

**Article No. 8****The Impact of Political Transition on Media  
Rebuilding the Media: Lessons from the Iraqi Case****Jassim M Jaber Al-Mijawi****[Sohar College of Applied Sciences](#)****Sultanate of Oman****Abstract**

After being a country of one party system that run every things including the media for more than a three decades, with the occupation and overthrowing Saddam government, the circumstances in Iraq have been dramatically changed. The impacts went deeply into every aspects of life. For example around 300 political entities fought the latest election, and if we look at the media field, we will find huge amounts of such changes and impacts. Until April 2003, there were no more than five daily newspapers, four radio programs and three TV channels with only one satellite transmission, all run by the government. And the local legislations did not allow people to install dishes to receive non-Iraqi (foreign) TV stations via satellites or publish a newspaper or airing independently produced programs. In less than three years and in concert with some shifts in the political situations in Baghdad, hundreds of new publications, television stations, and radio channels have emerged in what is turned out to be an unparalleled media free-for-all involving a broad range of Iraqi and regional media forces. Additionally, a massive increase in the numbers of satellite dishes opened Iraqis up to new sources of information.

**Overview of the Research Border and Theoretical Background**

The world has witnessed during the last past three decades, major political transitions in many countries including Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. Despite

the different circumstances and events led to these transitions, the fact is that most of the media in these countries were influenced by the political systems, and used to be as a part of their tools. With the transitions moved on in the process, the media were anxiously looking towards getting better situation and having healthy environment to practice their role in the changing. Numerous scholars have examined the impacts of the political transitions on the media and their role in the process. The findings are varying at some points. But unfortunately, in most of the cases suggests that the media freedom and having a healthy environment still far to be an achieved. There is a common understanding that a strong connection exists between mass communication and democracy. Simple put the assumptions that for democracies to function, civil society requires access to information as a means to make informed political choices. Similarly, politicians require the media as a way in which they can take stock of the public mood, present their views, and interact with society. The media are thus viewed as a vital conduit of relations between state and society (O'Neil, 1998).[1]

Some studies of democratization and the media have focused on the question of whether the media operates as an engine for change in moments of transition. Randall concludes that although the media were influential in earlier phases of democratic transition, media channels were subsequently captured by elite interests, promoting notions of democracy and citizenship that work against any impulses for further change, while McCargo argues that generalizations about the role of the media in transitions are impossible (Hughes, 2005) [2]

Dine states that in most post-Soviet countries, readers and listeners often see the media as being controlled by forces that wish to advance their own interests rather than the interests of freedom (Dine, 2001).[3]

Bennett suggests that free media systems in Eastern Europe are much better at bringing authoritarian regimes than they at later sustaining stable, participatory democracies. (Bennett, 1998).[4]

In Turkmenistan the idea of media freedom is still viewed largely along the same lines as it was under communism. Turkmenistan has seen a consistent policy aimed at subordinating all news media to the needs of a totalitarian state (Atayeva,2002).[5]

Soon after their jubilation over throwing Ceausescu' government, Romanians became frustrated with state-run television. On February41990, barely a month after citizens had defended the television building with their presence, thousands returned to protest the manipulative role of television.( Mollison, 1998).[6]

Under apartheid, the South African media operated in a context of repression and censorship and of extreme partisanship. In the post-apartheid, still the media largely white in its ownership, management and editorial make-up. (Jacobs,1999)[7].

Iraq is the last one in the line of those countries experienced the political transitions, where the impacts of the transition on the media are tangibles and reflected in many directions. The amounts and the varieties of the media outlets makes a turn point in the history of the Iraq media, and capture the attentions of many experts and researchers.

Moving from a state control media with a few outlets to non -governmental media with mix messages and background, which reflects different political and ethical groups and sects, was a mark stone of the new media in Iraq. Dismantling the Ministry of Information and reconstructing a new governmental media body and setting up a regulatory frameworks and institutional parameters for the private Iraqi media and established new legal boundaries, were the tasks of the governments and departments assumed responsibility for governance in Iraq.

Enabling environment and designing plans and frameworks for a free media were the main topics discussed by some related organizations and academic institutions:

The Office of Democracy and Governance Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistanes U.S. Agency for international Development conducted some discussions on the legal environment that enable media to advance democratic goals. A report which concluded the discussions suggests that” a basic understanding of the most pertinent laws , enforcement and judicial practices, administrative processes, ownership structures ,and other aspects of the enabling environment can help in design of more effective strategies for developing free media, and this in turn reinforces more broadly the effectiveness of democratic institutions.[8]

To examine how media policy can be adapted to developing countries affected by crisis and war were the main topic of a workshop organized by the LSE Crisis States Research Center, the Stanhope Center for Communications and the Annenberg School for Communication. The workshop was based on the proposition that” attention to the role of the media needs to be at the heart of efforts to consolidate security, effective government and development in the wake of crisis and war. The workshop concludes that:

