. Different American units participated in providing the content for the “newspaper”, but the publication did not give the names of the Editorial Board. The newspaper, which was distributed free of charge, was divided into two halves, one half in Arabic and one in English. This first issue was launched on 1 July 2003 (“Baghdad Now”, 2003). The publication had 28 pages in its first edition, but the pages were reduced to 24 in the editions published thereafter. Most of the articles were written by American soldiers, but in some cases there were articles being published by American writers such as Hannah Allam of the Knight Rider Newspaper (Allam, 2004) and Kim Barker of the Chicago Tribune (Barker, 2004). The language of many articles, whether English or Arabic, was weak because of non-professional translations in both languages. The directing editor of Baghdad Now newspaper at the time, Uday Lutfi, confirmed that the newspaper was printed in large quantities - nearly 500,000 copies. Mr Lutfi was heading the team of Baghdad Now, which included another four writers. “My job was to check the material and then send the final copy of the newspaper edition to the US army. They printed it and distributed it,” said Mr Lutfi (Lutfi, 2011). But Uday Lutfi was dissatisfied with the work style in the newspaper: “It was the worst kind of journalism, each one of us would be writing one report and the rest of the articles were coming from the Americans, but being translated to Arabic, and we just put them in as they were,” said Uday Lutfi (Lutfi, 2011). The directing editor confirmed that the newspaper audience was meant to be American soldiers and Iraqis: “It was in English and Arabic, because it was targeting Iraqis and American soldiers. It was meant to help Iraqi people to know how to deal with the American soldiers. At the same time it helped the American soldiers to understand the culture of Iraqis and the issues the soldiers should be aware of when they are

dealing with locals,” said Lutfi (Lutfi, 2011). Many locals rejected the newspaper; it was also the cause for confrontation between the American troops and students of Al Mustanseriyah University in Baghdad. I recall an event when American personnel carriers and tanks surrounded the whole University of Mustanseriyah, because some students of the university were protesting by burning piles of Baghdad Now a few minutes after the American unit distributed them.

According to Uday Lutfi the newspaper would be left in piles in the morning in certain busy areas of Baghdad, but he believed this was the wrong policy: “I told General Martin Dempsey that Baghdad Now is not worth printing and I advised him to make it more Iraqi” (Lutfi, 2011).

4-5-2 Other Publications

There were many newspapers launched by the US military units directly. For example Rooh Al Huriya (“The Spirit of Freedom”), Sada Al Rashed (“Al Rasheed Echo”) and Al Huria (“The Freedom”). However, in many cases the US army sponsored publications like Al Iraq Al Yom (“Iraq Today”). This was a tabloid-sized, weekly publication, printed in colour, and published in eight pages. Under the name of the newspaper, it read: “Issued by a group of Iraqi journalists, editor-in-chief Israa Shakir” (Al Ruba’e, 2007).

4-6 Iraqi Press Expansion

Observers considered this burgeoning growth in news media outlets as a healthy step towards creating a free press, based on fair competition. The situation in Iraq was unique, as it was an occupied country and there were many conflicting interests of many parties within Iraq. For this reason there was no base for fair competition. It was hard for the Americans to exclude their need to confront the anti-American messages, while other political parties were trying to influence the public with their political agendas. But what kind of framework organised the work of those newspapers and publications? What kinds of reforms were introduced to the previously active legislation to guarantee the freedom of expression? The next chapter will cover the media legislation in Iraq and what kind of “reforms” took place after the toppling of Saddam’s regime.

Chapter 5:

The Publishing Legislation 1968-2005

5-1 Introduction

One of the aims of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was to create a “democratic” state that would be a “beacon” for other countries in the Middle East. One of the most important factors in any democratic state is “independent” media. The Bush administration wanted to show the world that Iraq after “liberation” would have such independent media. But assuming that free and independent media will help to establish democracy is not always the case in post-conflict countries. The US approach, based on such assumptions, did not consider adequately the complexity of Iraqi society (Putzel, and Der Zwan, 2005). After the end of the short war, media outlets became a centrepiece of the struggle between different factions in Iraq. In order to gain popularity among certain religious or ethnic groups, many media outlets escalated hatred and spread fear against one another. In addition, the pre-conflict abuse by the former regime was used to inflame internal ethnic-religious differences, and this could be considered as providing motives for an escalation towards civil war (Erni, 2005). This raises the question, “To what extent should foreigners intervene in post-conflict society to build media space?” The American intervention in Iraqi media space was motivated by three goals: firstly, serving the US message that it was creating a democratic state; secondly, serving the military goal of winning support from the public; lastly, serving as a peace-keeping mechanism to achieve the stability of the country (Price, Griffin, and Al Marashi, 2007).

During the Ba’athist period, although different communities in Iraq may have suffered discrimination, the media had rarely used the terms “Shia,” “Sunni” and “Kurd” in a negative manner to refer to any part of Iraqi society, as this would harm national unity (Al Marashi, 2007). Conversely, the Iraqi media after the US invasion in 2003 developed the capability of reinforcing the country’s ethnic, and religious-sectarian divisions. Most of the media outlets with ethno-sectarian agendas were granted access to funds provided by the political parties (Al Marashi, 2007). The media space was soon filled with locally launched newspapers, and others representing political parties returning from exile. Just as much as the Iraqi political parties’ opposition movements abroad, their press organs in exile had been scattered and highly sectarian. Saad Al Bazzaz described the press in exile acerbically, saying: “Unfortunately, the newspapers in exile are not radically different from the official press in Iraq and harbour the

same totalitarian style. Each paper expresses just one opinion and disqualifies all others from the outset” (Cazes, 2003).

In a fragile society like Iraq there was a need to impose control on the media. Some attempts were made by Major General David H. Petraeus to control the output of TV in Mosul. He had concerns that local politicians and the returning exiles might be saying things that incited violence. The 101st commander said: “I want to be certain that nothing is shown that would incite violence in a city that was extremely tense when we took over two-and-one-half weeks ago, and which still has folks who are totally opposed to what we’re doing and are willing to do something about it.” He added: “Yes, what we are looking at is censorship [...] but you can censor something that is intended to inflame passions” (Price, Griffin, and Al Marashi, 2007). Such steps were widely criticised by many media experts, who assumed that the norms that function so well in established, stable democracies would also do the same in a society coming out of long-term conflict and dictatorship. Those who would like to apply such norms fail to distinguish between stable democratic societies and a democratising society. Such experts argue that media outlets could employ free expression to promote tolerance and understanding among the different factions. This role of the media is crucial in post-conflict situations in order to put in place a solid base for reconciliation and to prepare for fair democratic elections. But since democracy did not exist in Iraq, the US media experts and war planners should have recognised that Iraq needed to be democratised first. For pragmatic reasons democratic characteristics should be established first before implementing the norms of a free press.

Moreover, the typical “hands-off” approach to media taken by the US authorities did not work because the media in Iraq did not have any sense of how to serve the public interest, or awareness that their reporting should be subject to factors such as independence and accuracy. For these reasons, in post-conflict circumstances there will be a risk that the media will play a role in increasing violence, rather than it being eased by expansion of the media output. The conditions in a transitional Iraqi society did not reflect democracy, and consequently the application of democratic media norms proved to be ineffective. For this reason, strict adherence to such otherwise laudable norms should not have been required. Even when the CPA did attempt to regulate the media to a certain extent, the order that they issued (order 14) failed to deal

effectively with challenges that needed a far more robust regulation system (Berman, 2007). A democratising nation's media regulatory framework is considered fundamental to promoting pluralism, and a way of ensuring independence. The people working on media projects in a post-conflict country must be given achievable goals, within a realistic deadline. This would allow media policy regulators to begin the work required to create a vibrant media sector (Article 19 and UNESCO, 2006). In the case of Iraq, the planning and the implementation of measures to regulate and promote a free, independent media were lacking.

Despite the absence of any law that could be implemented in practice after the collapse of the former regime on the 9 April 2003, the press law number 206 from as long ago as 1968 was still technically in force. This law prescribed that any new publication must be licensed first, but in reality new publications in Iraq were launched without being granted such permission (Al Ruba'e, 2007), while the Americans thought it was the best practice, unlike the severe restriction imposed in post-war Germany and Japan. There was a crucial need to reform these laws, but what kind of changes took place? Were there any efforts being made to limit media from inflammatory reporting that could incite violence in Iraq?

5-2 Preparations for New Media Legislation

In order to introduce new legislation to organise the media activities, an Iraqi/US working group of 20 Iraqi journalists was formed and participated in a conference in the Greek capital, Athens, on the 1 June 2003 (Hume, 2004). Internews Network, Internews Europe (sponsored by USAID), the UN, the European Union, and other non-governmental organisations had set up this conference. These non-profit organisations, which support "independent media" worldwide, aimed to help in drafting legal key points for a democratic media in post-Saddam Iraq (Al Mijawi, 2009). The conference hosted seventy experts from fifteen countries who contributed to the first draft of the press law in Iraq after the 2003 invasion (Hume, 2004).

One of the key participants was Simon Haselock, a former Media Commissioner in Kosovo and a spokesperson for the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia. He was the principal architect in drafting the final guidelines (Price,

Griffin, and Al Marashi, 2007). Haselock, in an interview for this research, referred to an earlier conference that was organised in Cairo about the future of Iraqi media, which the Athens draft was based on. “In the middle of the war I was contacted by Internews, who had a contract with USAID to develop media entities in Iraq, to be part of a tight meeting in Cairo where I had written a framework for the media in Iraq based on the discussion we had in that conference,” Simon Haselock said (Haselock, 2011). Drawing on his experience in Kosovo and Bosnia, Haselock emphasised the need for a mechanism to gain independent media, allowing an impartial hearing and appeals process (Al Mijawi, 2009). “We produced this report which is known as the Framework for Iraqi Media,” said Simon Haselock (Haselock, 2011). The participants were supposed to submit these “Media guidelines” to the first elected parliament in Iraq in order to establish a legal framework for the new Iraq (Khudur, 2008). Hamid Ali Alkifaey, one of the Athens conference organisers, emphasised the importance of putting such guidelines in place: “You can't have new media without a new media law that clearly defines the relationship between the press and the government” (Daragahi, 2003). The representative of the US administration in charge of the Iraqi Media Project, Robert Reilly, asked to take the proposed framework back to Baghdad for further discussions with other key decision-makers. He emphasised that the critical questions that were being raised needed to be answered if the media were to be open and responsible in the “new” Iraq (Al Mijawi, 2009).

5-2-1 Legal Framework

The final guidelines from the Athens conference were issued in a report called “Framework for Change: Transforming Iraq’s Media Landscape”. This framework suggested a plan and recommendations for the legal and regulatory measures to be followed in the transitional period. The proposal also drafted a framework to prevent misuse of the freedom, which might affect the process of building freedom and democracy (Al Mijawi, 2009). The key proposals of the framework included:

- Guaranteeing freedom of speech, ending all kind of censorship.
- The creation of an independent broadcasting authority in Iraq, and regulation to facilitate the broadcasting frequencies (Hargrove-Simon, 2009).
- Penalties for media offences, ranging from apologies to the closure of the media outlet.
- Abolishing any licensing requirement in the law.

- The US interim governing authority (CPA) should guarantee the freedom to access all documents and decisions by the press or the public.
- Transforming the official media outlets, TV and radio into Public Broadcasting Services.
- The government newspapers to be turned over to private and independent owners (Hargrove-Simon, 2009).
- The subsequent laws should abolish imprisonment penalties because they are not suitable for charges that might be used against media (Jasim, 2009).

The conference urged the CPA to confirm that any regulations for the media would be subject to internationally recognised standards of human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Jasim, 2009). Many Arab journalists, union members and government officials attended the conference. But Iraqi journalists from inside Iraq did not attend the workshop, either for security reasons or because they rejected the idea of “helping” or collaborating with the occupiers (Price, Griffin, and Al Marashi, 2007). “It was difficult to get someone out of Iraq, because there was no air transportation, and communications were difficult after the war, although I did not think that we needed to get Iraqis from inside because free media has the same international standards. However there were many Iraqis at the conference who were living in the diaspora,” said Hamid Ali Al Kifaey, one of the conference organisers (Al Kifaey, 2011).

Based on this framework, The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the CPA assigned Simon Haselock to work on structuring media policies and regulations in Iraq (Al Mijawi, 2009). “I was contacted by the UK Foreign Office to take part in the CPA to implement what was called the Athens framework,” Simon Haselock said (Haselock, 2011). Simon was heading the advisory media team for the CPA and later for the interim Iraqi government headed by Ayad Alawi. Whilst in reality the press was expanding on the ground, it took Haselock and his team a year to come up with a proposal for a framework to regulate the Iraqi media.

5-3 The Situation inside Iraq

5-3-1 The Active Media Laws

The expansion in media landscape in Iraq made the US administration work in two different directions. It needed to fulfil the promise to establish a “healthy”

media environment up to the standards of a free society, to replace the ex-totalitarian regime media, but at the same time, it wanted to control anti-US messages (Al Mijawi, 2009). Simon Haselock referred to his meeting with Bremer regarding implementing the Athens framework for Iraqi media: "I met the head of the CPA Paul Bremer and he asked me to implement the framework and he was enthusiastic about it" (Haselock, 2011). Haselock also raised the importance of having an independent regulatory body that would deal with different issues such as incitements, political radicalism and ownership conflicts: "We said from the beginning that this regulator should be an independent body and not another Ministry of Information or any government institute. But American groups were arguing, why should we regulate at all, we should let a thousand flowers bloom, and in the end it will sort itself out. But my argument was that there was no commercial imperative in Iraq at that time, so the only people who would set up a media outlet were those who would have a certain agenda, either pro or antagonistic." Mr Haselock added, "in this case you will get pluralism but you will not get objective independent journalism" (Haselock, 2011).

The CPA followed one of the Athens conference's recommendations and suspended, by its order number 7 for 2003 and published on the 10 June 2003, the previous Iraqi Penal Code number 111 from 1969, which applied to publishing crimes. But the order number 7 issued by the CPA permitted only the head of the CPA to take a legal action against any publication (Al Ruba'e, 2007). The CPA worked first on filling the vacuum that was left by the disappearance of the Iraqi state media outlets. The plan was intended to establish and launch the new media network, the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), where Iraqis could get the "right" information. On the other hand, the US authorities in Baghdad tried to draft a media "code of conduct", with the intention of creating a licensing authority and a body to monitor the media. This issue angered some of the Iraqi journalists, who demonstrated against such legislation (Daragahi, 2003). Later, the idea for a specific media code of conduct was shelved.

5-3-2 CPA Introducing Order Number 14

The CPA specified the publishing regulations by issuing order number 14 in 2003. This code prohibited the media from broadcasting or publishing any material that incited violence, disorder, riots or damage to property. If any media outlet violated articles in order number 14, the law authorised those

bodies responsible to take legal action against the media outlet. These actions might include inspection without prior warning, confiscation of goods or prohibited material, shutting down the building and arresting employees of the media organisation who might be tried and sentenced to up to one year's imprisonment and a fine of USD 1,000 (Al Ruba'e, 2007).

Order number 14 specified the following offences:

1. Inciting violence against any ethnic or religious group or against women.
2. Inciting civil disobedience or disorder.
3. Inciting violence against the coalition forces.
4. Inciting change to the Iraqi border by force.
5. Calling for the return of the Ba'ath Party to power, or to speak on behalf of the Ba'ath Party.

Under this act any person or group of people breaching any of the above-mentioned articles, would be liable to arrest or detention by the coalition forces on the basis of Article IV of the Geneva Conventions, which is related to security matters (Al Azawi, 2008). But from the view of international law and best practice, order number 14 was problematic for many reasons:

- It failed to specify the meaning of "incitement" that would be acceptable internationally.
- Authorities such as the police or the army were allowed to punish the media outlet directly using its executive powers.
- The nature of punishment included imprisonment and "huge fines", which are not acceptable internationally (Price, Griffin, and Al Marashi, 2007).

This meant that many Iraqi newspapers, which had been critical to the US forces, could face closure since it would be up to the CPA official to differentiate between incitement and genuine criticisms (Sharp, 2003). Order number 14 was subject to criticism by media observers and journalists. The vague and flexible nature of the Act allowed the CPA to use it against any publication (Al Azawi, 2008). "Order number 14 was driven by the requirements of the military, who wanted the authority to be able to arbitrarily close any media outlet, who they thought was against them. It was an action of fear," Simon Haselock said (Haselock, 2011). Others believed the order was created to force news organisations or journalists to impose self-censorship (Hama-Saeed, 2007). "Order 14 put in the hands of Paul Bremer, and later the Prime Minister, the right on their own, to close media outlets and

we advised that it was not a good idea from the international perspective,” said Douglas Griffin, a lawyer who joined the Media advisory team headed by Simon Haselock (Griffin, 2011). Considering the huge number of Iraqi media outlets and the lack of professionalism among the new generation of journalists, this order was not used on many occasions because the CPA had insufficient capacity to deal with each case of violation of order number 14.

5-3-3 Iraqi Penal Code Punishments for Journalists and Media Outlets

The changes, which the CPA conducted in regard to the Iraqi media, were in theory essential, but the Iraqi Penal Code still contained a large number of constraints that specified what could be published in Iraq (Najjar, 2009). The reform abolished only two articles, concerning the criminalisation of incitement to change the constitution, and insulting the President. The CPA stopped only articles 200 and 225, while the rest remained in force (Al Ruba’e, 2007) such as decree number 840 of 1986 signed by the Revolutionary Commanding Council, which ordered the death penalty for anyone insulting the President, Saddam (Rugh, 2004). However, these laws and changes were redundant, given the collapse of Saddam’s Ba’ath regime.

Articles like 226 of the Saddam period Iraqi Penal Code, gave the courts the right to sentence for up to seven years imprisonment, those who “publicly insulted” officials or government institutions. Articles 433- 437 allowed the court to punish the offenders with up to a year’s detention. The definition of prohibited acts was vague and non-specific in these articles (Price, Griffin, and Al Marashi, 2007). Other articles could punish publications if they published “False News”:

- Article 210 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable with detention, to broadcast or to intend to broadcast false and ill-intentioned news, statements or rumours or to disseminate inciting propaganda if this disturbs public security, intimidates people or inflicts harm on public interest.
- Article 211 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable with detention, to publish by any means false information if this disturbs the public peace.
- Article 179 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable with detention, in times of war to broadcast false or biased information, statements or rumours that may lower the morale of the population.

- Article 180 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable with detention, to broadcast abroad false or biased information concerning the internal situation in Iraq that would undermine financial confidence or tar Iraq's international standing.

(Article 19, 2004, p.24)

Other articles punished those who demonstrated or published certain ideologies or beliefs:

- Article 201 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by up to life imprisonment, to promote Zionist or Masonic ideologies, including by joining related institutions, or by promoting these ideologies morally or in any other way.
- Article 208 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment, to obtain materials that incite constitutional change or that promote banned ideologies with the aim of publishing them.
- Article 214 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by up to one year's imprisonment, to shout or sing in a manner that provokes dissent.
- Article 215 of the Penal Code makes it a crime to possess, with the aim of publication, trade or distribution, materials that disturb public security or tarnish the country's reputation.

(Article 19, 2004, p.25)

There were more articles affecting the work of any journalists in Iraq, such as:

- Article 305 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by up to two years' imprisonment, publicly to incite others to withdraw capital invested in banks or public funds, or to sell or not to purchase State bonds or other government securities.
- Article 403 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by up to two years' imprisonment, to possess for publication any material "that violates the public integrity or decency".
- Article 404 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by up to one year's imprisonment, to sing or broadcast indecent or obscene songs or statements.
- Article 438 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by up to two years' imprisonment, to publish private information where this causes offence.

