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**CITY UNIVERSITY**

**Department of Journalism**

**D Journalism**

**The Iraqi Media Under the American  
Occupation: 2003 - 2008**

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**Submitted**

**2011**

## **Contents**

|                                                                                           |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Acknowledgments</b>                                                                    | 7  |
| <b>Abstract</b>                                                                           | 8  |
| Scope of Study                                                                            | 10 |
| Aims and Objectives                                                                       | 13 |
| The Rationale                                                                             | 14 |
| Research Questions                                                                        | 15 |
| Methodology                                                                               | 15 |
| Field Work                                                                                | 21 |
| <br>                                                                                      |    |
| <b>1. Chapter One: The American Psychological War on Iraq.</b>                            | 23 |
| 1.1. The Alliance's Representation of Saddam as an International Threat.                  | 24 |
| 1.2. The Technique of Embedding Journalists.                                              | 26 |
| 1.3. The Use of Media as an Instrument of War.                                            | 29 |
| 1.4. Attempts to Dominate Media through the use of Physical Attack.                       | 30 |
| 1.5. Portraying the Occupation in a Positive light.                                       | 32 |
| 1.6. The Involvement of Private P.R. Companies.                                           | 34 |
| 1.7. The Alliance's Public Diplomacy in the Lead Up to 2003 Invasion.                     | 36 |
| 1.8. The Relationship between the American Government and Media Communications Companies. | 40 |

|                                                                               |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1.9. Biased and Selective Reporting of Events.                                | 41        |
| 1.10.WikiLeaks Exposé.                                                        | 46        |
| 1.10.1. Exploiting Information.                                               | 50        |
| 1.10.2 The Iraqi Media Network.                                               | 53        |
| 1.10.3.Information Operations.                                                | 54        |
| <b>2. Chapter Two: American Journalism in Japan and Germany after WWII.</b>   | <b>56</b> |
| 2.1. The American Occupation of Japan.                                        | 56        |
| 2.1.1.Japan's Post-Occupation Media.                                          | 63        |
| 2.2. German Press History Before the American Occupation.                     | 65        |
| 2.2. 1.The American Occupation of Germany.                                    | 66        |
| 2.2. 2. Germany's Post–Occupation Media                                       | 72        |
| <b>3. Chapter Three: The History of Iraqi Media before the 2003 Invasion.</b> | <b>73</b> |
| 3.1. The initiation of Iraqi Media (1869-1914).                               | 73        |
| 3.1.1.Iraqi Media During WWI.                                                 | 76        |
| 3.1.2. The Press of the Twentieth Revolution.                                 | 78        |
| 3.2. Catalysts for the Development of the Iraqi Press.                        | 80        |
| 3.3. Iraqi Media during the Monarchic era (1921-1958).                        | 81        |
| 3.4. The Iraqi Press during WWII.                                             | 83        |
| 3.5. The Iraqi Press after the 14 <sup>th</sup> of July Revolution,1958.      | 84        |
| 3.6. The Establishment of Television Broadcasting in Iraq.                    | 86        |

|                                                                               |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 3.7. Iraqi Television during the New Republic from 1958.                      | 88         |
| 3.8. Iraqi Television after 17-30 July Revolution 1968.                       | 89         |
| 3.9. Iraqi Television under Saddam Hussein.                                   | 90         |
| 3.9.1. Baghdad International Television.                                      | 93         |
| 3.9.2. Al-Shabab Television.                                                  | 99         |
| <b>4. Chapter Four: Al-Iraqiyah Television Channel.</b>                       | <b>103</b> |
| 4.1. The US Administration's Preplanning of the Post-War Stage.               | 103        |
| 4.2. The development of a New Media Landscape.                                | 105        |
| 4.3. The Iraqi Media Network (IMN) in operation.                              | 108        |
| 4.4. Iraqi Media during the Paul Bremer period.                               | 109        |
| 4.4.1. Attempts to Protect the Media's Integrity with Legislation             | 113        |
| 4.4.1. Discord between the Americans and Arabic Satellite Channels.           | 116        |
| 4.4.3. IMN's Competition with the Arabic Satellite Channels.                  | 117        |
| 4.4.4. The American's Recruitment of Harris Corp.                             | 118        |
| 4.4.5. Continuing the Legacy of Censorship.                                   | 120        |
| 4.5. Al-Iraqiyah under the Rule of the Provisional Prime Minister Ayad Alawi. | 122        |
| 4.6. Al-Iraqiya during Islamist Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jafari's Tenure.    | 128        |
| 4.7. Changes Made within Al-Iraqiyah under Prime Minister Nouri Al-maliki.    | 132        |

|                                                            |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>5. Chapter Five: Special Cases.</b>                     | <b>140</b> |
| 5.1.The Baghdad Club.                                      | 141        |
| 5.1.1.The Baghdad Club Scandal.                            | 141        |
| 5.1.2.The Work Statement of the Baghdad Club.              | 143        |
| 5.1.3.The Baghdad Club's Techniques.                       | 146        |
| 5.2.Yathrib Newspaper.                                     | 150        |
| <br>                                                       |            |
| <b>6. Chapter Six: Salah Ad Din Satellite Channel.</b>     | <b>155</b> |
| 6.1.Salah Ad Din Province.                                 | 155        |
| 6.2.The Establishment of Salah Ad Din TV.                  | 115        |
| 6.3.Statement of Purpose.                                  | 160        |
| 6.4.The Establishment of the Board of Directors.           | 162        |
| 6.5.Main Programmes.                                       | 167        |
| 6.6. Salah Ad Din TV's Ownership.                          | 169        |
| 6.6.1.Salah Ad Din TV's Performance.                       | 170        |
| <br>                                                       |            |
| <b>7. Chapter Seven: Personal Experience.</b>              | <b>175</b> |
| 7.1. First Impressions.                                    | 175        |
| 7.2.The Gap between American Promises and Practices.       | 176        |
| 7.3. Learning Media Practices from the Home of Journalism. | 179        |
| 7.4. The Death Squads.                                     | 179        |
| 7.5. Working for an Iraqi-Exiled Channel.                  | 188        |
| 7.6. Back to International Standards.                      | 188        |

|                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| 7.7. Face-to-Face with Embedded Journalism.  | 189 |
| Conclusion: Summing up of Research Outcomes. | 192 |
| <b>Future study.</b>                         | 198 |
| <b>Endnotes</b>                              | 200 |
| <b>Working Bibliography</b>                  | 232 |

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## **Abstract.**

The American war on Iraq in 2003 has unleashed tremendous changes to the Iraqi media. It has been changed from a draconian, state-run institution into a free-for-all one. However, the relative freedom the media enjoyed was marred by the US management of the press, as part of the military operation and the campaign to win the hearts and minds of Iraqis who were suspicious of America's plans for 'liberation and democracy'. The stages of this US policy of press management and its impact on the shaping of the Iraqi media are the core elements of this thesis.

This study examines the relations between the media in Iraq and the American occupation military forces, including the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). It focuses on how American practices formed the media in Iraq after the invasion, how these practices and policies have affected the freedom of press and whether they conform to the international standards of journalism. It argues that the American policies undermined their promises to create free, independent and professional journalism in Iraq, and call into question the sincerity of their intentions. It presents evidence that the Iraqi media has been a tool used for the benefit of the American forces and the established Iraqi government.

To show the US dominance of the Iraqi media, the thesis studies the American policies and practices of building some of the Iraqi media institutions, and how they were used as part of US psychological warfare. The thesis also details how these media organisations developed through the years of the occupation; first serving the American agenda and tactical requirements, and then being handed to the Iraqi government to start a new era of state-run media in the name of democracy, or given as a gift to loyal individuals who served the Americans during the occupation.

The various factors that have influenced the Iraqi media after the 2003 invasion have been discussed at length. A qualitative methodology acted as a basis for an in-depth examination of the establishment and performance of the Iraqi media organisations, which were created by the American army. Unprofessional practices, unethical policies and negative influences on news

coverage riddled the Iraqi press throughout the period of military occupation. Figures in the American and Iraqi administrations and militaries, as well as influential members of the media organisations themselves, all had a hand in manipulating the press to propagate material that furthered their ideological and tactical goals. A severe lack of laws to protect journalists and their organisations and of a professional media greatly restricted the freedom of reporting, and stifled the growth of a free and independent media.

In analysing the history of Iraqi media, it is clear that the development of journalism in Iraq was directly affected by frequent changes in the Iraqi political administration and military leadership. In the Middle East politicians and militaries often held dominating positions in their relationships with the national media. The unethical policies imposed upon media organisations by the powers that be had a detrimental effect on their human resources and on practices within the institutions, which has in turn led to the current distortion and inefficiencies in the performance and professionalism of Iraqi media.

By close examination of American policies regarding the Iraqi media sector, similarities can be found between American practices in Germany and Japan after World War II. Here they made the fatal error of applying policies that were far more successful in Germany and Japan, directly to the situation in Iraq, without sufficient regard for the context of the situation in Iraq after the 2003 invasion. A close study of US-established Iraqi media brings to the surface the particular tools used to control the press. This offers a valuable insight into the major influences on Iraqi news, aimed at improving the image of American forces and the Iraqi government, which was under American supervision. The study begins with the premise that media is recognised as one of the most powerful tools in highlighting problems within deeply divided societies, and that it can help shape and influence public attitudes towards overcoming such tensions in national communities.

This thesis has been constructed empirically by approaching media organisations, journalists and newsrooms, as well as politicians and military figures from both the Iraqi and American administrations, in order to define the degree to which the quality of professionalism within media organisations was

influenced by the power of both the American and Iraqi governments and militaries.

Finally, the study reveals how, in order to serve tactical aims, the American administration built up state media organisations disguised as professional and independent broadcasters.

### **Scope of study.**

The United States' claims of building a free, independent and professional media in Iraq are examined in this study, using methodology which allowed for historic cross-checking from both primary and secondary sources. The study was conducted in Iraq between 2003-2008. This included work in Baghdad and in Salah Ad Din Province, the home town of Saddam Hussein. These two cities witnessed dramatic changes after the invasion and experienced hard times and violence, especially against the US army. These big challenges drove the US to put extraordinary effort into sorting out the political and security situation as anti-occupation powers threatened their project in Iraq.

Although this thesis embraces universalism, it will be subject to a number of limitations. The Iraqi media went through drastic changes which tossed it from the state-run media in the hands of Saddam's regime into the hands of the Americans, and later into those of pro-American Iraqi governments. The thesis focuses on the American role in creating the Iraqi media and its aftermath, because the American contribution in the war was dominant, and the role of other countries which participated in the coalition that toppled Saddam Hussein was minimal. Moreover, the US had already set out plans on how to handle the post-Saddam media before the war, along with the psychological warfare it staged against the Iraqi regime. The post-war period saw key US players carry out these plans and develop new ones to deal with unexpected problems that arose during the occupation.

The thesis concentrates on a set of media outlets, such as Al-Iraqiya TV Channel, Baghdad Club, Salah Ad Din TV Channel and Yathrab newspaper, for a number of reasons. Al-Iraqiyah, the semi-official TV channel, was the

mainstay for US planners who promised to turn it into a BBC or PBS-style outlet. It was also the main target on which US efforts were centred to create a channel engaging the Iraqi audience all over the country. Illustrating the transformation of Al-Iraqiyah highlights the current challenges facing Iraqi media outlets. In addition, the contractors who established it were American companies, so all in all Aliraqiyah Channel reflects the real American intention behind it. Since it was based at the same buildings and facilities as Saddam's media, Iraqi audiences gave it special attention, and examined the changes brought about by the Americans, including the differences and similarities in the professional standards, policies and its performance.

The Baghdad Press Club was selected as a case study within this thesis because it exposes newer American techniques to buy off journalists and media institutions for their purposes during the war in Iraq. Baghdad Club was a choreographed effort by the US army in Iraq to portray their presence and work in the country in a positive light, even when this portrayal was inaccurate. It gives the reader the opportunity to better understand what happened and the implications of such experiences. There were allegations that the US army was buying positive coverage in the Iraqi media using the Baghdad Press Club. This club was founded and financed by the US military. Although the Americans were offering reporters fees for coverage, along with digital cameras, laptops etc., they insisted that they did not ask for favourable coverage. I therefore decided that this case study would help illustrate the Americans' intentions for the new era of the Iraqi media after the long period of dictatorship. However, it was one of the hardest missions in my research, because there was not enough information about it available to the public or the media. So I decided to investigate this secretive press club, and most importantly to reach the classified documents which can show the aims of this club. I worked very hard for more than a year and a half, by which time I had accessed all the documents and interviews which I wanted to see. The process made me feel like I was working on an investigative piece rather than an academic research thesis.

*Salah Ad Din* TV Channel broadcasts from Tikrit City, the hometown of Saddam Hussein, where it is also based. The US army chose to establish this

channel because their presence was not welcomed in Iraq and they had an uphill challenge to win the hearts and minds of people there. In my opinion, it is a glaring example of using the media as a tool of persuasion and warfare. It also reflects a different technique based on using locals to launch a TV channel which then serves the occupying army by delivering positive coverage about American policies and military operations. Such a channel could also go further and justify deadly mistakes of the American army, as we will see in the main chapter.

But again, how could I reach classified documents and secretive people who worked on the project? I paid about ten visits from London to the province of Salah Ad Din, in spite of the real danger as the province was under the control of the insurgency for years. Truthfully, I can say that any mistake could have cost me my life. Through the visit I learned that the Americans dealt with uneducated people who were unaware of the importance of the documents and information. So I started working to reach them until I found highly classified documents about the *Salah AD Din* Channel project. This was great help to me in writing a chapter about Salah Ad Din TV.

Yathrab was a newspaper which the US army established in *Yathrab* town, 75 km north of Baghdad, in the proximity of the biggest US army base in Iraq - Anaconda. The US army chose to use this newspaper, with a limited circulation of 10,000 in a rural community, in order to convince the townsfolk, who were doubtful about America's plans for their country and about the US's good will. The American's experience with *Yathrib* newspaper also shows how the US army went on to use various means, in media and psychological war, to reach the different classes of the community, limit attacks and win the hearts and minds. This case was important because it shows the Americans' priorities in their psychological war. Working on this chapter I noticed the importance of the contacts in the research, as my personal contact with the team helped me to receive the information I needed from the people who were cooperating with the American troops in running the newspaper.

These media outlets have been selected for discussion because of style, and also each of them provides some insight into a major aspect of the US army's

role in shaping the current Iraqi media. The selected outlets exemplify the US intention behind creating these types of media. They register and reveal the US manipulation of media for military ends. Other media outlets are not less important but will be left for future research.

### **Aims & Objectives.**

The core aim of this thesis is to study the American creation of Iraqi media institutions, and their development under the joint efforts of the American administration and the Iraqi National Government. The backdrop of the Iraqi media's development before America's presence within the country is presented in order to contextualise the developments under observation.

It features a strong focus on whether the Americans succeeded in establishing truly independent media organisations, as well as the sincerity of such efforts. This will lead to questions being raised relating to any conflict between restrictions imposed and protective journalistic law, versus the ability of members of the press to maintain integrity and professionalism in their reporting.

The study also looks at shedding light on US practices which were either ignored or marginalised because of cover-up or a lack of interests. The aim of the research is to find out whether the American promises reflected their policies and practices on the ground. It analyses the path of their practices and policies in the media sector to discover their true perspective regarding the media's role in developing countries, or 'developing democracies'. And it is important to highlight the final results of their media project and the state which it was left in. The study aims at highlighting US's practices as a focus for academic research so that they may receive their due attention. Such experiences are important for field journalists and social science researchers who study the link between journalism and society.

Ultimately, a study such as this is not intended to offer radical new solutions to the current media landscape in Iraq. Rather, its objective is to offer a broader and deeper understanding of the use of the media as a tool for dominating

powers to further their own goals to the detriment of the Iraqi nation. The researcher hopes that with a more extensive understanding of the development and manipulation of Iraqi media, people will be more equipped to influence a future Iraq of healthier ethics and with an emphasis on freedom of speech.

### **The Rationale.**

The Iraqis need professional, independent, impartial and free media to build up a open society and democratic state, especially as intellectual Iraqis are trying to establish democracy and a new state after decades of dictatorship. However, the creation of these new media outlets was in the hands of the Americans, who promised to establish a democratic state in Iraq. The study attempts to analyse American policy within the media sector in Iraq, highlight its strengths and weaknesses and look at how it affected the future of the Iraqi media. This study aims to provide a better understanding of the media sector in Iraq under the American occupation, so that the country is helped to get on the right track for the future.

The conflict between Iraq's sectarian and ethnic communities needs to be addressed in the mainstream media, in order to serve as a safety valve for the stability of the nation. A key for the future of Iraq's wellbeing is the transformation of this debate into a constructive one. This thesis is an attempt to offer insight into commonly faced issues, in order that they may be avoided in the future. Despite the emergence of over 180 daily newspapers and 15 satellite channels in the nation since 2003, the literature widely available on emerging media in Iraq is scarce. The thesis presents further analyses of the history of key institutions. Such study will be of great importance for Iraqi journalists and academics who wish to learn lessons and monitor the development of their country's media.

## **Research Questions.**

How did the Americans handle the Iraqi media in the post-invasion period?

What steps did the Americans take to establish the new Iraqi media?

Did the American administration build a truly independent and professional media?

Did the Americans' policy aim to use the New Iraqi media as a tool to improve their image after the invasion of Iraq?

How did the various Iraqi Governments deal with the media institutions?

Did the Iraqi Governments use the media to serve the agendas of the ruling parties?

Did the media institutions advocate their ethnic and sectarian values, instead of representing professional independent journalism? If so, how was this done?

## **Methodology.**

Decisive stages and shifts in media outlets in Iraq during the period 2003-2008 are examined qualitatively. The qualitative research is used by social science researchers to observe and analyse key events or phenomena within a limited frame of time and place. It seeks to provide an in depth understanding of human behaviour and the motives that govern such behaviour. "Qualitative research ... involve[s] an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts – that

describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives."<sup>1</sup> There is good variety in qualitative approaches, all of which share these features.

A qualitative analysis method is adopted in this study to put the qualitative data that have been gathered into a structure of explanation, understanding and interpretation as explained by Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman in their book *Designing Qualitative Research*.<sup>2</sup> A phenomenological approach is applied to illustrate the major themes of the thesis.

A case study method is used in this research, which identifies multiple cases which go on to reveal an extraordinary development and reinforce the conclusion drawn from a review of the literature. These case studies are selected because they are powerful enough to show the reality of the Americans' perspective and intentions for the media in Iraq during the occupation.

As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson explain in *Ethnography*, the case study involves "the analysis of data [and] involves interpretation of the meanings, functions and consequence of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider context."<sup>3</sup>

The case study information is taken by date, gathered from news reports, documents, books, interviews and academic studies. The information was verified by conducting in-depth interviews. The interviews were not only gathered for information, but also to draw consensus on the validity of the literature and case study information.

The advantages of using a case study:

1. It helps to develop an analytic approach.
2. It gives enough space for exploration of complex issues.

The disadvantage of using a case study:

1. Insufficient information can lead to inaccurate results.

The in-depth interview technique is applied in the research to conducting interviews with key figures and individuals to explore their perspectives on particular events, policies and practices; both local Iraqi and international experts and staff who were involved in rebuilding the new Iraqi media with the Americans (see the appendix).

In-depth interviews have been useful in this research to explore new issues in great detail. It helped the study provide a better, more complete picture of what happened within the Iraqi media sector during the American invasion and administration. The semi-structured interview techniques used gave the respondents the opportunity to highlight what they thought were important features of their experiences and knowledge. These interviews were then carefully examined and checked accurately both against other interviews and against data and information which were collected from books, documents, contemporary media reports and other sources.

The advantage of using this technique is that it yields far more detail and information than what is available through other sources. The relaxed atmosphere during the interviews helped the interviewees to feel more comfortable and speak more openly, which in turn helped the collection of exclusive and detailed information about the topic.

Besides the advantages, there are limitations to the in-depth interview technique, such as collecting biased information. People who were involved in the projects that I am trying to conduct in my study might attempt to show that US policies and practices were good for personal reasons; for example to protect their reputation, as some interviewees were involved with the Americans in these media projects. So one has to prepare very well before conducting interviews if one hopes to avoid biased information.

Also, the researchers could be subject to time constraints, because interviews take time to conduct, write out and analyse. This project had in particular had time constraints, as it was conducted in Iraq, an example of a dangerous environment where instability can interrupt interview appointments. It was a tall order for me to fix meetings with people while I was in the UK and travel to

Iraq and interview people in a limited time. So interviews had to be pre-planned so that I could complete my interviews and meet my deadlines.

An investigative approach was adopted to check certain allegations which were difficult to verify. In particular there were many claims against the American policies and practices in the media field. For instance there were allegations that the Americans were paying Iraqi journalists to include positive stories, using their new propaganda tool, the Baghdad Club. This will obviously not have been easy to confirm using other research approaches, so I decided to adopt an investigative approach to gather well-documented and detailed data about it. Therefore the investigation was conducted by direct observation and supported with information from news reports, articles and academic literature studies. Finally I got exclusive documents which have never been used previously by anyone. They are classified US documents which show the background, aims and objectives of the Baghdad Club.

Salah Ad Din TV channel was a very big challenge as there are many allegations about the contract and intention of Sallah Ad Din TV channel. People accused the US of paying non-professionals to launch the channel so that it could be used for propaganda purposes. It was an extremely difficult area to look into, especially when I started to carry out my research and I could not find even one written word about the channel in any source, even on the internet. The channel does not have a website either. With these difficulties in mind, an investigative approach was adopted to prove or disprove the allegations. This time I conducted some very successful interviews, but still the interviews needed to be examined against detailed official documents which were in the American Military Base. However, through the research and the interviews I knew that copies of these documents are also held by a few Iraqi people who were involved in the Salah Ad Din Channel project. I launched investigations and found out their names. Then I started making contact and meeting some of them. Finally, one of them agreed to give these undisclosed documents to me.

The investigative approach became essential in my research because I worked on two projects to turn Wikileaks documents into two films, one of

them for Channel 4 and the other one for Aljazeera. These projects gave me a great opportunity to launch investigations into these secret documents and examine the data which I collected against them. This was a difficult and time-consuming exercise, but the investigation into these secret documents enabled me to obtain important documentation which exposes the US's intentions behind the creation and the usage of the new Iraqi media organisations.

Finally, I analysed the overall process to give an explanation for the outcomes of the research. The analysis began with the reconstruction of individual cases and, as a second step, summarised or contrasted these cases from a comparative and generalising viewpoint.

The study falls into seven chapters and a conclusion sums up the outcome of the research. Chapter 1 is a literature review which sheds light on the American experiences in Japan and Germany post World War II. It also includes a literature review of the psychological warfare waged by the United States in the preparations for the third Gulf war in 2003. The chapter introduces the reader to the techniques employed by US officials to justify the war, and win hearts and minds about the legitimacy of their actions. A qualitative data analysis method is adopted in this chapter to explain the data gathered about the US experience in Germany and Japan and their experience of psychological warfare, and to provide a structure of explanation, understanding and interpretation of their policies and practices.

The second chapter of the research chronicles the history of Iraqi television and print journalism from its inauguration to 2003. It attempts to point out the key stages of its development and the challenges faced by its staff and the viewership. The chapter places special focus on the history of Iraqi TV during the Saddam Hussein era, 1979-2003. It tries to explain the impact of the iron-fisted policy used by this regime on the performance of the media and its staff. A qualitative analysis method is applied in this chapter to explain the qualitative data that has been gathered about the history of the Iraqi media before the 2003 invasion and to provide a structure of explanation,

understanding and interpretation of impact of the Iraqi political system on the media.