In the wake of crises and war . in situations where the state is fragile , however , and where the political process is unstable and de-legitimated , the primary objective of donor assistance should be supporting the formation of functioning state . in such a scenario , unsophisticated liberalization of the media can potentially undermine the state building project . The creation and sustaining of independent media is central to theories of democratization. However, in the case of fragile states, it may also be misguided and potentially dangerous to assume that encouraging the creation of free and independent media will automatically strengthen civil society, or help establish a democratic system that will hold government accountable. This approach underestimates the complexity of the contexts of fragile states.[9]

The process of planning and rebuilding the Iraqi media and the outcome of the implementations of those plans has been examined by some scholars.

Professor John Nguyet Erni of city university of Hong Kong War, examined "Incendiary Media, and International Law" and come up with finding which suggests that "the pre-conflict abuse of the media to inflame inter-ethnic differences is seen as the catalyst for war. Once warfare breaks out, the media can become a centerpiece of the struggle between factions that want to utilize the media to escalate hatred and spread fear against one another. In post-conflict times, with the media infrastructures possibly destroyed, journalists killed or fled, and the entire media space quickly becoming a site of renewed struggle between the interim authority and remaining factions," He raised questions that urgently concern critical media studies from the perspective of international human rights law: To what extent should foreign agencies intervene in the post-conflict reconstruction of the media space in order to prevent it from being abused again as well as to help produce and maintain public order? What is the legal basis in human rights law for such an intervention? How do different forms of intervention stand the legal scrutiny for managing' and even restricting the freedom of the press in the post-conflict state? How is the line drawn between a "media intervention" aimed at achieving urgent military goals of stabilization and peace-keeping?<sup>[10]</sup>

Professor Monroe Price, the director of the Center for Global and Communications Studies, at University of Pennsylvania introduced two reports – on the emerging structure of media or media influences domestically in Iraq to understanding the influence of the successor to Saddam's state television. Price states that: The media in one state is the product not only of the state's own actions but of others, sometimes neighbors, sometimes powerful global actors. Iraq is a laboratory for these kinds of interactions with United States, Saudi Arabia, Iran, The United Kingdom, France, Turkey, and others seeming to have a stake in the emerging mix of images.

Another scholar, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Marashi, who systematically tracking media developments in Iraq examined the evaluation and current state of Iraq's media and offer recommendations to local Iraqi actors, as well as regional and international organizations <sup>[11]</sup>

**The objectives:**

Taking the above theoretical background and the past political transactions experiences in consideration, the paper try to trace the developments led towards rebuilding the new media and to draw a demographic map of the Iraqi media, and to identify it from different aspects. The paper will shed some lights on the drives, factors and the main players which played the main roles in designing and rebuilding the media. And as the final goal is to examine the out come of these developments to get some lessons form the Iraqi media case.

**Methodology:**

The method which has been employed to achieve the goals of this paper consists of historical observations and analysis of the documents gathered.

**I. Rebuilding of the Iraqi New media.****1.1. The framework of rebuilding the media Pre-war developments**

Planning for the post-war media environment in Iraq was ongoing for at least two years prior to the invasion and contained several elements-from overt media development initiatives, preparations for the broadcast ventures and the like to 'black psy-ops'<sup>[12]</sup>, and drafting frame work of rebuilding the Iraqi media.

Several departments and organizations within the United States have been asked to give their visions and suggestions for the frame work of the post-war media in Iraq,

Among those who participating in planning for the post war media in Iraq were, the State Department, The Defense Department and The United State Institute of peace.

1.1.1. The State Department in October 2001 began planning the post-Saddam Hussein transition in Iraq. The Department organized over 200 Iraqi engineers,

lawyers, businesspeople, doctors and other experts into 17 working groups to strategize on topics, rebuilding free media was one of these topics.

The result of the project was a 1,200-page 13-volume report (which name the future of Iraq project) that contains a multitude of facts, strategies, predictions and warnings about a diverse range of complex and potentially explosive issues.

The task of the media group was<sup>[13]</sup> :

- To develop a strategy for the training Iraqi journalists, legislators, government officials and members of the judiciary involved in media – related matter on the role of the press in free society.
- Develop laws that will promote a free and responsible press, consistent with international standards.
- Assess the roles of the public and private sectors in the media, including developing a plan for a transition to private ownership of Iraqi media.
- Develop a plan for the how to provide widespread internet access.