(Article 19, 2004, p.30)

- Article 182 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by detention, to publish or broadcast any governmental material the publication of which has been prohibited.
- Article 228 of the Penal Code makes it a crime to publish proceedings of secret sessions held by the National Assembly or, dishonestly and ill-intentionally, to publish proceedings of the Assembly's open sessions.
- [...]
- Article 437 of the Penal Code makes it a crime, punishable by up to two years' imprisonment, to divulge secrets obtained through employment or professional activities, except when the aim is to report or prevent a crime.

(Article 19, 2004, p.40)

The problematic issue here is the vague nature of terms like, "inflicts harm on public interest", "lower the morale of the population" or "intimidates people" (Article 19, 2004). Such lack of clarity in the wording of these articles gives any executive authority great influence over media outlets through the way they are interpreted. Experts say that the large number of publishing crimes in the Iraqi Penal Code provides any authority with great potential to pressurise any media outlet. "The Penal Code is still active from before Saddam and after the fall of his regime and we kept advising and we drew plans for changing such laws but it never happened," said Douglas Griffin (Griffin, 2011).

For this reason any media organisation could face serious problems with the authority if its coverage did not fit with the government agenda. There were no institutions or legal bodies to regulate the media after the dissolution of the Ministry of Information and the abolition of its institutions. The Interim Governing Council, which was appointed by the CPA (BBC, 2003) formed a media committee in early September 2003. The commission included nine members to follow up the media policy in Iraq. The members were as follows: Adnan Pachachi, Abdul Aziz Al Hakim, Ibrahim Al Jaafari, Mahmoud Othman, Muwaffaq Rubaie, Yonadam Kana, Samir Sumaida'ie, Akila Al Hashimi and Snkol Jabaok (Khudur, 2008). The commission did not take any decisions apart from threatening to close one of the Arabic satellite channels, Al Arabiya. The spokesman of the Iraqi Governing Council and former SAIC contractor, Hamid Ali Al Kifaey, commented: "The media committee was supposed to discuss

media issues and to deal with media outlets. Also in theory it would draw up a plan on how to deal with the previous regime's Ministry of Information and publishing houses, but the Governing Council had no power or money; the real authority was in the hands of the CPA in most issues, including the media" (Al Kifaey, 2011).

There were no copyright laws enforced in the country. This became a problem due to the increase in Internet plagiarism. The availability and the ease of accessibility to the world wide web meant that many newspapers start relying on the Internet as an information service. In this way, articles by veteran Arab and international writers would make their way to the pages of very small publications (UNESCO-IREX, 2006).

In April 2004 the CPA issued order numbers 65 and 66 in regard to establishing a Communication Media Commission (CMC). The Governing Council members had agreed that the CMC should be an independent body away from the influence of any authority (Piper, 2004). The new institution received criticism for its structure and influence. Al Sabah said that the CMC could be more powerful than the Ministry of Information during Saddam's time (Al Mljawi, 2009) but Douglas Griffin said something different regarding the situation with the press: "Order 65 stated that newspapers don't need to obtain any licence before being launched. There is a little area where the CMC would have a limited right to regulate press during elections" (Griffin, 2011). Mr Griffin, who helped to draft order number 65, which was mostly concerned with the broadcast media not the press, said that sanctions against journalists or media outlets in order 65 should not be money or imprisonment but just a [warning] letter. "Although order number 65 stated that imprisonment is not an acceptable punishment they could use the penal code to put someone in prison for defamation," said Douglas Griffin (Griffin, 2011).

When the CPA headed by Paul Bremer handed sovereignty to the interim Iraqi government headed by Ayad Alawi, all laws and orders made by the CPA were active, in addition to the former regime's penal code unless either of them had been replaced. More laws were introduced by the Iraqi governments, which succeeded the CPA, using laws from Saddam's era to restrain media freedom. The Iraqi Communications Media Commission (CMC), which in theory should have been protecting media freedom, was widely influenced by government

opinion (Ricchiardi, 2011).*

5-4 Interventions in Media and Closure of Newspapers (CPA)

The head of the CPA Paul Bremer referred to the new freedoms in Iraq, saying to a group of journalists in June 2003 that they were no longer bound by the government instructions and they were “free to criticise” whoever, or whatever, they wanted, according to Index on Censorship (Gourevitch, 2003). Despite these statements and calls for freedom of speech and democracy by the US administration and the support provided to some newspapers to spread the culture of “free” opinion, the occupation forces at the same time proceeded to close some newspapers, which published articles opposing its occupation of Iraq (Al Khafaf, 2006). The regulations, which were implemented, were serving the interests of the occupation authorities who did not allow anyone to exceed the “red lines” (Al Khafaf, 2006).

The former director of the Iraqi Media Network’s television confirmed that there was a mechanism used by the army to follow the news published by local Iraqi newspapers. “The army had a monitoring system for local newspapers; the headlines would be translated etc, there were many categories such as pro-American or anti-American or neutral,” said Ahmed Al Rekabi (Al Rekabi, 2008). Based on information provided by their monitoring system, American forces warned different publications about certain kinds of coverage, which the US army or the CPA would consider to be carrying an “anti-American message”.

Dr Abdulsalam Al Samer who was the editor of Al Sa’ah newspaper recalls a warning his newspaper received after publishing a series of articles and reports that were embarrassing for the occupation authority. “It was an official warning from the press officer of the coalition forces saying that the American troops were in a state of war and that what our newspaper, Al Saah, was publishing was putting the US troops in danger and we might have to take serious action; it was nearly two pages long,” Abdul Salam Al Samer said (Al Samer, 2010).

* The New York Times reported on 29 September 2006 that three journalists working for a small newspaper were brought to court after publishing articles accusing local officials of being corrupted. They were tried under the Penal Code No. 226 which meant a possibility of imprisonment for up to seven years because of public insult (Zielbauer, 2006).

The Freedom House* rating of Iraq's legal environment for journalists referred to a drop in freedom rating from 2003 to 2004. The drop in the freedom of the press resulted from the CPA's closure of media outlets and the interim Iraqi government's steps to take legal actions against journalists. Media rights experts said that the closure of many newspapers by the CPA set a bad example for Iraqi politicians in practice, although Iraq's media laws were still "liberal" (Rohde, 2005).

5-4-1 Closure of Newspapers

In the absence of a regulating body, there were many events where the Iraqi press were in confrontation with the occupying authorities or forces. Some newspapers were raided by the US army, temporarily suspended from publishing or closed. Many employees of these publications were arrested (Khudur, 2008). The first temporary closure was on the 14 June 2003, when Sadda Al Auma ("Echo of the Nation") newspaper was suspended for a few days in Najaf and its employees were detained for a short time by the occupation troops. The newspaper represented the Supreme Council for the Liberation of Iraq and Ayatollah Mahdi Al Awadi, who opposed the American occupation and their plans for Iraq (Sadda Al Auma, 2003). The newspaper closure happened after it had published articles asking Najaf's people to join the Ramadi resistance movement. The newspaper was back on the market after three days (Barry, 2003).

On 21 July 2003, the occupation forces raided Al Mustaqila ("The Independent") newspaper and closed its offices in the Waziriyah district of Baghdad. American soldiers destroyed the contents of the office and arrested the chief editor Abul-Satar Al Shaalan, accusing him of inciting violence against the US army (Khudur, 2008). In a press release, the CPA referred to the headline "Death to all Spies and Those who Cooperate with the US; Killing them is a Religious Duty" which was published after announcing the name of the US appointed Governing Council (Carroll, 2004). The CPA spokesperson Charles Heatley told CNN that the newspaper crossed all the "red" lines: "They had very, very clearly crossed any red line however you draw it. They were

* Freedom House is an independent watchdog organisation, based in the US, that supports the expansion of freedom around the world.

calling on Iraqis to kill anybody cooperating with the coalition” (Brahimi, 2006).

Al Shaalan was held for a few weeks, but after his release in September 2003, he said in a press conference at the newspaper: “Our offices were raided by the American force backed by armoured vehicles and Iraqi police cars. They attacked the newspaper using heavily armed soldiers. Offices have been broken into and searched in a hostile way. They took me to the back after being handcuffed, and they confiscated everything in our office including money in our safe, computers, journalists’ identity cards, and other things. Then, they wrote my statement after accusing me of making propaganda for the former regime and, of course, this is not true. They tried to find new charges but they did not succeed. After rejecting their accusations I was released by an Iraqi judge for the lack of evidence on 11 August 2003” (Jasim, 2009, p.89).

The chair of Al Mustaqila’s administration board, Dhari Mohammed Al Dulaimi, defended the paper’s editorial policy, saying that the headlines were simply quotes from a cleric in which his views reflected the feelings of the people in Iraq (Isakhan, 2009): “If this is American or world democracy, we reject it. Democracy means dialogue and exchange of views. Not attacking in this way,” Al Duleimi said (Brahimi, 2006). After the release of the newspaper’s chief editor from prison, the publication continued to pursue the same line, attacking the American occupation forces strongly and the overall political process. The newspaper published a few editions, which were modest in terms of design and material, and were not issued on a regular basis. The newspaper continued, but the chair of the administration board, the lawyer Dhari Mohammed Al Dulaimi, died. The last issue was number 44 on Sunday, 18 November 2004, which stated on the heading that Al Shaalan had become the chief editor and the Chair of the Board. He was detained again until the end of 2007 (Jasim, 2009).

In late September 2003 the occupation authority in Mosul closed the Sada Tal Afar (“Tal Afar Echo”) newspaper. The newspaper had published an article calling for Turkey to send troops to Iraq and said Turkey had the right to take Mosul province as part of Turkey. The Americans accused the newspaper of violating the “press laws” (Khudur, 2008); there were no press laws at the time, but it was referring to order number 14.

The closure of the radical Shia cleric Moqtada Al Sadr newspaper, Al Hawza Al Nateqa ("The Spoken Hawza"), on the 28 March 2004, resonated widely because of the number of Al Sadr's supporters. Also, Al Hawza was one of the first newspapers published after the first week of May 2003, and continued publishing for a while until it was closed in 2004, claiming a circulation of 15,000 copies (Cockburn, 2008). The eight-page newspaper claimed on its masthead that "It is the mouthpiece of the honoured, religious Hawaza", while on the right of the heading it described itself as a "daily newspaper, issued temporarily every Sunday and Wednesday". Its editor was Sheikh Abbas Al Rubaie (Jasim, 2009). Problems started when the Civil Governor of Iraq, Paul Bremer, ordered the US troops to close the newspaper and fine it a sum of money. The coalition forces closed the newspaper's building and sealed it, warning that anyone attempting to re-publish the newspaper might face up to a year in jail and USD 1,000 fine (CNN, 2004). The CPA warrant mentioned in the closing order, that Al Hawza could reopen in 60 days (Gettleman, 2004).

The order, which was signed by L. Paul Bremer III, also included several examples of what were considered "false reports" carried by the newspaper (Gettleman, 2004). One of them mentioned was the newspaper's claim that American helicopters fired missiles which caused the death of 50 Iraqi police recruits - when it was in fact a suicide truck attack, which took place in Alexandria 25 km south of Baghdad in February 2004. The newspaper said that they were reporting what eyewitnesses had said about the explosion. Bremer also did not like the newspaper's editorial comparisons between himself and Saddam Hussein. Many people in Iraq felt that the closure was a political punishment for the defiant opposition to the American occupation. There was also strange timing with the CPA's announcement that an arrest warrant had been issued against Moqtada Al Sadr in April 2004 with regards to the killing of a rival cleric back in April 2003 (Al Sheikh, 2004). All of these consequences sparked an armed uprising by Sadr followers, which destabilised southern Iraq in the spring of 2004 (Rohde, 2005). Bremer mentioned in his book, "My Year in Iraq", that he had wanted to imprison Muqtada Al Sadr in August 2003 (Bremer, 2006).

Al Mustaqila, Al Hawza and others were closed by the Americans for different reasons. "That period was not clear regarding some procedures against some

newspapers because Iraq was under occupation,” said Mofeed Al Jazaeeri, the former editor of Tareek Al Sha’ab newspaper and the former Minister of Culture during Bremer’s era (Al Jazaeeri, 2011). Some journalists accused these publications of lacking professionalism, which gave justification for the Americans to take such steps. “Al Hawza and Al Mustaqila were closed, because they were not directed by professional journalists. They fell into an area where they could not separate their feelings from the work they were publishing,” said Dr Mohammed Bedawi Al Shamari, the former editor of Al Sheraa newspaper (Al Shamari, 2011).

The Iraqi Governing Council was involved in closing or banning media outlets. On 23 September 2003, the Iraqi Governing Council closed down the Baghdad offices of the two Arabic satellite channels, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya (Coons, 2004) but they were reopened shortly afterwards. Al Jamhour newspaper reported that after these events, the Governing Council was willing to introduce new media regulation (Al Jamhour, 2003).

In February 2004, the Governing Council’s press office punished one of the reporters because of her “rudeness” in wording her question to public officials and members of the Governing Council. The reporter from Radio Sawa was banned from future Governing Council briefings. Journalists walked out of the conference in protest (Carroll, 2004). Although closures in a few cases could be justified for security reasons, in other cases it seemed to be mistaken (Rohde, 2005). The Americans were using order number 14 to close these publications, but such punishments against those publications did not appear to improve the situation. “The actions where the CPA used this law backfired because it made the public sympathise with the closed media outlet,” Douglas Griffin said, a former member in the media advisory team in Iraq (Griffin, 2011).

5-4-2 Iraqi Interim Government’s Practices Against Media Freedom

The appointed interim Iraqi government succeeded the CPA, and on 27 July 2004 the Prime Minister, Ayad Alawi, decided to create the Higher Media Commission (HMC). This body mirrored the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the UK’s communications regulator OfCom (Cochrane, 2006). The HMC allegedly intended to impose a requirement to license newspapers following certain conditions, which few publications could meet, and also impose punishment for criticising the authority. Alawi expressed his

own interpretation for media freedom, saying, “We will not allow some people to hide behind the slogan of freedom of the press and media” (Isakhan, 2009, p.17). The appointed interim Iraqi government wanted the HMC to control print and broadcast through introducing new sanctions such as the power to close any outlet. The HMC would draw new “red lines” and journalists or media organisations would be punished if they ignored them (Khalil, 2006). “Alawi wanted to highjack those laws by creating the Higher Media Commission which was controlling the whole media spectrum,” said Simon Haselock, the head of media advisory team in Iraq 2003-2005 (Haselock, 2011).*

Many events showed restrictions and oppressive practices being imposed on journalists. For example in August 2004, when the journalists were covering the confrontation between the government and Moqtada Al Sadr, the Iraqi police ordered all journalists to leave the city of Najaf. The police forces raided the hotel, where the journalists were residing, kicking open the doors to their rooms, and threatening a group of British journalists that they would be shot if they did not leave (Rohde, 2005). During the attack on Fallujah in November 2004, the Iraqi interim government introduced a new media regulation after declaring a 60-day state of emergency. The new temporary guidelines for media coverage warned journalists of legal action if they didn’t follow them and asked journalists “not to label terrorists, criminals and killers with any national tags”. Media outlets were asked to “set aside space in your news coverage to make the position of the Iraqi government, which expresses the aspirations of most Iraqis, clear” (Reuters, 2004). Although order number 14 was active, the interim Iraqi government did not use it, but it did not stop closing media outlets. “The government would close newspapers or radio stations or TV without even quoting any law,” Douglas Griffin said (Griffin, 2011).*

* Two weeks after the creation of the Higher Media Commission, on 9 August, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior decided to close down Al Jazeera in Baghdad. “This decision was taken to protect the people of Iraq and the interests of Iraq,” appointed Prime Minister Ayad Alawi said in a news conference. “[The commission] came up with a concise report on the issues of incitement and the problems Al Jazeera has been causing,” Alawi added. But the channel rejected the accusations (Hama-Saeed, 2007). In other events, Sawt Baghdad (The voice of Baghdad) radio station was closed a month before it was reopened (Al Mljawi, 2009).

* The Higher Media commission was dissolved after the end of the term of the Iraqi Interim Government headed by Ayad Alawi.

5-5 The Security Situation and the Iraqi Press

The continuing violence, which threatened the basic stability and safety of individuals in Iraq, was a main factor affecting media developments (Al Mijawi, 2009). Iraqi and international journalists were in the same boat, suffering from attacks by different militant groups or the fire of American forces. It was difficult or impossible in some areas to do a single reportage or even to enter and check the scene of news events, or to conduct interviews with eyewitnesses (Rohde, 2005). Many journalists started to refuse to make reports from the field after a dramatic increase in attacks against journalists. Killing, kidnapping and other assaults traumatised them (Hun-Shik and Hama-Saeed, 2008). The situation became even worse; journalists started to notice that many eyewitnesses or people in the streets were too scared to talk, fearing attacks against themselves or the reporter they were speaking to (Hun-Shik, and Hama-Saeed, 2008). Many journalists became cautious about what kind of stories they would report, hoping to avoid physical harm. They were hesitating or outright avoiding reports on controversial issues, which might create trouble for them or for their media outlet (Hun-Shik, and Hama-Saeed, 2008). Ismael Zayeer, Al Sabah former editor, and Al Sabah Al Jadeed current editor, said that journalists in most cases couldn't say what they knew, fearing the consequences afterwards. "You could write a beautiful article but it might be your last piece of work," Zayeer said.

5-6 "Old"-New taboos to be observed again

Despite the promises made by the CPA and the succeeding Iraqi government to guarantee freedom of expression, in practice this was not the case. Many provinces like Basra, Najaf, Karbala, Arbil and Duhok publicly declared they were practicing censorship. Many journalists stopped criticising the provisional councils or the local security officers in order to avoid closure of the publication they were working for or to avoid facing physical harm (El-Rikabi, 2007). Political parties and other religious or ethnic groups started to practise censorship on what would be printed in their publications or by other media outlets. In addition, these groups used the same propaganda methods which had been used by Saddam's regime. Journalists were accustomed to publishing stories to attack their rivals and the contenders of the group that their publication represented. Journalists raised their dissatisfaction about the danger which some news organisations put them in by publishing fabricated stories, and unverified rumours or scandals (Hun-Shik, and Hama-Saeed,

2008). The Freedom House report of 2004 described the media situation in Iraq by saying: "Continuing violence poses the greatest short-term threat to the work of journalists in the country. In the long-term, political stability and the ambiguous legal framework will need to be resolved in order for Iraq's media to truly function freely" (Freedom House, 2004). Some Iraqi journalists complained about the censorship practised by the US-led coalition forces and the Iraqi government, especially when they were reporting stories related to the militant groups. The Iraqi Association of Journalists (IRIN) said that two journalists were detained after shadowing insurgents and publishing stories about them (IRIN, 2006). The increase of violence prevented the growth of a free press in the country (Rohde, 2005). But the shadow of security had always affected the American plan for the Iraqi media. The next chapter explains their detailed plan for the Iraq media. The chapter specifies the failure of the American plan, as well as the CPA and the American official interventions in the work of the Iraqi Media Network and other local media outlets.

Chapter 6:

The US Plans for Iraqi Media and The Iraqi Media Network Project 2002-2003

6-1 Introduction

The American President, George W. Bush, who led the invasion in 2003 said: "All successful democracies need freedom of speech, with a vibrant free press that informs the public, ensures transparency, and prevents authoritarian back-sliding" (Rohde, 2005). Bush may have held those beliefs in free press, but was that what his administration offered to Iraq? In order to answer this question there are certain events that need to be recalled.