Chapter 3 aims to explain US policy and practice after the ousting of Saddam's regime and during the rule of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Its focus is the role of the US administration, as it was the governing authority and therefore the main hand in shaping Iraqi media. It also details the consequent results, which have been reflected in Iraqi media practices. It shows how this poses a challenge for other Iraqi media organisations, which seek to reflect the developments in Iraqi society according to international journalistic standards. It points out how the US, represented by the CPA, administered the scene after toppling the former regime, establishing its legislation to control media outlets. The researcher plans to hold interviews with journalists, politicians and media specialists to support the account of events, and their later impact on Iraqi media and conflicts. The researcher will also collect evidence, searching through articles, books and studies. The chapter sheds light on the development of the Al-Iraqiyah TV station. It also addresses whether this institution has become a mouthpiece for the occupying or domestic governments. In this chapter the case study method is used by identifying a case which reveals an extraordinary development and witnesses dramatic changes in the Iraqi media platform. This case study was selected because it shows the reality of the US's perspective and intentions toward the usage of the media in Iraq during the occupation. In particular the Al-Iraqiyah TV station was considered by the United States as the main and central media project for the capital of Baghdad, and the US described *Al-Iraqiyah* to be like the BBC in the UK or CBS in the United States. So it was their official media project and they promised the world and the Iraqis that it would be an independent, free and professional media. This is why I chose it as the first case study: so that I could examine the US's promises against their policies and practices.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to studying the Baghdad Club, the press umbrella used by the American military to buy positive media coverage. It highlights the purpose of the establishment of the Baghdad Club, which was to enlist journalists onto its payroll, in order to gain the ability to issue directives to the

reporters in the field. It also focuses on the way in which the United States adopted the founding of *Yathrib* newspaper, which was distributed to the north of Baghdad, to influence locals in a small town. In this chapter the case study method is used by identifying two cases which reveal a new techniques which the Americans used to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis in different environments and areas. The case study of the Baghdad Club was chosen to illustrate how the United States established a press club in the name of the free media in order that they could buy positive coverage in the Iraqi media, and is a great example of the US's point of view of the media in Iraq.

*Yathrib* newspaper is another case study in this chapter, chosen because it shows how the US were selective in creating the new Iraqi media organisations, and that they built new media outlets wherever they needed them as a part of their psychological warfare.

Chapter 5 features another case study which examines the reasons behind the establishment of Salah Ad Din television station founded by US troops in the hometown of Saddam Hussain. It also illustrates the attempts made by the Americans to polish their image in the minds of members of Saddam's community, who had been affected by the war. The chapter depicts how alterations in the US management affected the role and coverage of this local TV station. It also examines the impact of its behind-the-scene activities on this TV channel's spin and treatment of news. The chapter underscores the ensuing problems regarding ownership of the channel when the US troops transferred authority to the Iraqi administration in this province.

The conclusion sums up the findings of the research.

### **Field Work.**

There are inherent dangers in conducting such research in Iraq on a full-time basis. I received verbal threats from the head of an Iraqi media TV channel, who told me to try another channel. The media head went very far in his threats, telling me that I "would pay the price" if I did not stop analysing this channel. I continued in spite of his unwelcome remarks.

Conducting interviews with US media officials at US bases was a huge challenge. I was kept waiting for hours for interviews and appointments with US media staff. Many times I was left waiting with no reply at the military base gate, in a community which took anyone approaching the US base for a spy, and thus become a potential target for killing later on.

I therefore intended to use my residences in London, Amman and Syria while conducting occasional research visits to Iraq. I used my contacts with Iraqi media organisations, collected data from the Iraqi dailies and transcripts, read books, researched papers and articles, and conducted interviews with politicians, military figures, journalists, editors and producers, all in order to supplement the textual analysis.

Such interviews were necessary in order to determine the interests and attitudes of the parties who may have influenced Iraqi media, and how they viewed the role of the national media. Furthermore, such contact can help to extrapolate suggestions for developing a strategy of cooperation, and elucidate policy recommendations towards an impartial Iraqi media.

## **1. Chapter One: The American Psychological War on Iraq.**

### **Introduction.**

A large body of analyses has been generated about the Iraqi media and the media operations that took place during the period up until 9 April 2003, the date Saddam's statue in central Baghdad was toppled. This date is seen as a mark of the end of the war and the defeat of the former Iraqi regime. Although former US President Bush declared the end of the war on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2003, the Iraqi regime had practically collapsed by 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003, and it is believed that everything after this date could therefore fall within the ongoing occupation period of Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that attention was concentrated on the post-war emergence of hundreds of newspapers and several satellite channels, (in stark contrast to the five state-owned dailies and single satellite channel that existed during the Ba'ath era), these media were still used for psychological warfare post the occupation period.<sup>5</sup> There are many studies which examine the use of psychological warfare before the 2003 war, identify its methods and assessed its overall impact. This research aims to clarify and provide further analyses of the methods which were used in the war of 2003. However, the main difficulty facing researchers is the confusion that engulfed the scene preceding the ousting of Saddam's regime in April 2003. A historical timeline and a sketch of the techniques used can touch upon what was happening during that critical period of time. While the world was wrangling about an agreed international resolution to legitimise toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein in March 2003,<sup>6</sup> a fierce psychological war was raging. The weapons being used in this pre-war attack are not the conventional military hardware everybody knows about, but rather "a barrage of selected visual, auditory and even electronic information used with the aim of demoralising the Iraqi military".<sup>7</sup>

Unlike previous wars that witnessed the waging of conventional media wars, the Iraq War saga in 2003 marked a new situation in which war and media technologies directly affected the conduct of war. Various techniques and methods were implemented during this conflict to promote effective media strategies that could control information and manage news and images.

However, the main concerns for the United States and United Kingdom were how to fully establish the main motivation to launch the war on Iraq. They found the capability of Saddam's regime to produce weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) the most concrete motive to take this fateful decision.

### **1.1. The Alliance's Representation of Saddam as an International Threat.**

The United States, having been unable to pass a UN resolution legalising the war against the Iraqi regime, cited the possession of WMDs as the primary motivation to launch the war on Iraq.<sup>8</sup> To build up the media war to this effect, it mounted a propaganda campaign led by a number of key US and UK media organisations. The New York Times published a number of articles claiming to prove that Iraq possessed WMDs. One story written by its eminent journalist Judith Miller helped to persuade the US public that the Iraqi regime had the capability to possess such destructive weapons.<sup>9</sup>

The story was followed up by top US officials pointing to the New York Times reports as a reason for going to war against Iraq. For instance, on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2003, Paul Wolfowitz stated in an interview with Vanity Fair magazine that the WMD issue was the main uniting point amongst the Bush team instigating the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. He said "the truth is that for reasons that have a lot to do with the US government bureaucracy, we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on, which was the weapons of mass destruction as the core reason, but, there have always been three fundamental concerns. One is weapons of mass destruction, the second is support for terrorism, the third is the criminal treatment of the Iraqi people. Actually I guess you could say there's a fourth overriding one which is the connection between the first two".<sup>10</sup>

US inspector Charles Duelfer, deputy chief of the UN inspection team, said in an interview that "the United States brought pressure on inspectors to prolong the UN sanctions on Iraq and have the time to create the environment to launch war against this country".<sup>11</sup> To this end, The New York Times also shed light on alleged links between Saddam Hussein and a 9/11 attacks

ringleader. It cited the Czech interior minister in a report that an Iraqi intelligence officer met with Mohammad Atta, one of the ringleaders of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the United States, just five months before the synchronized hijackings and mass killings were carried out.<sup>12</sup>

It was only after 2003 that US officials and media organisations acknowledged that their statements and reports about the WMDs were misleading. On 26<sup>th</sup> May 2004, the New York Times published an editorial in which it stated that its journalism in the build up to the war had sometimes been flawed. It admitted that the writers of stories on the WMDs were either ignorant about the real status of Iraq's WMDs or being lied to by Iraqi exiles who were bent on regime change in Iraq. The editorial regretted that "information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged".<sup>13</sup> Former US President George W. Bush, who staunchly claimed that the Saddam regime was developing WMDs, said in a speech before the World Affairs Council of Charlotte, NC, on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2006, that he "fully understood that the intelligence was wrong, and he [was] just as disappointed as everybody else" when US troops failed to find WMDs.<sup>14</sup>

The United States experienced the same quandary as its allies in lacking the international legitimacy to launch the war on the Iraqi regime. It provided an arsenal of legal and political justifications to convince the world about the war.<sup>15</sup> For example, to the UN Security Council 1441, which adopted a compromise resolution stipulating the resumption of weapons inspections and promised 'serious consequences' for non-compliance<sup>16</sup>. Its then UN ambassador, Jeremy Greenstock, said that the resolution provided no "automaticity or hidden triggers for an invasion without further consultation of the Security Council".<sup>17</sup> Yet the most controversial case was that of the Dodgy Dossier, which was a briefing used by the Tony Blair government to persuade the British public about the war.<sup>18</sup> The briefing was presented by Alastair Campbell, Blair's Director of Communications and Strategy, to journalists on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2003. The dossier documents detailed reasons for British involvement in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. It created controversy when British Channel 4 News highlighted Glen Rangwala's discovery<sup>19</sup> that the bulk of the dossier was plagiarised from various unattributed sources. The most notable

source was an article by American-Iraqi researcher Ibrahim al-Marashi, entitled *Iraq's Security & Intelligence network: A Guide and Analysis*, which was published in the September issue of the Middle East Review of International Affairs.<sup>20</sup> The day after the Channel 4 revelation, Blair's office issued a statement that a mistake was made in not crediting the sources, however, this did raise questions about the credibility of the information mentioned in the report.<sup>21</sup>

The nature of the dossier's contents became the debating issue for the Blair government's conflict with the BBC, particularly its former journalist Andrew Gilligan. The latter claimed that the government 'sexed up' the 'dodgy dossier', which stated that Iraq could deploy biological weapons within 45 minutes, in order to strengthen the argument for going to war against the Iraqi regime.<sup>22</sup> However, Gilligan was dealt a blow when David Kelly, whom he cited as his only source for the filed report on Iraqi weapons, was found dead.<sup>23</sup> The Hutton Inquiry, which was set up by the Blair government to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of David Kelly, a biological weapons expert and former UN weapons inspector in Iraq, cleared the government of wrongdoing and criticised the BBC, precipitating the resignation of Andrew Gilligan from the organisation.<sup>24</sup>

## **1.2. The Technique of Embedding Journalists.**

Using unattributed sources and unconfirmed details was not the only controversial method deployed by the US in the media war against Iraq. Other techniques were used to incriminate the Saddam regime and divert attention from the international outcry against launching a war which in the eyes of many was not justified. One of the outstanding techniques used was the embedding policy.<sup>25</sup> The term 'embedded journalism' refers to the attachment of news reporters to military units in armed conflict.<sup>26</sup> Looking at the history of the policy has revealed that it is not a new policy, as it has been used by the US military before. The strategy had replaced the pool system, which has been adopted by the US media since the Vietnam War, but used mainly during the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>27</sup> With the embedded policy, journalists had been

grouped and led by the military, which consequently “affected the media coverage through censorship and restricted movement of journalists in the actual fighting”.<sup>28</sup>

By using this policy, the US military sought to meet two ends. First, it aimed at avoiding the criticism of the Western press, which was disappointed by the level of military censorship imposed upon them during the 1991 Gulf War and in the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan<sup>29</sup>. The military command also aimed at promoting good public relations for the army. Vaughan Smith, founder of the Frontline News Agency and a veteran of conflict as a soldier and as a journalist, considers embedding journalism as “a tainted compact that generates more public relations value to the military than democratic value to the public”. Embedding, he says, serves the military objective of “effective media operation”.<sup>30</sup>

Schechter argued that the embedding practice has become necessary following the bitter experience during the Afghan War, where there were conflicts between journalists who wanted access to the story on the ground and the military units who physically tried to restrict access to places of interest.<sup>31</sup> However, the resort to the strategy in the 2003 war is considered the brainchild of central command's military base in Tampa, Florida, which took a strategic decision to ease media pressure on Washington, where US military command lay. Instead, the Pentagon offered the media the chance during the war on Iraq to embed their reporters in designated military units, but only journalists approved by the Pentagon were able to join the main invasion force.<sup>32</sup>

This practice requires a mandatory level of basic training from journalists, so that they can be prepared for the conditions of the battlefield. As stated by Rutherford, embedded journalists also had to “sign contracts to signify their willingness to self-censor, so that information deemed vital to the ongoing military operations would not be released in their reports”.<sup>33</sup> Close-ups of dead or wounded soldiers, for example, were banned, at least until next of kin were notified. In return, the Pentagon and the military would make sure these

embedded reporters could send their stories and images back to their news outlets.<sup>34</sup>

The policy of manipulating news reporting was criticised by media researchers and specialists. According to Kumar, embedded reporters were telling the story both physically and ideologically from the perspective of the US and British troops; “they ate with them, they slept together, and they even wore the same clothes”.<sup>35</sup> BBC reporter Ben Brown highlighted the problem with this situation in the following statement: “There was an Iraqi who...jumped up with an RPG and he was about to fire it at us because we were just standing there, and this other warrior just shot him with their big machine gun and there was a big hole in his chest. That was the closest I felt to being almost too close to the troops...because if he had not been there he would have killed us and...afterwards I sought out the gunner who had done that and shook his hand”.<sup>36</sup>

Walid Shmait suggested that embedded journalism introduced a new challenge to journalism. He said that embedded journalism had witnessed the militarisation of the media due to the amount of reports coming from the battlefields which paid attention to the vocabulary and the technicality of the military rather than critically questioning the events and the incidents<sup>37</sup>. This, according to Shmait, dominated the coverage of the war and provided a partial view of it. For Orville Schell, embedding reporting “is a good idea, but it should not be the only food item on the menu”: “Getting coverage only from embedded reporters is like looking only into a microscope. What we need is something of the broader picture, and the chance to show other aspects of the whole enterprise”.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the US did not hide their motives in using this policy. When asked why the military decided to embed journalists with the troops, Lt. Col. Rick Long of the US Marine Corps replied, “Frankly, our job is to win the war. Part of that is information warfare. So we are going to attempt to dominate the information environment”.<sup>39</sup>

### **1.3. The Use of Media as an Instrument of War.**

According to Miller, the experience of embedded journalism in Iraq showed that the US has turned the media into an instrument of combat. It also showed the increased role of the private sector in information dominance, a role that reflected key changes in US and UK military information strategy, as the two had previously assigned its sole responsibility to the public sector. Miller argued that applying the concept of information dominance to media management's activities would also allow "the US and UK's strategists to tolerate dissent in the media and alternative accounts on the Internet".<sup>40</sup> For Winter and Griffin, the military plan that the US used in the Iraq War included two major components: first, building up and protecting friendly information; and second, degrading information received by the adversary. Both of these referred not simply to military information systems but also to propaganda and the news media.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, Miller has a favourable view towards embedding policy as "a valuable means of shaping and making friendly information, in addition to giving journalists better access to the fighting than that given in any conflict since Vietnam".<sup>42</sup> Unlike Miller, Martin Bell regarded the embedding policy as a controversial experiment which has produced a negative response. He claimed that "it would muzzle the press, and deliver only news that pleased the Pentagon, [arguing] that it created confusion among journalists who decided to embed with the military about their role in covering the battles".<sup>43</sup> "Not only the younger embedded journalists, but also some of the older hands as well failed to grasp the difference between being with an army, or being of an army," he added.<sup>44</sup> Bill Katovsky examined the issue from a different perspective when he likened the embedding policy to public relations, noting the policy was a "slick new public-relations concept".<sup>45</sup> For Katovsky, the introduction of this representation was due to the need for war planners, in the build-up to the new Iraqi campaign, to ward off all bad assumptions about dealing with the media.<sup>46</sup> Howard Tumber and Frank Webster highlighted that the US military adopted a number of strategies to ensure that they got appropriate reportage and tailored coverage about their activities. They maintained long-term encouragement of contacts in the media, and allowed special access to favoured reporters in order to exclude

the journalists whose approach or perspective was at odds with what the military wanted.<sup>47</sup>

Philip Seib pointed out that Pentagon officials tried to bring pressure on members of the press by differentiating between embedded and un-embedded journalists. The Pentagon made it clear that the embedded journalists would receive better treatment than the officially un-embedded journalists, of whom there were approximately 1,800.<sup>48</sup> When Kuwait blocked some 'un-embedded' reporters from entering Iraq, Pentagon spokesperson Bryan Whitman tried to justify the measures, citing security as a major concern.<sup>49</sup> He said that "We are going to control the battle space. Reporters that are not embedded are going to be treated like any other civilian, approached with a certain amount of caution, especially for many journalists proving their identity can sometimes be problematic".<sup>50</sup> Pentagon spokesperson Whitman noted that this precautionary approach was pursued due to security concerns that the Iraqis might have "individuals pose as journalists".<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, Katovsky stated that in the early days of the war, venturing journalists were too close to the fighting areas. Two other journalists were killed whilst being embedded.<sup>52</sup>

#### **1.4. Attempts to Dominate Media Through the Use of Physical Attack.**

The impact of the use of advanced war technology during the Iraq conflict was clear through the scope of materialistic devastation and human loss it left on civilians, as well as on journalists. According to the International Press Institute, "at least fourteen journalists were killed during the six-week campaign; with two others missing and believed dead".<sup>53</sup> However, the hostilities did not end after President Bush declared on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2003 that "major operations in Iraq had ended". The death toll was to rise to nineteen by the end of 2003. More still, according to a report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), on the journalists who were killed in Iraq between 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003 and 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006.<sup>54</sup>

The press organisation stated that the war on Iraq had proved to be the deadliest for journalists since World War II. A total of eighty-six journalists and media assistants have been killed in Iraq since the war began. This number,

according to RSF, is more than the number killed in Vietnam or even the civil war in Algeria. Around sixty-three journalists were killed in Vietnam during the twenty years from 1955 to 1975, and seventy-seven journalists and media assistants were killed during the civil war in Algeria from 1993 to 1996.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, Kari Lydersen argued that attacks on alternative media outlets were carried out on purpose. He claimed that one aspect of this approach is to hold domination over news reporting and to wield control and manipulation of viewpoints, through reducing the news sources to the information coming from the US government's side. This, according to Lydersen, was an explanation of why attacking the alternative media on certain occasions had its own strategic justifications.<sup>56</sup>

"The Bush administration had also been hard at work on limiting and, ideally, silencing, opposing or challenging viewpoints and factual narratives coming from other sources". The administration has attacked *Al-Jazeera*, the Qatar-based and state-funded media outlet that has been the unrivalled news source for much of the Arab world up to 2003.<sup>57</sup> John Simpson raised the issue saying that whether the attack on Al-Jazeera's office in Baghdad was deliberate or not, it was upsetting that the channel's offices had been hit twice in two consecutive wars - in Kabul in 2001 and in Baghdad in 2003 - and that "on each occasion American command had complained that Al-Jazeera was supporting the enemy."<sup>58</sup>

According to the International Press Institute (IPI) Report for 2003 Death Watch, Tariq Ayoub, a cameraman and correspondent for Al-Jazeera, was killed during a US air raid on Baghdad. Ayoub, a Jordanian citizen, died in hospital after he was wounded in the strike, which set ablaze Al-Jazeera's office near the Information Ministry.<sup>59</sup> The attack on Al-Jazeera was not only against its reporters, but also extended to its websites. On 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003, the Al-Jazeera website became a target of computer hackers who called themselves the "Freedom Cyberforce Militia". When opening the station website, visitors were directed to other websites with various content, including one showing the American flag and messages such as "God bless our troops".<sup>60</sup>

The report by the IPI also stated that on the same day (8<sup>th</sup> April 2003), Taras Protsyuk, a Reuter's cameraman, and Jose Couso, a cameraman for the Spanish television channel Tel 5, were killed when a US tank fired a shell at the Palestine Hotel, the base for many foreign media in Baghdad. Protsyuk, a Ukrainian based in Warsaw, was immediately killed while Couso sustained wounds, dying later on.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, the justification for bombing the Iraqi state television station in March 2003, by joint US/UK operations, which resulted in many civilians being killed, was that the station was 'part of a command and control centre' and it was housed in 'a key telecommunications vault' for satellite communications.<sup>62</sup> The IPI pointed out that "the inevitable result of these attacks is to blur the distinction between civilian and military activities during conflict."<sup>63</sup>

### **1.5. Portraying the Occupation in a Positive Light.**

The US administration did not only monopolise the reporting and production of news, but it also affected its dissemination to the world. As indicated by Lewis et al., the messages sent in 2003 by the coalition's media operations in Iraq were carefully run and presented to the global public by teams of professionals skilled in the art of perception management.<sup>64</sup> The teams, who were aware that the war lacked legal grounds, and had generated waves of protest and anger across the globe, stressed the need to launch a media campaign and send the message on a daily basis in a bid to win the public's support.<sup>65</sup>

This could explain why the media at the White House defined the Iraq invasion as "a war of liberation" and exerted their utmost efforts to support the idea. The Pentagon's official theme was 'Iraq: from Fear to Freedom', and the news media were given 'liberation updates' and heard 'voices of freedom' from Iraqis who appreciated Saddam Hussein's ouster.<sup>66</sup>

According to Tumber and Palmer, information planning by the US government before the war was based on a twenty-four hour news cycle. It is a kind of global PR network that was activated from different parts of the world; from the Pentagon and from Qatar, as well as from embedded journalists.<sup>67</sup> The strategy adopted was clearly outlined by Suzy Defrancis, President Bush's

deputy assistant for Communications, when she said that the media relations introduced were made in a certain way, that “when the Americans wake up in the morning, they will first hear from the (Persian Gulf) region, maybe from General Tommy Franks, then later in the day, they will hear from the Pentagon, then the State Department, then later on the White House will brief.”<sup>68</sup>

Tumber and Palmer noted that Ari Fleischer, the White House press secretary, used to set the day’s message with an early morning conference call to Alastair Campbell (Tony Blair’s then Director of Communications and Strategy), a conference call to White House Communications Director Dan Barnett, and then State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher, Pentagon spokesperson Victoria Clarke, and the White House Office of Global Communications (OGC) Director, Tucker Eskew. This routine was similar in many of its aspects to the procedures introduced during the Afghanistan War in 2001.<sup>69</sup>

The UK pursued a similar media strategy by consolidating its existing media staff in the MoD headquarters and despatching a huge public relations team to the Middle East. Colonel Angus Taverner, the director of news media operations policy, was in charge of coordinating the military and the civilian press functions within the MoD.<sup>70</sup> The MoD also set up a core press office of 24 people in London headed by Director of News Pam Teare with, according to reports, more than a hundred media reservists called up with secondary roles to act as media operators when needed for deployment in the UK and the Middle East.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, Angus Taverner claimed the role of MoD teams was to keep the British public informed, and to maintain that issues of national security were closely guarded. The US/UK military learned lessons from previous experiences in the 1991 Gulf War and in Kosovo, when at war against former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic.<sup>72</sup>

Nonetheless, Steven Tatham, who served as the Royal Navy’s public spokesman during the Iraq War, stated that while the world’s media waited for the conflict to begin, both the UK and US had already begun their media-handling strategies months before.<sup>73</sup> Tatham indicated that the US military

had a dedicated uniformed public affairs organisation, which provided an entire military career structure from private to general for public affairs officers (PAOs). The briefing notes range from press releases to updated versions of lines on particular issues.<sup>74</sup> Paul Rutherford points out that the main drive for the special management of the Iraq War was the Pentagon's desire for the total control of information, extending well beyond Iraq into the living rooms and bedrooms of America and around the world.<sup>75</sup>

### **1.6. The Involvement of Private Public Relations Companies.**

Moreover, the war preplanning included a new use of language and terminologies, along with the participation of Public Relations (PR) firms to influence the performance of the media and the spread of information during the war. War planners also strongly relied on the effectiveness of communication using advanced technology, in order to efficiently shape public opinion and win its support.<sup>76</sup>

The overwhelming use of scientific developments led researchers to believe that the war was the most sophisticated so far. As stated by Martin Bell, major changes have occurred since the 1991 Gulf War in terms of technology and the military. The most striking element is the use of information technology, at greater levels than the conventional use of such technology for war reporting.<sup>77</sup>

In other words, the technology introduced new methods of reporting with the aim of managing and controlling information, so that the media become a machine for war mongering.<sup>78</sup> According to Robin Brown, there are three influential communication tools used by the US 'in waging war on terrorism'. These are 'military concepts of information warfare, foreign policy concepts of public diplomacy, and approaches to media management drawn from domestic politics.'<sup>79</sup>