The group suggested a framework for “immediate media reform in Iraq” which contained some actions to be taken and provide some expectations.(appendix 1 )

1.1.2. The Defense Department planners recommended in January 2003 the creation of a “Rapid Reaction Media Team”(RRMT) to serve as abridge between Iraq’s formerly state-controlled news outlets and an” Iraqi Free Media” network. According to the white paper which have been disclose last year by the National Security Archive that the RRMT concept is “ a critical component of the overall information campaign beginning with the training and preparations during pre-hostilities phase of the Iraq mission (i.e., now) and ending when USG/coalition civil authorities assume control “<sup>[14]</sup> and to:

- Identify and vet Iraqi media experts and “anchors”, and train a group of Iraqi journalists.

- Prepare two months of news and entertainment programming, and prepare several editions of a new Iraqi (weekly) newspaper.
- Identify the media infrastructure that we need left intact, and work with CENTCOM targeteers to find alternative ways of disabling key sites.

A guideline and actions to be taken by RRMT shown in (appendix 2)

1.1.3. The United States Institute of Peace in February 2003 drafted a special report with some recommendations to reform the media in Iraq ".Within the first month of occupation, Iraq's Ministry of Information, Journalism Syndicate, and government censorship offices are dismantled. International civilian media professionals should be placed in charge of state-owned organizations, with Arab-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. A new media law developed. One channel of state television should be developed into a public broadcast entity. Control over the media should be relegated to an independent advisory board composed of Iraqi and expatriate professionals"[\[15\]](#).

Beside the Americans as main player in designing and planning for the post war media in Iraq, there were some efforts by other (Governments, NGOs )

1.1.4. On April 24, 2003 twenty media organizations met in London to Discuss future media development in post-war Iraq. Amongst the organizations that participated were International Media support(IMS), the International Federation of Journalism (IFJ) Internews, Index on Censorship, Alliance Internationale pour la justice, the Institute for War and Peace reporting and Article 19. The meeting concludes:[\[16\]](#)

- There is a need for the development of a media policy for Iraq with a strong local ownership and participation.
- There is a need for the appropriate authorities in Iraq to issue a clear policy statement on media.

- The close involvement of the Iraqi media community in designing the international support will be of key importance in ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of international assistance to media development.
- A collaborative and strategic effort of international media development organization is key to a successful to the Iraqi media community.

1.1.5. On June 5, 2003, Experts met at Athens in a conference organized by Internews Network and Internews Europe, non-profit organizations supporting independent media worldwide to hammer out a framework for democratic media in post-Saddam Iraq. The media framework calls for laws guaranteeing media freedom, including the abolishment of any kind of censorship. The framework also recommends setting up an independent public broadcasting authority in Iraq, and calls for bodies to assign broadcast frequencies. It includes ideas for developing journalistic ethics and Internet policy.

Robert Reilly, the US administration official in charge of media in Iraq, pledged to take the framework back to Baghdad to share it widely with other key decision-makers. He said, "This conference addressed the critical questions being asked in Baghdad that needed to be answered immediately if media are to be open and responsible in the new Iraq."<sup>[17]</sup>

In Athens, Haselock took charge of drafting a background paper and model law, which would be the underpinning for his assignment from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office to continue, with the CPA, the work of structuring media policies and media entities in Baghdad. Based on his work in Kosovo and Sarajevo, he believed that standards for broadcaster performance needed to be articulated, but there also had to be due process. It was his view that one needed a mechanism with autonomy and a clear and impartial hearing and appeals process.<sup>[18]</sup>

The final report of Athens conference (Framework for Change: Transforming Iraq's Media Landscape) presents a plan include details policy recommendations for legal and regulatory measures to be implemented during the interim period, to promote media freedom while providing sufficient regulatory authority to prevent misuse of the freedom o in ways that would be harmful to the process of building freedom and democracy. <sup>[19]</sup>

1.1.6. Some NGOs like Article 19 and INDEX on Censorship provides recommendations and guidelines for the concerned authorities in Iraq.

A Media Policy for Iraq is the title of a study prepared by Article 19 and a review by Index on Censorship suggested some "Options for Media Development in Iraq"<sup>[20]</sup>

By examining the plans and the frameworks of rebuilding the Iraq media we might conclude the following:

## **1.2. Post-war developments**

Shortly after the collapse of Saddam's government, as occupying power, The US-led collation forces set up a transitional government (the Collation Provisional Authority (CPA formerly ORHA )) to handle many matters including the political process and the economical and security developments. Dealing with the post-invasion media was among those responsibilities of the CPA.

To carry out its media policy and to establish healthy media environments up to the standards of free society, claimed by the U.S government to replace the ex-totalitarian regime. The CPA worked on two mane directions:

1. First. To fills the vacuum left by the disappearance of the state media. The plan intended to establish and launch new media outlets, were the Iraqi could get the right information.