As soon as Bush assumed the presidency his team, formed from senior neoconservative figures, escalated a media campaign against Iraq. It accused Saddam Hussein of hiding weapons of mass destruction and hosting Al Qaeda members, to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The neoconservatives had earlier achieved a degree of success in their attempts to promote the use of US military forces, as they demanded in their report in 2000 - "The project for the new American century" - to rebuild the US defence (Clifton, 2007). In his speech in Congress on the 10 September 2001, Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld urged the US government and Congress to "liberate" the Department of Defence (DoD) from institutional lethargy. He declared that he believed that the staff of the Department were his allies in the fight against bureaucracy.

Mr Rumsfeld said that he would change Pentagon bureaucracy and encourage innovation. "Why is DoD one of the last organisations around that still cuts its own checks?" Mr. Rumsfeld asked. "At bases around the world, why do we pick up our own garbage and mop our own floors rather than contracting those services out, as many businesses do? And surely we can outsource more computer systems support" (Garamone, 2001). Based on this new strategy of outsourcing, the DoD started using private companies and contractors to take over many of the jobs that the US army were not willing to nor had the expertise to do. Amongst the outsourced missions were media projects, psychological operations, and public diplomacy.

In January 2006 a secret document signed by Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was declassified. "The Information Operations Roadmap" considered

□ President George W. Bush, May 18, 2005, speech to the International Republican Institute, Washington, D.C.

information operations as a “core military competency,” and urged the launch of psychological operations using defensive and offensive strategies. The report suggested expanding information operations through 57 recommendations. However, as the DoD was short on in-house media experts, the department turned to private contractors (Cary, 2010).

These contractors were not notably efficient, and proved more focused on profits than on providing the services they were paid for. In a hostile environment or war zone, however, it is almost impossible for anyone to assess whether a media contractor has fulfilled the requirements of the contract or mission they have been asked to carry out.

Most of the projects turned out to have been used as a means to make huge profits by relying on a cheap, inexperienced labour-force. The contractors were not paid according to the level of success that the project they were building would achieve, but according to the theoretical workload for which they claimed. For this reason, the DoD contractors and many of the other organisations which worked in Iraq, ended up following a “box-ticking” culture. SAIC, the main contractor used to build Iraq’s Public Broadcasting Service, was criticised by the Pentagon auditors, saying that “SAIC was paid for work not completed, electronic equipment was missing, and that SAIC paid top salaries to executives and security officers, but skimmed on equipment for journalists” (Cary, 2010).

Although American policy was to repeat the same approach they had tried after World War II, what the US army had done in Germany and Japan was quite different. In those cases they had been able to assess and gradually measure the success of building media entities. Donald Rumsfeld stated that his idea about outsourcing was intended to find a way to avoid bureaucracy. However, as he admits in his book, “The Known and the Unknown”, there were many staff involved in post-war Iraq who were under-qualified and yet were holding critical jobs in the CPA (Rumsfeld, 2010).

The United States allocated a budget of USD 100 million for the media project in Iraq (Sharp, 2003). The final costs were closer to USD 200 million (spent between 2003-2005) – representing the largest attempt ever in any country or by any other country, to build a “free” media. The whole project was almost a complete failure in its first year, when it was run by the Pentagon. Local Iraqi

journalists, American officials and trainers confirm that the project was money-wasting, amateurish and counter-productive (Rohde, 2005).

So what kind of plans were US government working with?

6-2 US Pre-War Suggested Plans for the Iraqi Media

6-2-1 The State Department Plan

The early plan, designed by the US State Department, was called “The Future of Iraq Project”, and it included a framework for the future Iraqi media (Al Mljawi, 2009). The State Department plans went back to October 2001, when the US government began planning for post-Saddam Hussein transition in Iraq. The Department gathered together nearly 200 Iraqi professionals to work within 17 teams, and the collective group came up with a 1,200-page 13-volume report, entitled, “The Future of Iraq Project”. The project suggested a range of strategies, approaches and warnings to the decision makers (Al Mljawi, 2009). With regards to the media, the group was tasked to develop a long-term strategy to train Iraqi journalists, legislators, officials, and judiciary members to raise the importance of the role of the free press in any democratic society. The participants recommended preparing several editions of a new Iraqi (weekly) newspaper, and two months of entertainment programmes. Further recommendations were included relating to the standards of those Iraqi universities which gave Bachelor’s degrees in media and communication (Al Mljawi, 2009).

The media group conducted only one meeting, because most of the participants were hired by the Pentagon contractor SAIC - according to page 2 of the media report in “The Future of Iraq Project” (The National Security Archive, 2006). Choosing SIAC was a clear indication that the Pentagon would be in charge of Iraqi media in the next stage.

6-2-2 The United States Institute of Peace

Many organisations discussed the situation of the Iraqi media after the war. In February 2003 one such organisation - the United States Institute of Peace - drafted a special report called “After Saddam Hussein - Winning a Peace if it comes to War”. The report included some suggestions for reform of the Iraqi media: “Within the first month of occupation, Iraq’s Ministry of Information, Journalism Syndicate, and government censorship offices should be dismantled.

International civilian media professionals should be placed in charge of state-owned organisations, with Arabic-speaking and international media specialists being necessary to fill out the numerous positions that will open as incumbents are vetted out of state media outlets. Iraqi journalists will need to be trained and a new media law developed. Support for the professionalisation and expansion of diverse media throughout the country should be provided. One channel of state television should be developed into a public broadcast entity. Iraq's public should be encouraged to see the media as their window, not simply a conduit for official disinformation. There will be a strong temptation for the occupation government to insist on broadcasting "hearts and minds" programming and optimistic forecasts about the activity and intentions of the occupation government to a sophisticated Iraqi audience. The temptation should be moderated. Iraqis may see this as just more state-sponsored nonsense. In other places, this approach has seldom worked, with various Commander Solo operations and the "Ring Around Serbia" initiative being examples. Control over the media should be relegated to an independent advisory board composed of Iraqi and expatriate professionals" (United States Institute of Peace, 2003).

6-2-3 The US Defence Department Plan

The US Department of Defence started handing out contracts to reconstruct the Iraqi media more than a week before the start of bombing and the invasion in March 2003. The Pentagon contracted Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) to reconstruct Iraq's national media following the Pentagon plan (Barker, 2008). The Pentagon specified in the contract that SAIC was going to be in charge of creating a "free and independent local media network" and to provide "training of a cadre of independent Iraqi journalists to go with it" (Najjar, 2009). The Department of Defence plan was revealed only in 2007 after lifting the classification on a document, which was called "The white paper on the Iraqi media". The paper shows that in mid-January 2003, during the preparation for the invasion of Iraq, the Pentagon recommended the formation of what was called a "Rapid Reaction Media Team" (RRMT). The task of this team was to serve as "a quick start bridge" between Saddam's controlled media and a long-term "free" Iraqi media (Battle, 2007). The paper was prepared by the Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict Office - which also specialised in psychological warfare - and the Special Plans Office under Undersecretary of Defence for Policy, Douglas Feith (Lobe, 2007).

The plan suggested employing “hand-picked American, British, and Iraqi media experts in order to provide ‘approved US government information’ to the Iraqi public” (Battle, 2007). The “hand-picked” Iraqi experts would help other experts to “select and train Iraqi broadcasters and publishers to be ‘the face’ of the US government and coalition sponsored information effort” (The National Security Archive, 2007). This “strategic information campaign” would take between 1 and 2 years’ transition period (Battle, 2007). The plans for “Entertainment and News Magazine programming” ranged from “De-Ba’athification”, to “Saddam bomb maker” to “Hollywood”. The US media white paper suggested categorising the news according to ethnicity and sectarian factions, for example the new newspaper would have sections for “Shia news, Kurd News, Sunni News etc” (Battle, 2007). The paper shows that the RRMT focused on US/UK Government pre- and post-war efforts to prepare programmes for training US/UK media experts with a team of “hand-picked” Iraqi media experts to immediately act after the end of the war (Lobe, 2007).

The paper declared that: “The mission will be to inform the Iraqi public about USG/coalition intent and operations, to stabilise Iraq (especially preventing the trifurcation of Iraq after hostilities) and to provide Iraqis hope for their future. This team will deploy from Washington immediately upon cessation of hostility, collocate and interface with the designated CENTCOM[□] commander in Baghdad, and begin broadcasting and printing APPROVED USG information to the Iraqi public” (The National Security Archive, 2007). The media White Paper, asserted that the US government would, within 12 months, build an information system that would serve “as a model for free media in the Arab world”. This would counter the “hate” messages (Battle, 2007) by other Arab media which the paper described as an “equivalent to weapons of mass destruction” (The National Security Archive, 2007). At the same time, Pentagon planners expressed their hopes that the US government could control information distribution in post-invasion Iraq with the help of a new “friendly” Iraqi government. The paper did not mention any plans about building independent media outlets or freedom of access to information or even the Internet (Battle, 2007).

Some observers feel confident in saying that the US politicians were following

□ CENTCOM stands for US Central Command.

US political interests in Iraq, pursuing their own agenda to help the coalition, while their plan to build a proper public broadcasting system was a much less serious concern to the politicians and the US planners (Al Qazwini, 2004). “The US media control was entirely in keeping with the entire strategy of the United States in those days,” said Rohan Jayasekera of London-based Index on Censorship. But he describes this paper as showing a very simplistic attitude towards how Iraqis would react to an independent media: “I think that document was fairly typical of the stupid thinking which was going around before and after the invasion in April 2003” (Jayasekera, 2011).

The failure of the plan was due to the incapability or the unwillingness of the US administration in Iraq to keep the media development plans separate from the political interests of the Americans in the country (Al Qazwini, 2004). In November 2003 a Washington Post article referred to how the Defence Department Office saw SAIC’s operations as “specialising in psychological warfare operations, or Psy-Ops”. The article said that some parts of the Pentagon know the Iraqi Media Network as “Psy-Ops on steroids” (Rohde, 2005).

6-3 The Pentagon Launch the Iraqi Media Project, and the Iraqi Media Network is born

In order to build the Iraqi national state media, the US recruited a diverse team of exiled Iraqi consultants, to help editorially and to start TV, radio stations and a newspaper. This group would be acting as a policy unit, to provide advice on media strategy (Al Mljawi, 2009). One of the journalists who joined the team was Ahmed Al Rekabi: “There were preparations to shape the media after Saddam, this was approximately in the last three months of 2002. I went to the States to participate in workshops held by the State department to discuss the future of Iraq” (Al Rekabi, 2008). Bob Reilly, an active player in the Iraqi Media Project during the 1990s and until 2003, contacted Al Rekabi to discuss the future of Iraqi media after Saddam. Both agreed on a European Public Service style such as the BBC or the Swedish Media Public Service. Al Rekabi drafted a proposal for Reilly, who had asked him to consider the issue as secret (Al Rekabi, 2008).

In mid March 2003 the Americans gathered together the Iraqi Media Project team, which consisted of Robert Reilly, Mike Furlong, Shamem Rassam and Ahmed Al Rekabi. They met in an American air base near Washington (Al

Rekabi, 2008). Mike Furlong, who had a meeting with Jay Garner, told Al Rekabi that the war would start in a few days and the attack would start from the south, where their base would be Kuwait (Al Rekabi, 2008). Al Rekabi remembers, "I said, how could we manage to have newspaper, TV, and radio among ourselves, but Furlong assured me that there was an advert in Detroit where the Iraqi community was based, regarding vacancies to join our project," (Al Rekabi, 2008). Al Rekabi went to Detroit with other SAIC employees where he interviewed many candidates at Hayatt Hotel: "I was desperate, I did not ask for experience, I was looking for educated people who could talk properly and write in an acceptable way, it took a matter of hours to choose the team" (Al Rekabi, 2008).

The team, which gathered in Kuwait, came from all over the world - Al Rekabi had been recruiting people over the phone (Al Rekabi, 2008). The team moved into Iraq after 9 April and three weeks later the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) was formed. It was led by Robert Reilly, a former director of the Voice of America, and Mike Furlong, a Pentagon contractor who had worked before on broadcasting issues in former Yugoslavia (Al Mljawi, 2009). The Iraqi face was Ahmed Al Rekabi, who had previously been running a radio station in Sweden. Mike Furlong explained to the journalists about the media mission in Iraq: "The vision is to provide the Iraqi people with a European broadcasting system model" (Daragahi, 2003).

This assurance, in principle, raised hopes of getting an independent free media network, however the assurance was delivered by Furlong who had been head of the Joint Psychological Operations Task Force in Bosnia from 1995 to 1997 (Chatterjee, 2010). "Furlong was a former army officer, but he knew nothing about media, he was interfering in our coverage of many events" said Hamid Ali Al Kifaey a former SAIC contractor (Al Kifaey, 2011).

The media project in Iraq was significant because it was by far the grandest effort of the Pentagon to build post-conflict media in the Middle East (Cary, 2010). The US administration documents show that the Pentagon contracted Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) in February 2003, one month before the war, for a sum of USD 82 million. The US government allocated another USD 96 million for the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) project. The money came from the special operations and low intensity conflict department

(Psy-Ops) (Cotts, 2003).

Regular radio broadcasting started on 10 April 2003, while the television aired its first new programme on 13 May 2003. The official newspaper, Al Sabah (“The Morning”), was the last new media outlet to appear when its first edition was published on 17 May 2003 (Kadim, 2007). In the beginning Al Sabah was published twice a week, then three times, and finally it was published on a daily basis, as this thesis will present later.

The team responsible had started to prepare news and entertainment materials two months prior to publication, and they planned for several editions of the new newspaper (Cary, 2010). Several hundred local journalists joined the IMN, which was given access to the old government premises, facilities and equipment (Al Mijawi, 2009). Many members of the former regime media network were fired, but some returned, because there was a need for their services (Sharp, 2003). “I started recruiting most of the old technicians, but not reporters or presenters,” said Ahmed Al Rekabi (Al Rekabi, 2008). The network started using the stations and sites which had belonged to the Ministry of Information, as Iraqi specialists and technicians were better acquainted with these studios than were experts from outside. SAIC chose one of the studios at the Convention Centre in Baghdad to be the main television production studios and Al Salehiya broadcasting station was chosen for local transmitting, while places outside of Baghdad were fixed and kept running by the effort of the local staff in each province (Al Sudani, 2008).

Al Sabah was printed on a private press, and the editorial team were housed in one of the old historical houses in Baghdad. A few weeks later, Al Sabah started using press house number 3, the same one that had been used by Babil - Uday Hussein’s newspaper.

SAIC provided equipment through US funding in the beginning, but according to SAIC’s contract, the equipment would later become the property of the new Iraqi government. The US officials claimed that they wanted to create a network that was similar to other public information agencies, who receive funding through governments, but have their own independence (Al Musawi, 2008). After few weeks, the American civilian governor Paul Bremer, the chief of the CPA issued

order number 6, which stated that the Iraqi Media Network would replace the former Iraqi Information Ministry that was dissolved in May 2003 (Al Mijawi, 2009).

Although the US tried to present the Iraqi Media Project as an attempt to build a truly independent media network, many key facts made observers wonder about the feasibility of this project. For example, the division that provided the grant, which was supporting the Iraqi Media Project, was responsible for psychological warfare operations (Psy-Ops) in the US Defence Department. The company which handled the contract, SAIC, was itself a major Defence Department and CIA contractor (Chatterjee, 2004). Finally the person who was placed in charge of IMN was Robert Reilly, a former propagandist in the White House for the Nicaraguan contras during the 1980s (Barker, 2008). SAIC appeared much less interested in presenting itself as a company building an “independent” media network and the company press officers were “notorious for not providing information” (Barker, 2008). SAIC did not have any former experience in the media sector, but it had good connections with the Pentagon (Goodman, and Goodman, 2008).

SAIC had a lot of experience in setting up radio and television transmitters, but one of the essential parts of the SAIC contract was to provide training for journalists, something which the corporation had little experience of (Al Mijawi, 2009). Such lack of experience caused serious problems between the administration of SAIC and its contractors. In June 2003 the IMN's programme manager and SAIC contractor, Mike Furlong, and the government liaison, Robert Reilly, left because their initial contracts expired, but there were rumours they were fired. John Sandrock, who had no previous media experience, became the head of IMN (Gourevitch, 2003). There were many differences between what SAIC reported and what was actually being built. According to four of the Pentagon-contracted investigation officials, the infrastructure which SAIC was paid to build did not exist; For example only 11 containers out of 16 full of equipment for the IMN were unloaded while the officials in Baghdad thought the job had been completed. Large quantities of gear, cables and transmission equipment went missing (Auster, 2004).

The process of building the network was unsuccessful due to the political, technical, and security difficulties. Many problems were caused because of the

unsettled situation within the CPA itself. The media project in Iraq lacked a transparent strategic plan that could be implemented to create a proper independent national Iraqi media network (Al Qazwini, 2004).

6-4 Criticisms of the IMN

The plan for the media project in Iraq was designed to create an official media network – The Iraqi Media Network - which would not receive any private funding. The network was considered to be within the public domain, i.e. state ownership. In theory, the network had its own full independence, so it did not have to follow the guidance of the Head of State by any means. The network had the right to develop its own independent plans, which may or may not correspond with the programmes of the government. The Iraqi Media Network was not bound to present the policies, ideas and position of the government, but it would follow the national interests of the country – and serve the people regardless of who is leading the government and who manages its affairs. However, the American authority represented by the CPA confused the IMN's role in Iraq because it could not be the occupiers' mouthpiece at the same time as following a PBS-style network. Furlong, the former programme manager for the Iraqi Media Network said, “Both roles can't be done by the same animal” (Gourevitch, 2003).

Stephen Claypole (2003), one of the advisors of ORHA, described how in the early days IMN coverage attempted to give the impression that it was broadcasting the opinions of ordinary Iraqi citizens, but the official American contractors carefully checked these opinions. “We have got to have “vox pops” became the mantra, so that the Iraqi people can see themselves talking in an atmosphere of liberty” said Stephen Claypole, a veteran journalist who joined Iraq's TV project. “When the vox pops came back to the temporary studios with anti-American opinions, they were shelved for a day or two to be intercut with official requests,” Stephen added (Claypole, 2003). Dr Eiman Abdulrahman who worked for a Lebanese TV company called LBC [Lebanon Broadcasting Corporation], which was supervising the IMN, said, “I prepared a programme about Abu Ghraib prison, but they did not air it. Also we got a former Guantanamo detainee and they did not allow that programme either” (Abdulrahman, 2010). The “independence” of IMN and their propensity to be influenced was evident when a representative of the political programmes at LBC suggested having an American “guest” on a panel show that was hosted by

Al Iraqia, and Dr Eiman Abdulrahman followed this “suggestion” (Abdulrahman, 2010).

One of the former contractors of SAIC who helped in building the IMN, Don North, criticised the whole media project in his speech to a special committee in the American Congress. He said that the IMN staff were ordered to cover the daily activities of the CPA news conferences, interviews, etc while giving little time, personnel or equipment to cover real news stories from the street (North, 2005). North mentioned that the US authorities told him, “we were running a public diplomacy operation” for the occupation government (Margasak, 2005). Paul Bremer referred, in his book “My year in Iraq”, to the concerns of the US administration regarding the coverage of the situation in Iraq. He recalled an occasion when Donald Rumsfeld exploded after reading a newspaper headline of 11 April 2003, referring to the violence and chaos. Rumsfeld said that Iraqis deserved better coverage, as they were being “liberated” from a brutal dictator (Bremer, 2006).