The main aim of using advanced technology was to convert the military war into normal information operations. Brown highlighted that such warfare can be seen as "a systematic attempt to make sense of warfare as an exercise in

information processing.”<sup>80</sup> Computers were used to gather, process, and disseminate information, so that they could include any related details with regard to attacks or protection of information necessary for military operations. However, the military took the idea of information warfare a step further, providing a system by which to bring together existing activities, ‘psychological operations’ (PSYOPS), deception and public affairs – that is ‘the military-press interface and civil military affairs with computer network operations’.<sup>81</sup> The information was used in a choreographed effort to show American policy in the best light, in order to assist another important concept, that of public diplomacy. However, WikiLeaks documents revealed that the US military did not differentiate between psychological operations and public affairs, both prior to and after the war.<sup>82</sup> The information provided by the US military to private contractors demonstrates that most of the psychological operations were aimed at, and concerned with, the American public.<sup>83</sup>

The private sector involvement in the psychological warfare gives the war on Iraq a new aspect. The US Administration used new techniques to propagate the war in Iraq by using familiar PR companies, which helped to sustain their work. In July 2002, the White House created its Office of Global Communications (OGC) to coordinate the administration’s work in foreign policy offices and its messages, and in showing America in the best light. Later on, it was declared that the OGC would supervise a PR-blitz to persuade key groups that Saddam Hussein should be thrown out.<sup>84</sup>

According to Miller, other efforts contributed to advance the campaign, such as the media training of Iraqi dissidents by the state department, to “help make the Bush administration’s argument for the removal of Saddam”.<sup>85</sup> To reach this end, the US administration hired Pit Group to shape the whole campaign. Miller pointed out that this action revealed the US government’s determination to connect with firms that had well-known expertise in propaganda operations.<sup>86</sup>

The US administration had also worked with the Rendon Group, which had worked in a number of countries, providing discreet and confidential strategic guidance to clients in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

Their website also states that their clients are 'government agencies, private sector enterprises and non-governmental organisations that face the challenge of achieving information superiority in order to impact on public opinion and outcomes.'<sup>87</sup>

However, Rendon Group was not a new player to the Iraqi theatre of events. It had been hired by the CIA in May 1991 to encourage efforts to overthrow Saddam Hussein. The American administration, under Former President George H.W. Bush, was hoping to create the environment for a coup in which members of the Iraqi army would turn on Saddam Hussein and put an end to his regime.<sup>88</sup>

In February 1998, a report by Peter Jennings cited records obtained by ABC which showed that the Rendon Group had spent, in the first year of its contract with the CIA, more than \$23 million dollars. The group also set up the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella for 19 Iraqi Arab and Kurdish opposition groups. The INC groups were required to "gather information, distribute propaganda and recruit dissidents of Hussein's regime".<sup>89</sup> "ClandestineRadio.com, a website which monitors underground and anti-government radio stations in countries throughout the world, credits the Rendon Group with "designing and supervising" the Iraqi Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) and Radio Hurriah [Freedom], which began broadcasting Iraqi opposition propaganda in January 1992 from a US government transmitter in Kuwait".<sup>90</sup> In 1996 the IBC was supervised by six CIA case officers in the City of Arbil, Northern Iraq, including 11 hours of daily programming and Iraqi National Congress activities.<sup>91</sup>

### **1.7. The Alliance's Public Diplomacy leading up to the 2003 Invasion.**

The United States faced a political deadlock following international outcry about its plan to topple the Iraqi regime. Major countries, such as Russia and France, opposed the US proposal submitted by the United States, Britain and Spain, to get UN backing for military action against the Iraqi regime.<sup>92</sup> The US saw that it had to try a new approach, by moving public diplomacy from the

inner circles of politicians to the general public. Joseph Duffey, former director of the United States Information Agency, said that public diplomacy is “an attempt to get over the heads or around diplomats and official spokesmen of countries, and sometimes around the press, to speak directly to the public in other countries and provide an interpretation, [or] explanation, of US values and policies”.<sup>93</sup>

Speaking in October 2002, US president George Bush said that “the stated policy of the United States is regime change...however, if [Saddam] Hussein were to meet all the conditions of the United Nations, the conditions that I have described very clearly in terms that everybody can understand, that in itself will signal the regime has changed”.<sup>94</sup>

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2003, Bush reiterated that the failure of the Iraqi regime to disarm would lead to multi-national action to force it to comply with the UN resolution in this respect. He said that “Saddam Hussein must understand that if he does not disarm, for the sake of peace, we, along with others, will go disarm Saddam Hussein”.<sup>95</sup> Apart from the Iraqi weapons, the United States and United Kingdom used additional justifications at various times. They talked about the Iraq regime’s violation of UN resolutions, and that the Iraqi government repressed its citizens.<sup>96</sup> According to Steve Schifferes of the BBC, on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2003 the US named thirty countries that had decided to associate their efforts with the US action in Iraq, though few of the countries were providing a major, military presence in the Gulf. (This was most notably provided by Britain and Australia.) In addition there were fifteen countries providing assistance, such as over-flight rights, but which did not want to declare their support.<sup>97</sup>

Nevertheless, as noted by Laura McClure, in order to build this collaboration, the US administration offered large amounts of foreign aid in exchange for support for the Iraq War. This strategy was described by McClure as ‘the US brandishing its wallet as a weapon’, and it is clear that the US used money to buy off countries.<sup>98</sup> Turkey, for instance, was offered \$6 billion in direct aid, plus billions more in loans, if it would allow the Americans to base their troops there in advance of the invasion. Other nations like Guinea, Mexico, Chile,

Angola, Cameroon and Pakistan, which were the six undecided countries of the fifteen members of the UN Security Council, faced the dilemma of whether to pay no attention to the 'mounting opposition to war at home, or face the wrath of Washington.'<sup>99</sup>

The controversial military action against the Iraqi regime prompted the United States to manage the news in order to keep it in tune with its political interests. Brown argues that the US used spin to develop elaborate mechanisms to secure and control media coverage. He added that the strategy focussed on short-term media coverage and a strategic communications that developed proactive communications strategies.<sup>100</sup> In other words, 'the aim of Spinning' was to persuade the media that one version of reality, the version propagated by the US-led coalition, was correct.<sup>101</sup>

To achieve this goal the United States pursued a verbal strategy to win international support for invading Iraq. The significance of this strategy was to portray the war against the Iraqi regime as not just an American war, and to convince people that it was the will of the international community to remove Saddam Hussein.<sup>102</sup>

A classic example is the speech by State Secretary Colin Powell at the United Nations Security Council about Iraqi mobile chemical laboratories. US Secretary of State Powell appeared before the UN Security Council on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2003, and presented what he characterised as "compelling evidence of the existence of WMDs in Iraq and of links between al-Qa'ida and Saddam Hussein's regime". The second reason was that there were proven links between the Iraqi government and members of the Al-Qa'ida network, perhaps even implicating Iraq in the terrorist attacks on US targets on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.<sup>103</sup>

US officials were not the only pioneers of this approach; UK Prime Minister Tony Blair was also involved in war propaganda. For Miller, Blair was "very careful in his use of language that exploited the media thirst for dramatic threats".<sup>104</sup> In a key address to the House of Commons Liaison Committee, Blair stated, "I think it is important that we do everything we can to try to show people the link between the issue of weapons of mass destruction and these

international terrorist groups, mainly linked to al-Qaida.”<sup>105</sup> Rutherford states that the US and UK administrations used a selected style of language to convince the public about the legality of going to war. According to him, the Pentagon struggled to convince reporters and get them using their preferred terminology, such as, ‘collateral damage’ (civilian deaths) and ‘friendly fire’ (killing your own).<sup>106</sup>

Douglas Kellner criticised the US administration for using language which promoted its policies towards war on Iraq, and lying about Iraq and other political issues. Kellner stated that “the Bush administration has practiced the Goebbels-Hider strategy of the Big Lie. Assuming that if you repeat a slogan or idea enough times, the public would come to believe it – the words would turn into reality.” He added that they resorted to the repetition of simplistic slogans with the aim of mobilising conservative support, without regard for the truth.<sup>107</sup>

Although the manner of waging psychological war has changed, propaganda expert Nancy Snow said it has not changed in terms of its purpose.<sup>108</sup> For Randall Bytwerk, the primary change is the technology rather than the method, due to the fact that “It is now possible to spread much more information, much faster”.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, various techniques were adopted and used by strategists to manipulate the media, in order to sell the war and to control the message. Danny Schechter highlights that the newly additional element in the war on Iraq was the sophisticated way in which the public relations companies hired by the Bush administration “made the media sell the US government propaganda news to reporters, who, then [sold] it to politicians and to the public”.<sup>110</sup>

According to Deepa Kumar, the mechanisms used for information control were successful due to two main factors: the development and testing of government information control strategies over the last three decades; and the emergence of a commercial conglomerate media system that lends its services of propaganda to customers.<sup>111</sup> Douglas Kellner noted that the media had turned into the “arms of conservative and corporate interests due to the concentration of ownership”.<sup>112</sup> He pointed out that media was used to

advance the interests of political and economic elites instead of acting in the interests of the public.<sup>113</sup>

The Cardiff School of Journalism study of coverage of the Iraq War noted that the way of presenting news raised questions about the information provided by military sources.<sup>114</sup> As Kari Lydersen points out, one of the major casualties of the media's unquestioning dependence on government sources as the truth.<sup>115</sup> According to Kumar, a large part of psychological operations was the spread of misinformation. She argues that "this strategy took into consideration the twenty-four hour news channels' constant demand for new information, therefore, would official sources meant that military claims would often be relayed with no one taking the time to check the facts".<sup>116</sup> This could explain the contradictions in news reports based on US-led coalition and Iraqi sources. For instance, a British Forces spokesman, Group Captain Al Lockwood, gave a statement about a 'popular uprising' in Basra, which was denied by the Iraqi forces. Similarly, the southern Iraqi port of Umm Qasr was reported as being 'taken' nine times.<sup>117</sup>

Furthermore, BBC journalist Richard Sambrook admitted that "it was proving difficult for journalists in Iraq to distinguish truth from false reports, and that the pressure facing reporters on twenty-four hour news channels had led to premature and inaccurate stories".<sup>118</sup> One senior BBC news source complained that "we are absolutely sick and tired of putting things out and finding out they are not true".<sup>119</sup> The misinformation in this war is far worse than in any conflict I have personally covered, including the first Gulf War and in Kosovo.

### **1.8 The Relations between the American Government and the Media Communications Companies.**

The Iraqi war shed light on new links between media and communication companies and the government. It unveiled the scale of cronyism involving media moguls and top brass politicians. Solomon raises the point that media-owning corporations could also be significant weapons merchants. In a

combined study with Martin A. Lee, he discovered in 1991 the stake one major company had invested in the latest war. “NBC's owner, General Electric, designed, manufactured or supplied parts or maintenance for nearly every major weapon system used by the US during the Gulf War; including the Patriot and Tomahawk cruise missiles, the Stealth bomber, the B-S2 bomber, the AWACS plane, and the NAVSTAR spy satellite system”.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, Solomon revealed that during one year, 1989, General Electric had about \$2 billion in military contracts related to systems that were sooner or later being utilised in the Gulf War.<sup>121</sup>

Kumar attributed this development to the aftermath of the Vietnam War, when a section of political elites came to believe that “it was media coverage of the war that led to the US defeat”.<sup>122</sup> Along with other things, they argued that showing graphic images of the dead on television misrepresented the war and turned Americans against it.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, as Kumar points out, the media and government shared economic and political interests in war propaganda. This, consequently, cements a relationship between the media and the military industrial complex. This convergence, and search for increased profit by giant media conglomerates, has changed the circumstances of journalists working in these companies and could lead to methods of operation that have compromised journalists' ethics.<sup>124</sup>

### **1.9. Biased and Selective Reporting of Events.**

US Psychological operations focused on the media but it still used different methods and means according to the nature of the targeted community. At the end of the day, it aimed at creating an environment of fear, instability, desire, reason, or other factors; to encourage certain attitudes, drive certain feelings or behaviours, and support specific ideas, which are sympathetic to US interests.<sup>125</sup>

The use of psychological operations, or ‘psyops’, is a common practice of the American army. In World War II, the United States used leaflets and radio broadcasts, to control the “emotion, motives, objective reasoning, and

ultimately the behaviour of foreign governments, organisations, groups, and individuals". It was proven to be a useful tactic of persuasion on enemy forces. The United States has previous experience in a conflict environment with Iraq. For instance, during the weeks leading up to the 1991 Gulf War, the US used leaflets, radio and television broadcasts, in addition to loudspeakers, to propagate messages focusing on the Iraqi isolation by their Arab brotherhood, and the power of the allied air forces. Around 29 million leaflets were dropped on the Iraqi military forces during a period of seven weeks, reaching around 98% of the 300,000 Iraqi soldiers.<sup>126</sup>

In Iraq again in March 2003, psychological operations planning started before US entry into the war. The psychological war against Iraq had actually started on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2002, when 120,000 leaflets were dropped by an American A10 fighter-bomber, with warnings to the Iraqi troops and Government against continuing to fire at American and British jets in the 'no-fly' zone over Southern Iraq. "The leaflets carried a drawing of a warplane firing missiles at a Radar site and anti-aircraft battery on the ground with the Arabic text: 'Iraqi ADA beware! Do not track or fire on Coalition aircraft!' The back of the leaflet says "Attention Iraqi Air Defence. The destruction experienced by your colleagues in other air defence locations is a response to your continuing aggression toward planes of the coalition forces. No tracking or firing on these aircraft will be tolerated. You could be next".<sup>127</sup>

Another leaflet carried the text: "Before you engage coalition aircraft, think about the consequences." The back of this leaflet showed the face of an Iraqi soldier surrounded by smoke and the picture of a woman holding her crying child. It reads: "Think about your family. Do what you must to survive."<sup>128</sup> The Coalition air forces dropped thousands of leaflets listing the five frequencies on which Iraqis could reach Coalition broadcasts and listen to their programmes. The programmes were carrying anti-Saddam Hussein messages mixed with a collection of Iraqi and American Pop music. The following are transcripts from radio broadcasts:<sup>129</sup> "History has shown that appeasement of brutal domineering regimes only brings greater tragedy. Saddam too (like Stalin) has a lust for power, and the world will stand up and

put an end to the terror he imposes on others, before he destroys Iraq and crushes the hopes of its proud people.”<sup>130</sup>

“Saddam has built palace after palace for himself and has purchased a fleet of luxury cars all at the expense of the Iraqi people. This money would be much better suited to build libraries and schools. This money would have gone a long way to provide better food and medicine for the people of Iraq. The amount of money Saddam spends on himself in one day would be more than enough to feed a family for a year.”<sup>131</sup> “Do not let Saddam tarnish the reputation of soldiers any longer,” advised another broadcast. “Saddam uses the military to persecute those who don’t agree with his unjust agenda. Make the decision.”<sup>132</sup>

As Iraqi high officials and military leaders had been given mobile phones (with UAE-owned satellite operator *Thurayas*) and e-mail addresses to enable them to be in touch with central Iraqi headquarters in Baghdad, they had been flooded with messages from the American side, urging them to break with the regime and not to defend Saddam Hussein. One e-mail message reads: “Iraqi chemical, biological and nuclear weapons violate Iraq’s commitment to agreements and United Nations resolutions. Iraq has been isolated because of this behaviour. The United States and its allies want to liberate the Iraqi people from Saddam’s injustice, and for Iraq to become a respected member of the international community. Iraq’s future depends on you.”<sup>133</sup>

During the first Gulf War, ‘Desert Storm’, the successful use of PSYOPs directly contributed to the surrender of thousands of Iraqi soldiers.<sup>134</sup> In the invasion of 2003, the objectives behind PSYOPs, including all the leaflets, radio broadcasts, e-mails and mobile phone messages, were slightly different. The Americans’ desire was to encourage disloyalty and the betrayal of Saddam, and to persuade the Iraqis that their lives would be better off without Saddam in power.<sup>135</sup> However, as concluded by David Zuchchino, The Times staff writer, in a piece about an exhaustive Army study, the “efforts by psychological operations units to persuade Iraqi forces to surrender largely failed.”<sup>136</sup>

The US and the UK sought to apply the maximum impact of information dominance during the war on Iraq, which was the key strategy in the US and UK to influence public opinion both domestically and worldwide, to support the war effort and government policies. Justin Lewis et al point out that “the use of information as a weapon is becoming a dominant feature of modern warfare in an age that abounds with increasingly sophisticated digital and satellite communications. Information management is also an increasingly important part of global government and foreign policy.”<sup>137</sup> According to David Miller, the concept of information dominance is “the key to understanding the US and UK’s respective propaganda strategies, as it redefines our notions of spin and propaganda and the role of the media in capitalist societies.”<sup>138</sup>

In his analysis, Miller highlights two new elements seen in information dominance when compared to traditional conceptions of propaganda. The first is the integration of propaganda and psychological operations into a much wider concept of information war. The second is the integration of information war into the core of military strategy.<sup>139</sup> Miller noted that the traditional concepts of propaganda consist of shaping the message and distributing it via government media or independent media outlets. Current conceptions of information war go much further and incorporate the gathering, processing and disseminating of information by way of computers, intelligence and military information systems of command and control.<sup>140</sup>

Modern psychological operations have advanced thanks to the computer revolution that has ushered in a revolution in military affairs. In other words, propaganda and psychological operations have become an essential weapon in the information war arsenal. As Colonel Kenneth wrote, the 2003 invasion of Iraq “will be remembered as a conflict in which information took its place as a weapon of war.”<sup>141</sup> The findings of the Cardiff School Study of the Iraq War coverage highlight that the most remembered images of the conflict was the image of toppling Saddam’s statue at Al-Firdous Square in central Baghdad, and the Hollywood-like rescue operation of Jessica Lynch.<sup>142</sup> The study also indicated that the toppling of Saddam’s statue was widely referred to in focus groups, although reactions to it were divided. Some of the participants saw it as an accurate reflection of Iraqi joy at being liberated, while others felt there

was a degree of overacting for the cameras.<sup>143</sup> The focus of the camera and the arrangement that followed the incident made researchers suspect that the whole scene was staged to give such an impression. Rampton and Stauber question as to whether the toppling of Saddam's statue was as spontaneous as it was made to appear, or if there was a reason the scene was a bit too picture-perfect, hinting at the role of the PR machine in constructing it, an inaccurate picture of Baghdad, and of Iraq as a whole.<sup>144</sup>

Another case that raises awareness about the US use of media was the story of Jessica Lynch. Jessica Lynch was a Private First Class in the US Army Quartermaster Corps. Lynch served in Iraq during the 2003 invasion by the US-led Coalition. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2003, she was injured and captured by Iraqi forces but recovered on April 1<sup>st</sup> by US special operation forces, with the incident subsequently receiving considerable news coverage.<sup>145</sup> Lynch spent a little time in the custody of an Iraqi army unit that had captured her. She was then reinstated to a hospital in the city of Nassiriya. The US forces were told about Lynch's location by an Iraqi, who said that she had been tortured, but was still alive.<sup>146</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, the US Special Forces launched a night-time raid on the hospital, rescuing Lynch and recovered the bodies of eight other American soldiers.<sup>147</sup>

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2003, the Pentagon released a five-minute video of the rescue and claimed that "Lynch has stab and bullet wounds, and that she had been slapped about on her [stay in] hospital, and interrogated".<sup>148</sup> The Iraqi medical staff (doctors and nurses), including Dr Harith al-Hassuna, a doctor in the Nassirya hospital who was later interviewed about the accident, disproved the US claims. Al-Hassuna described Lynch's injuries as a "broken arm, a broken thigh, and dislocated ankle". According to al-Hassuna's statement, there was no sign of gun blast or stab wounds, and Lynch's injuries were like those that would be suffered in a car accident.<sup>149</sup> Al-Hassuna's story was later confirmed as correct in the US Army report on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2003.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, Pentagon officials disputed a report that appeared in the Washington Post that Lynch had fought back. The first official report of Lynch's actions during her capture released by the Pentagon weeks later, said that the US military in fact "overdramatized" the story of her rescue, denying information about Lynch

fighting back against her captors.<sup>151</sup>

When Lynch spoke to the public, her statements were more critical of the original story that was reported by the Washington Post, saying, “That wasn’t me. I’m not about to take credit for something I didn’t do...I’m just a survivor.”<sup>152</sup> She pointed out that she fought until being wounded, reporting that her weapon jammed immediately, and that she could not have done anything anyway.<sup>153</sup> When she was asked about the Pentagon footage, she said “They used me to symbolize all this stuff. It’s wrong. I don’t know why they filmed [my rescue] or why they say these things.”<sup>154</sup> She also stated, “I did not shoot, not a round, nothing. I went down praying to my knees. And that’s the last I remember.”<sup>155</sup> She reported that she was not mistreated in the Iraqi hospital and that she refused amputation surgery to her leg.<sup>156</sup>

Lynch, along with other major media outlets, has accused the US government of embellishing the story as part of the Pentagon’s propaganda effort.<sup>157</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> April 2007, Lynch gave congressional testimony before the United States Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, that the Pentagon had erroneously portrayed her as a “Rambo”, and expressed her astonishment at why the military “lied” and tried to make her a legend.<sup>158</sup>

### **1.10. WikiLeaks Exposé.**

I had unrestricted access to uncensored, classified documents leaked by WikiLeaks, amounting to almost 400,000 SIGACT (Significant Action) cables written by American troops, while I was working for the Bureau of investigative Journalism based at City university. These documents revealed the reality of five years of the US war in Iraq.<sup>159</sup> The US military used different tactics and closely integrated Information Operations (IO) as part of its war machine. The American public relations officers systematically tried to control local Iraqi media to provide pro-coalition media spin, attempting to influence the hearts and minds of the people.<sup>160</sup>

The point of contact for both the media and the US military will often be a Public Affairs officer (PAO), a specialist trained in military public relations.

Public Affairs (PA) is defined in an American military document as a “related activity” to Information Operations, “in the sense that the effects they achieve may be similar to some aspects of IO, particularly PSYOPS.”<sup>161</sup>

While PSYOPS and PA may have similar effects, according to US military doctrine, their methods are distinct. The manual for Public Affairs emphasises that, “propaganda has no place in DOD (Department of Defence) PA programs.”<sup>162</sup> One of the principles of PA is to “Tell the Truth. JFC PA personnel will only release truthful information. The long-term success of PA operations depends on maintaining the integrity and credibility of officially released information. Deceiving the public undermines trust in, and support for, the Armed Forces and PA activities. Accurate, balanced, credible presentation of information leads to confidence in the Armed Forces and the legitimacy of operations.”<sup>163</sup>

The WikiLeaks material shows a more nuanced tactic used by US Public Affairs officers. The PAOs are often deliberately passive in their dealings with Western media while paying close attention to their coverage. At the same time, they actively seek to influence Iraqi media and to propagate the PSYOP ‘message’.

A report dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2009 describes an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack in Diyala that killed an Iraqi city councillor. The PAO attached to the unit started tracking “open source intelligence (OSINT) and western media” for any reporting. The PAO then assessed that the “incident will garner minimal coverage in Western media”, and decided to “conduct passive respond [sic] to query only.”<sup>164</sup>

However, the PAOs were more proactive when dealing with Iraqi media. In the same report, the officer states: “Local media will request information from Iraqi sources. Coordination will be conducted with DOC Media Officer to see their message to the public.”<sup>165</sup>

The Iraqi sources referenced in that particular report are not identified. But another report, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2009, suggests that high ranking Iraqi commanders and politicians were used by the US to engage with Iraqi

media.<sup>166</sup>

The report describes an attack by insurgents, involving IEDs, grenades and machine guns, against a US patrol in Mosul. A US armoured vehicle collided with an Iraqi truck in the confusion, killing both its occupants, who were a young boy and his uncle. The IO officer acted to temper local criticism by drafting a list of “Talking Points”:

- 1) We regret there was an unfortunate incident that caused civilian casualties.
- 2) CF [Coalition Forces] and the ISF [Iraqi Security Forces] take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of innocent civilians.
- 3) By allowing AQI/ISI [Al Qaeda Iraq/Islamic State of Iraq] into your homes and neighbourhoods you are inviting only death and destruction.
- 4) Do not give these terrorists and criminals refuge in your homes. They only place your family at risk.<sup>167</sup>

The ranking US officer then met with brigade and division commanders of the National Police to “discuss rapid response of the Coalition Forces to that area and express sympathy over the loss of innocent Iraqi lives. [As well as] influence them to make statements to the press with embedded IO Talking Points.”<sup>168</sup>

There are numerous other examples of this kind of occurrence regarding the relationship between American IO officers, Iraqi officials and the US-funded Iraqi media. In Mosul on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009, a US engineering brigade was conducting repairs to a damaged berm next to a major gas pipeline.<sup>169</sup> They struck and ruptured the gas line that provided heat to all of western Mosul. Sensing the potential damage to the Coalition’s public image, the IO officer responds with detailed instructions:

“The below message has been sent to Al Mosullia TV and Radio, as well as Ashur TV and Radio:

Earlier today; 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009, Coalition Forces struck and ruptured a gas line while conducting critical repairs on the Riyadh line in Western Iraq. There were no injuries; however, the gas line is significant because it is a feeder line that provides heat to all of western Mosul. The Coalition Forces have secured the site and are working with Iraqi city officials, engineers, and the Provincial Reconstruction Team to assess and begin repairs immediately.