2. Second. Control the media outlets and to establish new legal and regulatory framework for Iraq's media.

### **1.2.1. The Iraqi Media Network (IMN)**

The Iraqi Media Network (IMN) led by Bob Reilly, a former director of the Voice of America, and Mike Furlong, a long-time Defense Department contractor who had worked on broadcasting issues in post-war Kosovo. A budget Of \$15 million was confirmed in February, a month before fighting began. The US assembled a diverse team of exile Iraqi consultants, to serve as an editorial group to establish a TV stations, a radio station and a newspaper, and to act as a policy unit, to advice on media strategy. Several westerners were employed, to provide journalism, technical and logistical support. Consultants were hired through Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), an employee-owned services company with a long record as a Defense Department subcontractor. By mid-April, the overall media team comprised more than two dozen people, largely based in Kuwait. Contracts were set to expire, and the entire operation due for review by the coalition authority, on June 10. The IMN team began radio broadcasts from Um Qasr on mid-March (later moved to Basra to improve country-wide coverage).<sup>[21]</sup>

In early June 2003, The US administrator Bremer, the chief of the CPA issued an order (no.6) saying the IMN was an interim body to replace the Iraqi information ministry, which was dissolved in May. The preamble said the intent was to create "conditions to permit the Iraqi people to develop a free, independent, responsible and reliable media for the people of Iraq."<sup>[22]</sup>

IMN was given the premises and equipment of the old government media as well as several hundred journalists and other people who had worked for it. More than 5,000 information ministry officials were sacked. IMN sees itself as "an interim body with the job of building new infrastructure, training journalists and laying the foundation of a public media policy," according to one of its top officials.<sup>[23]</sup>

IMN was modeled on the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and the American PBS (Public Broadcasting Service). IMN currently includes a TV station, two radio stations and a newspaper, Al-Sabah (Morning).

### 1.2.2. The Regulatory frameworks for the Iraqi Media

On June 5, 2003, the CPA issued Order no. 7 " Public Notice Regarding Public Incitement to Violence and Disorder" prohibits any individual making a " prohibited pronouncement in a public place or distributing or attempting to distribute any prohibited material in whatever form"<sup>[24]</sup>. On June 10, 2003 issued Order 14, which set some basic rules for the media a decree banning media activities aimed at inciting violence and spreading instability. In addition, the order allows Coalition troops to raid premises and cancel licenses on nine grounds - among them inciting or potentially inciting violence against the CPA, inciting "racial, ethnic or religious hatred," promoting "civil disorder, rioting or damage to property," advocating support for the Baath Party, advocating "alterations to Iraq's borders by violent means" and putting out news that is "patently false and calculated to promote opposition to the CPA." Punishment includes closing down a media outlet, confiscation of its equipment and a prison sentence of up to a year to be imposed by the "relevant authorities." The media can appeal by writing to the Administrator.<sup>[25]</sup>

"We want a free media," a CPA spokesman said on 11 June, saying the order was not intended to curb freedom but to rein in violence and preserve security<sup>[26]</sup>. Such a measure may seem necessary because of current political instability but it remains to be seen if the Coalition forces will interpret "incitement to violence" reasonably or excessively. In the absence of a legal system, the US army and the CPA have the authority to prosecute and punish the media.

Working with its Iraqi interim governing partners, the CPA invoked this Order a number of times, shutting and banning some media outlets.

Many media outlets have been suspended under the Order 14. The radio station Sawt Baghdad was closed a month after it opened. The Shiite newspaper in Najaf, Sada Al-Umma (Voice of Umma) had also been shut down by the CPA.

In May 2003, Major General David Petraous, the military governor of northern Iraq, seized control of Mosul's TV station because of its "predominantly nonfactual/unbalanced news coverage ". While admitting this was an act of censorship, he justified it because of the need to keep from "inflaming passions". [\[27\]](#)

The interim Iraqi governing council temporary, bans and restrictions on coverage by the Arab satellite television channels al-jazeera and Al-Arabiya. Both channels were repeatedly barred from covering official sessions of IGC through late 2003 and early 2004, accused of working with armed groups opposed to the U.S led occupation .On March 28, 2004, the CPA shut down the weekly newspaper, Al-Hawza of Shiite cleric Mugtada al-Sadar . [\[28\]](#)

### **1.2.3. The Iraqi National Communications and Media Commission (NMC)**

Through decrees (Order 65 and Order 66) the CPA setup the regulatory frameworks and institutional parameters for the private Iraqi media and established new legal boundaries and media regulatory body , the National Communications and Media Commission (NMC) as an independent, nonprofit administrative Institution, responsible for licensing and regulating the media.

The NMC is chartered by Order 66 to set new professional standards and codes of conduct for media professionals, establish policies for radio-frequency management, and licenses all media and telecommunications operations. [\[29\]](#)

Order 65 stated the purpose of establishing the NMC, to balance the interest of creating a pluralistic media environment with commercial and investment interest

in telecommunications. The Order gave the NCMC the power to enforce sanctions, close operations, and withdraw licenses and seizing equipments.