American officials at the CPA were attempting to use the IMN and to manage news content aimed at Iraqis and Americans to explain the American policies to Iraqis, Americans and to the world - but this would make the IMN simply another “Voice of America”*. One of the senior CPA public relation officers, Dan Senor, had a long-time involvement with the IMN (McCaul, 2003). He was also intervening in the work of the reporters as the Iraqi Media Network’s TV director. Ahmed Al Rekabi said of Senor: “Once we sent a reporter to do an interview with Paul Bremer while Dan Senor was present. Dan Senor did not like the reporter’s questions so he did another version of the interview and asked us to broadcast it, but we refused” (Al Rekabi, 2008). But Senor insisted that IMN was providing “factual and authoritative information”. “IMN was not supposed to be the dominant media in Iraq, but one of many voices. We never viewed our goals as being built around a propaganda war,” Senor said (Williams, 2003). However, Dan Senor was also making a “great” effort to convince different media outlets to report the “good news story” (Bremer, 2006).

Another intervention came from the US ambassador to Morocco, Margaret Tutwiler, who went to Baghdad to help with the diplomacy effort of the US

* Voice of America is an official American radio representing the United States government.

occupation. She intervened with strong judgments about programmes. She insisted that the wife of the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Hero Al Talabani, should check programmes in advance before they were broadcast by the IMN. The reason she gave for this intervention was that Hero had a “good sense of Iraqi’s tastes” (Slevin, 2003). Media experts like Don North agreed that in the time of conflict it was difficult for the US Department of Defence and the CPA to support independent reporting and publishing (Cary, 2010). So the IMN became a propaganda tool of the Coalition Provisional Authority (North, 2005). “The irony was that the Americans wanted to have independent media, but at the same time they wanted to control the IMN,” said Simon Haselock, head of the media advisory team for the CPA (Haselock, 2011).

As was mentioned above, the Iraqi Media Network was considered to be one of the most expensive projects, but it lacked operating capital, which forced the IMN to run on a shoestring, which in turn was reflected by a poor quality presentation. According to Don North, senior advisor for IMN, “There were no funds for basic equipment such as camera batteries, tripods or editing equipment” (North, 2005).

The first editor of Al Sabah newspaper, Ismael Zayeer, accused SAIC of not being efficient: “They were very bureaucratic; it took them ages to supply only 50 PCs. They promised us many things, but we got nothing” (Zayeer, 2011). Ahmed Al Rekabi, The IMN television director blamed SAIC for not being willing to spend anything and being a corrupt company: “They were sending bills to the Pentagon for transmission towers which were there before Saddam’s time,” (Al Rekabi, 2008). This issue was emphasised by Ismael Zayeer: “We asked them for electricity generators, but they were stealing them from other provinces or cities, for example we read on the label in Arabic that they belonged to Kut City Council” (Zayeer, 2011).

Although the Iraqi Media Network in theory was a national service, neutral and not biased politically nor affiliated with any sector or ethnic group, the IMN was accused of being sectarian following the government’s Shi’a political party after they won the 2005 elections (Gambill, 2009).

6-5 SAIC: Essential Pentagon Contractor to Build the Iraqi National Media Network

Science Application International Corporation (SAIC) was one of the Pentagon's major contractors in information and communication control. On 5 March 2003 a contract for USD 33 million was given to SAIC - on a non-competitive bid basis - to help the Iraqi Reconstruction and Development Council (IRDC), a group of Iraqi exiles put together by Paul Wolfowitz, (Battle, 2007) to create a secret shadow government, a predecessor to the Iraqi Governing Council (Barker, 2008). Six days later, on the 11 March 2003, SAIC was given another USD 15 million sole-source contract to rebuild the "Iraqi Free Media Project". The company had experience in working with US Special Forces, but it did not have any media experience. The contract was given under the purview of Undersecretary of Defence Douglas Feith (Battle, 2007). The occupying forces awarded SAIC eight contracts in total, seven of which were on sole-source basis (Calbreath, 2004). The US Department of Defence justified the no-bid contract to SAIC by saying: "We need their immediate services" (Cary, 2010). Furthermore, the Pentagon described SAIC as a "fully qualified contractor who has the unqualified support and confidence of the Pentagon leadership and who was prepared to begin work and deploy as soon as possible" (Calbreath, 2004). Rohan Jayasekera of London-based "Index on Censorship" criticised the Pentagon contract saying, "SAIC didn't have any suitable qualifications to run a media network. The whole thing was so incredibly badly planned by them that no-one could make sense of what they were doing" (Dauenhauer and Lobe, 2003). Jayasekera recalled how SAIC brought equipment that was incompatible with local systems in Iraq. He accused the company of not having plans for TV programming (Dauenhauer and Lobe, 2003). Ahmed Al Rekabi, who worked with SAIC and the former Iraqi Media Network television director said, "This was the biggest disaster. SAIC had not done a media project before, that was why they chose someone like Mike Furlong who in theory had previous experience in installing TV when he was in Kosovo and Bosnia, but more importantly this guy had worked with psychological war operations" Ahmed (Al Rekabi, 2008). The US Department of Defence kept the project limping on because of the short-term contracts with SAIC, but the Pentagon was actively looking for an alternative (Dauenhauer, and Lobe, 2003).

These contracts raised many questions about the practices and procedures which had been followed in choosing or handing these lucrative contracts to SAIC that were not subject to competitive bidding (Calbreath, 2004), especially the relations between SAIC staff and the Pentagon. The contracts - which were

given to SAIC - were issued by the US Undersecretary of Defence for Policy, Douglas Feith, while his principal deputy, Christopher Ryan Henry, was the head of SAIC strategic development. Admiral William Owens who was a member of the Defence Policy Board, advising Donald Rumsfeld, later became SAIC's vice chairman. Another retired general, Wayne Downing, worked for SAIC on domestic and international business development. But he was also a board member of "The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq" (Battle, 2007). "*The San Diego Union-Tribune*" said that after SAIC employed Downing, he "became a vocal advocate for overthrowing Saddam Hussein, becoming a part-time lobbyist and military planner for Iraqi dissident Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress" (Calbreath, 2004). One of the people who worked for SAIC was David Kay, a former weapons inspector in Iraq who had confronted the Iraqi government during the inspection processes under Saddam's regime (Witte, 2005). He had problems also with Hans Blix over whether Iraq was producing weapons of mass destruction (Kull, 2004). Kay, who was SAIC vice president of counterterrorism initiatives, told the American Congress that Saddam was a few months away from making nuclear missiles (Calbreath, 2004).

On 27 March 2003, in the middle of the bombing of Iraq, SAIC was awarded a further contract in excess of USD 800,000 for an "Advisor for Democracy and Governance Group". One of the members was Shaha Ali Riza[□] (Battle, 2007). A member of the Defence Department contracting team claimed that the SAIC had received an order to employ Riza - on 21 March 2003 someone from the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) sent an email asking SAIC to employ four names as "Subject Matter Experts" to advise about voter education, business development, politics, women, and government reform, and one of the names was Shaha Ali Riza (Battle, 2007). "It would have been easy to hire ex-BBC, or ex-CNN personnel but SAIC decided to hire people like Mike Furlong who came from a military psychological warfare operation," said Simon Haselock the head of the CPA media advisory team (Haselock, 2011). Mr Haselock added, "Many of the people who were involved did not know much about how to move from a totalitarian media system to a free media, for example Robert Reilly was a broadcaster not a media expert" (Haselock, 2011).

□ One of Iraq's invasion planners, Paul Wolfowitz, was romantically involved with Shaha Ali Riza, who worked for SAIC from March to May, 2003. Mr Wolfowitz arranged for Riza to be granted several posts and large raises in salary to more than USD 193,000 it was revealed in April 2007.

Although SAIC was generous with its international staff this was not the case with the local ones: “SAIC officials said to me, when I was complaining about the salary of our employees, the USD 60 per month salary is enough, SAIC said they were paying the salary of what the employees in the Iraqi government would get. This was unrealistic,” said Ismael Zayeer the former editor of Al Sabah (Zayeer, 2011).

6-6 Information Control

One potential reason for the SAIC’s lack of success in Iraq was their company focus on information control: the SAIC website offers a programme for “Information Dominance/Command and Control”, which includes “Battlefield Control”, and ending with “Information Warfare/Information Operations” (Chatterjee, 2004). SAIC’s contract with the IMN was ended in December 2003 amid complaints about the company’s performance and accusations that they had made what was theoretically a project for a “Public Broadcasting Service” into a propaganda tool for the occupying forces (Calbreath, 2004).

This kind of propaganda was thought essential by the Americans, who used many other companies to confront the anti-American messages and to win the “hearts and minds” of the Iraqi people. The next chapter investigates the efforts of the US army and other US institutions to wage an information war against the “rumours” spread by the insurgents in Iraq.

Chapter 7:

American Propaganda: Means and Methods after the War 2003-2006

7-1 Introduction

The US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told the Washington Times in October 2003: "We are in a war of ideas, as well as a global war on terror." Mr Rumsfeld, who was the mastermind of outsourcing, affirmed that such ideas need the right channels: "The ideas are important, and they need to be marshalled, and they need to be communicated in ways that are persuasive to the listeners," he added. ("The Washington Times", 2003)

The United States concentrated on "publicity", as it is perceived by them, as an essential part of psychological warfare and military action, and a means to help governments or armies to achieve their strategic goals. The US government accountability office reported that there were a total of 343 media contracts for USD 1.62 billion for their whole programme between 2003-2005. The report said that 40% were for advertising contractors and 38% with media organisations, while 16% went to public relations companies (The US Government Accountability Office, 2006). However, much of these efforts have not been productive and cannot even be measured despite the huge budgets allocated for such media operations, because they have tended to be conducted in secrecy. For this reason, the effectiveness of many projects is still a question that no-one can answer. Many media operations launched by private contractors hired by the DoD ended as big embarrassments to the US government (Cary, 2010).

This chapter will explore how the Americans tried to influence the Iraqi press, the US psychological operation work and how such practices undermined the effort to build free media in Iraq.

7-2 The US Army and the Iraqi Press

The USD 200 million fund, provided by the Pentagon to rebuild Iraq's national media, could be considered a classic "media development". But in reality it was meant to influence Iraqi public opinion to improve the security environment or to counter anti-American messages (Cary, 2010). But this was not enough; in addition, the US military divisions attempted to improve their image through the launching of newspapers in different names. All of these publications attempted

to promote the activities of the US military, to give a good impression of the US soldiers to Iraqis, and to establish good relationships between the American troops and locals. For example, on frequent occasions these publications showed images of American soldiers kissing children or helping elderly men or women (Kadim, 2007). The military brigades and divisions created their own means of communication by issuing “newspapers” in Arabic and English. Some of them were printed in colour, and in different size formats - some large, while others were in tabloid size.

These publications did not cover the news or local issues, but concentrated on the US forces’ efforts to build or establish local service projects for Iraqis in the areas the relevant division was occupying. The newspapers showed the engineering efforts of these forces and their attempts to fix local water stations or to clean the area. Often the publications contained messages to counter the attacks against the American troops. These publications could be considered as propaganda leaflets, as the images and the topics focused on the US military power, exaggerating their force’s capabilities. These publications were usually given to locals for free (Kadim, 2007).

The US army formed the Combined Press Information Centre (CPIC) in 2003. This centre’s responsibilities included the coverage of US forces’ and multinational forces’ activities and to transmit news and information about such actions to the public through local, Arab and international media outlets (Kadim, 2007).

7-3 Psychological Operations Play Major Role in Iraqi Press After the 2003 Invasion

7-3-1 Army Officers Offered Help to Journalists

The US government which formed the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, ORHA, created its provisional offices in all of Iraq’s provinces, except the northern region of Kurdistan. When the CPA succeeded ORHA, the regional offices of ORHA changed its name to CPA in the province it settled in. Many of these regional CPA offices launched or helped journalists to launch newspapers. These offices provided funding or offered help to different publications, newspapers or magazines. It was an attempt to keep the mass focusing on anti-insurgent, democracy, and civil and human rights. Mohammed Al Shamari of Al

Sheraa ("The Canvas") newspaper recalls a visit by two US army officers to his publication offering him any kind of support to promote his publication. Al Shamari recounts, "Our correspondent in Babil province was approached by the Americans and they offered their support. In November 2003, the commander of Iraq's Heart base of Babil province visited us at the newspaper and he offered to furnish our office, but we refused. I told them: 'We don't want financial support or equipment or any other kind of help, but if you have any news tips, scoops or exclusive access to us, please give them to us'" (Al Shamari, 2011).

In a paper entitled "The Nature of the Iraqi Media Under the American Occupation", Fadhil Al Badrany (2008) refers to an attempt by the American forces in Faluja to persuade him to launch a newspaper. "An American colonel called Alan Nicolson offered to help me in launching a newspaper. He assured me that I would be free to write what I want or to criticise the American troops or the US policies in Iraq, but the newspaper should be publishing specific reports which the Americans would ask the newspaper to cover or to publish" (Al Badrany, 2008, p.128). Dr Hashim Hassan, an experienced editor, explains the American attempts to influence these publications: "The Americans did not care much about a certain level of criticism because they wanted to keep the situation within the areas of discussion instead of using arms" (Hassan, 2010). Many professional journalists refused to meet the Americans because of specific attitudes towards the occupation according to Dr Hassan, whilst others accepted: "There were many contracts which were given to local journalists to start a newspaper" (Hassan, 2010). Most of the newly launched newspapers did not direct much criticism towards the Americans. Some praised them highly, such as Al Ahead Al Gadied newspaper which said in its main headline: "Have a nice day Mr Bosh"[□] ("Al Ahaed Al Gadied", 2003). Some published pictures of American soldiers talking to Iraqi children in a friendly way (Al Hilal, 2003).

Although the US authorities in Iraq, either the CPA or ORHA, were keen not appear to have been spoon-feeding the new "independent" newspapers, many newspapers published stories in their favour. Al Nass ("The People") newspaper, headed by Dr Saadi Al Khalidi, published a special greeting in English on the first page, which read: "Thanks to the office of civilian and military for assistance this daily, on the occasion of the first issue, has the honour to inform the office of

□ The newspaper was referring to the American president George W. Bush, but there was a typing mistake.

civilian and military for assistance in Baghdad in general and to Major Jacka Nales and Rena Brownridge in particular its great attitude for good manners and this kind of treatment which they used to do it with anybody else especially with the editor. Thanks to ORHA this newspaper appreciates (ORHA) in general and justice ministry in chief who has received while asking”[□] (“Al Nass”, 2003). The newspaper gave a complete third page to an American judge, Mr Campbell, who was the representative of the occupation authority for the establishment of the Iraqi judicial system. On the sixth page the newspaper repeated the same greeting as on the first page but with more specification, saying “Thanks to the office of civilian and military for assistance this daily, on the occasion of the first issue, has the honour to inform the office of civilian and military for assistance in Baghdad in general and to Major Jacka Nales and Rena Brownridge in particular its great attitude for good manners and this kind of treatment which they used to do it with anybody else especially with the editor. Thanks to ORHA: this newspaper appreciates (ORHA) in general for all moral help and encouraging have been delivered to starting its work for the purpose at first issuing” (“Al Nass”, 2003).

7-3-1-1 Wassit’s Publication

This research project looked at the experience of the editor of Wassit Al Aan (“Wassit Now”) to present an example of newspapers being specifically sponsored by the CPA after 2003. In an interview the editor, Jamal Fayadh Al Jumaili, explained the development of Wassit Al Aan newspaper and the support it had received from the CPA regional office of Wassit province. “In July 2003, the coalition forces wanted to publish a newspaper which was a basic A4 size. The Americans asked me to launch the “newspaper”, which was called Awqat Wassit (Wassit Times), on a weekly basis, it was nearly 2,000 copies per week, then we moved to three days a week. It was distributed for free by the coalition forces and it lasted for three months,” Jamal Fayadh Al Jumaili said (Al Jumaili, 2011).

The newspaper covered local news and the activities of the coalition forces in Wassit province, but it was modest. “We decided to move to a proper newspaper and we called it Dhifaf Wasit (“Wassit Boundaries”) where we received more support from the coalition forces, but it was published on weekly basis,” Jamal Fayadh Al Jumaili said (Al Jumaili, 2011). The editorial policy of the newspaper

□ This is the exact text which was published in the newspaper which was poor in the language and full of typing mistakes.

raised problems amongst the staff: Al Jumaili continues: "I told the American coordinator about these troubles. He advised me to launch another newspaper promising to move the financial support they were providing to my newspaper, and he said let them find other financial backers" (Al Jumaili, 2011).

The editor decided to drop the word Wassit from the old title and call his new publication Al Dhifaf ("The Boundaries"), which was another weekly publication. His former colleagues complained about re-allocating the funds provided by the CPA regional office. Al Dhifaf did not last long and was replaced by yet another title, as Al Jumaili decided to close it and to launch a new political publication called Wasit Al Aan ("Wassit Now") on the 22 May 2004 ("Wassit Al Aan", 2004). Jamal Fayadh Al Jumaili explained, "Wassit Al Aan issued twice weekly with a circulation of 2,000 copies" (Al Jumaili, 2011). The newspaper was not sold outside the province it covered, and it was keen on covering the activities of the local government and the coalition forces ("Wassit Al Aan", 2005). "We covered the provisional council meetings and many activities like the installation of a water station by the coalition forces," Al Jumaili confirmed (Al Jumaili, 2011).

Al Jumaili referred to the coordination between his newspaper and the coalition forces on the coverage of coalition activities: "The coalition forces would inform us about any activity they wanted us to cover in advance, then either I would go or I would send one of the reporters" (Al Jumaili, 2011). The editor of Wassit Al Aan confirmed that his newspaper did not publish any article against the coalition forces, but they published pieces that criticised the provincial council of Wassit. Wassit Al Aan was printed in Baghdad, but the local reporters would write the material: "The newspaper material would be put onto a DVD then given to the Hamid Al Gailani office who would design the newspaper and print it in one of the presses for nearly USD 700 for each edition," said Jamal Fayadh Al Jumaili (Al Jumaili, 2011).

The revenue resources of the newspaper were limited and came mainly from the Americans. "We could not compete with the big newspapers of the political parties; sales represented 5% of our resources and adverts were difficult to get, so the rest of our financial support was coming from the Americans," said Jamal Fayadh Al Jumaili (Al Jumaili, 2011). But the Americans stopped the financial support in August 2005: "I stopped the newspaper because I could not carry on publishing it after publishing 84 editions since it was launched in June 2004" (Al

Jumaili, 2011). The coalition forces directly supported three newspapers launched by Jamal Fayadh Al Jumaili: “In the beginning it was cash, but later the American coordinator put the money in a bank account. I was not able to make any payments unless the American coordinator would add his signature to mine on any cheque” (Al Jumaili, 2011). The editor of Wassit Al Aan presented a document that showed the amount of USD 29,500 being awarded to Wassit newspaper on 19 June 2004, and the agreement between the CPA and Mr Fayadh Al Jumaili was active until 30 December 2004. Mr Jamal Fayadh Al Jumaili referred to another kind of support, which he received from the Americans: “I was provided with a car to use for the newspaper business and computers” (Al Jumaili, 2011).

7-3-1-2 Baghdad Press Club

In mid 2004, a few Iraqi journalists who supported the US military formed The Baghdad Press Club. Although the US army was cautious about paying money to reporters, it was revealed that many Iraqi journalists and members of Baghdad Press Club received financial “rewards”, for publishing material in local newspapers. Small amounts of money would be paid for each news piece published in a newspaper, or broadcast via radio or TV (Kadim, 2007). One of the club’s founders, Uday Lutfi, explained how he and his journalist colleagues started getting involved in the club: “The Americans decided to create a group for journalists to be contacted through the CPIC and I was nominated by the Americans, in particular General Martin Dempsey[□], to coordinate the process so I became the media consultant for the Baghdad area” (Lutfi, 2011).