#### Recommended Talking Points:

1. The Coalition Force members were conducting much needed repairs to the berms on the Riyadh line.
2. Coalition Forces understand the importance of this pipeline and are working as quickly as possible to repair the damage with the assistance of Iraqi city engineers.
3. The damaged area is secure and will remain secured while repairs are being made.
4. Coalition Forces immediately notified the Provincial Reconstruction Team upon receiving news of this incident.

#### Recommended Engagements:

1. 84<sup>th</sup> ENG CDR can speak to the Mayor as to the purpose of the mission that his unit was conducting when the accident happened.
2. Mayor of Mosul can speak of the positive relationship between CF and the engineering projects that have been built and repaired for the people of Mosul. CF Engineers have conducted numerous operations and positive projects in and around Mosul that have benefited the people.

COL Volesky's translator has already contacted the Mayor of Mosul concerning the issue."<sup>170</sup>

The IO officer then lists media outlets, consisting of the Iraqi Media Network Station in Tal Afar and Mosul, along with Al Mosullia Satellite TV, while also including the names and telephone numbers of the stations' managers.<sup>171</sup> Similar 'talking points' appeared in hundreds of reports. Repetition is a key tactic of Public Affairs, as the manual points out: "Repetition of the information being provided...is a factor in information retention. For information to be effectively processed, individuals must receive the information in a timely fashion, multiple times and from multiple sources."<sup>172</sup>

#### **1.10.1. Exploiting Information.**

Another tool of the IO officer is the use of prepared templates, allowing for a rapid and consistent reaction to events. Any event that could be seen as 'good news' was systematically exploited. One report includes the "Good News Stories Radio Exploitation Template", which formulates the script to be broadcast on a local radio station.<sup>173</sup>

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 2009, an Iraqi army squad discovered a cache of weapons in Ninewa province. The IO response included the following:

"Good News Stories Radio Exploitation Template:

- 1) When – When the good news took place. Date, time and group.
- 2) Who – Who was involved with the good news and who it will benefit. Who deserves the credit.
- 3) What – What the good news was about.
- 4) Where – Where the good news happened.
- 5) Why – Why this is good news for Maslawis [people from Mosul] and the *Ninewa* province as a whole.

PSYOP message: The Ninewa provincial government and the city of Mosul are working hard to make good things happen for all Maslawis and the citizens of the Ninewa province as a whole."<sup>174</sup>

As with any public relations worker, the PAO's main task is to advise leaders on the expected PR consequences of operations and activities. They monitor the 'public understanding' of the US military's actions and act to influence the "perceptions and attitudes of decision-makers, leaders and other individuals."<sup>175</sup>

An example of this can be found in a report dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2008. After an IED attack in Diyala, the public affairs officer notes that:

"This IED attack has already received attention in the local Iraqi, as well as by Baghdad, media (Iraqi and western)...Unfortunately, any time an IED explodes or an SVEST is mentioned anywhere in Diyala, it reinforces long-standing terminology used to describe Diyala as restive or volatile."<sup>176</sup>

The officer then pledges to:

"continue to aggressively promote any/all ISF/CF successes in degrading this threat in the province, IOT [in order to] counter this and improve public perception."<sup>177</sup>

Another example of aggressive pressure to improve perceptions is found in an incidence report from 21<sup>st</sup> July 2009, this time describing an Iraqi police officer in the Ninawa province, who finds a suicide vest after being tipped off by a local source. The US intelligence officer attached to the unit states that:

"The details, motivations, and informants involved with the discovery of the suicide vest are extremely questionable...It is assessed that these vests are most likely being built and turned in to CF by a source and his informants in order to build rapport, gain respect and earn monetary reward."<sup>178</sup>

However, the IO officer is quick to see the propaganda potential and comments:

"This event bolsters our IO themes of IP [Iraqi Police] supremacy.

This is another good news story we can exploit to further the positive image of the IP and give the people a feeling of security.”<sup>179</sup>

The PAO also drafts a press release saying:

“The Sharqat IP have once again proved that they are a professional and competent force. On Wednesday morning, the IP recovered a suicide vest in Sharqat. This is one more weapon which would have been used to kill the Iraqi people that is now off the streets thanks to your local police.”<sup>180</sup>

From 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009, US combat troops withdrew from Iraqi cities. The soldiers that remained were designated to coordinate, train and advise Iraqi security forces.<sup>181</sup>

A report from 11<sup>th</sup> July 2009 suggests part of their role was to mentor Iraqis on how to deal with the media after large attacks. The report expresses how a suicide car-bomb shocked a district in east Mosul, killing five people. The PAO supervised the media reaction and directed the National Oil Company (NOC) on what to do:

“July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009

PAO:

Multiple western media sources have accurately reported the number of casualties killed in this attack which indicate that these media outlets are obtaining information from a reliable source. However, we continue to mentor and advise the NOC to use these attacks as opportunities to engage the media and put out a command message condemning these attacks.”<sup>182</sup>

There is also proof that Iraqi authorities purposefully covered up incidents of propaganda use. In February 2009, an explosion in the holy city of Karbala killed 9 people and wounded 54 others. The local Iraqi Army, who was at that

time in charge of security of the country with American supervision, was the first on the scene. When questioned by the US forces about what caused the explosion, they “acknowledged that it was likely a suicide vest, but chose to report it as a propane explosion for IO purposes.”<sup>183</sup>

### **1.10.2. The Iraqi Media Network.**

One of the first acts of the Pentagon's Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) was to award the US consultancy firm, Scientific Applications International Corporation (SAIC), a no-bid contract to “establish a free and independent indigenous media network” called the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), in March 2003.<sup>184</sup> The cost of the project ballooned from \$15 million to \$82.3 million, and the contracting process was plagued by poor planning and inadequate government oversight.<sup>185</sup> A review by the US Department of Defence Inspector General of two dozen contracts in Iraq, including the SAIC contract, was issued in the months after US troops moved into Baghdad. The review found that in 22 cases, “supplies and services were quickly acquired, and contracting rules were either circumvented or liberally interpreted”, while at the same time, “officials performed little or no Government surveillance on awarded contracts.”<sup>186</sup>

The US military used IMN reporters to selectively cover events that provided Coalition Forces with propaganda benefits. A report from May 2006 describes a weapons store being found in the city of Mosul. The reporter notes that, “Both ComCam and IMN crew on-site, conducting IO site exploitation.”<sup>187</sup> ‘ComCam’ refers to ‘Combat Camera’; another kind of support to IO, helping acquire and use still and motion imagery for PSYOPS, military deception, public affairs and civil-military purposes.<sup>188</sup>

The IMN was not just in the right place at the right time; they were often informed and transported to events by the US military. When Iraqi Police killed two suspected insurgents in Ninewa province in August 2006, the IO coordinating officer “contacted IMN for local media coverage.”<sup>189</sup> In October 2004, an American patrol came under attack while investigating a car bomb,

which then exploded. The report mentioned that, “PAO has been notified and is sending IMN to the scene.”<sup>190</sup>

There are multiple examples of IMN reporters being escorted to sites for IO exploitation. One from April 2007 involved the discovery of a large weapons cache by the Iraq Army in Mosul, to which “3/C/2-7 CAV responded by transporting several reporters from IMN to the scene.”<sup>191</sup> When a rocket propelled grenade, meant for an Iraqi police station, damaged a mosque in Mosul in December 2004, the first unit on the scene started “photographing the minaret in order to exploit the incident through IO”, then states, “IMN responded to the scene. IO is exploiting the incident.”<sup>192</sup> In contrast, when Iraqi police found the remains of a decapitated interpreter in Mosul in October 2004, “IMN was not notified”.<sup>193</sup>

### **1.10.3. Information Operations.**

A secret Pentagon report from October 2003, titled ‘Information Operations Roadmap’, recognises “the likelihood that PSYOP messages will be replayed to a much broader audience, including the American public.”<sup>194</sup> Despite “recognising the legal conundrum presented by the use of overseas propaganda in the information age and the need for boundaries (referred to as ‘lanes’) between US public diplomacy and foreign propaganda, it fails to provide any such limits.”<sup>195</sup> The document explains the goal of escalating and coordinating the Pentagon's PSYOP and public diplomacy operations, and it was approved by Donald Rumsfeld personally. It very clearly called for psychological operations to be launched over radio, television, cell phones and “emerging technologies”.<sup>196</sup> In July 2009, a report by the Department of Defence Inspector General recommended cancelling four IO contracts awarded in September 2008, as “the contract language did not differentiate between the audiences for PSYOP and PA in accordance with established doctrine, creating the appearance that PSYOP was associated with a US audience.”<sup>197</sup> While the Inspector did not find proof that the American audiences were targeted with PSYOPS, they quoted the statement of work (SOW), which stated that “it is essential to the success of the new Iraqi

Government and the Coalition mission, that both communicate effectively with our strategic audiences (i.e. Iraqi, pan-Arabic, international and US audiences) to gain widespread acceptance of their core themes and messages.”<sup>198</sup>

## **Conclusion.**

The US launched an extraordinary variety of psychological warfare techniques in Iraq during the 2003 invasion and pre-occupation time to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis. They used multiple and varied techniques to reinforce or encourage sympathetic behaviour towards US objectives in military, diplomatic, political and economical policies. The US deployed what they called a “weapon of mass persuasion” in the battlefield and employed it in the post-invasion time. It could have been effective in the battlefield because of their status as a superpower, but actually it was not in the post-invasion era, as their messages were always coming against or in contrast with their policies and practices on the ground. So in spite of the huge effort and the new techniques which they applied in Iraq as a part of their psychological warfare, they could not win the hearts and minds or even achieve a minimal persuasion of the Iraqi people. It is obvious that the media played a vital role in the US war via visual, audio and audio-visual media and print journalism to communicate with local and foreign audiences and influence their motives and emotions. Besides this, the media worked to navigate the behaviour of foreign governments, groups, organisations, institutions and individuals. In reality the open nature of the satellite channels and the internet embarrassed the US in many instances, especially when they tried to twist the truth to suit their own agenda. Many made-up stories were broadcast by the US media, but then other media broadcast the true stories in response. This was one of the challenges which faced American warfare in Iraq.

## **2. Chapter Two: American Journalism in Japan and Germany after WWII.**

### **Introduction.**

In military campaign terms, there are four phases for a joint forces commander's (JFC's) plan: deter/engage, seize initiative, decisive operations and transition. "Once a victory is accomplished, there is a 'transitional' phase whereby the military may function as an instrument of national power in environments quite foreign in culture, climate and character...that requires balancing...offence, defence, stability and support."<sup>199</sup>

The American occupied forces' experience in Iraq during and after 2003 resonates with their experience in Germany and Japan after WWII. The US Army has tried to follow a certain strategy; one with a historical precedent in their World War II operations including post-war occupations of Japan and Germany. The success of such transitional operations depends upon whether the occupying force has a sound understanding of the history of the country's forms of government; relationships between military and government; state of economy; influence of native religious practices; active relations with the international community; status of civil support infrastructures; impact of social factors on the stability of operations; and last but not least, the influence of the media on the people and government. Today, US military advisors recommend that when building democracies in transition phases, there should be no censorship by the military. Despite this, there have been some rare cases where it was deemed necessary to break the 'no censorship' rule in the interest of national security.<sup>200</sup>

### **2.1. The American Occupation of Japan.**

From 1871 through to 1945, a period spanning Japan's Meiji, Taisho and Showa eras, under the country's pre-war constitution, the media in Japan faced significant legal regulations that restricted press freedoms.<sup>201</sup> At the end of the Second World War, a defeated Japan faced what would become a six-year occupation by the Americans. The Allied Powers demanded Japan's unconditional surrender and defined two goals for the American occupation:

1) Complete demilitarisation of the Japanese military complex.

2) The democratisation of Japanese society.<sup>202</sup>

With the end of combat operations in the Pacific and Emperor Hirohito's surrender, the American forces found themselves facing a need for an almost instantaneous shift in acting as an invasion force to peaceful occupier. The Americans had already had some transferable experience from their occupation of Germany immediately after the Nazi surrender, but in the previous situation America acted as one of four occupying nations who shared administrative responsibility for a small percentage of the country only. In Japan's case, the United States, working through General Douglas MacArthur and his staff as the "Supreme Command of the Allied Powers" (SCAP), assumed the sole responsibility of implementing the surrender requirements, stabilising the country and turning Japan into a modern democracy. Almost a quarter of a million Japanese were removed from public office, including military officers, police chiefs, government officials, bureaucrats, teachers, university professors and even people working in the arts.<sup>203</sup>

After almost a decade of military rule and war, and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese economy was a shambles. There was not enough food to feed the surviving population within the country, which was due to swell with the imminent return of Japanese civilians from overseas. Japan had not been self-sufficient in food production since 1912. For many, starvation was a real possibility. Raw materials for rebuilding the cities were scarce following the war, and to all intents and purposes Japan's merchant fleet no longer existed. Overall industrial production was at 19<sup>th</sup> century levels, and the living situation for many was comparable to periods of history much earlier. These were extremely poor conditions in which to see wide-ranging social, political and economic reforms take place, least of all in the hands of the enemy, who was seen as responsible for putting Japan in its dire situation. So how did Japan make such a rapid turnaround? It began with "Operation Blacklist"; an occupation plan that would be used across approximately 14 geographical areas in Japan, and three to six in Korea. Critical to the plan's

success was the recognition that “the most efficient means of administering an occupied Japan was through its existing administrative and government infrastructure.”<sup>204</sup>

Language barriers, cultural awareness limitations and other obstacles meant that SCAP had a central need for a partner within the Japanese government. In the eyes of Japan’s citizens, this would legitimise the government and make any behind the scenes manipulation much easier to conduct. MacArthur arrived in Japan on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1945. Judging by his monologues en route from Australia, he appeared to feel that he was on a mission, “guided by George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Jesus Christ... [to] deliver this benighted Oriental nation from slavery and feudalism, and transform its people into pacific democrats.”<sup>205</sup> Like Commodore Perry, MacArthur thought he would “bring light to Japanese darkness.”<sup>206</sup> He regarded the Japanese as childlike and, furthermore, incapable of achieving progress independently of active western guidance. MacArthur firmly believed that the Japanese had stumbled into militarism because they “didn’t know any better”. For MacArthur (who, considering the nature of his role, knew very little about Japan) the idea was to create a link between pre-war, wartime and post-war Japan. He saw himself as “a reformer of the Japanese soul” and intended to “overhaul” thousands of years of Japanese culture.<sup>207</sup> He set himself up as the exclusive executive authority, much as the emperor had always been, believing that in this way a people set on display and ceremony would more readily accept his authority. In fact, the Japanese saw MacArthur much as their “second emperor”, though most were too afraid to voice it. Later SCAP was to become known as the “MacArthur Shogunate”.<sup>208</sup>

In April 1946, SCAP was informed that an entertainer in Tokyo was singing subversive songs. Investigators attending a performance heard lyrics like: “Seducing Japanese women is easy, with chocolate and chewing gum”, and “Everybody is talking about democracy, but how can we have democracy with two emperors?” The banning of the show was the beginning of a Japanese self-censorship that was carefully monitored and enforced by the offices of SCAP, and the inviolability of MacArthur was brought home to writers and editors in what became known as the “hero worship” incident of October

1946.<sup>209</sup> The occupation forces hoped to control of Japan's media sector, so SCAP encouraged Japanese newspapers to re-establish themselves. SCAP saw the media as a tool to convey its own policies for democratisation and, later, the revitalisation of the capitalist state. Ironically, given the zeal with which it abolished the Japanese military's censorship apparatus, "the occupation did not hesitate to institute measures of its own to thwart criticism of its policies, officials and troops."<sup>210</sup>

"Already in 1944, ahead of the occupation, a subcommittee of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) had concerned itself with the question of how to deal with Japanese mass media following the country's defeat. The subcommittee completed its work on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1945, and issued a paper entitled 'Control of Media of Public Information and Expression in Japan'. In it, the subcommittee suggested that during the initial phase of the occupation "all Japanese media activities should be suspended, while the remaining facilities should be brought under the direct control of the military authorities."<sup>211</sup> "Only the press organs most closely associated with the wartime authorities were abolished. The first to go was Domei Tsushinsha." On 24<sup>th</sup> September of the same year, President Furuno Inosuke notified the Allied Headquarters that his agency had been dissolved. Earlier that day, the Allied Headquarters had issued a memorandum in which it set forth a range of measures including the breakup of press cartels. One of the organisations with the greatest responsibility for the disreputable role that the Japanese Press had come to play during the war had already ceased to exist some five months before Japan's capitulation. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1945, Ogata Taketora, who recently exchanged his presidency of the Tokyo edition of the Asahi Shinbun for his role within the Cabinet information bureau, dissolved the Japanese Newspaper Society, explaining that it had "fully accomplished its objectives."<sup>212</sup>

The subsequent Japanese Newspaper Publishers' and Editors' Association, the Shimbun Kyokai, was a directive backed by SCAP who wanted to support publishers attempting to reassert their right to determine editorial policy and the direction of their businesses. This had the advantage of keeping leftists from taking over the media landscape. It also helped foster a Japanese

tendency to organise for collective decision-making. The result was the “Canons of Journalism”, which stated: “The press should enjoy complete freedom in reporting news and in making editorial comments, unless such activities interfere with public interests or are explicitly forbidden by law, including the freedom to comment on the wisdom of any restrictive statute. The right of the press should be defended as a vital right of mankind.”<sup>213</sup>

Article 21 of Japan’s Post War Constitution stated: “Freedom of...speech, press, and all other forms of expression are guaranteed. No censorship shall be maintained, nor shall the secrecy of any means of communication be violated.” Article 12 stated that, while such rights are guaranteed, the people “shall refrain from any abuse of these freedoms and rights, and shall always be responsible for utilising them for public welfare.”<sup>214</sup> But while SCAP officials preached free speech, they punished anyone who criticised occupation policies. They banned the production of satirical cartoons featuring SCAP, and even literary works such as American author John Steinbeck’s famous novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, which dissects American poverty. Books about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were also embargoed. In fact, any material that might have portrayed the Americans in a bad light, or as anything less than “models of virtue and probity” was banned by SCAP officials.<sup>215</sup>

The Allies formed a unit called Press, Publications and Broadcasting (PPB), which was responsible for preventing media organisations from publishing material harmful to the aim of the demilitarisation and democratisation. The PPB office expanded and updated the list of prohibitions. The PPB deleted material from newspapers, wire service copy, films, plays, slides and lantern shows, paintings, cartoons, magazines and books.<sup>216</sup> Publishers had to submit two copies of all galleys to the censors and wait for their decision, just as they did under previous Japanese governments’ control. In addition, strict measures were taken to keep the occupation’s continued censorship concealed from the Japanese public, including banning all written references to the process, and proscribing the use of telltale ellipse marks for deleted items or passages. Of course, Japanese authors, editors and publishers were fully aware of the process, as were foreign correspondents.<sup>217</sup>

By the spring of 1946, SCAP authorities in Japan had set in place a policy designed to exclude unions and their workers from the management and editorial policy-making of newspapers. This policy helped establish in Japan the concept of “editorial right” (*hensūken*), which became institutionalised as the “Declaration on Safeguarding Newspapers’ Editorial Rights”, announced by the Japan Newspapers’ Association on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1948. In effect, it meant that no one but management would be allowed to participate in the process of editing, and no criticism would be allowed concerning the newspapers’ statements and content. The Americans then shifted to use a softer, but highly effective, approach. SCAP instructors offered “unofficial and thus voluntary history lessons.”<sup>218</sup> Japanese reformers and leftists were thrilled with their new freedom, which by October 1945 also included the removal of restrictions on civil liberties and free speech. In this new atmosphere, a documentary called *The Japanese Tragedy* was made which included several images of Hirohito as a war criminal, but out of fear that the film’s ‘radical treatment’ might ‘provoke riots and disturbances’, SCAP banned it nonetheless.

MacArthur wanted to use the emperor “as a symbolic presence; a kind of shrine” to legitimise his own authority.<sup>219</sup> To use this symbol of national unity, he first had to destroy the extremist belief that the Emperor was a divine priest-king. In September 1947 an initial, highly effective step toward this goal was the strategic distribution throughout the press of a photo with MacArthur and Hirohito standing side-by-side at the US Embassy. The photo showed MacArthur in an open-necked shirt, his hands lodged easily in his hip pockets, towering over the diminutive monarch, who was standing stiffly to attention in his formal morning coat, his mouth slightly open.<sup>220</sup> During the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, modelled after The Court at Nuremburg, SCAP determined that the Emperor was innocent of war crimes. Ironically, the Emperor himself was kept from the trial, even as a witness. The trial was then broadcast on Japanese radio and repeated in the press. General Tojo, who was prime minister at the start of the war, took personal responsibility, but during his trial he insisted that no-one would have dared go against the Emperor. The press coverage and the cross-examination of Tojo were cut short to prevent this truth from becoming widely known. Eventually, Tojo was

pressured to change this stance and say that the emperor “had always loved and wanted peace.” Depicted in the press with round tortoiseshell glasses, a shaved head and buck teeth, Tojo became America’s favourite caricature of the “evil Japanese”.<sup>221</sup>

With the emperor exempt, and therefore seen to be distanced from any war crime, the Japanese showed no sympathy for the military war criminals, and came to believe that they were responsible for the destruction of Japan. The effect of the Tribunal was to persuade the Japanese that they were no longer the ‘pawns’ who had previously been led astray. However, they also understood that if atrocities such as the Nanking massacre were terrible and wrong, then so too was the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One of the censorship policies of the time that had the greatest consequences was concerning terms used for events. The Japanese were forbidden to call their war in Asia “The Great East Asia War” (Dai Tōa Sensō). Instead, they were required to use the term “Pacific War” (Taiheiyō Sensō). SCAP introduced this change in mid-December 1945, as part of a larger directive aimed at eliminating religious and nationalistic indoctrination. This resulted in an unexpected outcome: Whereas the Japanese phrase had centred on the war in China and Southeast Asia, the new term re-centred it in the Pacific. This psychologically indicated the dominance of the United States there. Instead of instilling a sense of guilt in the Japanese for the war, the initiative diminished the nation’s memories of what Japan had done to their neighbouring Asian countries. Sometimes SCAP’s censorship was plainly ridiculous. Files contain records of one incident where an order was issued to delete a small dog from a photograph of US forces on parade because it lessened the dignity of the troops. But it was more common for the troops, jeeps, English-language signs and the like to be removed from visual record, in attempts to remove any signs of the occupation from films and photographs, helping the Japanese to forget their defeat. For example, a cartoon about how quickly and easily the GIs took over Tokyo, captioned “the power of chewing gum is awesome”, was banned from broadcast and never reached the public.<sup>222</sup>

From 1946 through to 1948, the public media had been saturated with coverage of war crime trials, and of publicity regarding Japanese atrocities in

the Pacific War and Chinese theatre.<sup>223</sup> “There were a number of dead and wounded [Japanese], it is said, but because of the American censorship, there was nothing about the indictment in the papers. The Americans talk about freedom, but they conceal what is to their disadvantage.”<sup>224</sup> The SCAP censorship officially began to decrease in 1947. Traditional theatre was removed from pre-performance censorship in mid-1947, with classic feudal loyalty and revenge-type dramas, such as *Forty-Seven Loyal Retainers*, returning to the Kabuki stage. All major newspapers and news services were removed from pre-publication inspection by the end of July 1948. In October of 1949, SCAP officially terminated the censorship, citing the US State Department’s recognition that it only ever had “the effect of continuing the authoritarian tradition in Japan.”<sup>225</sup>