The NCMC set Guidelines for Broadcasting on Incitement to Violence, Ethnic or Religious Hatred, Civil Disorder or Rioting. \*

When the state-controlled media disappear on 9<sup>th</sup> April, the country is left in a vacuum for a couple weeks. With in just two months later the streets flowed by many daily and weekly publications. The air fills with many TV and radio channels. New ones seem to spring up all the time. It was open for any one to print a newspaper or to air a TV and radio programs.

## **2. The presences of the Foreign Media**

In addition to the media massive increase in the number of Iraqi publications and media outlets, foreign media flocked to Iraq, anxious to gain a foothold. Some of those tried to influence the public's perception with the political agenda of the states run these media.

Radio Sawa, the USA's Arabic-language station, began broadcasting 24 hours a day. Voice of America (VOA) Kurdish and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Arabic, known as Radio Free Iraq, also began transmitting on FM from northern part of Iraq. The USA in February 2004 established a regional satellite television station named Al-Hurra a public funded, 24 hours Arabic-language channel. Al-Hurra then have been running a special channel calls Al-Hurra Iraq.

The UK is also sponsoring 10.000 copies of Al-Zamman newspaper in the southern part of Iraq, where the British forces put in charge.

The BBC has only been broadcasting on FM in Baghdad for a short while and does not seem to have needed any official permission. RMC-MO had been broadcasting in the city on FM since 13 July on 93.5 frequencies.

By May 2003 Libya had begun shortwave broadcasts specifically for Iraq in Arabic. By November 2003, Radio Exterior de España had launched special programs.

Iranian-sponsored media outlets have gained greater prominence. A Tehran-backed group of Iraqi Shi'ite exiles known as the Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI) began broadcasting its "Voice of the Mojahedeen" radio programming on the frequency formerly used by Iranian state radio.

The external service of the "Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran" could be heard on AM and shortwave in Iraq even before the war. The official Islamic Republic of Iraq Broadcasting Radio Channel can be heard in Baghdad. Two Iranian television stations, Sahar and Al-Alam, have joined the ever-growing list of media options for ordinary Iraqis.

### **3. The New Iraqi Media Landscape**

In the weeks since the end of hostilities, dozens of new newspapers and magazines have been launched in the capital, Baghdad, while the media in Iraqi Kurdistan – established during the decade of self-rule – has continued. The new media outlets in Iraq can be classified into five categories:

*First:* Media outlets run by the government body (IMN).

*Second:* Media outlets run by the foreign establishments and organs.

*Third:* Media outlets published and financed by various political parties and groups.

*Fourth:* Media with religious, ethnic base and constituency

*Fifth:* independent media run by individuals and group, covering different interests: politics, art, literature and sports.

Beside the media outlets run by the CPA and later by the Iraqi government, many political parties, business group and individuals launched their own media outlets. IMN's TV output was launched on May 13, from Baghdad. *Al-Sabah*, a CPA sponsored newspaper produced in Baghdad by a SAIC employed Iraqi exile, was launched on May 15. On May 28, the first issue of a second CPA sponsored newspaper, *Sumer*, produced in Kuwait.

The London-based international newspaper al-Zaman on 8 April published its first "Basra edition", which is being distributed in Basra, Umm Qasr, al-Faw, Nasiriya and elsewhere in southern Iraq. Then another newspaper hit the streets of Baghdad is Tariq al Sha'ab (the Path of the People) published by the communist party. The Kurds have moved in and have taken over one of the printing houses in Baghdad, and they have launched a newspaper, The Iraq. The other major printing house has been taken over by the Iraqi National Congress. The number of the news papers and magazines exceeded 250 publications.

Some papers have already come and gone and others still running. Half of them say they are dailies but in fact only about a dozen manage to publish every day. The other is half weeklies, some appearing irregularly.

### **3.1. Baghdad Media**

Among the first new papers to start publishing in Baghdad was *Azzaman* ("Time"), owned by Sa'ad al-Bazzaz, former editor-in-chief of the state-owned *Al-Jumhuriya* who defected in the mid-1990s. It is run as a slip edition, with the bulk of the pages produced in London, and locally produced front and inside pages inserted in Baghdad before printing. *Al-Saah* ("The Hour") is published by Sheik Ahmed al-Kubeisy, a Sunni Muslim cleric who voluntarily left Iraq a few years ago

to work as an advisor for a senior sheikh from the United Arab Emirates. He had a weekly religious program on Abu Dhabi TV. *Al-Saah* is regarded as a platform for an Iraqi Sunni agenda. The most influential Islamist papers are likely to be *Al-Da'wa*, the organ of the Al-Da'wa party that was the first to fight against the Ba'ath; *Sadr*, the organ of radical Shias who seek an Islamic Republic of Iraq; and *Al-Adallah*, the organ of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Republic in Iraq of Ayatollah Hakim. For the moment, neither *Al-Da'wa* nor *Al-Adallah* criticise either other parties or the occupation forces. An anti-occupation agenda is apparent in *Sadr*. Kurdish parties have established several newspapers, as well as radio stations.