Ahmed Al Zubaidi, a co-founder of the club, confirmed Lutfi’s story saying that the club included a group of journalists who had established a friendship amongst themselves and with the American officers during meetings at various conferences held by the CPA and the US army spokesman, Mark Kimmitt. Some documents mentioned that the club was the idea of, or was supervised by, National Guard officer and civilian attorney, Major John Fuhrman, who wanted the members to be hand picked Iraqi reporters, but Al Zubaidi said this was not the case: “It was our idea, and we decided to call it Baghdad Press Club in a meeting with the US army officers in one of the palaces near Baghdad airport. I was there, as was Uday Lutfi, Abbas Al Salehi and Najem Al Rubayae. From the American side there was General Hurling who was the head of the first mechanic division which was in

□ Martin Dempsey is the current chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, but before that he served in Iraq.

charge of Baghdad” (Al Zubaidi, 2011). The American officers were keen to send a specific message: “They wanted to use us to send positive signals. We were asked to report specific stories such as the help which the American troops provide to the locals or to the Iraqi army, etc” explains Ahmed Al Zubaidi (Al Zubaidi, 2011). According to Ahmed Al Zubaidi, the members chose Uday Lutfi to be the head of the club, and Uday suggested later to charge the US army money for the stories the club members were covering for them. But Uday Lutfi said this was not the case: “I asked the American generals to give the journalists who were members of the Baghdad Club rewards or gifts like cameras etc and sometimes money” (Lutfi, 2011).

Members started organising their work so that there was a mission for each journalist to carry out, or a story to cover. The US army started making payments and reimbursing expenses or equipment to those they considered “pro-democracy” journalists. “The journalist would bring the story after it had been published and would receive the money from Uday Lutfi who would get the agreed amount from the Americans,” Ahmed Al Zubaidi said (Al Zubaidi, 2011). The US army officers would pay Lutfi after seeing the piece in a newspaper, on TV, or being reported by a radio station (Kadim, 2007). Journalists who were members of the Baghdad Press Club said that they were given money, regardless of the content of the news they were reporting. However, more often these pieces dealt uncritically with the activities of US forces. “We were paid USD 50 for each news piece whether the stories were positive or negative,” Ahmed said (Al Zubaidi, 2011).

The activities of the Baghdad Press Club included covering other US military divisions who had asked the members to report their activities. The reporters would be granted identification cards as workers for these divisions, such as the 101st Airborne. The club reporters would be invited to graduation ceremonies or other events, which would be covered by the media outlets they were working for: “Baghdad Club members would receive emails about media activities or conferences to be covered for your news outlet, our role was passing info to the club’s members,” said Uday Lutfi (Lutfi, 2011). The support provided was not only financial, but also included training or workshops. “The Americans were ready for anything, whatever we were asking for, in order to keep us happy to keep passing their message. I asked them to get Dan Rather to train us, and he came and gave us some training,” said Ahmed Al Zubaidi (Al Zubaidi, 2011). Some reporters tried

to conceal the nature of the pieces they were writing, whilst others were more brazen: “In my newspaper I was making the piece in a way which didn’t look like a propaganda piece, while other newspapers would make it pro-American in order to get financial support or to get adverts from the Americans,” Ahmed Al Zubaidi said (Al Zubaidi, 2011).

On the American side Major Fuhrman was screening the club’s membership, and also prepared the day-to-day activities for the club’s members - and managed to allocate the required funding for such activities. Major Fuhrman’s background was in the US army’s “Information Operations” in the Baghdad metropolitan area (Source Watch, 2011). Fuhrman tried to influence these “Information Operations” with data collected by Iraqi focus groups formed or supervised by him. He wanted to gain insight into Iraqi opinions and the rumours circulating among the local populace, which were shaping Iraqi public perceptions in the Baghdad area. “Fuhrman was in charge of the Public Affairs Office of the US army, he was sending me the news about the activities which needed to be or could be covered, sometimes the generals contacted Major Fuhrman and he contacted us. He was friendly to everyone and he made a lot of friendships, he never asked for something in return,” said Uday Lutfi (Lutfi, 2011).

The club included members from different Iraqi media outlets, but mostly of the “pro-democracy” print press. A military spokesperson who was commenting on news about the club said that, “members are neither required nor asked to write favourably” about the United States (Source Watch, 2011). The Baghdad Press Club did not continue for long, as the US media raised the issue of US army payments, but the head of the club said it was ended because he decided to leave Iraq: “I terminated the Club in September 2005, at that time the number of journalists was 168, representing different outlets,” said Uday Lutfi (Lutfi, 2011).

7-3-2 The US Bribes Scandal

One of the more prominent scandals concerning the Iraqi press involved the bribes that were paid to some Iraqi newspapers to publish specific stories, mostly translated from English to Arabic and designed to be planted in local Iraqi publications. The Los Angeles Times revealed on the 30 November 2005 that the US military had provided secret financial rewards to local Iraqi newspapers to publish articles written by US military personnel. The company that was assisting the army in this was a US public relations company called the Lincoln Group (Al

Dahan 2006). The Lincoln Group was one of the leading contractors in Iraq working in public relations and psychological operations. The group had four offices in Baghdad and Basra due to a five-year contract with the Pentagon for close to USD 100 million. According to the New York Times, the company was in charge of producing recorded video clips or written articles to be published within the Iraqi media by any means (Al Dahan 2006). These stories were denouncing insurgency and praising the efforts being made by the US to rebuild Iraq. The group started distributing articles among different Iraqi newspapers to be published as unbiased news accounts written or reported by independent freelance journalists (Middle-East Online, 2005).

In a clear practice of “black” propaganda – that hid the true source of the information - the Lincoln Group was used to mask the connection between the propaganda articles and the US military. The Lincoln Group used Iraqi staff to claim that they were freelance reporters interested in publishing their stories (Mazzetti, and Daragahi, 2005). Their work was supervised by the “Information Operations Task Force” in Baghdad, which was part of the multinational corps headquarters under Lieutenant General John Vines, according to the Los Angeles Times (Mazzetti, and Daragahi, 2005). The company was responsible for nearly 1,000 news articles published in 12 to 15 Iraqi newspapers. The cost would be between USD 40 to USD 2,000 depending on which newspaper published the story and its reputation (Isakhan, 2009). The Los Angeles Times based its report on interviews with American military officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity, and with Iraqi journalists, but documents were also obtained. The report also indicated that the Iraqi newspapers, which published the articles, did not reveal their official connections with the US army. Although some newspaper editors considered those articles to be “advertorial”, others denied knowledge of the source of the articles. The Government Accountability Office of the US Congress considered those efforts as a form of secret publicity (Al Dahan, 2006). The US army in Baghdad defended such practices saying it aimed to confront the lies spread by Al Qaeda (Al Dahan, 2006).

7-3-2-1 How the Lincoln Group led the Propaganda Campaign for the US Army

The Lincoln Group, which operated in Iraq as Iraqex, was awarded a USD 6 million in September 2004. Although the company had “no previous background in public relations or media”, according to the contract it promised to lead “an aggressive advertising and PR campaign” (Battle, 2007). The company’s owners,

Christian Bailey and ex-Marine Paige Craig, grabbed the opportunity to work for US government projects in Iraq. However, whilst their company offered public relations services, none of them had a public relations or journalism background (Cary, 2010). In regard to the USD 6 million contract, Iraqex had formed a partnership with the Rendon Group, which had led public relations activities on behalf of Republican Party causes (Battle, 2007). The partnership between Rendon and Iraqex ended when Rendon left. According to a Rendon spokesman, his company left because it did not agree with Iraqex on the subject of planting stories in the local Iraqi press. Iraqex changed its name to The Lincoln Group, which together with SAIC later won a five-year contract for close to USD 100 million each to do psychological operations work for the United States Special Command of the army (Cary, 2010).

One of the former interns at the Lincoln Group, William Marx, described how they operated in Iraq. Marx managed to go to Baghdad after applying for an internship from the Lincoln Group to gain some journalism experience, but he discovered that his job was to help in the propaganda effort of the US army: “An army team inside the Al Faw palace, another of Saddam's former residences, would send me news articles they had cobbled together from wire stories and their own reports from the field. It was my job to select the ones that seemed most like Iraqis had written them. I was then to pass these articles along to our Iraqi employees, who would translate the pieces into Arabic and place them in local newspapers” (Marx, 2006). In many cases these stories would be written by US soldiers who belonged to the Psy-Ops division (Isakhan, 2009). Marx recalls some of these stories, which he read to approve for publication in Iraqi newspapers: “Unlike the terrorists, who offer nothing but pain and fear, the ISF bring the promise of a better Iraq. No foreign Al Qaeda mercenary would ever consider bringing gifts to Iraqi children. The Iraqi army, however, fights for a noble cause... together with the Iraqi people, they will bring peace and prosperity to the nation” (Marx, 2006).

The US military writers at the Al Faw palace added an even more positive spin on Iraq's prospects according to Marx. He referred to one of the articles, which ended up almost as a public service announcement: “Continue to report suspicious activities and make Iraq safe again” (Marx, 2006). The stories that Marx chose also needed to be approved by the army in Camp Victoria. Then the Iraqi staff would make a deal with a newspaper to publish these articles for a certain amount of money, telling them that it came from a wealthy businessman who was looking

for publicity (Isakhan, 2009). Marx mentioned that after the articles were published, the local staff of the Lincoln Group or their subcontractor would send them a scanned copy as proof of publishing the story (Marx, 2006). But evidence of these articles also needed to be supplied to the US army officers in charge of the operation. "I forwarded the scanned articles to the two majors in charge, Scott Rosen and John Muirhead, and received emails thanking me for my work" (Marx, 2006).

Some pro-American newspapers like Al Mutamar ("The Congress"), which represented Ahmed Al Chalabi's party did not object to publishing these articles (Isakhan, 2009). "We publish anything," said Al Mutamar's editor at the time, Luay Al Baldawi. "The paper's policy is to publish everything, especially if it praises causes we believe in. We are pro-American. Everything that supports America we will publish" (Mazzetti, and Daragahi, 2005). Al Destor newspaper, which had published articles from the Lincoln Group, confirmed through its editor Basim Al Shaikh that the newspaper followed the ethics of journalism, but "these were clearly marked as paid ads," said Al Shaikh (Beehner, 2006).

The Lincoln Group was also assigning Iraqi journalists to write specific opinion pieces for payments of USD 400-500 per month (Cary, 2010). Lincoln's Iraqi staff would never disclose the origins or the aims for which these articles were meant to be published or, more importantly, the party standing behind it (Isakhan, 2009). Although the Lincoln Group would try to remove anything from the translated articles that indicated they were coming from the Americans, such efforts were not effective. "Many Iraqis knew it was from the Americans," according to one of the former employees of the Lincoln Group (Gerth, 2005).

This policy sparked serious discussions amongst Iraqi media personnel. Some newspapers reacted with anger when they discovered that they had been trapped or targeted by this policy. Some of these newspapers published an apology to the readers for publishing Lincoln Group articles (Hama-Saeed, 2007). One editor in Azzaman said that such US actions were a humiliation to the independent national press (Isakhan, 2009). The company issued a statement saying: "Lincoln Group has consistently worked with the Iraqi media to promote truthful reporting across Iraq. We counter the lies, intimidation, and pure evil of terror with factual stories that highlight the heroism and sacrifice of the Iraqi people and their struggle for freedom and security" (Buncombe, 2005).

7-3-2-2 The US Government's Reaction

The first reaction of the US government came from the White House, which expressed concerns over the allegations (BBC, 2005). President Bush was "very troubled" about this revelation, while other official offices demanded an inquiry (Buncombe, 2005). American law prohibits such kinds of operations within its domestic media.

The Pentagon conducted an internal review by the Defence Department Inspector, which found no violations of US guidelines for Psy-Ops on foreign soil (Isakhan, 2009). But the inspector referred to violations by the military officials of the guidelines for competitive bidding and for overseeing costs regarding the September 2004 Lincoln Group contract. The inspector did not ask for any further action because the contract had since expired (Battle, 2007). Some of the former employees of the Lincoln Group have confirmed that the Psy-Ops programme that they were involved in had no impact on Iraqis despite its big budget (Isakhan, 2008, pp.17-18). "The Lincoln plan was just stupidity, people had lots of money who had to spend it before the end of the financial year, because if they didn't spend it they wouldn't get any more, so they just have to keep spending the money," said Rohan Jayasekera of London-based "Index on Censorship" (Jayasekera, 2011).

Observers considered the Pentagon's use of this kind of tactic as a huge mistake. It had undermined US claims about promoting democracy in Iraq. The US should have supported and given help to truly free independent media outlets and helped them to get real stories rather than fabricating propaganda articles (Hama-Saeed, 2007). "The Psy-Ops did not understand that there is a huge connection between credibility and believability. Everyone could hear something but if you don't believe what you are hearing it is propaganda and it is a waste of time," said Simon Haselock, head of the media advisory team for the CPA in 2003 (Haselock, 2011).

In the spring of 2006, The US military's Special Operations Command decided to discontinue the USD 100 million contract with the Lincoln Group, but the military officials confirmed that the decision was not related to the revelations about the Group's activities in Iraq. Lincoln Group spokesman Bill Dixon said in a statement responding to the news that the firm "continues to win contracts in the American effort to engage audiences in transitional areas of the world because of its unique

capabilities and proven record of accomplishing the objectives of its clients” (Witte, 2006).

The US government showed its willingness to continue its media propaganda campaign in Iraq (Isakhan, 2009). On 26 September 2006, the Lincoln Group was assigned a two-year contract for the amount of USD 6.2 million – USD 20 million to carry out monitoring of the services of the Iraqi and Arab media, in addition to providing training and advice to the Multi-National Forces in Iraq (Cary, 2010). In September 2006, the Lincoln Group offered the “Divide and Prosper” project to the United States Special Operations Command. It recommended targeting the Sunni religious leaders with US propaganda (Cloud and Gerth, 2006). According to Peter Cary (2010), the Lincoln Group had changed its name to Fulcra Worldwide. But after checking the name and the website provided, the current name of the company (as of August 2011) is Strategic Social. Strategic Social describes itself as “A global technology, media and research company that provides our clients with ACCESS to CULTURES which have historically been DIFFICULT TO REACH through traditional Western communications. Our expertise lies in PROVIDING INSIGHT TO OUR CLIENTS in the markets they wish to reach and THE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THEIR TARGET AUDIENCE.” The company is advertising jobs now in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the United States (Strategic Social, 2010).

“Psy-Ops were always there, you are trying to undermine the morale of the enemy by planting faked stories, the military mind-set is functioning to serve the military goals and it will be always like that and they have the money to do it,” said Jacky Sutton, IREX Baghdad office director (Sutton, 2011). General George W. Casey who was in charge of the US army in Iraq said in March 2006 that the US army would keep paying local publications for topics which promoted the image of the US. He confirmed that such actions would not violate any US laws or Pentagon guidelines. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called for the US to confront the “campaign of disinformation” led by Iraqi militant groups (Mazzetti, 2006).

The military went even further in the propaganda campaign as demonstrated by a military official who claimed that the task force had bought an Iraqi newspaper, and control of a radio station, and was using them to channel pro-American messages to the Iraqi public in 2004 (Mazzetti, and Daragahi, 2005). The official refused to disclose the name of the newspaper or the radio station fearing the

possible danger which their employees might face of insurgent attacks (Mazzetti, and Daragahi, 2005).

Some would defend such policy, like Charles A. Krohn, a retired army spokesman and journalism professor: "Psychological operations are an essential part of warfare, more so in the electronic age than ever. If you're going to invade a country and eject its government and occupy its territory, you ought to tell people who live there why you've done it. That requires a well-thought-out communications programme" (Gerth, 2005).

7-4 Losing Credibility

Many Iraqi newspapers lost their credibility with the public when they published certain stories or images. People became more suspicious about the motivation of any newspaper publishing positive stories about the United States or the US army. Questions started to be raised by the educated elite about the financial sources for such kinds of newspapers. The circulation of many newspapers started to decline. But among this press anarchy and the serious attempts by the US administration to control the situation in Iraq, two newspapers, Al Sabah and Azzaman, achieved a high rate of circulation. The next chapter analyses the contents of these two newspapers and their coverage of different events in Iraq.

Chapter 8:

Azzaman and Al Sabah Newspapers

8-1 Introduction

Despite the huge number of publications that flooded onto Iraqi streets, only a few publications hit a recognisable circulation figure. The only two newspapers to circulate over 40,000 copies per day were Azzaman and Al Sabah. This thesis characterises Azzaman as an independent profit-motivated newspaper representing the private sector, and Al Sabah as a politically-motivated newspaper representing the government. What kind of coverage did both newspapers present in their pages? What content did both publications have? How credible are they?

Many Iraqi journalists hoped that the end of Saddam's monopolisation of the press would lead to a free democratic press, but such freedom was not absolute, as it was affected by the security situation and by the interventions of the occupation authorities.

8-1-1 Azzaman Newspaper

Azzaman is an Iraqi international Arab-facing independent daily newspaper, published by the Azzaman Foundation for Press, Publishing and Information. It is one of the leading Arab newspapers in Europe, and was founded by the Iraqi journalist, Saad Al Bazaz, a former press secretary of Saddam, and former editor of Al Jumhuriya daily newspaper before he joined the formally opposed Saddam's regime and from 1995 lived in exile in London. The first pilot issue was published on 10 April 1997. Azzaman covered different kinds of global news, but news about Iraq and Saddam's regime in particular. "We were covering the Arab countries in general and Iraqi issues in particular with professionalism and an unbiased attitude," said Dr Fateh Abdul Salam, the editor of the newspaper since 2004 (Abdul Salam, 2011). Many stories were leaked to Azzaman newspaper from within Saddam's tight circle. Some of these stories were not true, but the publication would publish an apology on the front page if the editorial team found out, as Azzaman's editor Dr Fateh Abdul Salam[□] said: "It was difficult to get the news from Iraq, but we had some reporters who were

□ Dr Fateh Abdul Salam is the editor of Azzaman , and the brother of Azzaman's owner Saad Al Bazaz.

working for us secretly” (Abdul Salam, 2011).*

8-1-2 Azzaman in Iraq

The first edition distributed inside Iraq was on the 8 April 2003 in Basra by British troops. The title carried the words “Basra edition” which meant that the newspaper had more than one edition and might have even more in the future (Falhi, 2006).

This was to come true for Azzaman newspaper, when the publisher launched another version on 29 April 2003 with the heading “Baghdad edition” (Falhi, 2006). Azzaman was being distributed in Iraq earlier than April 2003, but it was limited to the provinces of Kurdistan in northern Iraq (Khudur, 2008).

The reason for the existence of more than one Iraqi edition of Azzaman related to a contract between the Azzaman Foundation and the British Ministry of Defence, to publish a newspaper for the areas that would be occupied by the British troops. Some websites - for example swissinfo.net (swissinfo.net, 2003) - show images of the British soldiers distributing copies of Azzaman newspaper to the citizens for free. The former editor of Azzaman at the time, Abdel-Munaim Al Aassam, confirmed this information: “During the war, maybe after a single day of the war, there was an agreement with the British Ministry of Defence to publish a special edition of Azzaman... I received the instructions from the editor-in-chief, Saad Al Bazaz, that we had an agreement with the British Ministry of Defence and the newspaper would be given to the British troops to be distributed in Iraq” (Al Aassam, 2010).