The post-war economy had started to improve, but when MacArthur began to make suggestions about continuing to fight China, President Truman dismissed him. The Japanese responded in an extraordinary way. The liberal newspaper, *Asahi*, thanked MacArthur for teaching the Japanese “the merits of democracy and pacifism”, and for “guiding them with kindness along this bright path.”<sup>226</sup> The Emperor also thanked him for everything he had done for his people. All along MacArthur’s route to Haneda airport, hundreds of thousands of Japanese citizens, including children who were pardoned from school for the occasion, stood crying and waving little paper flags. NHK radio played “Auld Lang Syne” as Prime Minister Yoshida waved goodbye. It was the same plane that brought MacArthur to Japan in 1945 that flew him away again for the last time.<sup>227</sup>

### **2.1.1. Japan’s Post-Occupation Media.**

Books, press, theatre, radio and films were used by SCAP to change the intellectual and political atmosphere of Japan. This was achieved by continuously promoting the concept and practice of peace and democracy through various information programmes, campaigns and exhibitions. One benefit of this was that it helped create a positive image for the Americans in modern Japanese literature.<sup>228</sup> However, since World War II, Japanese

newspapers have developed to meet the level of quality papers in Europe. The five nationally distributed newspapers competed not just among themselves but with the local Japanese newspapers across the country, allowing local newspapers to publish more than 120 editions.<sup>229</sup>

Until shortly after 1951, when Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty ending the American Occupation, the world saw Japan as a country facing poverty and humiliation. The Japanese struggled for daily survival as they put their broken lives back together and tried to recover economically. To face this struggle, the Japanese looked mostly to their own cultural history; to a time of national pride that gave them a sense of national destiny. These were the Meiji years, which witnessed military and economical advances on the international stage. As the Japanese began to rebuild their lives after World War II, they looked to the West for technology. In 1956 they were enraptured by a new slogan: "The Post-War is Over." This slogan set the tone for one of the most phenomenally rapid growths of an economy in world history.<sup>230</sup>

To conclude, during World War II all aspects of the press were placed under national control. This form of control deprived the press of virtually any freedom to attempt to contradict or condemn the state's objectives and the invasion of neighbouring Asian countries. It was only during the end of the post-war period that the Japanese press gained the levels of freedom of speech and expression seen in the more industrialised Western Nations. More precisely, this occurred within the time Japan was again recognised as an independent member of the international community, several years after the enactment of the country's new constitution.<sup>231</sup>

With regard to lasting legacies on the Japanese press, it could be said that there was some success achieved. It survived the Occupation with its 90 years of tradition largely intact. Having never known true independence, Japan's press fumbled a bit during the years of defeat and recovery, but eventually resumed its function as the "communications instrument of the national leadership."<sup>232</sup> Press reporters and journalists began to travel abroad and become educated at American universities. At the same time, some of

the great Japanese business corporations expanded to broadcast internationally. These specific actions were proof enough that the economy was on the rise. The international press, especially corps of foreign correspondents in the world's largest cities, cheered them on. Yet confrontational news stories about foreigners in Japan were becoming more popular. For example, the arrival of a branch of a foreign company in Japan was generally characterised as a "landing" (jōriku); the same term used in earlier times for military invasions. If a foreign firm closed down part of its operations in Japan, it was referred to as a "withdrawal in defeat."<sup>233</sup> Except for a brief period in 1950, in which the "Declaration on Safeguarding Newspapers' Editorial Rights" was announced by the Japan Newspapers Association on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1948, the principles have not been abused and have instead functioned to regulate the activities of the newspaper workers since. It has been quoted as the standard in relation to the establishment of editorial policies on important social and political problems.<sup>234</sup>

## **2.2. German Press History Before the American Occupation.**

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1933, President Paul von Hindenburg named Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany, with Franz von Papen as Vice-Chancellor. Alfred von Hugenburg, a former Krupp executive who owned the Telegraphen Union News Agency and several other media concerns, was included in the Cabinet, along with two members of the Nazi party; Hermann Goering and Wilhelm Frick. Hitler refused to compromise with the leaders of the still-strong Centre party, bringing about the dissolution of the Reichstag with fresh elections set for March of that year. Those elections gave the Nazi group added power, with legislation being passed in the following weeks giving legal authority, including over the media, to what later amounted to a Nazi dictatorship. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1933, President Hindenburg signed a Nazi-drafted document called the "Decree for the Protection of the German People". It professed to have a high moral purpose, and explained that it was necessary to prevent the publication of "false news" and "malicious" reports. But within a month, it resulted in the suppression of more than 200 newspapers and periodicals.

One official in Berlin at the time said, "This is not a matter of right. It is a matter of force."<sup>235</sup>

Foreign correspondents, who had worked under favourable conditions between 1920 and the first month of the Nazi regime in 1933, reported the growing signs of trouble within the country. It came as no surprise to them when they were informed late in February 1933, that the parliamentary democratic time in Germany had passed. A day or two later, the press was informed that further action would be taken against correspondents whose dispatches "maliciously oppose the government".<sup>236</sup> It was Goebbels who said, "The mission of the press should be not merely to inform, but also to instruct. The press of Germany should be a piano upon which the government might play. The press must therefore cooperate with the Government and the Government with the press."<sup>237</sup> Christopher Bollyn wrote in his article, Germany 58 Years of US Occupation, that "The Allied occupation of Germany, begun 58 years ago, in the eye of many Germans, has not yet ended. Foreign armies are still based on German soil and Europe's largest and most prosperous 'democracy' still lacks a constitution and peace treaty putting a formal end to the Second World War."<sup>238</sup> Similarly, the stated goal of the Anglo-American forces in Iraq is "to liberate the Iraqi people and establish democracy. However, if the US and British Occupation of Iraq follows the pattern set by the Allied Occupation of Germany, a sovereign democracy in Iraq is not likely to appear in the near future."<sup>239</sup> From an early date in the occupation it was realised, by at least some officials in the United States, that one of the most constructive services to the German people would be various types of information programmes.<sup>240</sup>

## **2.2. 1. The American Occupation of Germany.**

At the Potsdam Conference of August 1945, after Germany's unconditional 8<sup>th</sup> May surrender, the Allies divided Germany into four military occupation zones: the French in the southwest, the British in the northwest, the United States in the south, and the Soviets in the east. The commanders-in-chief exercised supreme authority in their respective zones and initially acted together on questions affecting the whole country. In 1951, MacArthur, comparing

Germany to Japan, had predicted it would be easier to rehabilitate Germany by simply removing the “German perversion.” Yet history was to prove that the occupation, demilitarisation and democratisation of the Germans was perhaps more difficult. Mary Beard, comparing MacArthur’s success in Japan to that of the US Occupiers in Germany, said that the occupation plan in Japan was “so superior in intelligence...that General MacArthur’s leadership shines with brilliant illumination.”<sup>241</sup>

According to the “Special Report of the Military Governor”, dated November 1948, “Democratically-minded and trustworthy German editors and publishers have established a solid core of independent and democratic newspapers in the US area of occupation. Newspapers had been encouraged towards independence and objectivity no matter what.”<sup>242</sup> But more recently, historians examining this period point to it as being generally chaotic, especially concerning America’s role in planning Germany’s occupation. The consensus is that problems began at the highest level, with President Roosevelt’s delay in planning for the occupation until after the war.<sup>243</sup> As a child, Roosevelt had received part of his education in Germany, and was therefore uniquely prejudiced against the German militarists. But as his health diminished, so did his focus on planning for the occupation. This resulted in several government agencies taking widely differing views ranging from a “re-constructionist policy at the State Department to a punitive, destabilising scheme at Henry Morgenthau’s Treasury Department.” Consequently, the War Department did not consistently support anyone, and US forces entered Germany without a coherent national policy. Eventually, the War and State Departments decided the best solution would be to have civilian agencies with military capabilities that would take responsibility for a long-range occupation policy, “but that these agencies should not interfere with War Department operations in the war zones.”<sup>244</sup>

In May 1945, when the allies forced a German admission of defeat, they rightfully concluded that German newspapers, radio and film were thoroughly “coordinated” and had been contaminated by Nazi ideals of *kunstpolitik* - the goal “to make art serve politics and to make politics serve art”. But they also incorrectly believed that pre-Nazi German press traditions reflected a press

subservient to political and nationalist interests.<sup>245</sup> Initially, scarce materials, supplies and equipment necessitated imposing some restrictions, but the controls were also placed in order to train editors, publishers and journalists in the American democratic, free-press tradition. The controls were lifted after about a year and the US Military Government took steps to ensure tenure of five to eight years for newspaper publishers, during which time it was believed that the publishers would be able to acquire their own plants or make otherwise satisfactory long-term lease arrangements. Democracy was a foreign concept with no precedent in Germany, so there was a perception that the American ideal would be too alien to the German public to be accepted through *Die Neue Zeitung Kultur*, which was often described as “the antithesis of democracy.”<sup>246</sup> “A spiritual change in Germany needed to take place in the public arena, as well as in every citizen’s mind. Germans were to be subjected to a thorough process of re-education that would familiarise them with the values, rules and institutions of a modern democracy similar to the American model.”<sup>247</sup>

“The key agency for the re-education of the German mind became the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD), a subdivision of the War Department. PWD was the innovation of the strategic services (OSS).”<sup>248</sup> The task of reorienting the German news fell first to the Psychological Warfare Division of the US War Department and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). Before German unconditional surrender, the Psychological Warfare Division worked to demoralise German soldiers and civilians, and inform inhabitants in occupied regions of the US military rules, regulations and intentions. At this time, Psychological Warfare had four tasks: to ‘wage psychological warfare against the enemy’; to improve morale in friendly nations occupied by the Axis and influence compliance in these nations following Allied liberation; to coordinate the press in the liberated nations; and to control information services in occupied Germany. Besides using loudspeakers and radios for delivering Allied propaganda including demoralising messages to German troops and civilians, many other tactics were employed.”<sup>249</sup> The programme planned for the German media before VE Day was based on the fact that the Nazis had flattened the opposition press,

having forced democratic editors, journalists and publishers into exile and retirement or concentration camps, acquired financial control of newspapers and press facilities, dictated the make-up and content of papers, and channelled all news through governmental or semi-official press agencies.<sup>250</sup>

What would soon unfold would be the PWD taking control of the press and radio stations in the occupied area and using them to prepare the ground for a new democratic post-war media system, central to the Allies' re-education strategy. It used a three-step plan based on the application of the German press as an essential component of re-education; one of the very few points upon which all four Allies agreed. First the entire Nazi press and propaganda system was to be completely dismantled. Each power would then distribute press licenses to German anti-Nazis, and when German editors were deemed to be "democratic enough", the press market would finally be opened to free competition.<sup>251</sup>

The first step in their mission was to wipe out the propaganda press that the Nazis had set up and to suspend and abolish the approximately 1,500 Nazi newspapers still being published up to VE Day. This was done through Military Government Law 191, which closed down existing German information services as the Allies advanced into Germany in March and April of 1945.<sup>252</sup> The second step was to fill the gap left by the elimination of the newspapers and news agencies with progressive establishments of allied army publications, enabling Military Government instructions and information to be communicated to the German people.<sup>253</sup> The initial press policies were the product of four directives issued between May and September of 1945. In the wake of Military Government Law 191, which prohibited all public expression in Germany, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1945 SHAEF issued "Directive No 1 for Propaganda Policy of Overt Allied Information Services". This law further obliged the dissolution of the Nazi press, but also urged the publication of materials to highlight the need for food production amongst Germans, stressed "re-education" by printing messages of collective responsibility for German crimes and printed facts which exposed the fatal consequences of Nazi and militaristic leadership.<sup>254</sup>

The first Information Control Division (ICD) enforced the Potsdam Agreement as well as Directives No 4 and No 40 of the Allied Control Council, which forbade any criticism of the occupying powers.<sup>255</sup> Directive No 3 of 28<sup>th</sup> June 1945 established the policies by which individual Germans might receive licenses to publish newspapers.<sup>256</sup> As a peacetime successor of the PWD, the Information Control Division (ICD) was supposed to lead the media effort in the US Zone under the guidance of Robert A McClure, formerly head of the PWD. The task of the ICD was to control cultural affairs, including literature, theatre, music, film, radio and all print media.<sup>257</sup> The military government banned any publication from publishing any information which might jeopardise the lives and well being of troops or encourage resistance against them.<sup>258</sup> Directive No 3 also stated that “dissemination of any type of news information or editorial, which constitutes a malicious attack upon policies or personnel of [the] Military Government, aims to disrupt unity amongst the Allies, or seeks to evoke the distrust and hostility of German people against any occupying power, is prohibited.”<sup>259</sup>

In comparison to the British Zone’s decidedly more liberal press policies, the Americans had stricter regulation on who could and who could not publish newspapers. Ideally, the Americans only licensed those they saw as committed to a democratic future and judged to be free from the taint of Nazism.<sup>260</sup> More than the other occupation powers, US press officers opposed the revival of German local newspapers, party publications and sensational journalism. No one who had published in Germany after 1932 was to be granted permission to write for a democratic daily. Each newspaper had to keep two licensees, an editor and a publisher, in order to guarantee the separation of news and opinion. Through inspection and censorship, exchange programmes and journalistic schools, the ICD hoped to organise the democratic reform of the German press.<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, according to Directive No 4 of the Military Government, only people who had openly opposed the Hitler regime were to be employed in the post-war press.<sup>262</sup> With this rule in place, editors, publishers and key personnel were sought, screened, and selected on the basis of a positive and concrete record of opposition to Nazism.<sup>263</sup> Primarily in the interest of establishing papers that

would not be subservient to government or special political or economic interests, but also because of a shortage of printing facilities and supplies, the Military Government banned the licensing of political party newspapers, at least until a concrete foundation of an independent press could be established.<sup>264</sup>

Unquestionably, there were plenty of Central and Eastern Europeans, such as Hans Habe, who were less than desirable to the Western Allies' vision of Germany. Very few were given the opportunity to work with the Psychological Warfare Division and the information Control Division, but Habe was given the opportunity to set up the first Allied Government newspaper in Berlin; the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. He also convinced OMGUS to allow him to establish and operate the US-controlled newspaper, *Die Neue Zeitung*. As its sub-title claimed, *Die Neue Zeitung* was "the American newspaper for the German population." ICD published the first issue relatively soon after the war, on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1945.<sup>265</sup> Continuously being published was the main army paper, *Die Neue Zeitung*, which was being produced solely in the American zone.<sup>266</sup> Moreover, in 1947 *Die Neue Zeitung* was the only Amazon newspaper allowed to travel across internal Amazon borders. Ultimately, in June 1947, the Allied Control Authority allowed the internal exchange of press materials.<sup>267</sup>

It was Marshall Knappen, however, who noted that press coverage of the occupation was lacking due to inexperienced reporters having replaced seasoned veterans, or pressure from respective Home Offices to write domestic stereotypes of the Germans as "sullen [and] recalcitrant, who learned nothing and forgot nothing."<sup>268</sup> Throughout the winter of 1946-47, both the Soviets and the Americans levelled accusations at each other claiming violations of Directives No 4 and No 40 of the Potsdam Agreement, as well as the doctrine of inter-Allied harmony. The Soviets claimed *Die Neue Zeitung* had multiplied the number of German POWs in their sphere of influence, downplayed the de-Nazification endeavour of the Russian forces and was spreading rumours of kidnappings and starvation in the Eastern Zone.<sup>269</sup> It was these disputes between Soviet and American representatives that led to a change in the development of *Die Neue Zeitung*. Until August 1946 the paper had mostly

been a concern of ICD, but as tension worsened over reparations, the dismantlement of Berlin and the exchange of information, US officials such as H. Freeman Matthews, the Chief of Division for West European Affairs in the State Department, began to consider using Die Neue Zeitung as a propaganda instrument against the Soviet Union.<sup>270</sup>

## **2.2. 2. Germany's Post-Occupation Media.**

In a letter of support to the Director of Military Government of Wuerttemberg-Baden in March 1948, General Clay said: "If the newspapers of the US Zone fail to carry out what is a major task of any newspaper, and fail to report fully on what their governments are doing, as well as what their governments are not doing, they cease to be quasi-public institutions and betray their trust."<sup>271</sup> Although press freedom and democracy were essential for Germany's future, Die Neue Zeitung's poorly conceived messages on democracy seemed overtly American and unsuitable given Germany's culture and history. Perhaps journalistic homogeneity represents a link between the national socialist and occupation eras. After all, occupation era policies and events prevented the formation of a highly partisan or anti-governmental press in ways similar to the experiences of the controlled press under the Nazis.<sup>272</sup>

The attempt to democratise Germany in the American image through the process of re-education began as an idealistic, naïve and disorganised plan to combine de-Nazification, the restructuring of the school system, university reform and cultural exchange. There was a notable gap between America's aims (as expressed in the Military Government's documents) and what they actually achieved, as expressed through criticism from the new German and International press. Perhaps surprising to many, there were more changes in German society during the occupation than had occurred under Hitler and the Nazis. Identifying the successes and failures of the occupation and the educational reform has been problematic. More than 30 years after the war, historians and educators are still having difficulty discussing them. It may have been easy to see where failures occurred, but it has not been as simple to clearly identify the successes. Attempts to create comprehensive schools, to alter university governance, or to impose other changes in educational

institutions were snubbed. But none could deny that the influence on the media was very real. One problem in analysing the situation, as previously noted, is that the official policy is contradictory, vague and uncertain. In fact, according to the Cold War historian Geir Lundestad, and others including German historian Anjana Buckow, American policy towards Eastern Europe during the 1940s was fundamentally a “non policy”.<sup>273</sup>

## **Conclusion.**

During the Allied occupation, the German media were subject to censorship by the American and Allied forces. Criticism of the occupational forces and of the emerging government were not allowed. Publications which were expected to have contain negative messages or coverage were prohibited. Licenses were required to print any publication, and permission was essential to perform any visual art. There were two kinds of censorship: one before and the other after publication of journalistic work. Also It is obvious that the American occupation administration in Iraq 2003 applied almost the same policies as were adopted in Germany and Japan during World War II in the media sector. And they did not take into consideration Iraq's cultural, geographical, or religious differences. So although it may have worked in Germany and Japan it did not work in Iraq because of those differences. It was a big shock to see the US administration applying the same policies which they had used seven decades ago.

### **3. Chapter Three: The History of the Iraqi Media before the 2003 Invasion.**

#### **3.1. The Initiation of Iraqi Media (1869-1914).**

##### **Introduction:**

In Chapter 2 the study examined the American experience in Germany and Japan to give a wider view of the US's experiences in other occupied countries and to help to provide a better understanding of what happened in Iraq. This chapter will focus on the history of the Iraqi media, to provide additional background on that history and the impact of politics and the military on the media in Iraq. The story of the Iraqi media started on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 1869, when Medhat Basha, the Ottoman ruler of Baghdad, published the first Iraqi newspaper, Alzawra, with eight pages and in two languages: Arabic and English. In 1908, the Ruler, Najim Aldin, published it solely in the Turkish language. However, on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1913, the Ruler Mohammed Basha published it in both Arabic and English. It continued for another 49 issues and stopped on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1917, when the British army occupied Baghdad. Alzawra focused on internal and external issues, and covered politics, culture and health. In addition, it criticised the governmental administrations during that time, so it is considered a historical source of information to gauge the political and cultural situation during that period.<sup>274</sup>

After Alzawra, the Ottomans published The Mosel newspaper, in Mosel on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1885, and, ten years later, the Albasra newspaper in Basra emerged. It was the mouthpiece of the Ottoman government, who monopolised the media of the time.<sup>275</sup>

Akleel Alward (A Wreath of Roses) was the first Iraqi magazine, published in 1902 by the Dominican Friars in the City of Mosel, to be the mouthpiece of Syriac Catholics; it was therefore outside the monopoly of the Ottoman rulers. It consisted of ten pages that covered scientific, literary, historical and religious issues until it closed in 1908.<sup>276</sup>

1908 was a turning point in the history of the Iraqi media. The Ottoman constitutions during this year allowed Iraqi intellectuals to publicise their

thoughts and hopes. There were calls for the liberation of the populations, and reconstruction of education systems.<sup>277</sup>

The Baghdadi's published their first newspaper in 1908, called Baghdad, written in both Arabic and English. It focused on the politics, science and literature of that period, and was the brainchild of the Alatihad Waltaraqi society, but it ceased to exist after only one year. After the Baghdad newspaper, there were many newspapers that were published in Iraq, because of the freedom which was given by the Ottoman constitution under the Rule of Sultan Abdulhameed Althani (Abdullhameed the Second). But this freedom enjoyed by the press did not last long; when the Alatihad Waltaraqi society came to power in Turkey in 1911, they closed many newspapers and disturbed the freedoms which were previously given by the constitution.<sup>278</sup>

In 1910 the Iraqi newspapers called for the Arabic language to become the official language of the state and the media. They also called for the Ottomans to stop disturbing the Iraqi press and demanded a better independent Iraqi newspaper. Since then, Iraqi newspapers had started to abandon the old style of writing, implementing the use of metaphors, for example, and the sophistication of the words used noticeably dropped. Thus, a simple and easy to understand style of writing was administered and used by all. It was like a starting point for using a journalistic style of language rather than one of rich literary style.<sup>279</sup> Alalim (The Science) magazine was the first Arabic publication in the city of Najaf of a religious, political, philosophical, and scientific nature. The publisher was the famous Iraqi poet, Alhaj Abdulhusein Alazarli. Its first issue was published on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1910, with 48 pages. It was printed in Baghdad because there was no publishing house in the city of Najaf at the time. Alalim was a very popular magazine, but production stopped during the First World War.<sup>280</sup> Lugal Alarab (The Arab Language) was one of the magazines published after the Ottoman Constitution in the City of Mosel. The founder, Inistafis Marri Alkaramli, published it in July 1911. It was one of the best cultural and intellectual magazines of the time.<sup>281</sup> There was a newspaper in the centre of each state of the Ottoman Empire under the monopoly of a governmental employee. Most of its pages contained appreciation for the Ottoman Sultan (or 'ruler') and prayers for him. The front

pages were also used to offer prayers to the Sultan. During this time, it was impossible to get permission to publish an independent newspaper. Disturbing the press was not just preventing the people from publishing and narrowing the freedom of the press, but also preventing foreign press from coming into the country.<sup>282</sup>

### **3.1.1. Iraqi Media during WWI.**

The newspaper industry suffered during the First World War (1914-1918) as it was not allowed to distribute in Iraq. Both Ottoman and non-Ottoman journalists were also excluded from the country. The war environment also controlled the content of newspapers, which were focusing on war related news. There is no doubt that the first city which was affected by the British occupation was Basra. It was there that the British took their first footsteps into the country. The British troops sponsored the publishing of a newspaper to create propaganda for them. It was Alawqat Albasriah (The Basra Times) newspaper, which was published on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1914 in four languages: Arabic, English, Persian and Turkish. It is obvious that this newspaper was published to serve the occupiers and promote the Alliance's policy by publicising their ideas. Its pages were full of news of the war from the front lines. In addition to the newspaper, they also published a weekly magazine called AlIraq fi Zaman Alharb (Iraq in the Time of War).<sup>283</sup>

When the British troops invaded Baghdad and occupied it, they did so after very strong resistance from the Ottomans. This was apparent from the first moment the British started the war propaganda, circulating information by initiating rumours and issuing statements. The best known of these was G. Mood's statement: "we came as liberators not occupiers". They also helped to widely distribute books, magazines, newspapers and bulletins, which speak of Britain's exploits and its attitudes regarding human rights, stressing a stance against injustice. On 4<sup>th</sup> July 1917, they published AlArab (The Arabs) newspaper, which featured on its front pages that, "it is [a] daily political, historical, literature rebuilder. Arabian in its principle and aim." Unfortunately, the name was all that it got from the Arab world. There were some Iraqi writers working for the newspaper with very high wages. The name of the

newspaper was a part of the name of Britain's declared policy, which announced that they were in harmony with the Arabs' intentions and aims. Miss Bell (Gertrude Bell), the Civil Secretary with the British military troops, took an active hand in developing the publishing industry and translating literature. She established Dar Alsalam (The House of Peace) publishing house in August 1919, to distribute these publications widely at cheap prices.<sup>284</sup>

Even though the Turks had left Iraq, Ottoman publication law was still valid. Still, the British administration did not follow Ottoman law in its relations with the Iraqi media. They closed the newspapers which were owned by Iraqis, and used various methods to strangle freedom of speech and liberal thought. It was clear that there was no difference between the two occupations in their control of the Iraqi media.<sup>285</sup>