### **3.2. The Southern part of Iraq**

Outside of the Baghdad newspaper hot-house, there is still considerable activity. Like Baghdad, the south has seen a flood of indigenous publications. Almost all are in the hands of religious groups or small collectives of intellectuals – or even single individuals – keen to capitalise on the new freedom of expression.

Basra boasts the main radio station which was operating in the South at the time of the assessment mission besides the IMN operation in Um Qasr. The 24-hour Radio Nahreen (“Two Rivers Radio”) appeared to have gained a considerable audience, and affection, for its lively mix of Arab and European music, military messages and public service announcements, and twice hourly news gleaned from the web and news wires. Produced by a British Army Psychological Operations unit and run by reserve Col. Colin Mason, a former BBC broadcaster now working in commercial radio, it launched on the eve of the war, broadcasting towards the Fao peninsula from the Iraqi desert, and moved steadily north until it arrived in Basra at the end of March. It broadcasts 24 hours a day – live only in daylight hours – with news gleaned from the web and wires on the hour and local news gathered largely from the military, “because most of the initiatives in Basra

are military”, on the half-hour. A dozen local restaurants and businesses get free advertising in return for advertising the radio on their premises.

On May 27, *Radio Nahreen* began to be re-broadcast by the CPA radio that had moved a few days earlier into Basra from Um Qasr.

### 3.3. Iraqi Kurdistan

Long-established during the past decade of autonomy from Baghdad, Kurdish media is sharply divided between pro-Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) operations centred around Erbil, and pro-Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) efforts, in Suleimaniya. The media environment is extremely active, but also bound by the lack of training and resources, uncertain legislation and heavy party political and other traditional influence. According to the best estimates available during the assessment mission, there are 344 media outlets registered in Iraqi Kurdistan. These are split between 132 print media and 24 TV and radio stations in Erbil, and 110 prints and 78 TV and radio station in Suleimaniya. The vast majority are supported by political parties or specialist organizations contained within or directly associated to these parties. (In Suleimaniya, a Council of Independent Media has been established to support independent media efforts, though its council is strongly PUK-led.) There is little advertising. All political parties have at least one print publication, often more. The faces of Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, the KDP and PUK leaders, respectively, dominate the front pages of the publications in their respective power-base cities. In recent years a small number of less partisan print publications have begun to appear authorities in the autonomous region established separate legislation over the past decade. Despite official commitment to freedom of speech, there is a sense that political and tribal habits against public criticism of leaders remain strong, and that, in any case involving the media, the judiciary are inclined to support the political parties.

### 3.4. Broadcasting

Beside the amounts and the varieties of the media outlets, the new TV and Radio stations signal other aspects of the diverse and complex media environment in Iraq. It has become common to launch a new television or radio station beamed to Iraqi every week, and so it is difficult to work out how many there is.

Along with Al-Iraqiyah Channel, Al-Diyar channel, which, is run by faysal ai-Yasiri was launched, followed by. Al-Sharqiyah owned by Sa'd al-Bazzaz. Within just tow years later the number of TV satellite channels reaches more than twenty five stations (Al-Sumaria, Baghdad, Al-fayhaa, Al-Forat,)

"The Voice of Iraq, which transmits from Baghdad on 1179 kHz, is the first independent radio in Iraq's history. It started transmitting on 15 July 2003 after a month of testing. Dijla, Annass and UR are among the private stations still running.

As for terrestrial stations, their ability to multiply is no less than that of the satellite channels, especially those that transmit within the bounds of one governorate. Al-Fayhaa is one of the channels that transmit within Babylon Governorate. The governorate of Diyala, Nasiriyah, Basra, Karbala and Kirkuk has their own local channels. Most of stations are airing programs to the taste of their provinces.

As for the northern governorates, both main Kurdish political parties sponsor a major satellite-broadcasting channel, the PUK's KurdSat and the KDP's Kurdistan TV. These are large operations: KurdSat boasts easily the most modern equipment seen in Iraq on the mission. It has access to VOA TV and APTN news feeds. The majority output is in Kurdish, with some Arabic and English programming. Cultural programming and Kurdish folk music dominate, along with extended interviews and live discussions on political issues.<sup>[30]</sup>

There are also a total of 62 terrestrial TV and radio broadcasters registered with the two respective Ministries of Culture in Erbil and Suleimaniya, with 24 in Erbil and 38 in Suleimaniya. Many of the radio stations are based in the same premises as the TV broadcasters, and thus are similarly politically dominated.

For the satellites stations some of them transmit from Baghdad and major cities, while the rest operate from Dubai, Cairo, Beirut, and London.