The newspaper was printed in Bahrain, but additional copies of the Basra edition would be printed and then received by the British troops late at night and they would be distributed the next morning in Basra, according to Al Aassam.

The Basra edition was fairly similar to Azzaman, but not identical. “I was the directing editor, but this edition of Azzaman would have its own editor. The first page would be different to ours, also the third page,” Abdul Munaim Al Aassam confirms (Al Aassam, 2010). The current editor, Dr Fatih Abdul Salam, has

□ Azzaman was originally the name of a newspaper published in Baghdad in 1947 by Tawfiq Al Samaani, but it was stopped in 1963 (Khudur, 2008).

denied completely any ties with the British Ministry of Defence. He said that kind of cooperation with British troops happened only because of the lack of means to send the newspaper to Iraq and to distribute it there. "We used the troops because the army was controlling everything which crossed the southern border between Kuwait and Iraq, it was the only available mechanism to make our newspaper reach Iraqis," he said (Abdul Salam, 2011). However, Dr Jassim Al Mijawi stated in his research paper "The Impact of Political Transition on Media Rebuilding the Media: Lessons from the Iraqi Case", that 10,000 copies of Azzaman newspaper were sponsored by the UK in areas where British troops were deployed in southern Iraq, Basra city in particular (Al Mijawi, 2009). The newspaper was printed in Bahrain and distributed in Iraq and the Gulf states, but from 28 April 2003 it was printed in Baghdad and distributed in Basra and Baghdad, and the international version was printed in London. Azzaman was printed in 20 large size pages, the first and last printed in colour (Falhi 2006).

The Iraqi edition of Azzaman was focused on local issues. On the whole, there were no news pieces from around the world or other Arab countries, unless they related to Iraq. Nada Shawqat, one of the editors of Azzaman in Baghdad, claimed that the circulation tolled up to 50,000 in Baghdad, while it was 15,000 in Basra (Fisk, 2003). But Dr Ahmed Abdul Majid, editor of Azzaman's Baghdad edition, said they were aiming for more: "We started with 50,000 copies of Azzaman and we were aiming for 250,000" (Abdul Majid, 2010).

Azzaman claimed to be an independent daily newspaper, but the independence of Azzaman was doubted by the Middle East correspondent of The Independent, Robert Fisk, who wrote: "Azzaman's London offices and the newspaper never refers to the 'occupation', only to the 'Coalition', America's own favoured expression for the armies of the United States and its allies in Iraq" (Fisk, 2003). This is something confirmed by the editor of Baghdad edition of Azzaman, Dr Ahmed Abdul Majid: "We did not call the Americans 'occupiers', we called the American troops 'the coalition forces,'" he said (Abdul Majid, 2010).

8-1-3 Azzaman Sources and Editorial Policy

The newspaper had a wide network of journalists and writers in different Iraqi provinces and other Arab capitals and even in foreign countries. In addition, Azzaman subscribed to the services of news wire agencies such as Reuters, AP, AFP and the German Press Agency. However, this newspaper like many other

local publications, deliberately “cleaned” the news received from these agencies, by reformulation of the news to make reports more accurate and clear them from any terms or descriptions which might be meant to stir up sectarian strife (Al Dahan, 2006).

Editorially, an analysis of the distribution of news content throughout the newspaper shows us that 75% of the front page was taken up with Iraqi news and reports representing local affairs, while columns and images of other important international news appeared in the inside pages (Al Shimari, 2008).

The editor-in-chief of Azzaman, Dr Fateh Abdul Salam, often referred to the great suffering endured by Iraqi reporters inside Iraq, so the reader was easily able to spot the differences between reports drafted in Azzaman’s Iraq edition and in its international sister. “Anyone checking the front page of each edition of Azzaman, International and Iraq, could tell the difference,” said Karam Neama, one of the Azzaman editors (Neama, 2010). He added, “I was the editor of the Azzaman website and two pages of Azzaman’s newspaper, both Iraqi and international, I was careful when I chose stories” (Neama, 2010).

Azzaman’s editors often complained about the censorship that was practised by the American troops. The Americans visited Azzaman’s office in Baghdad from time to time, or in some instances they asked the office manager and Baghdad edition editor, Dr Ahmed Abdul Majid, to pay them a visit in the green zone. “Once they asked me to visit them in the green zone and the Americans were rude, they considered that publishing a picture of a female soldier searching an Iraqi woman in Faluja was an attempt to incite violence,” Dr Ahmed Abdul Majid recalls (Abdul Majid, 2010). But it was not the last time Dr Abdul Majid visited the green zone. “The Americans called us once again because we got some news about Al Qaeda from the Internet,” Dr Ahmed Abdul Majid said (Abdul Majid, 2010). Azzaman later decided not to report similar stories in the Baghdad edition.

Nidhal Al Laithi confirmed that he was called several times by American officers with regards to some stories published by Azzaman. Such censorship forced Azzaman editors to be extra cautious about the stories they were covering. “We stopped using eye witnesses to avoid troubles with the Americans in our Baghdad edition,” Dr Fateh Abdul Salam said (Abdul Salam, 2011).

Karam Neama from Azzaman's London office referred to an event where he had an argument with the newspaper's Baghdad office regarding "cleaning" his article: "At some point I referred to Ali Al Sistani[□] as the Iranian religious leader. There was a big row in Baghdad about this issue and then they removed this sentence from my article, although everyone knows that Ali Al Sistani is originally Iranian and nothing wrong with that, they removed this sentence, later on even the whole article was removed from our website," Karam Neama said (Neama, 2010). Like Neama, other Azzaman writers in London would be careful about what they wrote in order not to cause trouble for their colleagues in Baghdad. "We are free here [in London] to write what we like, but in Baghdad it is a different story. Not much of what we publish here could they publish in Baghdad. They stopped confronting the authorities, because it was a matter of life or death," said Karam Neama (Neama, 2010).

In mid April 2004 both Iraqi editions of Azzaman, Basra and Baghdad, merged in one edition called the Iraq edition (Kareem, 2007). The merger between the two editions after one year gave some validity to the claim that there was some formal contract between Azzaman and the British Ministry of Defence. The Basra edition of Azzaman appeared to stop after a certain period for no real reason. This could have suggested it ceased as a contract had reached its end. In practical terms, there was no need to issue more than one edition of Azzaman newspaper inside Iraq, unless there was a prior agreement with another party, which appeared to be the British Ministry of Defence in this case. However, the editor-in-chief, Dr Fateh Abdul Salam claimed that having more than one edition of Azzaman was simply an attempt to avoid censorship.

8-1-4 Azzaman Funding

The newspaper was funded by sales of the newspaper and advertising only - it was not funded by any particular party (Falhi, 2006). "We had agreements with our distributors not to accept any returns, they had to take the whole set of copies," said Dr Ahmed Abdul Majid, (2010) the editor of the Baghdad edition. But this did not mean that the newspaper was making profit, in fact it was losing money initially. "In the first two years, Azzaman losses were covered by the newspaper owner Saad Al Bazaz, but from early 2005 the newspaper revenue from sales and

□ The Grand Maraja (Religious leader) for Shi'a Muslims in Iraq.

advertisements was enough to cover our expenses and even make profits,” said Dr Abdul Majid (Abdul Majid, 2010).

The revenues from advertising - a major source of funding for Azzaman - came from government advertisements, which covered considerable space in the newspaper's pages. There were low levels of commercial advertising in all newspapers as a result of the security situation, as many businesses closed because of the on-going violence. Government advertisements would have been as difficult to place with Azzaman, as with any other independent newspaper. The spread of corruption among employees meant that they would receive a portion of the payment for each advertisement the ministry commissioned. Furthermore, the publication would be subject to the pressure practised by some ministries, which were being run by partisan ministers. This usually happened if there was a crossover of interest between what the newspaper was publishing and the political party that ran that ministry. Any criticism of any ministry's performance, or of any senior official in the ministry, or government official, could be the reason for losing all advertisement deals with a certain ministry. Like other newspapers, Azzaman used private advertising bureaus, which shared the profits of the advertisements. The advertising would take up two to four pages a day in the Azzaman newspaper (Al Shimari, 2008).

8-1-5 Accusations against Azzaman

Azzaman was sometimes accused of being a pro-Sunni newspaper and of taking a stance which went against the country's Shi'a population - indicative of Mr Al Bazaz's good relations with other Arab countries (Isakhan, 2009). Other accusations came from one of the better known Iraqi journalists, Abdul Munaim Al Aassam, who was the former directing editor of Azzaman: "I felt that the head of the newspaper, Saad Al Bazaz, was using Azzaman to fulfil his political ambition and the newspaper moved away from being a media project" (Al Aassam, 2010). In an interview with the New York Times, Al Bazaz said that he made the newspaper investment to fulfil his political ambitions (Baltic Media Centre, Index on Censorship, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, and International Media Support, 2003). Al Baydha'a newspaper reported a meeting between Al Bazaz and the tribal Sheikhs of Mosel on its main page. It reported that at the meeting, he discussed different political issues in Iraq (Al Taiee, 2003). The situation in Iraq did not allow the former director of Saddam's press office to play any political role, so it seems that Al Bazaz dealt with Azzaman as an investment.

The former editor of Al Sabah newspaper, Ismael Zayeer, accused Azzaman of being sponsored by the coalition forces, mainly the British and the Americans: "The Americans told me that 40,000 copies of Azzaman newspaper were sponsored by them (the coalition forces), they were taking the copies from Bahrain and sending it to Baghdad by planes," Zayeer said. "I attended a meeting with Bremer and another British general. I asked them to stop supporting Azzaman because we can not compete, I said there must be one newspaper you are backing, Bremer said we support Al Sabah," Zayeer added (Zayeer, 2011).

Al Bazaz faced serious accusations of running a covert propaganda campaign funded by the Saudi intelligence to attack the wife of the Amir of Qatar, Sheikha Mouza. In the public hearing in October 2005, a bank statement was presented in the high court of London showed £2.5 million was transferred from Saudi Arabia to Azzaman's National Westminster Bank account in Ealing (Barker, 2008). Mr Saad Al Bazaz did not want be interviewed nor to answer my questions I had sent to his office.

8-2 Al Sabah Newspaper

Al Sabah ("The Morning") newspaper was launched as part of the American media project in Iraq and then became part of the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), which was formed in the early days of the US occupation of Iraq in April 2003. The first issue of Al Sabah newspaper was published on 17 May 2003 edition number zero. The newspaper, at the time, was accused of speaking on behalf of the coalition forces in Iraq (Al Dahan, 2006). Theoretically Al Sabah was formed to be "independent" as many articles confirmed in the establishment codes of the IMN, but the publication was effectively a mouthpiece for any party representing the authority (Mukhlif, 2008).

8-2-1 Launching Al Sabah

The CPA launched the newspaper, which later became part of the Iraqi Media Network. The IMN replaced the Ministry of Information by CPA order number 7. The concessionaire and first chief editor was the Iraqi journalist, Ismael Zayeer, a former journalist at Radio Free Europe (Kareem, 2007). Zayeer said that Al Sabah was the idea of one of the American advisors, Mike Furlong, who suggested this name as well to Paul Bremer and Jay Garner. "I contacted my old friends, journalists and writers, we were nearly 15 journalists and we agreed that we

needed two weeks to launch a newspaper,” said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). The Al Sabah team led by Zayeer selected the size of the newspaper to be the same as the French newspaper Lomond Diplomatic. The content was similar to that of Al Hayat newspaper, where Zayeer was working before. “We showed the first demo to the American administration on the 14 May 2003,” Zayeer said (Zayeer, 2011).

On the 17 May 2003 Al Sabah was launched to be Iraq’s national newspaper. Zayeer confirmed that in the beginning Al Sabah was basic. They lacked the required equipment, journalists were writing reports by hand, and the contents would be gathered at the printing house. The first edition contained an interview with Jay Garner conducted by the chief editor, Ismael Zayeer. This front page interview was criticised by some journalists: “When I saw the first edition of Al Sabah and Garner’s picture on the front page, I felt disgusted and I said, did we replace Saddam with Garner?” said Ahmed Mehana, an Iraqi journalist (Mehana, 2010).

The newspaper was published in tabloid size twice a week, Monday and Wednesday from 17 May 2003 until 2 July 2003. This progressed to three times a week, Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 3 July 2003 until 1 August 2003. Finally from the 3 August 2003, the newspaper became a daily publication, printed every day of the week except Friday, Friday being a public holiday in Iraq (Falhi, 2006). The newspaper started to use the same printing factory as had previously printed Babil newspaper (Jasim, 2009). “In June we found the printing house number 3, but it was occupied by Al Kazanazanies group (a religious political group), where they were printing their newspaper. I negotiated with them and they left, then we re-organised the whole place and we moved in,” said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011).

The newspaper benefited from the printing house’s professional staff of technicians and qualified workers who joined Al Sabah (Mukhlif, 2008). As mentioned before, Al Sabah newspaper was founded as a project, supervised by SAIC under a contract to the US Defence Department.

8-2-2 Al Sabah Editorial and Management Policies

Ismael Zayeer was the editor who drew up the editorial policies of the newspaper from the beginning, based on his understanding and experience in working for Radio Free Europe and the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat. The editor

had daily editorial meetings where he divided the coverage among his reporters. This mainly covered the activities of the CPA and the coalition forces, but also included other local issues. "Our coverage was mainly the local issues which were related to Iraqis, they were our audience, and the country was full of events that would easily cover the whole space of our newspaper," said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). Zayeer claimed that the CPA officials were pleased to have Al Sabah in the beginning. Malath Amin, one of Al Sabah journalists confirmed: "Bremer said to us that you were the channel which put us in touch with the Iraqi people" (Amin, 2010). Amin and his colleagues were frequently asked to escort Paul Bremer to his public events. Other, mostly positive "news" and developments were covered by Al Sabah reporters. "We were covering news like the forming of the first Iraqi army battalion; the re-establishment of the Ministry of Interior; the beginning of the new academic year in September 2003," Malath Amin added (Amin, 2010).

The newspaper had direct channels of contact with the US army or the CPA. "I was attending weekly meetings with Paul Bremer and Jay Garner," said Ismael Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). On other occasions the US army would pass information to the editors, but the newspaper would usually verify the information with witnesses from the scene.

The newspaper introduced new terminology for dead people to gain the sympathy of the public, by calling the victims who died because of the violence, "martyrs". Certain terms were used to refer to certain groups - such as "terrorists" for Al Qaeda or "militant groups" for other armed organisations or "militia" to refer to Shi'a armed groups. Although the newspaper was the state's newspaper, some reporters claimed to have an amount of freedom where they could criticise any ministry or even Bremer, but still they had some taboos. "We had red lines we should not cross, for example not to talk about National symbols such as the religious leaders, Ali Al Sistani (Shi'a leader), Al Sadr (Shi'a leader), Barzani (Kurdish leader), Talbani (Kurdish leader) and Ahmed Al Kubaisi (Sunni religious leader)," said Malath Amin (Amin, 2010).

These red lines which Malath Amin mentioned affected the coverage of Al Sabah as demonstrated in a particular story: "I was covering the Sadrists' demonstration and I said there were 150,000 individuals who demonstrated in Baghdad. The day after, I was called by the editor, Ismael Zayeer saying that the number was incorrect and it was a million, but this was not what I had seen. I believe that he

was called by the Sadrists and he published a correction the day after,” Malath Amin said (Amin, 2010). The editor was careful about publishing the names of his reporters, fearing that the reportage would endanger them and/or get them into trouble. “I wrote a reportage about missing Iraqi air-force planes, but my editor refused to put my name, fearing attacks by the people who were making money out of that trade,” Malath Amin said (Amin, 2010). Zayeer said that he followed such policies to protect his staff.

In January 2004, Harris Corporation won a USD 96 million contract to rebuild, operate and equip the Iraqi Media Network (IMN). Harris handed over the supervision of Al Sabah to a Kuwaiti-based, Iraqi-owned public relations company called Al Fawares (Haner, 2004) which was supposed to help the newspaper to expand its reach (Online NewsHour, 2004). Harris was criticised by the chief editor of Al Sabah, Ismael Zayeer, who resigned because of what he described as “editorial intervention” from Harris employees (Goodman, and Goodman, 2008). “Harris (Al Fawares) started intervening in everything, for example the representative of Al Fawares, Firas Arory, was questioning Al Sabah journalists about their reports! They were questioning our advertising contracts, they told me I should not sign any advert contracts. I thought they were willing to take our resources but instead of helping us, they gave us nothing,” said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). Harris denied Zayeer’s allegations of editorial intervention at the time, but Zayeer left along with another 20 journalists, which in turn threatened the newspaper with closure (Goodman, and Goodman, 2008). The Associated Press reported that the reason for this disagreement was because Harris rejected Zayeer’s plan to turn the newspaper into a private venture. “We informed [Zayeer] that the paper would remain part of the IMN,” said Tom Hausman of Harris’s corporate communications, who confirmed that Al Sabah would continue publishing with a new staff (Associated Press, 2004). “Al Sabah was not part of the IMN and the Americans told me it is not part of the IMN, but there was a handwritten addition to order number 65 and 66 which stated that Al Sabah was part of the IMN,” said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). The first editor-in-chief of Al Sabah did not deny that it was his wish to gain independence from any government institute: “I told Bremer in one of the meetings that we hoped that Al Sabah in a year’s time would be an independent newspaper which was self-run and we could put the legal framework for publication in this form,” said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). Media experts like Jacky Sutton from IREX encouraged such plans saying, “For Al Sabah to be within the IMN was a short-sighted decision, but the people who were

surrounding Paul Bremer were not media development experts, so they did not direct him in the right way” (Sutton, 2011).

Ismael Zayeer worked in Al Sabah until he resigned on 4 May 2004, when he was succeeded by Mohammed Abdul Jabbar Al Shaboot who was working for a Kuwaiti newspaper called Al Watan, part of Al Fawres. But he was replaced by his deputy Jumaah Al Hilfi in early July 2004 until early October 2005 (Kareem, 2007). The interim Iraqi government, headed by Ayad Alawi, who was appointed by Paul Bremer as prime minister in June 2004, decided to extend the contract for Harris Corporation, which included Al Fawares, for another three months at a cost of USD 22 million (Rohde, 2005).

In the middle of 2004 the contract with Harris ended, and the IMN including Al Sabah newspaper came under the supervision of the Iraqi Media and Communications Committee, founded by the civil governor of Iraq, Paul Bremer. The new board was founded according to laws number 65 and 66 issued by the CPA on 20 March 2004. Since that date Al Sabah has been fully managed by the Iraqi administration as being part of the IMN; however the editors protested that this was not the case. “We did not find any document referring to the managerial connection between Al Sabah and the IMN,” said Jumaah Al Hilfi, a former editor-in-chief of Al Sabah (Al Hilfi, 2010).

8-2-3 Funding and Advertisements

The newspaper was being funded from public money, which meant through the CPA - then the interim Iraqi government - but in theory, it was not officially speaking on behalf of the Iraqi government. However, Al Sabah was keen to be the first newspaper to publish the government’s points of view, news, decisions and laws (Al Dahan, 2006). But the first editor-in-chief had a different opinion: “I must say here that the Americans did not give us anything, not a single computer or a car, they were paying the salary of 75 employees a ridiculous amount such as USD 60 per month for drivers USD 120 for department managers, people were not happy but I told them that I would sort everything out later through our work,” said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). The newspaper did not publish any advertisements when it was first established, but after a few editions they began to appear in the newspaper’s pages, as it became clear that advertising revenue was essential for covering the expenses of the publication. The first advertisement appeared in edition number 50, and it took up a quarter of the fifth and sixth pages. Later the

area for advertisements was increased - in edition number 60 they took up half of the fifth and sixth pages (Mukhlif, 2008). "We got just commercial adverts in the beginning, it was not that much. We did not have people who were specialised in marketing or adverts, but we noticed that such revenue would grant us our independence, so we gave the advert department more attention," said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011).