In spite of the disruptions of British occupation and Ottoman law, the Iraqis published *Al-Sahifa* (The Newspaper) on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1924. It was the first Marxist newspaper published in Iraq, and it criticised some of the common Iraqi social customs of the time.<sup>286</sup> The First World War was a difficult period for Iraq, as on the one side the Ottomans had a very deep sense of fear of a public revolution that may have arisen in support of the Alliances. They were, therefore, very hard with the Iraqis and the Iraqi press. On the other side, the British had the same fear of a public revolution supported by the Ottomans, so they monopolised the rights of publications.<sup>287</sup>

The British administration published *Najmat Kirkuk* (Kirkuk Star). The first issue was published on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1918 in the Arabic Language. The newspaper became the mouthpiece of the government after its independence. In Sulaimaniah, they published a weekly political newspaper, *Sulaimaniah Beshkoween* (The Development), on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1920 in Kurdish languages.<sup>288</sup> As previously mentioned, the British authorities had published *Al-Arab* newspaper in Baghdad. Issue number 872, dated 31<sup>st</sup> May 1920, surprised the Iraqis with a piece stating that, "Tomorrow, the first issue of *Al-Iraq* (Iraq) newspaper will be published; it is a daily newspaper focused on politics, literature and economy. Mr. Razooq Afandi Dawad is the sole owner. This is

the last issue of Alarab newspaper, so we would like to say goodbye to our readers, and we would like to say thanks for your help and support for the newspaper since the very beginning.”<sup>289</sup>

It was not easy to find a publishing house for Alirag, but the British authorities helped Razooq Afandi Dawad to print his newspaper in Alarab publishing house, which was Alzihoor publishing house before its confiscation by the British army. Dawad was working in the management and editing staff of Alarab newspaper. He was a nationalist during the Ottoman era, so the Ottomans exiled him during the war. Alirag newspaper's first issue was published on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1920 in standard Arabic language.<sup>290</sup>

### **3.1.2. The Press of the Twentieth Revolution.**

Freedom and independence were the intentions of nationalistic Iraqis; those who believed that the Iraqis should live with dignity. The Iraqi journalist suffered from the British monopoly of the press, but the British administration did not disable educated Iraqis from publishing an Iraqi political newspaper. After the Paris Treaty between the Allies and the Ottomans, intellectual Iraqis looked for a way to lead the Iraqi community toward a better future. They gained permission to publish a monthly historical, literary and social magazine. The fact that it had political content worked for the Arab Renaissance in a literary way. They named it Allisan (The Tongue); it was the tongue of the Arabs, like Allisan newspaper which was published in Istanbul by the same publisher; Ahmed Azat Alaadami. Alaadami registered the magazine under two names; Ali Ridah and Antone Sadiq, in order to hide himself from the British authorities. The first issue of the magazine was published in July 1919. The bureau of the magazine was a meeting centre for those who worked against the occupation, seeking the freedom of their nations. Some of those who participated in the Arab Revolution returned to Iraq; and, along with nationalists and those who came back from exile and prison, donated to the magazine to help it survive. It called the Iraqis to rise in revolution against the British occupation. The newspaper suffered financially and continued for four months until its closure by the British Authorities in Iraq, because the publisher had participated in the revolution.<sup>291</sup>

The twentieth revolution emerged from the City of Romaitha, when Sheik Shallan Abu Aljoon lit the revolution's fuse. The movement then became wider and wider, and revolutionaries felt that they needed the press to inform them about what was happening on the different frontlines. The Alfurat (Euphrates) newspaper was published by Mohammed Baker Alshabibi in the City of Najaf. Its first issue was published in July 1920, and it was a weekly political and historical newspaper. It was the mouthpiece of the revolution, publishing daily bulletins about battles with British troops. It was published by Alhaidariah publishing house in the city of Alanajaf.<sup>292</sup>

Alfurat called for war against the British troops, but it also established an ethical guide for that war. The publisher, Sheik Baker, wrote its most famous article, the title of which was Commandment for the Fighters. He asked warriors to follow prescribed ethics of war saying, "it is not a war to revenge, but to regain our freedom and dignity." He asked fighters to protect the roads, saying, "do not loot and assault." He called on them to take care of British prisoners of war. The British army closed Alfurat newspaper to control the revolution. The publisher wrote one last letter to the British administrator, promising that "We will stand against each other in front of the court of history and [it is] history who would judge us, and decide who is the criminal and who did kill the innocent without mercy or kindness. Agony [upon] those who painted the land by the blood of the innocents." The revolution dealt with the British through the newspaper, so when the British called the revolution's leadership for negotiation, leaders sent three conditions to cite with each other. These were:

- 1) Withdraw the British troops from Iraq.
- 2) Return the exiled Iraqis to Iraq.
- 3) The attendance of the other countries' representatives in the negotiation.

Iraqi historians, such as Kamal Modhaheer, considered Alfurat newspaper as the national Iraqi mouthpiece, which shouted in a loud voice against the occupiers.<sup>293</sup> After this, leaders of the revolution published Alistiqlal (The Independence) in Baghdad. The owner of the newspaper was Mr.

Abdulgafoor Albadri. Aladliah magazine was published on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1920; Alistiqlal newspaper in the city of Najaf on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1920. These newspapers and magazines attracted nationalists, liberals and educated youth after the revolution, and they covered all the national events and issues from a new and modern point of view.<sup>294</sup>

The press had become an essential part of the Iraqis' lives because it was the only platform through which they could explain themselves, their ideas and thoughts. So, one of the seven famous items, or clauses, of the twentieth revolution was liberating the media and launching freedom of speech with the application of Ottoman publication law, until a new law could be established to replace it.<sup>295</sup>

### **3.2. Catalysts for the Development of Iraqi Press.**

#### **1) The Struggle for the Independence of the Country:**

Following the Paris conference, and their signing of the treaty which called for the population's right to decide their future and destiny, nationalists started calling on the British authorities to give Iraqis the right to decide the future of their own country. This was more pronounced following the establishment of Damascus's independent government under King Faisel the 1<sup>st</sup>. These demands came hand in hand with calls from educated people, who asked the British authorities to liberate the press, and to give them permission to publish daily newspapers in the cities of Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, and Najaf. In response, the British authorities accepted the request, as they were trying to set up a civil system instead of the existing military occupational system. The British permitted them to publish three newspapers; AlIraq, AlSharq (The East) and Alistiqlal (The Independence).<sup>296</sup>

#### **2) The Twentieth Revolution:**

The Occupation authorities delayed the implementation of their promises and continued to use a military system to control the country. In reaction, nationalists insisted upon the deliverance of the rights of the Iraqi population, including freedom of the press. The pressure on the British authorities forced

them to give the revolution's leadership the right to publish newspapers, to explain their intentions and lay out their plans for the revolution.<sup>297</sup>

### 3) The Establishment of the National Governing Era:

After the national movement's calls for independence became stronger, the British conference in Cairo 1920, which was attended by Winston Churchill, decided to set a formal state in Iraq, and to give independence to the country by forming the monarchy under Alhashimi's Crown. The British authorities used propaganda to implement their decision, and persuade the Iraqis of the integrity of British policy and forming the monarchy. The British introduced their project to the Iraqis through the press, publishing five newspapers in Baghdad, which were: *Alfalah* (The Farmer), *Lisan Alarab* (The Arabs' Tongue), *Dijlah* (Tigris), *Alrafedain* (Mesopotamia) and *Almufeed* (The Useful).<sup>298</sup>

### 4) The Emergence of the Political Parties:

King Faisal Alawal's (Faisal the First) rule (1921-1933) was a significant period in the history of Iraq. It was the stage of the construction of the modern Iraqi state. The period's political landscape saw the establishment of the new state, the forming of political parties and their being granted permission to publish newspapers as their mouthpieces. The political parties used these newspapers to express their political thoughts and ideas. These newspapers attracted educated Iraqis, illuminating Iraqi minds and guiding them toward a positive future.<sup>299</sup>

## **3.3. The Iraqi Press during the Monarchic Era (1921-1958).**

The Iraqi government published the weekly *Alwaqaa Aliraqiyah* newspaper (the official Gazette of Iraq) on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1922, in Baghdad, in both English and Arabic. It was to be the official newspaper to publish the Iraqi government's statements and laws, which were issued by the British high commissioner, the Iraqi cabinet or the ministries.<sup>300</sup> Ibrahim Hilmi Alomar then published *Almuffeed* (The Useful) newspaper on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1922, and then *Altawheed* (Monotheism) newspaper in Baghdad. They were political daily

newspapers in the Arabic and Kurdish languages.<sup>301</sup> The political parties published many newspapers. The Altaqadom Party (Progress Party) published *Alliwa* (The Flag) newspaper on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1928, followed by the Altaqadom Party publication, *Altaqadom* newspaper, with Mr. Salman Alsheik Dawwad as the editor-in-chief. One of the most active publications of partisan press of the time was the *Alnahdah Aliraqiyah* (The Iraqi Renaissance) newspaper, which was published by the *Alnahda Aliraqi* political party.<sup>302</sup>

In June 1930 the Iraqi government signed a treaty with the British, named the 1930 *Treaty*, which gave the British the right to have two military bases in Iraq. The Iraqis had a negative reaction and the media criticised it strongly, and most of the newspapers attacked the agreement. The Iraqi government responded with the closure of many of these newspapers, and prosecuted the newspapers' owners and staff. The reaction of the government was the production of a new publication law, entitled *Publication Law 1931*, which was no less aggressive towards the media. The law was then amended several times to make it more suited to the government's interests and intentions.<sup>303</sup>

The comic newspapers played a vital role in the period between the world wars, and were very effective in influencing public opinion. An example was the weekly humorous newspaper *Habazbuz*. The first issue was published on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1937, and it ran until its owner and publisher, Nori Thabit, died in 1938.<sup>304</sup>

After the Communist Party started its work in Iraq in March 1934, they found no way to operate overtly as a political party. Therefore, the need for secrecy extended even to their publication, *Kifah Alshaab*. They used the bulletin to explain their political point of view. In addition, in July 1935, they secretly published *Kifah Alshaab* (The Population's Struggle) newspaper. It had the Communist Party's name on the front page, and was a turning point in the history of the Iraqi media. It broke with tradition and challenged the necessity of getting permission to publish a newspaper. The newspaper had fearless editors and writers within its ranks. It was printed by copy machine, and consisted of four pages, with the first page in colour. 500 copies of each issue

was produced, which was more than some of the publicly known newspapers, but after issue number six it closed due to a police raid on its bureau.<sup>305</sup>

### **3.4. The Iraqi Media during WWII.**

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Iraqi government, a puppet regime of the British government, stopped all political party activity in Iraq. Most of the political parties' newspapers ceased to operate, but during the years of the war the Iraqi government did permit some newspapers to distribute their publications: Sawt Alhaq (The Voice of Justice), Alahwal (The Status), Aljihad, Aliwa (The Flag) and Alshihab newspaper (The Meteoroid).<sup>306</sup> The Iraqi government's loyalty to the British government, along with its ignorance of the Iraqis' demands and intentions, drove the country into the May revolution against the monarchy. The revolution was led by Rasheed Ali Al-Gailani and a group of nationalist military officers. The uprising did not fully succeed, but it did reflect the instability of political life in Iraq. The events after the revolution could explain why the Iraqi government was devoted to old policies which caused the Iraqi population so much stress. Logically, the reaction of the Iraqi community would be very strong against the authority that was supported by the British. The pages of the Iraqi press were an explanation of the stress and the ignorance that the Iraqi community suffered at that time. Perhaps the revolution was one of the causes of the Iraqi government's decision to stop the national newspapers from publishing.<sup>307</sup>

One of the freedoms which the Iraqi population gained from the Second World War, after a long period of struggle, was the rebirth of a political party culture. The Iraqi population kept up their demands of resurgence from political parties, so that during the tenure of the Iraqi Prime Minister Taufeeq Alsewidi, the government permitted five political groups to run on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1946. The press of the political parties returned along with the parties themselves. The political parties' publications defended their groups' thoughts and ideas, freedom of speech and various other rights.<sup>308</sup> The press defended the parties, and considered the freedom of political activity as one of the most significant freedoms; a sign of democracy in the country. It was a very hard struggle because the press was defending something the government did not

believe in. The government allowed the political parties to act and organise themselves in reaction to the anger of the population, and then punished them.<sup>309</sup> In September 1954, the Iraqi Prime Minister, Mori Alsaed, issued decree number 19, by which the government dissolved all the political parties and their establishments, including the media organisations and theatres. The government forced anyone who wanted to reform the establishment to apply to the Ministry of Interior for permission. The government satisfied the decree by issuing a statement saying that the political parties and their organisations used their voices to incite the population to riot, and caused disorder to serve foreign parties; therefore, no permission was given.<sup>310</sup>

The history of the Iraqi media is full of struggle against various governments and of government attempts to monopolise the press. The Iraqi press was often like a tongue which voiced the community's pains. It played a big role in inciting community action against governmental exploitation. The government lay down policies with the aid of the British government and, as a result, it shut down the voices of the press whenever it had the chance. Finally, Prime Minister Nori Alsaed issued a decree to close all newspapers and political parties, due to government feeling that the media had started playing a role in the community which threatened the stability of their position. So, the public press disappeared with a single signature, not to return until after the 14<sup>th</sup> of July Revolution.<sup>311</sup>

### **3.5. The Iraqi Press after the 14th of July Revolution, 1958.**

After the success of the revolution, the leadership of the movement drafted a new constitution. Item number 10, chapter 2, mentioned that freedom of speech and beliefs should be protected and guaranteed to the Iraqi population.<sup>312</sup> The revolution made public the press' demands and intentions, but, in spite of this, the press withered considerably after the revolution. Press was contracted to very few organisations. The Iraqi News Agency was established on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1959. In addition, there were very few newspapers published after the Revolution, one of which was Ajumhoriya newspaper (The Republic), which was the mouthpiece of the Arab Baath Socialist Party. The first issue was published on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1958 in Baghdad. In

Kirkuk, they published Albasheer (The Missionary) in 1958, and in Baghdad, there were another four newspapers which were published at different times, like: Sawt Alahrar (The Voice of the Liberals), which was leftist; Alraqeeb (The Watcher), and Alistiqlal (The Independence). Alrai Alam (The Public Opinion) was a very bold and critical publication, so it was closed down by the government.<sup>313</sup>

Following the revolution of the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1963, and the execution of the Iraqi President G. Abdulkareem Qasim, the fellow military officer, Abdulsalam Areef, became President. Aljamaheer (The Population) was published; a Baathist newspaper. Tariq Aziz was its editor-in-chief. Following this was the publication of Althawrah (The Revolution), which was anti-leftist. In addition there existed Altaliah newspaper (The Lead). On 28<sup>th</sup> April 1964, the revolution's leadership, (i.e. the government), issued a new publication law which cancelled all the permissions given to publications before this date. According to this law, permission of any publication should not be given by just one committee. The committee could contain no less than five persons not including government employees, and at least two of them were to be journalists, to form its board of directors.<sup>314</sup>

When the Baath Party led the revolution of July 1968 and gained power, they seized Aljumhuriya (The Republic) and Althawrah newspaper (The Revolution). Publication law number 206-1968 cancelled all permissions of newspapers and magazines in Iraq. The Baath Government allowed some newspapers to be published, such as Alfiker Aljaded magazine (The Modern Thoughts), which was the Communist Party's magazine. The first issue was published on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1972. In 1976, the first issue of AlIraq (The Iraq) newspaper was published. It was a weekly political newspaper and it stated that it was the mouthpiece of the Iraqi Kurds.<sup>315</sup> At the very beginning of the eighties, the leftist newspaper, Tareeq Alshaab (Road of the Population), closed after the Communist Political Party was prosecuted in Iraq, along with all the other political parties. With the start of the Iraqi-Iranian war, the Iraqi government published Alqadisiyah (The Name of the War). This was a daily newspaper that focused specifically on the news of the war.<sup>316</sup>

### **3.6. The Establishment of Television Broadcasting in Iraq.**

The television, as a new scientific invention, was not well known in Iraq before 1954, except in its existence as new technology. People learned about it through radio stations and newspapers. Firsthand experience of the new, superior method of broadcasting was extremely rare, not only in Iraq, but in the whole of the Middle East region. The television set was shown to the average Iraqi person for the first time at the British Trading Fair, held in Baghdad in 1954, although at this point there was still no broadcasting throughout Iraq. The Iraqi newspapers published an advertisement on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1954, seeking staff to employ. The advert was entitled A Lady TV Presenter, and read: "The TV station, which would be established inside the British Trading Exhibition by Bay Company, is in need for a qualified lady who has a perfect command of Arabic and/or [the] English language. So, whoever finds herself fitting with [these requirements is] to apply for the job by attending at Hasso Akhwan (Hasso Brothers) Limited, in Baghdad."<sup>317</sup>

It was very obvious that the company wanted to employ a pretty and attractive woman as a presenter, in order to attract viewers through the screens of the exciting new television sets of the time. It was a gesture based on the understanding that a woman is more likely to grab the viewers' attention than a man in a very conservative society. One of the Iraqi newspapers labelled a resulting article The First TV Programmes in the Middle East, and stated that "two TV programmes would be broadcast in the afternoon from the location of the Exhibition's studios, from 4:30pm to 5:30pm, and in the evening, from 8:30pm to 10:20pm. Besides that, it would broadcast important sights from the exhibition...They could be watched in different areas, on 12 sets inside and outside of the exhibition, and in some [other] places that would be announced later."<sup>318</sup> A day before the inauguration of the exhibition, an Iraqi newspaper published a story about Iraqi journalists who had visited the television studio set to broadcast programs during the opening days of the exhibition. The newspaper noted that an English female presenter was filmed delivering a welcoming message, which was watched by the journalists from a room attached to the studio.<sup>319</sup>

However, the article pointed out that the advertisement for an Iraqi lady to be a TV presenter did not succeed in attracting even one Iraqi lady to work for the television station. It certainly was a new profession for a conservative country characterised by macho culture, where there was little or no room for women's jobs in the public eye. The newspapers had continued publishing the advertisements for the television programmes, which were due to be broadcast in the exhibition. It also set the fees that must be paid to watch the programmes at 50 Fils, (approximately 20p sterling).<sup>320</sup> This advertisement, therefore, confirmed that watching the programmes was not to be free, but for a price. At the same time, the Arabic radio station, Alsharq Aladna Radio (The Near East Radio), aired news saying that the Iraqi government was planning to buy the TV station shown at the British Trading Fair in Baghdad. The radio pointed out that the television station would not start broadcasting until six months later, and that a number of Iraqis would be sent abroad for a training course on the station's operating system. The news also mentioned that Iraq would be the first country in the Middle East that would be broadcasting television.<sup>321</sup>

It was obvious that the plan to purchase a television station was discussed officially in Iraq, because the newspapers published that the Iraqi cabinet discussed the issue in depth. However, the members saw that technical difficulties and the lack of programmes to air were sufficient reasons for not buying the station. The station's offered price was sixty five thousand Iraqi dinars (approximately £100,000), which was less than the entire budget for Iraqi radio the year before the launching of the exhibition.<sup>322</sup>

The idea was rejected by the Iraqi government for practical reasons. As a result, The Bay Company gave the station to the Iraqi government as a gift.<sup>323</sup>

The station was provided with three cameras and a 16mm projecting cinema screen. The station was installed at the Iraqi Radio Station's studio. An Iraqi newspaper published an article announcing the arrival of a wireless television receiver which was to be installed on a 14 foot tower (or pylon). The article highlighted that the area of coverage for the programmes would be a 30km radius around central Baghdad.<sup>324</sup> To reach more people, a number of

television sets were installed throughout some districts of Bagdad, in addition to the television sets within the Trading Fair. News then spread that the Iraqi television station would be one of the first stations in the world that would mostly air educational programmes, aimed at adults as well as children. In this regard, the station would be ahead of many others in the world, including British stations.<sup>325</sup>

The Iraqi Monarch, Faisal II, was to cut the ribbon for the station, and was given a tour on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1954. In the inauguration ceremonies, the General Director of Iraqi Radio made a speech announcing that the station would be supervised by three Iraqi engineers who had graduated from British universities, in addition to eleven students selected from the Industrial School; who had been further trained by the television station to carry out their on-site tasks. He also mentioned that additional numbers of students would be selected for the following year.<sup>326</sup> The development of the Iraqi television industry was very slow in the early years, due to the staff's limited capabilities, as well as a lack of technical equipment and funds. In spite of this, the Iraqi government understood the potential power of television.<sup>327</sup> After acknowledging the impact television could have, the government tried to use the station very soon after the initial launch to influence the Iraqi people.

### **3.7. Iraqi Television during the New Republic, from 1958.**

On 14<sup>th</sup> July 1958, a military junta took control of the country by a coup d'état against the monarch, Faisal II. They dissolved the royal system and established a republic. One of the leaders of the coup, Colonel Abdulsalam Araef, occupied the building of the only Iraqi radio station and announced the first communiqué of the republic regime over the airwaves. The Iraqis awoke to hear the tune of the national anthem in the morning, followed by the Voice of Colonel Abdulsalam, reading communiqué number one, which declared the end of the monarchic era and the beginning of the Republic Order in Iraq.<sup>328</sup> By and large, the television later turned out to be one of the Iraqi government's political tools to influence the domestic population. For instance, they broadcast The People's Court (Almahdawi's Court), in which the government showed the trials of opposition figures who rebelled against them.