#### **4. The challenges**

The goals set by the CPA; to rebuild the new media in Iraq has been challenged by different factors. The unrelenting violence that continued to threaten basic stability and safety in Iraq was the main factor, which reflected on media developments. The poor management and the reliance on unqualified people and institutions, led the process to negative point.

Beside the improvements have been noticed in the new Iraqi media, many critics been raised over. The efforts of the CPA to establish new media institutions (IMN and NCMC) got many critics of ill management and bad Balancing of Press freedom with Responsible Journalism.

Don North, long time TV producer, who took part in rebuilding the IMN. Identify one of the challenges that face the process" The CPA doesn't seem to be able to differentiate between public diplomacy, in other words telling Iraqi and world what we American are trying to do in Iraq, and giving the Iraqis a voice of independence that need themselves. That's been the problems.

It's unfortunate....with all of the intentions, we are trying to bring democracy to Iraq in a way and in way, we are imposing democracy, and a free and independent media is the bull work, the cornerstone of any democracy. But somehow, even though we are ourselves are created and have established a

marvelous democracy of our own, we don't seem to be able to transfer this and export this to people who are hungry for it and really want it like the Iraqi"<sup>[31]</sup>

Critics say the IMN mission is weakened by its goals. So far IMN is touted as both the voice of an occupying force and an inspiration for Iraqi to produce fair and balanced news coverage. But many Iraqi have already dubbed the network a propaganda organ. A poll conducted by the end of 2003, found that 35 percent of Iraqis now have satellites receivers, and of those, 67 percent prefer to get TV news from the satellite channels Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera, rather than from IMN (Cotts, 2003).<sup>[32]</sup>

The United States government awarded the initial contract for rebuilding Iraq's media to Science Application International Corporation (SAIC), a government contractor that specialize in providing advanced technologies to support military operations. SAIC had experience in setting up radio and television transmitter and other equipment required for building a new national media network, but it had less experience in training broadcast and print journalists, a key part of its contract. A November 2003 inspection by the Pentagon contracting officials found that SAIC had not lived up to many of its contractual obligations.

The Iraq Media Assessment Report also found a host of other problems with the IMN" Equipment were poorly planned, internet assess was not established. Fierce internal rivalries emerged between projects with the network itself. Budgets were undefined and not devolved, restricting the ability of the staff to get on with to get on with the job. No serious professional training was offered, and program planning was nonexistent. Hiring of local staff in Baghdad was not systematic, with very little pre-vetting for political links or professional capacity. Of the approximately 130 staff, of which around 25 are journalists"(McCaul,2003)<sup>[33]</sup>

Gordon Robison, senior fellow, USC Annenberg School of Communication, presents his personal account of rebuilding Iraqi television, were he had been

hired to oversee the news department at Iraqi television. Criticizing the intervention of the CPA officials in the news editorials and questioning the credibility of TV station. [\[34\]](#)

Some NGOs see IMN as "too close to the U.S. government and too akin to public diplomacy, rather than independent media". The Independent Iraqi Media Assessment Report carried out by the Baltic Media center, Index on censorship, call "Iraqi Media Network should be dismantled and the constituent parts all located within independent institution. [\[35\]](#)

The Washington Post calls the IMN "psyops on steroids". In October 2003, leaders of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq threatened protests, bans, and religious decrees or fatwas against the IMN has been issued, stating that it aired immoral programming. [\[36\]](#)

Several seasoned journalists were reported to have quit the IMN out of frustration with CPA oversight. Ahmad Al-Rikabi, news director at the IMN, resigned in August 2003, citing IMN's under-funding and lack of independence. [\[37\]](#)

Veteran news boss Claypole, who was the founder of the TV news agency APTN and chairman of broadcast advisory company DMA-Media said all attempts to be independent was lost.

While IMN attempted to give the impression that it was conveying the views of ordinary Iraqis, it was heavily weighted in favor of the official US line, Claypole claimed.

'We have got to have vox pops,' became the mantra, so that the Iraqi people can see themselves talking in an atmosphere of liberty.

"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. [\[38\]](#)

When the CPA announced its vision for the NCMC, Al-Sabah criticized the NCMC as being more powerful than the ministry of Information. Iraq's interim minister of communication, Haider al-Abadi, who was appointed by the CPA, complained that the NCMC replaced him and that the CPA officials had not kept him apprised of the plans for the NCMC as they developed.

Other analysts and authorities worried that the NCMC set a dangerous new precedent that might encourage the new Iraqi government to dominate and control the private media outlets that have emerged since the invasion. John Nguyet Erni of City University of Hong Kong explains, that the power to enforce the sanctions and the power to enlist enforcement and military forces, positioned the NCMC as an adjudicating body in civil and criminal proceedings. [\[39\]](#)

ARTICLE 19, an independent organization promoting freedom of speech rights, states that the NCMC was not appropriately constituted to act as judicial body violates both Article 14 of the ICCRP and Iraq's own transitional constitution.