The increase of the space given over to advertising continued until it represented up to 25% of the volume of Al Sabah (Mukhlif, 2008). In many cases 50% of the front page was advertisements. "I decided to give the adverts such space on the main page, because we wanted to make revenues for the newspaper, we were in a race," said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). The space given to advertisements was an "historical" new development in the editorial policy of the Iraqi official newspapers. The newspaper also began using spaces in the interior pages to complete news stories, with the headline and a short excerpt printed on the front page (Al Dahan, 2006).

Like other publications, Al Sabah was seeking to establish financial resources to continue publishing in case their financial support, granted by public money, was suspended. Although recent research says that the advertising provided financial revenues covering 50% of the expenditure (Al Dahan, 2006), the former chief editor confirmed that the newspaper started covering its expenses within less than a year of its establishment: "In the beginning, adverts revenue was covering 40% of the cost of the newspaper, but after seven to eight months we started making profits," said Ismael Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). Jumaah Al Hilfi, the editor-in-chief of Al Sabah from 2004-2005, said that initially, Al Sabah advertising rights were being sold to advertising companies. "The contract was giving Al Sabah only USD 80,000. When the contract ended I refused to renew it, and we started dealing with the advertisers directly. We made USD 280,000 income in less than one year," Al Hilfi said (Al Hilfi, 2010).

Other reasons for the increase of space given to advertising was the dramatic increase in the number of advertisers through the new laws implemented in Iraq. The laws asked any advertiser, who commissioned a TV advertisement, to publish additional advertisements in the local newspaper. This represented 20% of the value of television advertisement costs (Mukhlif, 2008).

8-2-4 Al Sabah Distribution

Al Sabah was printing nearly 20,000 copies in the early stages, but the circulation rate of the newspaper later reached up to 45-55,000 copies per day. “The Americans wanted to give the newspaper away for free, but I refused because I know that Iraqis would not respect a newspaper given to them for free,” said the chief editor at the time Ismael Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). The wholesale copies were being sold without retrieval as deals were made with distributors to buy all of a set quantity. Those distributors could ask for increases or decreases in the number of copies, if they had a sense of the market. The circulation numbers might increase dramatically if there was an exclusive piece of news which interested the public and that was published in the newspaper (Mukhlif, 2008). “Sometimes it was 100,000 when there were certain events, such as the capture of Saddam,” Zayeer said (Zayeer, 2011).

Al Sabah was not distributed in some areas for political reasons. “We had trouble in distributing the newspaper in Ramadi, Salah Al Din and Mosel because we were accused of representing the Americans. I decided to give out the newspaper for free for a month in those provinces and the circulation went up from 150 to 2,000,” said Zayeer (Zayeer, 2011). The international distribution of Al Sabah was limited to the neighbouring countries and was usually late, but the publication would publish up-to-date news on its own website (Mukhlif, 2008).

8-2-5 Al Sabah and Credibility

The chief editor and concession owner, Ismael Zayeer, who ran Al Sabah, tried to emphasise the independence of the publication. He said in his first editorial that Al Sabah was a “journal of Iraqis first and foremost, committed to their interests and aspirations” (Sulaibi, 2007). While Mohamed Abdul-Jabbar Al Shaboot, who succeeded Zayeer, said: “Al Sabah is the first national newspaper in Iraq, but nevertheless it is not an official newspaper” (Sulaibi, 2007). Nevertheless the newspaper, which mostly published political articles and contained events and field reportages directly related to people’s everyday life, hardly ever published articles that criticised the authority. Nor did it print information which might reveal any crimes committed by high level officials or executive authorities such as the coalition forces, the Iraqi army, the police or even private security companies (Mukhlif, 2008). Many Iraqis considered Al Sabah to be a mouthpiece of the CPA. Although an Iraqi government was ruling the country, Al Sabah was still seen by many as a product of the occupation (Rousu, 2010).

However, the former chief editor, Ismael Zayeer, denied such accusations, saying that the newspaper was not representing the American occupation: “It was an Iraqi newspaper, not an American one. Al Sabah’s location helped us to be away from the American influence, it was not in the green zone, they hardly came to see us, even when they came it would be an unpleasant visit for me because of the security preparations” (Zayeer, 2011). Despite the accusations about Al Sabah’s one-sided coverage, it stands as one of the widest circulated publications in Iraq. “Iraqis are used to buying the official newspaper since the former regime,” said Malath Amin (Amin, 2010). I believe Malath was right about that. As an Iraqi citizen myself I remember buying the official newspapers under Saddam’s regime, but I did not have any other option at the time, as they were the only newspapers available. After the launch of a huge number of newspapers, I started choosing the most credible one that provided the information I was after. I used to buy many newspapers to get information about stories coming from different places in Iraq. That helped me a lot when I was working as a journalist in Iraq as well as when I moved to work in the UK. In the next chapter I present my personal experience through two years of covering the conflict in Iraq when I was working as a fixer and then Baghdad bureau manager for the UK based newspaper, The Independent.

Chapter 9:

Working as a Journalist in Iraq and in the UK, 2003-2008

9-1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to counterbalance the analytical study of the Iraqi press, conducted in the main body of the thesis, through a discussion of my personal experiences as a working journalist in Iraq and the UK, reporting on Iraq and the Middle East between 2003 and the present. This chapter will present specific experiences gained through my work in the UK as a freelance journalist, specialising in Iraq and Middle Eastern issues, from 2005 to the present. In this capacity I have worked with newspapers, television, Internet broadcasting, and news agencies, gaining experience with many Anglophone media organisations, such as the BBC, Channel 4, APTN, and Al Jazeera International. But beyond any doubt, my experience in Iraq, working as stringer, fixer, and journalist for the British newspaper The Independent from 2003-2005, has had the biggest impact on my career and understanding of journalism.

In March of 2003, the United States of America led the coalition to occupy Iraq, promising to demilitarise Iraq and democratise the country, but for me it was the beginning of a unique and sometimes frightening experience.

9-2 Important Events

My work for The Independent newspaper in Iraq required me to travel around the country reporting different events and stories relating to the American occupation. Like many other journalists at the time, I was often faced with very difficult times and terrible situations. In particular, there is one situation that stands out clearly in my mind, reminding me how important it is to be a journalist.

In May 2003 I was stopped at an American checkpoint on my way back to Baghdad, coming from Dyala province, 50km to the east. The soldiers began to search my car; they opened the doors, and they looked under the car's engine. More than four soldiers were involved in checking the car, and it seemed to me they were looking for something hidden. When the soldiers finished the search, their sergeant came to me and asked me if I spoke any English, to which I responded, yes. The sergeant said: "We had information about a car similar to yours carrying weapons." I smiled warily and responded by saying that I was holding no weapon, I was holding only this, and I showed him my pen and

reporter's notebook. The American sergeant moved one step back and said in a serious way, "This is the worst kind of weapon, but I can't arrest you because of it. You can go now." I continued to carry my only weapon through my work covering different violent events for the next 27 months.

9-2-1 From Najaf to Faluja: Being a Journalist is Dangerous

During my work in Iraq in April 2004 I was covering an event in Najaf with my other colleagues from The Independent newspaper. We were captured by a militant group belonging to the young Shi'a cleric, Muqtada Al Sadr, and were taken as hostages. I was asked by my abductor, "Why are you not fighting with your 'cousin' Muqtada, especially since you both share the same tribal origin?" I was not expecting his question, but I decided to share, with someone who might be my killer, a dream that I thought I was making come true, which was, telling the truth, or getting as near to it as I could. I believed - and still believe - that this is a privilege; to find out about things. I said to him, "You told me earlier that you came here to Najaf to fight with Muqtada, but who is going to write about that? I have chosen to play my role, while you decided to fight." My abductor seemed to be satisfied by this answer. We were lucky to escape from Najaf, and to avoid being the story ourselves.

In the spring of 2004 in Iraq, there was fighting everywhere. With my colleague Patrick Cockburn, we tried to go to Faluja. There was fighting in the city, and we decided to escort an aid convoy of Red Crescent ambulances as a means of getting into the city. But on our way in, the convoy was caught in crossfire between Iraqi militants and a US army patrol that was passing through the main road. We were forced to stop the car and to jump out and lay on the ground, creeping to the closest hiding place through the heavy exchange of fire. During these few minutes, as I was counting the American vehicles, one of them caught fire. The shooting stopped and we jumped back into our car to go back to our office. On our way back we were stopped by militants who appeared to be from the same group as those who were shooting at the American vehicles. They asked our driver, "How many cars were burned?" I replied quickly, "Four," gesturing to the driver to move before they noticed the "blond" foreigner, Patrick Cockburn, sitting in the back seat. They started shouting "Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar." We drove off and returned to our base to write about what we had witnessed on that sunny day.

9-2-2 Faluja is the “Insurgents” Safe Haven, but Why?

I covered the story of Faluja from the moment Saddam’s regime fell on 9 April, until it became impossible to cover from the field. I was also lucky enough to be with the first group of reporters to cover a particularly memorable event.

I met some friends from my university days living in the same street where the first incident happened - where American soldiers killed a minimum of 16 Iraqi demonstrators. The demonstrators wanted the American soldiers to leave a school they were occupying, so that their kids could return to study. The report in The Independent about this incident was the closest to the truth of any in the western media. However, although we tried hard enough to get the story, there were certain issues that I noted, had been “lost in translation”. These were the cultural issues, which seemed to be difficult for the Americans to understand. The story as reported by most journalists was that: “The people demonstrated, asking the American soldiers to leave the school, then there were two bullets fired close to the crowd, then the soldiers followed ‘the rules of engagement’ and shot at the crowd.” After asking many eyewitnesses, and because some of them were my friends whom I knew and who trusted me, I was told the more accurate story. Dr Noaman Al Hadithi said to me that the reason for the demonstration was not the school itself, nor that the people wanted their kids to go back to school; it was something totally different. He said that residents in the houses neighbouring that school were complaining about the American soldiers: “They were watching our women, and they have ‘laser glasses’ through which they could see people naked.” The use of binoculars by some soldiers was another reason that seemed to confirm the rumour and it developed into a story, according to Mr Al Hadithi.

Although it started with a rumour, later it developed into a solid fact: the killing of many people. People in the city of Faluja believed that this meant an agreement would be reached between the families of the victims and their killers. I recall here what I heard from someone whose brother was killed in that incident. When I asked, “What are you going to do?” he told me, as we were sitting in the funeral tent, that he and his tribe would wait for a few days for the Americans to come and apologise, and then make a deal about the “lost blood”, in other words - negotiate compensation. “In the agreement, the soldiers of that unit must leave Faluja,” he added. I thought that this person must come from a tribal background, like the majority of Faluja residents - this was the way he and others would see things. It is tribal law, that the killer must leave the area and his tribe should pay

compensation, “blood money”. I asked him, “If they don’t?” Without hesitation, he replied, “I will fight until I get my revenge, it is a stigma to live while the killer of your brother is walking free and enjoying life.” In this one incident, the Americans created a group of nearly a hundred enemies ready to die fighting them. It was a lack of cultural understanding of the special quality of the society in Faluja. From then on, Faluja became a regular destination for me, where I covered many stories.

9-2-3 Mysterious Newspapers

One of the main resources for my stories were the new Iraqi newspapers. These newspapers, an important element of the rapid expansion of the Iraqi press, were covering many issues all over the country; news you would not otherwise know. However, these newspapers sometimes carried materials either badly translated from English or based on eyewitness stories that could not be proven. I recall an event where an Iraqi local newspaper, Al Yom Al Akhar, published a translation of an article by The Independent’s Middle East correspondent, Robert Fisk. I was stopped by the angry receptionist of the hotel where The Independent office was based, and he asked me, “If you think our hotel is dirty, why are you staying here then? Tell Mr Fisk that we do not want him here anymore, he is the dirty one, not our hotel.” I thought there had been a fight between this normally nice receptionist and our senior reporter. But then a copy of the translated article from Al Yom Al Akhar newspaper was presented to me, in which the hotel was described as a filthy place. Apparently the translation was wrong, because the original words were “dingy hotel”. I persuaded the receptionist that “dingy” means dark, and that it was a metaphorical use of the word, but I did not tell him that dingy in truth has a similar meaning to dirty. I took the newspaper, and we decided to make it our story of the day by paying a visit to the newspaper’s offices. There was an address mentioned in the heading of the newspaper, but when we went there, we could not find it. There was no newspaper, office or printing house. We realised that this newspaper was trying to hide its identity, for fear of attack from the different militant groups.

9-2-4 Cultural Differences Cause More Damage

The Independent was one of the first newspapers to cover the death of Baha Mousa in British custody in September 2003. I went with the other members of The Independent team to Basra, where we visited Mousa’s family. They were cautious about new visitors. They were very sad about the death of their family

member, and at the same time angry about it, insulted by the way the British army had dealt with them. "Do you know that our lives are worth USD 2,500?" Mousa's angry brother told me. He presented a document, which offered this amount to the family as compensation for their loss.

The Baha Mousa case was no exception. I started visiting Basra on a regular basis, since we covered British army stories ("The Independent" is a British newspaper). I went many times to a Basra slum called "Al Hayaniya". "You must be crazy, they will eat you alive. Those people kill for no reason. I will leave you here, may Allah be with you." That was the last warning from the local taxi driver whom I hired in Basra, when we started to investigate the deaths of three people who, according to a local paper, had been killed by British soldiers. Obviously I was a stranger, and I attracted attention.

"Salam Alyakum, do you know these names?" I asked passers-by or people sitting on narrow street corners. Different faces and ages, all shared the same answer: "No, we do not." Finally someone called over: "Hey brother, why do you expect us to help you in finding those people? You are a stranger and Allah only knows what you want from those people". I explained that I was a journalist, and that my concern was to report the deaths of three civilians. Suddenly he called others, and I was received like an honoured guest at a big party. "They forced my brother to swim, and he did not know how to swim, so he drowned. His friends told me that the British soldiers were laughing at him while he was dying," a young lady told me, through tears. In the same slum I was directed to another family who had lost their main breadwinner, a former headmaster, who was arrested and returned dead in a plastic bag. There were many signs of torture all over his body, according to his angry young son. He told me that the British army arrested his father because of accusations that he was an active Ba'athist before 9 April 2003. This simple accusation could be levelled against five million Iraqis, especially in the education system, after 25 years of the Saddam regime. I asked if he was going to follow the steps of Baha Mousa's family. "I was contacted by the British army attorney. He told me they needed to dig up my dad's grave and do an autopsy. But I refused because this is against Islam and our tribal law," his son said. I tried my best to convince him to allow it, saying, "I am not acting as a reporter here, but for the sake of the truth, let them do so," but he shook his head and said, "No, I believe in seizing my rights with my own hands." That was his final answer. Again, there was a cultural ignorance between the two sides that could

prove fatal.

9-2-5 Don't be Misled by What the Majority are Saying

Another event where cultural differences led to the death of six British soldiers took place in Amara, 400km south of Baghdad. The soldiers were killed in the local police station, but the loss of life could have been avoided if there had been greater knowledge about the local culture of the area's residents amongst the British military. In Amara we met officials first, then we talked to the locals, who accused British soldiers of stealing their gold. This was hardly credible. After winning the trust of two of the hotel guards, they whispered the reason the local people had risen up in numbers. "They [British soldiers] were searching our women. They even searched their wardrobes and they were presenting their underwear and laughing," one guard said. This exaggerated rumour was, for the locals, the spark to make them "punish" any British soldiers, even those not involved in such patrols, like those killed.

Such stories are a reminder of a general indifference about Iraq and the relationship between its different communities. I recall a discussion with an American soldier standing at the gate of the green zone, when he asked me in late April 2003 if I was Shi'a, Sunni or Kurd. I was surprised that an American soldier from Alabama would care about the main Iraqi communities. I took it as well intentioned, asking, "What is the difference?" He replied: "If you are Shi'a you are a friend. If you are Kurd you are a very good friend. If you are Sunni you are not a friend and may be an enemy, because Saddam was Sunni." He seemed not to know that the only Al Qaeda camp was in Kurdistan, that Saddam had large numbers of Shi'a supporters, and that he executed many Sunni officers after accusations of a coup attempt. His simplistic idea about Iraq's communities seemed to be shared by many highly-placed American planners of the invasion, as their "white paper" tells us about designing different programmes for the Sunnis, and others for the Shi'a and Kurds, in the media project for Iraq.

9-2-6 Censorship could Lead to Brutal Fighting

One of the important events that I witnessed was the closure of the Sadrist newspaper Al Hawza Al Natiqa ("The Spoken Hawza"). It was the mouthpiece of the young Shi'a cleric Muqtada Al Sadr, and was less than a mile from my office in Baghdad. I had visited it a few times. I met many of its eager young journalists and also the editor, who told me they were aiming to distribute more than 5,000

copies, twice weekly. Its closure was surprising, since what Al Hawza was accused of was something done by many other newspapers - that of reporting stories based on only a single eye witnesses or for comparing certain political figures to the former Iraqi dictator. The closure warrant was difficult to translate because it didn't make much sense in Arabic. It was obviously an order that had been translated into Arabic from another language. When I went to the newspaper's offices, I saw many American soldiers surrounding the place with their guns, vehicles, and personnel carriers, while the journalists were standing aside among the public. I recognised one of them: "What are you going to do?" I asked. "We will start another publication, we could use one of our houses as the newsroom. They cannot stop us," he replied. But the leader of the Sadrist Current, Muqtada Al Sadr, used the newspaper's closure to mobilise his followers to demonstrate in Baghdad's main square. The demonstration led to serious fighting, in the course of which I ended up being held hostage, when we were covering a press conference in Najaf, as mentioned earlier.

9-2-7 Investigative Journalism Does Better Than the Intelligence Service

One of the stories which I worked on after the conflict, was an investigative journalism piece. I worked for The Atlantic Publishing Group, researching a very difficult story. I was contacted by a writer, Dominic Streatfield, with regards to leading an investigation into 400 missing barrels of HMX and RMX - heavy explosives. They were sealed by UN weapons inspectors sometime before the war, but went missing shortly after the invasion of Iraq. The explosives were last seen a few days before the fall of the Saddam regime by a small group of American soldiers and two reporters, in Al Yousoffia military compound. When the disappearance first came to light, the Americans said that the Russian Intelligence Service was responsible. Months later, the Americans accused the Iranian Intelligence Service of stealing the barrels.

My plan was to go to Baghdad and conduct the relevant interviews, but at the same time I commissioned three researchers, whom I knew, but who did not know one another. I chose them based on many factors, starting with their capability to access the village where the barrels were stored, and also considering the tribal, ethnic, and sectarian background of each of them. It was not long before I received reports from my colleagues that gave me some initial idea about what had happened to the barrels. Each one of the researchers sent findings that would not stand up by themselves, if not confirmed by the other two. The first started

talking to the locals, who told him that farmers looted the barrels in the post-invasion anarchy. They stored the material in potato sacks. Then the farmers started selling them to different militant groups. But after gaining control of the area, the militant groups began murdering the farmers and confiscating the explosives. The remaining farmers looked further afield and started selling to dealers from the neighbouring province of Babil. I asked the second researcher to look for a weapons and explosive dealers in the black market. He found one, and conducted an interview with him on condition of anonymity, but I was able to listen to the interview and ask the questions using the researcher's mobile phone.