It was a daily show, and a way to terrify people in a way that had a lasting effect on them. Historians regard the programme as one that instilled the government's guided policy.<sup>329</sup>

A remarkable historical event was when the leader of the coup, or revolution, General Abdulkareem Qassim, was executed by the leaders of the following 1963 coup at the studios of Baghdad TV. On February 8<sup>th</sup> of that year, military leaders were bent on showing the footage of Qassim's execution in order to publicly confirm the death of the first republican leader. This was an exercise in flexing their muscles and draining the morale of Qassim's supporters, who were still resisting the coup leaders. In 1967, Baghdad TV was covering an area extending from the centre of the capital to 100km north and south, broadcasting programmes for seven hours a day. The television was used once again to show the clout of the government, just as it had been manipulated within the early period of Republican rule.<sup>330</sup>

### **3.8. Iraqi Television after the 17<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July Revolution 1968.**

Between 17<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> July 1968, the Baath party staged another coup led by Ahmed Hassan Al-Baker and Saddam Hussein. The new regime considered television high priority, and they tried to provide it with up-to-date technology. They also developed the financial and administrative systems of Al-Iraq television. In 1970, the government enacted a new law that offered the television directors better flexibility and patent power to run their stations. A five year plan, running from 1970 to 1974, provided increased funds for its budget, in order to expand the station and its broadcasting capabilities. The government also established a second channel, increasing the variety available for its viewers. In addition to taking advantage of new technologies, the station also developed the skills of its staff.<sup>331</sup>

In 1976, colour broadcasting was launched by Baghdad TV after years of black and white programming. Colour broadcasting started with children programmes, which ran for about 45 minutes a day. They then increased the number of programmes aired in colour, until all of the channel's shows were broadcast in full colour. The big shift in Baghdad TV's technical requirements called for a number of modifications in the studio's equipment, as well as the

introduction of some new equipment for replacements.<sup>332</sup> This big change from a technical point of view carried the Baghdad TV station into a new era. The mid 1970's saw big developments in the news and political departments, to facilitate broadcasting of news and other programming internationally. This indicated that the station's standards were more professional than ever before.<sup>333</sup>

Baghdad TV focused on cultural programmes, as well as some Arabic and western programmes, as it was mostly produced by Iraqi staff. Iraqi programmes managed to attract the attention of the Iraqi audience much more than the foreign ones, because they were more representative and expressed the Iraqi culture more accurately. One of the well-known programmes was Studio al-Huwat (Studio of Amateur Singers), a programme similar to Simon Cowell's Britain's Got Talent. The presenter in the Iraqi programme was Kamal Akif, who was a melody composer and mentor for many Iraqi singers. The successful management of the new broadcasts received praise from both the Iraqi elite and the average person.<sup>334</sup>

### **3.9. Iraqi Television under Saddam Hussein's Rule.**

The researcher was eight years old when the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, granted television sets to the residents of the Iraqi marshes before the breakout of the Iraqi-Iranian war. The researcher thought, like other glad lay-people, that their President was keen to create a civilised community enjoying the latest developments in technology and entertainment. New methods of agriculture and machinery were introduced, as well as attractive opportunities for foreign companies to construct huge industrial and housing projects. But the television boom was short-lived, as the war with Iran broke out officially on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1980. The focus of the government turned from building up the country to protecting it. This shift was stated clearly by Saddam Hussein, when he appeared on Iraqi television screens saying that the pen and the rifle are one weapon in the battle. By the pen, he meant the media organisations. This was the graffiti painted as a motto on the wall of many a primary school. Many researchers observed that during this period, while Saddam developed Iraqi media technically, he also destroyed media

professionalism at the same time, turning it into a type of propaganda apparatus. The media under Saddam was a government-run organisation, which served the government's political agendas. For this reason, the government developed the media technically and increased staff numbers.<sup>335</sup>

When the Iraqi-Iranian war broke out in 1980, the broadcasting of Iraqi television covered the whole country from the South to the North. The Iraqi government used television as a tool to explain their ideas, thoughts, attitudes and policy. The television was used to counteract Iran's psychological warfare against Iraq. The programming covered the war from the Iraqi side, focusing particularly on the front line, through the program *Sewar min Almarakah* (Footage from the Battle), which showed scenes from battles and trenches. It also broadcast grisly scenes of dead Iranian soldiers, and prisoners of war who were cuffed by victorious Iraqi soldiers. The aim of the programmes was to raise the morale of soldiers and portray the government as triumphant in the eyes of its Iraqi viewers.<sup>336</sup>

As the television stations were dependent on the policy of the Iraqi government, they launched a guided propaganda campaign against the Iranians. This was to persuade them of the Iraqi political point of view after the withdrawal of the Iraqi army from Iranian lands in 1982. It portrayed the war as having been imposed upon Iraq, and that the Iraqis had no option but to fight and defend their country. Iraqi television also launched psychological warfare against the Iranians, by broadcasting footage of the battles in which the Iranians were defeated and suffered heavy casualties.<sup>337</sup> The work of both stations was carried out by Iraqi staff, as the broadcasters deployed a suitable number of journalists throughout the country, in the front lines, to facilitate the psychological war against the Iranians, as well as propagating its ideology to the Iraqi people themselves.<sup>338</sup>

The war provided Iraqi journalists with new experiences, especially when it comes to the role of war correspondents and cameramen. It was the first time they were embedded with military troops to conduct live coverage of a war on the battlefield, or in other words, to propagate the war. The footage captured by Iraqi journalists was bought by international television stations as an

indispensable source of media; as a readymade package from frontline assignments.<sup>339</sup> Since 1980, the media in Iraq had become a vehicle for the government represented by Saddam, to fulfil their own political targets and to defend the President's policies, both internally and internationally. The Ministry of Information, and the Special Office of Saddam Hussein, had the final say in editorial decisions, especially in key events or ceremonies chaired by the head of the regime.<sup>340</sup>

Mr. Wafa Al-Saffar, the News Director of Al-Iraq television for 20 years, described the circumstances of working under Saddam's rule as "hard, torturous and full of despicable sponsorship, restrictions, and forced policies upon the media". As in many circumstances, Iraqi journalists had no better option than to work. The country was closed for travel and all able men were sent to the trenches unless they worked in key security or media jobs in towns. Mr. Al-Saffar described the media scene as being overwhelmingly controlled by Saddam. It was reliably one sided and dedicated to the authorities and the Baath Party, without showing any consideration to viewers. "We had a very big list of banned items labelled under 'the long illicit list'. We used to receive daily orders which outlined guidelines for the programmes, the news bulletins, and the words and terms which we have to use", Mr. Al-Saffar said. "It unleashed a strange environment for editors who had to forsake their professionalism for public relations activity that propagated the government's side only, and ignored the variety of views available from the wider spectrum of sources." "Because of the high pressure from the government and the huge numbers of phone calls that we received every day from top officials and the security offices, the editors became more restricted than the regime itself. In other words, there was a security agent in the mind of each one of us. We were very worried about being misjudged or misinterpreted," Al-Saffar added.<sup>341</sup>

The tough times brought about a terrifying police system that inflicted a stranglehold on the capabilities of journalists. They also left traumatic marks upon the minds of journalists working in the government sector. "The process was very complicated due to the orders handed down to different offices, and each one made more complicated rules and invented more restrictions to

keep our work on the safe side,” Al-Saffar explained. Media officials sought to keep their places inside the towns, and not to go to the trenches, at the cost of professional standards and their human values. They also looked for ways that glorified the administration, though they were not asked to. “It was not possible to put blame on the head of the [administration] and to hold him wholly responsible, because actually subordinates who were in charge were acting very badly to stay in power. We were producing meaningless material to be on the safe side. That hugely affected the performance of journalism in Iraq and unfortunately resulted in having no big names in the Iraqi media, because we did not have a suitable environment to create talented journalists,” Al-Saffar concluded.

These circumstances put a lot of pressure on journalists to hype up their reports, in order to ensure that their superiors would be satisfied with the material. Therefore, the resulting reports were exaggerated and often far from reality. “The main media policy was not to criticise the government at all, influencing public opinion for the government’s [benefit]. The station was working hand in hand with the government, so we were obeying the government policies and justifying their mistakes.”<sup>342</sup>

### **3.9.1. Baghdad International Television.**

After the 1991 war, the Iraqi government established Baghdad Cultural TV, and appointed the famous Iraqi journalist, Faisal Al-Yasiri, who had lived abroad for 32 years, as a director of the television station. The station focused on cultural and educational programmes. After the success which was made by Al-Yasiri and his staff, the Iraqi government believed that Baghdad Cultural TV was of a high professional standard, and was therefore able to compete with the booming international satellite channels. So they decided to shift the branding of the station to Baghdad International TV. Consequently, the authorities asked Al-Yasiri to start working with the editorial staff to launch the satellite channel.<sup>343</sup>

Al-Yasiri said that he met the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, after three months of starting work at Baghdad Cultural TV. Saddam said that he appreciated the station, and that the Iraqis were in need of entertainment. Al-

Yasiri understood that Saddam tacitly wanted the channel to report his news and activities, glorifying him, along with repeating programmes about him. Al-Yasiri said that Saddam may have mentioned his desire to have a stronger presence on state television, because the channel made recognisable changes to its policy, such as a new style of news editing; now more professional than before, and with a diminished presence of propaganda. He even changed the style of songs on the station, broadcasting romantic and emotional songs rather than nationalist ones. Al-Yasiri attempted to make use of the little space of freedom he had as a director; to do something different.<sup>344</sup> Al-Yasiri said that he suggested to Saddam that he allow the Iraqis to watch the international satellite channels, but Saddam rejected the proposal because he thought that by allowing the satellite channels to be viewed, the Iraqi people would stop watching his own stations. He added that the Iraqi people needed a form of ideological protection.<sup>345</sup>

The idea of launching the first Iraqi satellite channel dominated the minds of Iraqi high officials after the success of launching the Alabid Missile system into space on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1989. The government decided to establish an Iraqi satellite channel, and to name it the Iraq Satellite Channel. Preparations for the project started, but the surrounding circumstances hindered efforts due to the 1990 war and the embargo. The set-up was complex, as a project like this required hiring a frequency on one of the satellites' spectrums; funding a broadcasting station, receivers, dishes and staff who could produce the programmes that suited the objectives of the channel. This gave the channel and its content a clear Iraqi identity. In 1993, the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and Information tried to persuade the Arab and international communities to have a presence on international satellites. The Ministry contacted the administration of ArabSat to book space on one of its second generation satellites, for the Babylon Production Company that would broadcast normal programming and cinema. On 14<sup>th</sup> April, ArabSat gave conditional permission to the Iraqi government to book a channel for the Ministry of Culture and Information, providing Iraq booked in on the fourth satellite. The Iraqi government would also have to pay \$2 million annually before it could start airing the channel's programmes.<sup>346</sup> Baghdad International TV was

established on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1996, by order number 154 which was issued by the Revolutionary Command Council. The order specified the channel's task of producing and airing programmes to the Arab nations, and the world, using satellite technology. The order gave Baghdad International TV a form of independence in finance and administration.<sup>347</sup>

However, all of these efforts were exerted and negotiations did not have tangible results, so the Iraqi satellite channel did not air. In 1996, the Iraqi government succeeded in booking a satellite channel on the European Eutelsat. The organisation agreed to offer a space for a price of \$3,250 million a year. By the end of 1996, the preparatory works were finalised to open the Iraqi satellite channel through Eutelsat on Hot Bird Two. It was a new experience for the Iraqis, so it was full of challenges; especially from a technical point of view. There were compatibility issues between Iraq's broadcasting technology and the world standards of telecommunication technology of the time, due to the heavy impact of sanctions imposed by the international community.<sup>348</sup>

In 1994, Al-Yasiri had been selected to be the director of Baghdad International TV and had started working in this role. However, the staff faced a lot of challenges in booking an allocation on satellites due to the restrictions of the sanctions. The struggle went on until 1996, when the channel managed to broker a deal with NileSat to air its programmes. As a result, the channel prepared a pilot program plan for launching as an international channel, and to be able to compete in the satellite channels' market. Al-Yasiri stated that, "its platform should comply with the international standards and satisfied interests of different sectors of audience." Moreover, the channel was not targeting Iraqis inside the country, as Iraqis were banned from having dishes to watch satellite channels. Its broadcasting was dedicated purely to audiences living outside the country. "Yes, I am not denying that it (the channel) was to reflect the policies of the Iraqi government and the good [light] of Iraq, but it should satisfy the mood and the interests of the foreign world," stated Al-Yasiri. These two requirements made the scale of the challenge become bigger and bigger. The director had to balance between the required standards and the directions set by those who were supervising

the media sector in the Iraqi government, whom in turn could not understand the differentiation between the Iraqi audiences and others.<sup>349</sup>

The director recruited 145 people as staff for the channel and enrolled them onto a six month course, granting them professional qualifications in an attempt to compete with the international channels. To help the staff have a deep and full understanding, al-Yasiri gave them the chance to watch international channels inside the studios, but this step fuelled the anger of security officials, who were in charge of the media sector, and subsequently upset high-ranking government officials by breaking the rules. The government asked the director to stop the process of watching international satellite channels. The big challenge came when the channel started airing domestic news, and struggled with the dilemma of how to report the actions of Iraqi political leaders. For example, the channel received an open letter sent by the Iraqi Vice President, Azzat Al-Duri, to Saddam Hussein. The local channels used to air the whole letter in local Iraqi stations, but the director decided on a new direction to reflect the new policy of the channel.<sup>350</sup>

Al-Yasiri stated, "I decided in this station just to give two lines from the letter, and I changed the style of the news editing, as well as ignoring some of the non-important news internationally." The step generated uncomfortable reactions among high-ranking officials, and they expressed a desire for it to be like the local stations, but the director was quite sure that the channel would fail if it followed this policy. He decided to withdraw from the project before broadcasting commenced. The incident affirmed the fact that media in Iraq was owned and run by the Iraqi government. Its officials wanted the media to be the mouthpiece of their influential figures within government. "There were many obligatory procedures in the Iraqi media organisations, and every journalist knew it very well even though there was no written law outlining the forbidden items, but we got to know the forbidden and the permitted things by experience. Therefore, I could say that the journalist in Iraq was not working as a member of his profession, but like a governmental non-journalist employee."<sup>351</sup>

The hardest part in the first steps of the project was providing engineering facilities and equipment which could provide the satellite with a signal. This process necessitated the construction of a fully equipped broadcast station in Baghdad. The Iraqi network staff managed to organise the construction successfully, and it worked with NileSat.<sup>352</sup> The channel's first day of broadcasting was Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July 1998, using the Egyptian satellite, which covered North Africa, some southern African countries, Mediterranean Europe, the south eastern part of the former Soviet Union, eastern Iran and the Arabian peninsula. The experimental broadcasting continued for three months, for four hours a day, from 7 to 11pm, Baghdad time.<sup>353</sup>

On March 10<sup>th</sup> of the following year, the channel started airing on the European satellite Eutelsat 2F3, on the Frequency 10984. This covered the east of Ireland, parts of Russia, Middle Asia, some parts of Iran and all areas spanning from Sweden, in the north, to Spain, in the south.<sup>354</sup> There is no doubt that the Iraqi government had strong reasons for these efforts. Al-Yasiri, the supervisor of the project, believed the purposes could be:

- 1) "To use the space to air and spread the Iraqi media message to the world.
- 2) To identify Iraq as a civilised country, and to broadcast the bright image of Iraq and its developments.
- 3) To link Iraqi diplomatic missions with cultural centres outside the country, so as to relay Iraqi issues internationally.
- 4) To link the Iraqi community who live outside of the country with the Iraqi media, informing them about current affairs in the country.
- 5) To demonstrate the Iraqi government's point of view on Arabic and international issues.
- 6) To respond to the hostile media against Iraq, and to build bridges with the Iraqis and Arabs outside of the country.
- 7) To promote Arabic values, singling out the Arabic cultural identity and protecting its unity."<sup>355</sup>

However, the aims of Iraqi television were defined by Dr Waleed Alhadeethi, who headed the channel after al-Yasiri, in Baghdad's first Media National Conference in 2001 as the following:

- 1) "To declare the Iraqi voice (governmental voice) to the world, and to give an objective image about the civilised developments in the country.
- 2) To explain the Iraqi point of view on Arabic and international issues.
- 3) To reflect the Iraqi achievement made under the embargo (sanctions) by producing programmes about Iraq's accomplishments, demonstrating the Iraqi renaissance in spite of the embargo in the spotlight."<sup>356</sup>

It was obvious that the policy of the Iraqi satellite channel was not different to the policy of local Iraqi television. In other words, it was just a mouthpiece of the Iraqi government and it was another striking example of government intervention in the state-run media. The channel had to perform its tasks based on using its limited capabilities, for instance, by producing and broadcasting programmes and commercial advertisements, and then selling them for a price.

The annual budget of Baghdad International TV came through the following sources:

- 1) The annual governmental grant as specified in the annual governmental budget.
- 2) The incomes of Baghdad International TV through its own activities.
- 3) Funds left over from the previous year and, therefore, circulating to the following.
- 4) Contributions and donations in accordance with the law.<sup>357</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> April 2001, airing hours reached 11 per day, and a plan was in place to extend this to 12 hours a day, from 5pm to 5am, on its first anniversary. On 28<sup>th</sup> April, the channel managed to produce and air programmes 24 hours a day.<sup>358</sup> By that time, the channel was able to cover the whole of the Arab region, Europe and America, as it was now linked to 6 satellites.<sup>359</sup>

The channel also aired some of the programmes in other local languages. It started to broadcast some of its programmes in the Kurdish language, which reached a daily total of four hours on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2001. The Kurdish programmes were divided into two periods: from 12pm to 2pm, and from

5.30pm to 7pm.<sup>360</sup> This step reflected the government's desire to reach out to the Kurdish community in Kurdistan, which was taken out of the Iraqi government's control by Anglo-Americans who created a no-fly zone haven for Kurds.

### **3.9.2. Al-Shabab Television.**

Al-Shabab TV (The Youth) was the only private station in Iraq, but it was owned by Uday Saddam Hussein, the eldest son of the then Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein. It was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1993 as the first private channel in Iraq. It was broadcasting films, programmes and songs, which were stolen from Arabic and international channels without requesting copyright permissions to rebroadcast them.<sup>361</sup>

In a short time, the station became very famous and popular among the Iraqis. As the Iraqi government then forbade Iraqis to own satellite dishes for political and security reasons, Al-Shabab station was the only outlet for the Iraqi audience; especially when it gave them the chance to criticise governmental establishments and high officials. It was a big surprise because it was the first time the public could see public criticism of the government under the rule of Saddam Hussein. It was a major step in the country's freedom of speech, exercising the power of the press to offer criticism of the government. There was a talk show called Anta Walmasaool (You and the Official), which put high officials on air, face to face with the audience. The talks were focused on displaying the complaints of Iraqis, and their criticism of the performance of the governmental offices.<sup>362</sup> The station was broadcasting a news bulletin every hour, as well as the main news at 7pm, which contained political and business reports, as well as sports coverage. The station gave high priority to Saddam and his son's action in its coverage and news. Al-Shabab was sharing the coverage of Saddam's meetings and conferences with the state-run Iraq TV.<sup>363</sup>

Al-Shabab was noted for its young staff and, as well as delivering news bulletins, it focused on entertainment, art and cultural programmes, especially music based shows. When the coalition forces, which were led by America, launched the war against Iraq, the channel stopped its cultural programmes

and started broadcasting coverage of the war; the national anthem; patriotic songs; statements by the spokesman for the military forces headquarters; statements by the infamous Iraqi Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahaf; footage from the battlefield; related interviews with ordinary Iraqi people; and poets with enthusiastic words to provoke the feelings of the Iraqis. The channel stopped its airing when the US-led coalition forces' air fighters attacked its Baghdad studios with missiles at dawn on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003.<sup>364</sup>

Faisal Al-Yasiri, who spent thirteen years working in the Iraqi media under Saddam, described Saddam as "a figure with [a] very profound understanding of the media role and its importance, but at the same time, not a good user and player of the media." He attributed the drawbacks to Saddam's inner circles; that were "biased and always polishing his image in front of him."<sup>365</sup> As soon as the channel was established, it was intended that it would not to follow the protocols practiced in other Iraqi television stations, which gave first priority to the activities of Saddam and then other ranking figures in the leadership. The channel did not follow the general agenda (brain washing), which gave special attention to the President's schedule and activities. Instead the top priority became covering the activities of the President and his son Uday, the head of the all-powerful Olympic commission.<sup>366</sup>

After the Desert Fox Operation took place in December 1998, a massive re-shuffle of the way the media covered the news was undertaken. It started talking about the general agenda, with three major authorities responsible for supervising the role of the media:

- 1) The Presidential Office.
- 2) Ministry of Culture and Information (media).
- 3) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tariq Aziz, who authorised the Iraqi ambassador in Austria, Naji al-Hadeethy, whose notes, outlining directions, were circulated and reported weekly by fax to Aziz).

However, new directions sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged for more emphasis on the brighter side of Iraq. This was a element that Iraqi television had lacked since 1991, due to the extreme focus on the Iraqi siege, and its severe consequences for the Iraqi people and their lifestyle.<sup>367</sup>

In a related meeting held by members of this group in February 1999, Tariq Aziz asked the attendants to seek out wider coverage and longer hours of broadcasting, mainly addressing Iraqis living abroad. The step could be interpreted as an attempt to encourage them to return to the country, or at least keep them in touch with people still residing in Iraq. Thus, Mohamed al-Said Mohsin, a presenter of an entertainment programme *Tajwall* (Wanderings), was asked to provide poems centred on a theme of homesickness and the sweet feelings of being at home in Iraq. In addition to *Tajwall*, Mohsin produced another set of programmes in favour of the same theme, such as *Jisser Al-Mahaba* (Bridge of Love). Once this program started broadcasting at 6pm, a telephone line was available for Iraqi viewers living abroad to call in, in order to send their regards and wishes to their relatives and friends inside the country. The programme was shown around the same time of day as *Tallola Iraqiya* (Iraqi Vigil). This programme featured influential Iraqis, from athletes, to singers and artists, who might leave a mark on Iraqis living abroad. In addition to that, scenes of picturesque greenery were added as backgrounds to the programme, to pass the message that Iraq, and especially Bagdad, was doing well and looked beautiful. The two hour show was broadcasted late at night, from 12am to 2am, taking into consideration the difference in time for Iraqis living in Europe and North America. However, telephone calls were monitored for security reasons.<sup>368</sup>

Mohsin stated that “the telephone calls we received were not aired live. All calls had to go through a security check process. Calls were first received by the telephone section, which then put each one under an editing process. After the editing process was over, we faced a challenging task to air those telephone calls as if we had received them live.” Iraqi journalism has suffered greatly for many years. Distractions from their work, as well as traumatic experiences, left journalists believing that these oral directions were rules and

laws that must not be broken. For instance, the Minister of Information, Mohammed Saed Al-Sahaf, tried to break the rules by giving more freedom to the staff of Baghdad International TV. He met the staff and told them that the Ministry would issue punishment only once the work had been submitted. The statement offered a little relief from the former policy, which allowed for punishment to be issued to journalists before work had even been completed. This ludicrous policy allowed for journalists to be abused for nothing more than unsubstantiated claims that they fell short of their duties in their work. He said, “so Al-Sahaf said you have the right to think freely, but keep in your considerations the rules and consequences.” However, this space allowed for journalistic freedom, but did not rule out the concerns of the journalists themselves upon whose minds the government had left unforgettable marks. “We, as journalists, could not get rid of our fears, and what we used to do [following] the directions due to the fear factor, [when considering] what...cruel punishments [we saw] against some of our colleagues in the media sector.”

369

## **Conclusion.**

The Iraqi media faced big challenges from the first day of its creation, with the political and military leaders always trying to use it to serve their own agendas. Especially under Saddam, the media became solely a propaganda tool in the hands of the government, rather than a collection of independent journalistic organisations. The regime controlled it with an iron hand and punished any journalist who tried to work professionally. Thus the practice of the freedom of speech or professionalism became a crime which could cost the journalist his or her life. The Iraqis got used to this governmental policy over the years, and using the media as a propaganda tool became common practice among the Iraqi journalists working inside Iraq. So independence was far from the journalists' knowledge, understanding, ethics and practices, whereas the fear of punishment was very present in the minds of Iraqi journalists. This controlled the performance of all journalists and made them like any other governmental employee.