ARTICLE 19, expresses a number of detailed concerns regarding the specific content and other rules in the media. There are concerns, for instance, about the vagueness of the documents, in which phrases like 'standards of decency', 'exercise care and consideration' or incitement to violence' are not defined at all.

Reporters without Borders, said that the goals and the power of NCMC need to be spelled out clearly –and probably redefined-as soon as possible.

ARTICLE 19, predicts in its review of the media development in Iraq 2004 that "Iraqi journalists will probably have to spend the next few years campaigning for an independent self-regulatory body that will look very much like Commission dose now". [\[40\]](#)

## **Conclusion**

In the political transition, where the media going to be a part of the change; moving from stat- controlled to free media is a complex multi-tier process which could be derived and influenced by a diversity of factors.

A comparison between the media experience in post-occupation in Iraq with the experiences witnessed by other societies and countries or against the theoretical and academic frameworks defined by academics and researchers in this field could yield some lessons set below:

1. Taking into consideration the crucial question raised by those concerned; whether it is politics that leads the media or it is the latter that influences the political process the result underlines fact that, in Iraq's experience , the media were led and influenced by the political process. This in turn leads to a broader conclusion, namely that the political transition, orchestrated by the military in bound to negatively. Influence the process of rebuilding the media, which would be exploited to serve the military move and to further their political objectives.
2. At the point of transition or the point that represent the dividing line between state- run media and free media after witnesses a media vacuum. During this period , there remains an indispensable need by the people for news and information sources. The question that arises here; Who would be in charge of making these sources available for the people? Is it the responsibility of the military or the political parties which leads the transition process? Or , is it the institutions of the new free media which are more often than not still in the offing and not yet qualified to assume this responsibility for a period which could well be long? A review of similar experiences and that of post-occupation Iraq would help define a fact that the onus could rest with the party that leads the charge by the establishment of institutions and information sources. Indeed such institution, no matter how unbiased and objective, would eventually strive to serve politic

ends and the interests of the parties that undertake the change. Notwithstanding the justification which could be logical or spontaneous, these institutions must be dissolved, their role ended and new state media institutions be set up.

3. The process of rebuilding a media system in Iraq in terms of planning and implementation regardless of the expertise of those who oversee it, should basically depend on local players because they have a better insight into the local situation and its complexities. The Iraqi case has revealed an obvious imbalance in this respect. The planning and implementation phase was mostly done during the run up after the transition without any serious contribution by the Iraqi expertise.

4. Although broadcasting is viewed as of great important medium in the process of transition or the construction of a democratic society and requires the mobilization of all possible support and care, the structuring of other media, especially print media, are in need of just as much attention. The Iraqi case has lacked the mechanism to rebuilding the Iraqi new media. Most of the plans and programmes have assigned broadcasting the lion's share at the expense of other media.

5. The management of the transition process in the media system cannot be inferior to the type of the envisaged media. The management would cast its shadow on the output of the transition process. As far as the Iraqi case is concerned, it is obvious that the management was poor and confused. It was planned with corruption. This has deepened some negative results of which the Iraqi media is still suffering, which include among others:

- a. The absence of neutrality and objectivity and the perpetration of the politically oriented media which speak for the parties and forces that lead the government. This has spilled over to the state's media outlets and become a conspicuous feature of the day.

- b. The financial corruption and poor management have contributed to hampering and weakening the rebuilding process. Much time , efforts have been gone down the drain let alone the invalidity of the outcome.
- c. The absence of professional standards and failure to adopt media criteria in the gathering and dissemination of news.
- d. The conflict and rivalry among the state departments concerned and the adoption of contradicting plans and programmes which are not viable and are badly needed for the rebuilding of intuitional media.

6. The rebuilding of free media, unaffected by the state's censorship requires in addition to constitutional protection, moral and vocational norms, a vigorous economic and investment environment that enhances the role of the private sector which is the basis of free media capable of competing with public media and immune to state interference or financial bondage to the state. The Iraqi experience offer some lessons in this regard which includes:

- a. The private sector still small and unqualified alluring big investment in them
- b. Neither the state nor the non-governmental donors have failed to secure funds to the private media to help them develop. Other financial aid are less than it should be.

7. In a multi-racial –ethnic society like Iraq, this blend of cultures has concretely reflected on the trends and the outcome of the media. In the absence of an all-embracing national and institutional media , ethic and sectarian oriented media have appeared and are mushrooming . This in turn has turned the media into a tool of deepen political and sectarian

dissent at the expense of national unified media that can preach unity and loyalty to the homeland.

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[Appendix 1](#) (PDF, [Adobe Reader](#) required)

[Appendix 2](#) (PDF, [Adobe Reader](#) required)

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## Endnotes

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