The third reporter came from Baghdad, and managed to track down and interview a US ally who had formerly been a militant organising bombing campaigns. Again he agreed to be interviewed under the condition of anonymity. He told us how his former comrades had bought their heavy explosives from farmers in Al Yousoffia, and how they were using them. He also explained that they had had problems, since the farmers had stored the explosives badly. Finally I interviewed the head of the Department for Defusing Explosives at the Iraqi Ministry of Interior. He explained to me the nature of the car bombs his teams had dealt with during the first two years after the 2003 invasion. They mostly used RMX and HMX explosives.

9-2-8 A Dead Journalist Cannot Write a Story

One of the options I did not choose in reporting the above story was to conduct an interview with a militant. The militant had wanted me to meet him without knowing where I was going and possibly blindfolded. Despite the assurance of the cameraman about our safety, I refused, because there were no sponsors for the interview. There was no third party trusted both by me and the militant, to arrange the interview and to handle the situation if something went wrong. Going without a sponsor is a big risk, and no story is worth gambling between life and death – a dead journalist cannot write the story. I recall here one of the occasions when I went to Faluja with Robert Fisk, to report the death of an Iraqi detainee. The houses of the victim's family and of the witness were both in the most dangerous area of Faluja, and we needed to get there. I was responsible not only for my safety, but also Fisk's. I went to my source and asked him to get us a guarantor such as a tribal leader or a well-known Imam, who would be dealt with by my news organisation, family or tribe if something went wrong. He refused to get involved: "Are you mad, giving you guarantees? You, I may manage, but what

about the foreigner you are with? In Faluja? Forget it.” Those were his words.

Another method had to be found. I knew an army general living in Baghdad, but originally from Faluja, who was a cousin of a tribal Sheikh from the same area. I asked him to be the sponsor, to which he agreed, and he helped us with the interviews. We went to Faluja where we found someone waiting for us; they took us first in one car, then another. Then we reached the house of the victim’s family where we did the interviews with them and a witness, who was also there. Afterwards we were driven to our car and two cars escorted us to the outskirts of Baghdad, which was 30 km from Faluja.

9-3 Trauma of War Reporting

Security was a big issue during my work in Iraq. I witnessed the killing of many colleagues. I was careful about who I told that I was working for a British newspaper. Britain was one of the leading countries in the coalition. My family knew about the nature of my job, as did the few friends whom I really trusted and whom I asked not to talk about my work to others. I changed my route to The Independent office every day, both on my way to the office and on my way back, to make sure I was not followed. Although I was heavily involved in covering events in Iraq and the work was interesting, I witnessed a great many car bombs and saw too many dead bodies. In one of my last visits to the green zone before I came to the UK, I missed a suicide bombing by just a few minutes. I was standing at the middle checkpoint, while the bomb exploded at the first one. I decided to wait for 15 minutes, fearing a second attack, which was a common militant technique. But then I decided to go back to find out what had happened and pass it on to my newspaper. As I walked there, I saw many dead bodies, flesh, and pools of blood. People were crying hysterically, asking for help. I saw the police carry a man, and then throw him down and run away. I went to look, and then I noticed that there were wires coming from his shirt. This was the second suicide bomber, who had not managed to detonate himself, because he was killed by the first suicide bomber. I went home that night and thought, “Have I lost my sense of humanity, after reporting for so long about the violence in Iraq? Have I crossed the point where I have become like a machine which does the job?” My take on this is that every war reporter needs to take a break from the war zone. The Independent, like many other organisations, provides these breaks for their UK staff, but not for their permanent local staff.

Chapter 10:

The Conclusion

After exploring the dramatic changes in the nature of the print media in Iraq pre- and post- the 2003 invasion, I am able to share many findings. From being a heavily controlled, state propaganda tool, the Iraqi press became a plethora of political, ethnic, tribal and sectarian mouthpieces.

The Iraqi press has always been proud of titling itself as an “opinionated press”; this term referred to the way the Iraqi press would take one side or the other, and goes against the nature of modern professional journalism. Journalistic standards state there should be a differentiation that draws serious lines between news pieces, and columns where writers are allowed to present their own opinions.

During the Ba’ath Party era 1968-1979 and before the rise of Saddam Hussein, the ground was prepared for a new dictatorship as the previous regime “nationalised” all private press in 1968. However, there was a chance to build a free press and even democracy when the first National Advancing Front, established by the Kurdish Democratic Party, the Communist Party, and the Ba’ath Party rose to rule Iraq in 1972. There were some internal discussions covered in the pages of these parties’ “mouthpieces”, but the Ba’ath Party’s desire to monopolise authority and the media put a stop to such progress.

Another factor that helped the Ba’ath Party to achieve its goal was the withdrawal of the Kurdish leaders from the front, and their move towards armed struggle instead of leading political campaigns in their press. The communists were left alone to confront the Ba’ath Party press, who would easily accuse any other party of following foreign agents in any disagreement about a case. When Saddam assumed power on 17 July 1979, the Iraqi press was mostly government-owned and the few privately owned newspapers were more pro-government than the government press. The role of the Iraqi media has fluctuated according to the political changes in the country. When the government suffered from hardship, it promised to make changes, but in the end, the situation remained as it was.

A remarkable point in this period of time was the role of Uday Saddam Hussein - well known for the atrocities he committed. Uday’s interest in the role of the press in Iraqi society came through his sports publication, Al Ba’ath Al Riyadi. Many journalists

whom I have interviewed confirmed that in some way he played a “positive” role. He gave them the power to criticise many ministers and government officials, which they would not dare to have done before. Although some said they were used by Uday to attack someone he did not like, they also used him to attack others. Although not all journalists could cross certain “red lines” like Saddam, the ruling family, and the Ba’ath Party, in the end it was a small step forward, where journalists were able to practise some real journalism.

Another factor which affected the development of the Iraqi press, was the United Nations sanctions and the shortages in printing paper and other materials. Circulation of many publications declined by up to 90% during this time. This affected readership; many Iraqis were not able to buy newspapers because vendors would sell them for 5-10 times the “official” price due to limited supply from the publishing houses. Also many prominent writers left the country to work for Arabic newspapers and publications abroad because of the low wages paid by the Ministry of Information. The 13 years of sanctions did not affect Saddam’s authority, but it weakened the Iraqi press, which lost both people and printing capacity.

During the sanctions, the Iraqi press led many campaigns against the United States following government orders and responding to many attacks by the successive US administrations against Iraq. At the same time the Americans were financing one of the leading Iraqi opposition newspapers, Al Mutamar. However, the effects of this newspaper were limited to the Iraqi expatriate community. Despite the generous American support to this publication, it had no influence inside Iraq since the regime was powerful enough to prevent its circulation by any means.

When the war started, the propaganda campaigns of both sides concentrated on presenting each as the righteous one. Iraqi propaganda was extremely successful inside Iraq to the extent that people working in the press actually believed its content. Many journalists said that they were going to work for their publications right up until 8 April 2003.

The collapse of the regime was surprising not only for journalists in Iraq; it was also unexpected for many journalists working outside Iraq and others in the Kurdish Iraqi area, who were not under the control of Saddam’s regime. This could be seen through the hesitation of many editors to move to Baghdad. In many interviews I conducted, editors mentioned that they had continued printing outside the country or

outside Baghdad for a few weeks until they managed to establish a foothold in the Iraqi capital. Meanwhile journalists inside Baghdad and in other provinces took the initiative and started launching their own publications. There were many businessmen, tribal Sheikhs and clerics trying to gain influence to achieve their political aims. At the same time there were many journalists starting to enjoy the new “freedom” to present different points of view, which was achieved only after the end of Saddam’s regime. Many of those journalists received support from the occupation forces or the CPA. The absence of any organising body, due to the collapse of the government institutions, led to a plethora of publication titles. Many of the newly launched publications used the same titles as had previously been in circulation, which confused both readers and distributors.

The post-Saddam Iraqi press was motivated by two factors. One sector was politically motivated, while the other’s motivation was financial profit. The first category of press was aiming for political achievement for a government, authority, or political party. This represented a large proportion of Iraqi newspapers that were launched post-war. Many of these new publications appeared all over Iraq, but some were short-lived as they were not able to make any profit due to competition with other newspapers, provided by different political factions or the government.

The political motivation of different parties could be considered as the reason for the dramatic reduction in the number of newspapers in Iraq on two counts:

- Many politicians who were backing different publications either lost the political interest or decided it was hard to achieve anything, thus they decided to close many newspapers.
- The high quality of many publications launched by the political parties did not leave much room for the profit-motivated publications to achieve any financial gain, especially as the political parties’ newspapers were sold at cheap prices. This forced many newspapers to close down, because they were losing their business.

Like the press all over the world, the Iraqi press had a problem with sustainability. This problem was on a larger scale in Iraq, because of the ongoing violence. So, Iraqi press support came from political parties and the Americans, which in turn meant that news coverage could not be entirely free from the effects of the backers’ agenda. Many newspapers failed to make money because the system of distribution was based on the newly formed “newspaper stock” daily auction, rather than a fixed cover

price. This allowed the distributors to control the failure or success of any publication.

Two examples, taken to represent the two motivations, were Azzaman and Al Sabah newspapers. The first one represented the financial profit motivation whilst Al Sabah was totally driven by the authority's political attempts to inspire the public. Some may argue that even Azzaman was originally driven by the owner's political ambitions, but I would exclude such a motivation, as this kind of ambition vanished a few weeks after the fall of the Ba'ath regime, because of Mr Al Bazaz's former relationship with the Ba'ath regime, especially having previously been Saddam's press secretary.

Although both publications were covering ongoing events inside the country, both had connections with the occupation authority, whether it was the American or the British occupation. Both allies were keen on presenting their own ideas and political opinions on the first pages of these two publications.

The British played a minor role at the beginning of the war through making a deal with Azzaman's owner, but the Americans had a much larger role as the area which they occupied was larger in size and more populous than the oil rich southern provinces of Basra and Amara controlled by the British army.

In the first year of the American occupation there was no legal framework for the Iraqi media to follow in general. Most of the new publications had no guidelines. Although the Americans did not impose any restrictions on launching new publications, there were not many reforms made to the Iraqi laws which guaranteed freedom of expression. Even with the two orders 65 and 66, which represented the new framework, there were not many changes implemented in the laws. The penal code was left unamended, leaving journalists and the local publications to face prosecution, heavy fines, and imprisonment. The American authority in Iraq froze or stopped a few articles in the Iraqi penal code, but left many to be used by the subsequent Iraqi governments to prosecute and punish critical journalists and publications.

The American authorities were keen on creating new publications all over the country. The Americans appeared to prefer keeping disagreements with the Iraqi people down to the level of criticism within the pages of the press, in order to prevent or defuse any potential fighting with the locals. However, there were certain kinds of criticism, which the Americans would not tolerate, such as any article which might

encourage the public to fight or to attack their troops. The Americans should have maintained stronger control over the new press, as they did in Germany after World War II by not allowing political parties to have their own press. The CPA should have organised training and rehabilitation workshops for journalists in order to encourage journalistic standards, before being permitted to practise the profession.

The CPA neglected any media violations except those made against the Americans, where in contrast the US army or the CPA would react strongly. The reaction of these authorities, whether it was the US army, or the CPA, varied between closing the publications, arresting journalists or prosecuting them using laws which were introduced after the occupation in 2003, such as order 14, which was used to close the Sadrists' publication, Al Hawza Al Natiqa. Order 14 was vague and it allowed any authority to seize any freedom the press would enjoy. It could be related to many of the previous publishing laws during the Saddam regime. The Americans terminated certain laws introduced by the Ba'ath Party and Saddam, but these laws were not active in practice after the collapse of the regime.

The American role had a negative impact on the Iraqi media as it was chiefly motivated by the desire to control the information that the public received. The first mistake of the US administration was to hand the Iraqi Media Project to the Pentagon. This wasted the previous experience that the State Department had gained through many years of direct involvement in supporting Saddam oppositions' press. Also, while many NGOs were dealing with the State Department in the Balkans, the majority refused to deal with the Defence Department in Iraq because of their lack of experience in dealing with the military and fears of exposing themselves to security risks. The other mistake was the Defence Secretary's new strategy of outsourcing and handing a no-bid contract to Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), a company more experienced in information control and the technical side of building broadcasting systems, than in building a free media organisation. It was clear that this corporation enjoyed a good relationship with many US military figures, politicians and even former United Nations weapons inspectors. These figures were often the ones who had been confronting the former Iraqi regime during the weapons inspection period, when the United Nations was leading the process. In return, SAIC recruited many unqualified people to pay back favours to military generals and politicians, but this had a negative impact on the output of the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), the main American media project in Iraq. SAIC neglected the press outlet of the IMN, leaving the whole project to be run by one single editor,

Ismael Zayeer, from May 2003 to January 2004. The situation was the opposite with Al Fawares Company, which was subcontracted by Harris, the company that succeeded SAIC. Al Fawares started challenging Al Sabah newspaper for getting advertising contracts, instead of helping the newspaper to secure new advertisers to ensure sufficient revenues to achieve its independence.

Another factor that undermined the development of the Iraqi press was the psychological operations (Psy-Ops) campaigns practised by American intelligence and the US army. In attempting to defuse violence against the American soldiers in Baghdad and other central areas of Iraq, they tried to buy many journalists and to control their coverage. There were many attempts to make journalists cover certain topics which could enhance the image of the occupation and demonise the militant groups. The Pentagon commissioned companies like The Lincoln Group to conduct large scale, secret psychological operations. But the positive stories, designed by The Lincoln Group, which the Iraqi newspapers carried, did not have much effect on general public opinion. If the Americans had been as generous in building a proper liberal Iraqi press as they were in financing the psy-ops campaigns, their money would have been better spent.

There are some arguments made about the willingness of the US to use the press to increase the feeling of difference among the Iraqi people. This argument is based on a “white paper” - the Lincoln Group’s plan “Divide and prosper” - which was declassified in 2007. The paper included plans for many programmes and media coverage for the Iraqi media once the people were classified according to their sector and ethnicity. The “white paper” suggested creating a page for each major community in Iraq. It reveals the aim of the Americans to use the press as well as other media outlets to increase the divisions between different communities in Iraq following the common historically colonial policy of “divide and rule”.

The Americans tried to create their own publication, “Baghdad Now”, but it was a poor newspaper, hardly followed by the public. 500,000 copies were printed fortnightly, but it did little good for the occupation.

The Iraqi press industry remained in its infancy a few years after the fall of Saddam’s regime, and the American motivation to control information prevented the Iraqi press from developing to play the role of the Fourth Estate.

Future research

There are many areas to be covered around this topic by researchers in the future. One of them is the American propaganda effort to confront the “insurgency” in Iraq after the deterioration of the security situation in Iraq between 2007-2010, using private “advertising” companies. These companies used different Iraqi media to classify different factions as either “good” or “bad” in the conflict in Iraq. Some newspapers, TV, and radio stations would give the audience warnings that those were “paid advertisements”. Future research can explore the effectiveness of such efforts to ease the conflict in Iraq.

The development of the press in Afghanistan is a similar area of research to the situation in Iraq, especially since both countries are/were occupied. The American effort in Afghanistan has many similar aspects to their effort in Iraq. Future researchers could investigate how influential the American role was in shaping the Afghan media.

The dramatic changes that are taking place in many Arab countries after the Arab Spring is a new area which researchers could explore in the future. Many media entities have passed through a transition period from being propaganda tools to acting freely after the collapse of a number of the totalitarian regimes in the region. This transition period could be studied and analysed in different countries considering the many factors that played an important role in shaping the final picture of the media landscape in those countries.

A particular case is that of the Libyan press, where researchers could study the rebel press in the areas that were under their control. The support which this press received, and the sources of this support, could be disclosed by future academic study.

This thesis did not cover the effect of social media on the population of Iraq because of the marginal access to the Internet before the fall of Saddam’s regime on 9 April 2003 and thereafter.

Saddam Hussein banned ownership of satellite dishes, and Internet access, which was introduced late in 1999, and was then only available to a limited number of people. Ordinary Iraqi people could only access the Internet through the government’s server. In the whole country there were only 30 or so Internet centres

licensed to operate legitimately. These Internet cafés were censored by government agents, and were subject to censorship checking of any information that users might wish to send abroad. Those who attempted to access outlawed sites, such as "Hotmail", could be punished with substantial fines. The technical difficulties and the government monitoring system together made it almost impossible, and certainly very unfavorable, for Iraqis to access the Internet from home (Cazes, 2003).

The Arab Human Development Report for 2003 stated: "The mass media are the most important agents for the public diffusion of knowledge, yet Arab countries have lower information media to population ratios... these are just 18 computers per 1000 persons and only 1.6 percent of the population has Internet access. These indicators scarcely reflect a sufficient level of preparedness for applying information technology for knowledge diffusion" (UNDP, 2003, p.3). The report named various different factors that led to this situation, but mainly concentrated on "computer and Internet illiteracy, the high cost of the lines used and high personal computer prices and access fees" (UNDP, 2003, p.64).

After the US invasion in 2003, the number of Internet subscribers dramatically increased, from around 4,500 pre-war to 59,000 (out of the total population of 27,139,200). The number continued to grow strongly, reaching 160,000 by the end of the same year (Rohde, 2005, p.14). Iraq had witnessed an increase in the launch of many local websites, but few websites were registered in the .iq domain administered by the Communication and Media Commission. On 17 January 2006, a Google search reported zero results when searched for any website registered in this domain. The CMC itself is registered as an .org domain according to Article 19 and UNESCO report "A Media policy in Iraq". This reflects the ignorance concerning the use of the Internet as a source of information or for business purposes even among those who were responsible for administering Internet development in Iraq after 2003 invasion (Article 19 and UNESCO, 2003, p.36). When analysing a newly media-literate population, we also need to discuss the availability of the tools required: firstly to have access to the new technology, and then to learn how to use it. In Iraq there was no infrastructure for the Internet. Most of the Internet cafés, which spread quickly all over the country, relied on foreign providers. The Ministry of Communications and the CMC were not able to provide high-speed dial-up Internet connections. Such issues made it nearly impossible for many Iraqis to have access the Internet from home.

The situation in Iraq differs in comparison with other Arab countries. In Tunisia, for example, when people seized the moment and used social media to claim power in autumn of 2010, nearly four out of ten Tunisians were connected to the Internet; almost 20% of the Tunisian population are on Facebook. By contrast, the percentage of Internet users in Iraq was scarcely 2% between 2003-2006, and fewer than 3% of households are online.

The rise in power of social media has started to be seen only recently. YouTube, which has become an enormously important source of footage for broadcasters around the world, was introduced in 2006; Facebook, which has similarly become one of the main sources of news for many press agencies, was launched in 2005; Twitter then followed in March 2006. None of these years were the subject of this thesis, which focuses on the period 2003-2006. It could be argued that there were other social media websites already in use before 2005-06, but they were not nearly as popular among users in the region. Also, other social media websites did not allow users to have the same power as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter have allowed their users to assert, because of the dramatic increase in user numbers in the region and world-wide.

The new social media culture was also spreading among the Arabic language satellite channels such as Al Jazeera, which became a major disseminating tool for user-generated content. BBC Arabic has also started to make extensive use of material provided through user-generated content (Harb, 2011).

This kind of culture did not exist among media organisations around the world prior to the Arab Spring (from the end of 2010 to early 2011) or the social media revolution, which has only been a powerful force since around 2006. While media organisations in the recent past were reluctant to use material provided by citizen journalists, today the rise of social media has made these contributions one of the main sources of news from areas that otherwise could hardly be covered without such means of communication. These kinds of new media sources of information are well on the way to becoming an important source for print media in Iraq, and future research will undoubtedly find much of interest to follow in this regard.

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