#### **4. Chapter Four: Al-Iraqiyah Television Channel.**

##### **Introduction.**

As I wrote in the previous chapter, the Iraqi media struggled for decades under the control of the governments and got used to being used as a vehicle to serve the politicians' agendas. But the needs or the voice of the Iraqis as a population did not exist in the Iraqi media at that time. Many professionals saw some hope and light in the US invasion, and looked at the war as the saviour of the Iraqi media. Such hopes were the result of US promises to build up a free and independent media after toppling Saddam's regime. But those promises were not fulfilled. Experts pointed out that the American plan for the policy and development of Iraq's media after the invasion has been poor. The goal of the US Department was to create an independent channel based on western examples, such as the BBC or PBS.<sup>370</sup> Interviews conducted to examine the details of the channel's development revealed that the US administration was floundering with regard to the required content, and personalities who would run the institution. It was the American administration themselves who stipulated that the structure of the new Iraqi media project, called Iraqi Media Network (IMN), be established in January 2003. The operation was led by Bob Reilly and Mike Furlong. Reilly was a former director of Voice of America and an outspoken, right-wing ideologue, who began his public career in the 1980s as a propagandist in the White House for the Nicaraguan contras. Mike Furlong was a Defence Department contractor who worked on broadcasting issues in post-war Kosovo. The US government confirmed a budget for the project of \$15 million in February, a month before launching the war.<sup>371</sup>

##### **4.1. The US Administration's Preplanning of the Post-War Stage.**

This 'concept' was planned by the Pentagon in January 2003; less than two months before the war began. On the other hand, the Pentagon had hired the SAIC to run a secret 'government in exile', of Iraqis and Americans in Virginia, to compose a plan to run the country in the eventuality that Saddam Hussein would be ousted. The SAIC quickly formed a committee of five exiled Iraqis to plan this new media outlet.<sup>372</sup> Ahmed al-Rikabi. Al-Iraqiyah's first director,

agreed with this statement. However, he said that the saga of the new channel went back to an earlier time. The Swedish and UK-educated journalist, Al-Rikabi, a son of the Iraqi Islamic opposition figure, Hussein al-Rikabi, was asked about his plan in the event that Saddam Hussein's regime was toppled. He went on to say that the project was proposed in an indirect way during a symposium over post-Saddam Iraq, organised by the US Secretary Department. Al-Rikabi felt that most of the involved personalities were from the US Intelligence Service.<sup>373</sup>

Al-Rikabi, who was already a strong supporter of the war, had experience with the Americans due to his job before the war as the London bureau chief of Al-Iraq Alhor Radio (Free Iraq); an arm of the US-funded Radio Free Europe. In addition, throughout the year of 2002, he was a secret contributor in the media subgroup of the post-war planning team under Richard Warrick, the US State Department official, "whose detailed report on how to run post-war Iraqi media was junked under Pentagon influence. The first CPA head, Jay Garner, revealed much later in a BBC interview, that he had been ordered by the US Defence Department not to have [Warrick] on his staff. 'I had a vision of an Iraqi BBC; state owned, but editorially independent and objective,' he said."<sup>374</sup>

In February 2003, Rikabi was summoned to Fort Bragg, in the US, from London. After a gloomy delay in which no one seemed to notice his presence, he said he was suddenly told as chief-designate of the new US-backed Iraqi Media Network, that the invasion was happening in two weeks and that without telling anyone why it was so urgent, he should assemble a small team of broadcasters - mainly from Detroit's Iraqi community - to fly to the Gulf.<sup>375</sup> Nevertheless, Al-Rikabi was called in February 2003 and told to take a US-bound flight immediately. He could not understand the American decision, and his hopes of ousting Hussein's regime had faded due to the many previously discussed projects. Al-Rikabi met with high-level intelligence and army figures, and was told that the war against Saddam's regime would be launched in two weeks and that he had to start the creation of the channel. He was told to stay in the United States and to look for potential staff for the channel, mostly from a pool of Iraqi exiles living in the States. The search was drawn from a small pool, concentrated particularly in Detroit, where many

Iraqis live, and Canada. At a later stage, he was also permitted to contact certain Iraqi media professionals living as European exiles.<sup>376</sup>

The limitations on the times and places for the search complicated Al-Rikabi's task, and precipitated failure in selecting sufficiently qualified media workers. The recruitment and selection was undertaken by a US firm, and the advertisements for the jobs appealed to future linguists with an understanding of Iraq. Al-Rikabi, who had no information about the qualifications of Iraqis who worked in media organs before, chose a number of applicants whose resumes showed some previous experience, whatever it was, in journalism.<sup>377</sup>

A prime example of the lack of professionalism within the organisation's staff, would be the case of a presenter of the morning news show, Under the Statue of Liberation, Wajeeh Abbas, who greeted the nation with words that translate as 'Morning of Penis', which phonetically is very similar to the usual greeting of good morning.<sup>378</sup> An interview with a journalist, who would like to remain anonymous for reasons of security, describes a conversation between Wajeeh Abbas and a colleague, prior to the blunder, in which Abbas was bet an amount of \$100 if he would say the offending line. Professor Muaid Al-Khafaaf, a specialist of ethics and the history of Iraqi media, stated that the behaviour of Abbas is completely unprecedented, even in items such as political cartoons, which would often portray figures as animals in order not to violate the understanding that foul speech is not suitable for human beings. Al-Khafaaf elaborated that the incident reflects the low standards of ethics and professionalism of Al-Iraqiyah.<sup>379</sup>

#### **4.2. The development of a New Media Landscape.**

Al-Iraqiyah television, formerly known as the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), began transmission on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2003. The channel, which started solely as a terrestrial one, is now available on different channels in 26 major cities and towns across Iraq. It is received in Baghdad on VHF channels one, seven, and nine, and UHF channels 37 and 67. It is also received via the Arabsat, Nilesat and Hotbird satellites. It now broadcasts 24-hours a day.<sup>380</sup>

The history of the channel involves a ferocious battle during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This conflict over the management and control of Al-Iraqiyah's broadcasting content has extended to the present time. The content the channel broadcasts has played a major role in exacerbating the post-war media landscape, which has already been afflicted with sectarianism and political limitations. The burgeoning Iraqi media was blossoming after the war. However, it still had a number of flaws that had affected its performance previously.<sup>381</sup> The explosion of numerous media outlets in Iraq after 2003 was a positive development. Yet there have been costs to the country that are still being paid today. The new media organs are controlled by religious and ethnic political parties, as well as influential religious, political and business leaders, who make use of the media to serve particular agendas or promote their beliefs. This was, in some way, different from America's promise to the Iraqis, to create independent, professional journalism, which would promote the Iraqi public's interests rather than that of governmental or political bodies.<sup>382</sup>

The development of Al-Iraqiyah experienced ups and downs and a number of managerial changes. To elucidate these pivotal stages, one needs to look at Al-Iraqiyah's chronological progress; from a group of fledgling media outlets used for propaganda during the war, to an established channel, whose management was directed either by the Prime Minister or the Parliament in the earliest political step. The American plan was criticised from the very beginning, when it gave the contract to the SAIC, as experts believed that it had zero experience in operating either a television or radio station. The SAIC's directors, who were either previous CIA, military or FBI top brass, perhaps managed to convince the US administration that it had enough experience in military media management.<sup>383</sup> The company website shows a nine point programme of "Information Dominance/Command and Control", starting with "Battlefield Control" and ending with "Information Warfare/Operations."<sup>384</sup>

"Intelligence experts say that it is the largest recipient of contracts from the National Security Agency, and one of the top five contractors to the Central Intelligence Agency; two of the top spy agencies in the United States".<sup>385</sup> The

original programme of the company for Iraq stressed the need to muster up a revolt by the Iraqi people against Saddam's regime. As the Iraqi opposition was divided along ethno-sectarian and political lines, the idea of establishing an effective media outlet to compete with the Saddam-run channels was unlikely to bear fruit. The overseas broadcasts of the Prague-based Free Iraq, and the US-funded, Radio Sawa, were not received well; at least not well enough to win the hearts and minds of debilitated people living under draconian international sanctions.<sup>386</sup> Moreover, the Iraqi people had not been offered incentives to rise against Saddam while America suffered from a credibility gap. Memories of what happened during the 1991 uprising ran deep. People were afraid of being betrayed again and nothing that had happened since the uprising had gone towards restoring their faith in America. The United States had not told Iraqis of any concrete steps in support of democracy.<sup>387</sup> The US administration delayed the announcement of its plan to establish a provisional media network that could counter and supersede Saddam's media network during the war, as an attempt to keep the timetable of their military operations secret from Saddam's regime. The key members of its staff, who were recruited from the pool of United States and European exiles for the new network, did not even understand the specifics of the jobs they were hired for; this was still the case when the work was due to start.<sup>388</sup>

During the first days of the war, Al-Rikaby moved to Kuwait with a small team to start the task of launching their journalistic work hand in hand with the US military operation. The team successfully made some irregular news programmes for broadcast through a transmitter in Umm Qasr. Then, Al-Rikabi moved very quickly to Basra with his team, because the Kuwaiti government felt embarrassed about being involved in the war against Iraq by launching such a media operation from its own lands. A few days later, the team were moved to Baghdad's airport, supposedly under US control, although still under regular attack from the Iraqi forces. They were flown in by US forces in time to make the first radio transmission from a small tent at the airport. The infant station's first words reached the public through the airways on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003, declaring; "Welcome to the new Iraq. Welcome to an Iraq without Saddam, Uday or Qusay."<sup>389</sup>

It seemed the American-led forces preferred to adopt the normal approach of putting the existing stations out of service, and then air over their frequencies through a commander solo aircraft spinning over Baghdad and the rest of Iraq.<sup>390</sup>

However, Al-Rikabi, who was contacted by the Americans, and was later appointed as the director of the first Iraqi Media Network, pointed out that the pilots of the American jet fighters ignored his notifications regarding the locations of the network's broadcasting stations, in order to avoid harming them in their efforts to bomb targets, including Saddam's statue. "I requested that the US army ensure that the broadcasting stations, buildings and facilities were not harmed, so that we could make use of them at a later stage, and recommended for them to take down Saddam's statues. Instead, they demolished all the stations and their facilities, and left Saddam's statues untouched," Al-Rikabi stated.<sup>391</sup> Moreover, the lack of information from the US army on Iraqi media, along with its weak post-war planning, put an end to the rest of the untouched media facilities and infrastructure. The facilities, which were left unguarded, were exposed to massive looting, which swept the country immediately after the downfall of the Saddam regime. As well as the destruction of broadcasting facilities, these circumstances caused the trashing of video libraries and the laying to waste of studios. There was nothing left of these buildings except the walls. The biggest losses were the libraries (Iraq's storehouses of knowledge).<sup>392</sup>

#### **4.3. The Iraqi Media Network (IMN) in Operation.**

Iraqi staff, who were keen on showing the fruits of the new media scene, managed to put Al-Iraqiyah station on the air on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2003. Al-Sabah newspaper, another CPA and SAIC product, published its first issue on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2003.<sup>393</sup> This moment was warmly received by the Iraqis, who were looking forward to new, free, engaging and professional media after 35 years of state-run broadcasting. The Iraqis were hoping that the new media would create a healthy environment to reconstruct the country and to build the future state.<sup>394</sup>

The launching of the broadcasting service called Towards Freedom was a

failure for various reasons. The service allowed unprofessional procedures to abound, including flaws in management. Part of the failure lay in the decision to carry programmes produced by US channels that were formulated to suit the taste of the US audience. For example, Al-Iraqiyah carried programmes from ABC or NBC's Nightly News, as well as a two-hour feed produced in the United Kingdom, which was sent by satellite to Washington to be reviewed, then from Washington to Kuwait for post-production, and, finally, to the commander solo for broadcast in Iraq.<sup>395</sup>

In May 2003, the appointed US administrator of Iraq, retired Lt. General Jay Garner, expressed explicitly his disappointment with the lack of progress made in establishing a television and radio broadcast system for Iraq: "We have not done a good job...I want TV going to the people with a soft demeanour; programmes they want to see."<sup>396</sup> Garner's suffering did not last for a long time. He was replaced by L. Paul Bremer III, as the ruling Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2003, in a move described as transferring the administration of Iraq into the hands of a diplomat from the State Department, instead of a military general.<sup>397</sup>

#### **4.4. Iraqi Media during the Paul Bremer period.**

One of the harshest orders given by Bremer was "Order 2", which disbanded the former Ministry of Culture and Information to which all Iraqi journalists belonged, as they all worked in state-run journalistic institutions.<sup>398</sup> The order was a blow to many Iraqi journalists who thought that the new changes would bring freedom, transparency and professionalism to their institutions.<sup>399</sup> As the new administrator, Al-Rikabi took a number of steps to have the IMN's performance resemble that of the BBC and PBS. He had asked the SAIC, which was hired by the US Defence Contracting Command, to lay out a plan for a 24-hour news channel, a sports channel and two FM radio stations, along with Al-Sabah newspaper. The contractor failed in its task to provide the desired results. Moreover, a sudden financial crisis hit the network despite the fact that the IMN at that time was the most expensive US government media project in history, with estimated running costs of \$4 million a month. This forced IMN to take austere measures, so that there were no funds for basic

equipment, such as camera batteries, tripods or editing apparatus. A request for a Reuter's subscription, which would cost \$500, was turned down.<sup>400</sup>

The financial shortage pushed staff to practise piracy and violation of copyright. Dan North, the CPA-appointed director, reminisced about these difficult conditions, saying that a "lack of planning for programme production or acquisition resulted in illegal airing of copyrighted European and Hollywood film tapes, confiscated from the mansion of Saddam's son, Uday."<sup>401</sup> North also pointed out that the IMN staff were ordered to cover endless daily CPA news conferences, interviews and photo opportunities, leaving little time and few facilities to cover genuine news stories by IMN reporters on the street.<sup>402</sup> The occupying authority told Al-Iraqi staff to stop doing 'man-on-the-street interviews' because some of them were too critical of the American presence in Iraq. The authorities also asked them to stop including readings of the Koran as part of cultural programming. The Iraqi audience considered these steps as the introduction of an intentional campaign targeting their Islamic heritage, while US officials were uninformed about the serious implications of their procedures. All these decisions should lie with the Iraqis, Don North later told the Washington Post; "this is the last thing I want to do; tell them whether they can have their Koran or not."<sup>403</sup>

Iraqi viewers were hoping to forget the imposed routine of programmes, which included Egyptian soap operas and Saddam's long speeches, but these hopes came in contradiction with the Pentagon's first goal after occupying Saddam's TV studios, which was to broadcast pro-American shows on Iraqi airwaves.<sup>404</sup> So they switched Saddam's long speeches with translated speeches by administrator Paul Bremer. It seems that part of the problem was that Al-Iraqiya was run by the Pentagon, not the State Dept. or the Broadcasting Board of Governors; the Pentagon, being an independent federal agency which supervises all US international, non-military broadcasting, including Voice of America (VOA).<sup>405</sup> It was believed by professional Iraqi journalists that the Americans were not interested in professional Iraqi journalism, and that all the calls for improving working conditions made by the IMN members were turned down. Even when IMN staff twice went on strike for higher wages, they were told, in effect, to either

accept it or leave. The CPA paid the IMN staff low wages based on the same standards of the old Ministry of Information (under Saddam Hussein), which offered a reporter the equivalent of 120 US dollars a month. As a result, some staff members had already quit working under the IMN to join with foreign agencies, TV stations or newspapers that paid better salaries.<sup>406</sup>

The SIAC had put forward tens of millions of US dollars for the construction of one broadcast studio. Ahmed Bin Afif, a specialised engineer of broadcast facilities, commented that, “even today, a fully equipped, state-of-the-art broadcast studio would not cost more than 3 million dollars. Therefore this makes one wonder where the substantial finances received from the SIAC had been spent.” Simon Haselock, the British representative in the new Iraqi media project, said that SIAC spent tens of millions of US dollars, but the problem was that the quality of the broadcasts did not reflect the investment. He said, “I wouldn’t deny that SIAC delivered high quality equipment, but the standards of the productions were far below international standards.”<sup>407</sup>

Al-Rikaby was partly dependent on the skills of some Saddam-era journalists, but he was determined to keep well-known TV faces off the screen until the network’s editorial values were firmly established. Al-Rikaby spoke proudly of experiences in which he managed to turn those journalists of the former era into accomplished journalists, who could understand perfectly the editorial lines of the new policies.<sup>408</sup>

The Iraqi journalists from Saddam’s era who worked within the IMN believed that Al-Rikaby had a negative attitude and felt hostile toward them, regardless of IMN’s ethos of professionalism. As he called one member of staff, Ziad Tariq, who held a PhD in media studies, Al-Rikaby asked him mockingly, “What was your topic about? Was it about Saddam or the Baath party?” Ziad answered him saying that he finished his PhD after 2003. Immediately Al-Rikaby punched him in public and fired him. There were many motivations behind the concerns of seasoned journalists. One of them was a fear of local Iraqis who worked closely with the American troops, as they felt that they could steal their positions. Also, the exiled journalists returned to the country with a feeling of revenge for everything that had happened to Iraq.<sup>409</sup> There

were many journalists who had worked for the Iraqi media under Saddam, and it would be wrong to assume that they all automatically lacked professionalism, although it seems that this was a widely held opinion at the time. After the 2003 invasion, most of them had started working for international news agencies, television stations and newspapers, and they are still doing well for themselves. It would be wrong to blame them for the failure of the American media projects in Iraq.<sup>410</sup>

North saw how the Pentagon's control over Al-Iraqiya made things even worse. The CPA's original plans for IMN were more interested in managing news for both Iraqis and Americans. It was an attempt to send messages to both US managers, and to Iraqi viewers, about the nature of broadcast items. Although "the United States has a responsibility to effectively explain its positions and policies to Iraqis, to Americans and to the world, it does not warrant them to make IMN play a double role or to be turned into another Voice of America. Through a combination of incompetence and indifference, CPA has destroyed the fragile credibility of IMN."<sup>411</sup>

Iraqis were already upset that they experienced a lack of safety in every waking moment of their lives, and they did not have the basics for a standard quality of life. It would take over three hours waiting in a queue to buy a tank of gasoline, and electricity had not been restored to many homes. Even so, there were high hopes that the Americans would manage to at least deliver interesting television entertainment and reasonably honest news, which could compete with the Arab language television stations like Al-Jazeera.<sup>412</sup> Seven months later, like so many of the goals and hopes for the new Iraq, a credible media landscape had not been realised. The failure to establish television that was "accountable to the society" was strongly felt. Instead, the IMN had become "an irrelevant mouthpiece for Coalition Provisional Authority propaganda, [managing] news and mediocre programmes."<sup>413</sup>

The resentment led the once-enthusiastic Don North to leave the most interesting job of his career. At about the same time that North resigned, the anchor of the new Iraqi broadcasts, Ahmed Al-Rikabi, also quit his job. "The people of Iraq, including the Sunni Muslims, are not about to turn against their

liberators, but they are being incited to do so. These channels contribute to tension within Iraq. You need television at their level.”<sup>414</sup> Ahmad Al Rikaby, proudly told Baghdad Bulletin, “I opened my eyes to a family who were fighting Saddam Hussein and became part of this fight...I always wanted to speak freely in Iraq but never had a chance to do so. The project of creating free media in Iraq is an honour, a dream.”<sup>415</sup>

#### **4.4.1. The Attempts to Protect the Media’s Integrity with Legislation.**

Not only Iraqis, but also international bodies and NGO’s helping Iraqis to lay out a suitable media policy, were prevented by America’s behaviour. It had unleashed a new conflict between two participants, described, in the period from summer 2003 to March 2004, as a typical conflict between American and British views. Both the United Kingdom and the United States saw broadcasting and media through the prism of their own experiences or influential ideologies. It seems that due to the chaos and violence which were overwhelming and affecting the shaping of policies, the US seemed to prefer independent players, while the UK looked for a strong public service version of Iraq’s state broadcaster.<sup>416</sup>

The UK was represented by the Media Development Team (MDT), established by Simon Haselock, a British retired Royal Marine who served as spokesperson for the Office of High Representatives in Bosnia, and a key media policy maker there. He then assumed the position of Temporary Media Commissioner in Kosovo. He was perhaps the most qualified expert in the field of post-conflict media, as he was working under circumstances involving both international governmental organisations and media development for conflict zones.<sup>417</sup>

As the UN recognised that the fall of Saddam Hussein “removed a government that preyed on the Iraqi people and committed shocking, systematic and criminal violations of human rights,” journalists were not protected from mistreatment. Since April 2003, the condition of the media sector and human rights has improved in some areas, but worsened in many more.<sup>418</sup> Haselock said that he was contacted by the UNESCO official in April 2003 to draft a plan to help Iraq establish a public media network. He pointed

out that the discussion with international figures and officials took him to Cairo and a number of European capitals to make use of previous experiences in similar war-affected countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>419</sup>

The MDT manager's involvement set him on a collision course with the US administrators. However, Haselock had managed to informally convince Paul Bremer of the importance of creating an interim licensing system to control the Iraqi airwaves. The MDT broadly saw the system as a regulator, based on Britain's Ofcom, to license all channels using Iraqi airwaves through consultation with the Iraqi Governing Council. The discussions and challenges on the ground had raised some questions: should the body have jurisdiction over all telecommunications and broadcasting, or over broadcasting only? Should the Iraqi Media Network become privatised or licensed? The right answers to these questions should help to develop an independent media in Iraq, not a controlled one.<sup>420</sup>

The background of the American occupation which was seen by many as illegitimate, along with an arrogant approach by the American administration, intensified the conflict between NGO's and US officials in Iraq. This conflict came to a head at the Athens Conference, held in June 2003 to help establish Iraqi media institutions. Although the NGOs participating in the conference called for opening direct and free venues to facilitate the easy exchange of ideas between Iraqi journalists themselves, it also opened the gates for them to be in touch with other journalists around the globe. This was considered to be an attempt to make a kind of marriage between their experiences, helping the Iraqi journalists develop their own capabilities.<sup>421</sup>

The conference approved a framework document for the improvement of the Iraqi media, known as the Athens Framework, which was widely approved by leading international media development organisations, including UNESCO and the European Union. This framework document recommended that the Iraqi authorities "should establish an independent broadcasting regulator and public service broadcaster. It also advised to look for ways to enact a legislation and regulation for doing so."<sup>422</sup> However, the view of NGO's varied regarding involvement with the Americans. Key NGO's opposing the

American occupation decided to reduce their presence and operations in Iraq, or to work largely from outside in order to avoid any involvement. While some would have been more willing to engage if the State Department and USAID had been in charge, they were unwilling to cooperate with the Department of Defence. It was a significant move by civil society, but unfortunately, it damaged the Iraqi media more than it affected the US stance on invading Iraq.<sup>423</sup> It was obvious that the Athens Conference lacked the presence of Iraqis, especially those who were working in the field inside the country itself. This was partly because Iraqis had no passports at that time, or were confined to the US fortified Green Zone. The only Iraqi Governing Council was busy finding ways to legitimise its presence, and had offered no point of view regarding broadcasting policy.<sup>424</sup>

The coordination brought two important laws, namely, Order 65 and 66. Order 65 ordered the formation of the Communication and Media Commission (CMC), consisting of nine commissioners, and the power was to be laid in the hand of the Chief Executive Officer. Despite the fact that the Iraqi members were given the freedom to discuss the issues and draw the criteria of regulation, the body borrowed certain provisions from previous similar policies endorsed in Kosovo; notably, the role of the board being to deal with appeals independently. Nevertheless, Haselock defended the steps, saying, “they were made purely at the hands of Iraqis and not inserting an international judge, and Order 66 created a new governing entity called ‘public service broadcaster’, which controls the streaming of broadcasting in the Iraqi airwave.”<sup>425</sup> The testing time for the two orders came in November 2003, when the US appointed an Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and shut down the Doha-based channel al-Jazeera, and the Saudi-owned channel al-Arabiya, for “inciting violence” by broadcasting a voice said to belong to Saddam Hussein. The US Department of State approved the temporary closure, but groups advocating freedom of press were enraged by it. In early December, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) closed the Baghdad office of al-Arabiya in a controversial move that sparked charges of outright censorship. The channel was closed under a charge of “inciting violence” after it aired an audio

tape purporting to be from Saddam Hussein, calling for attacks against the US-led coalition and Iraqi authorities.<sup>426</sup>

In the tape, broadcast on 16<sup>th</sup> November, the speaker told Iraqis that the “road to Jihad and resistance” is the only one to make the “armies of the unjust occupation leave our country.” The voice criticised Iraqis who were cooperating with coalition forces, calling them “stray dogs that walk alongside the caravan.”<sup>427</sup> IGC members lashed out at the channel’s decision to air the tape, the content of which was also broadcast on numerous other channels in the Arab world and abroad. “Al-Arabiyah channel incites murder because it is calling for killings through the voice of Saddam Hussein” said Jalal Talabani, a member of the IGC and the current Iraqi President. On the ground, about 20 Iraqi police officers raided al-Arabiyah’s offices in Baghdad, making lists of equipment to be seized if the channel continued to report from Baghdad. “Officers, who carried out an order from the IGC told the employees they would be fined \$1,000 and imprisoned for a year for each violation. But police had told the correspondents that the council might reconsider its decision if the news channel writes a letter pledging never to encourage terrorism,” said Ali al-Khatib, a correspondent who was later killed by US forces while filming a bombing.<sup>428</sup>

#### **4.4.2. Discord between the Americans and Arabic Satellite Channels.**

There was tension between the Arab satellite channels, the US-led coalition and the IGC during the very beginning of the war on Iraq. During the fighting in April 2003, the offices of Al-Jazeera were bombed by US warplanes. The CPA and the IGC had, on several occasions, lashed out at the channels and banned broadcasters Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiyah from attending press conferences and events.<sup>429</sup> The US State Department defended the ban order and its then spokesman, Richard Boucher, said their aim was to try “to avoid a situation where these media [organisations] are used as a channel for incitement, for inflammatory statements and for statements and actions that harm the security of the people who live and work in Baghdad, including citizens themselves.”<sup>430</sup> The American media project in Baghdad (represented

by Al-Iraqiyah) was on air at that time and the Americans, along with the IGC, tried to use it as a weapon to fight Arab channels in Iraq. However, to concoct such a plan was to be divorced from reality, since the professional performance of Al-Iraqiya was not comparable with that of Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya<sup>431</sup>

Unlike Americans, who branded both networks "violently anti-coalition", Iraqis who possessed satellite dishes at that time considered Al-Iraqiyah as "stodgy and slow on breaking news, and they [preferred] Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya; the flashy Gulf-based stations where anti-American fighters are branded resisters."<sup>432</sup> An October study by the US Department of State showed the Arab channels gaining ratings over Al-Iraqiyah. It said 63 percent of Iraqis with access to a satellite dish got their news from Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, and only 12 percent watched Al-Iraqiya.<sup>433</sup> Shamin Rassam, an Iraqi-American director and well-known broadcaster for Hussein's media before leaving Iraq in exile in 1990, said there was no doubt that IMN's audience would rise. She defended IMN's programming against accusations of being a propaganda channel, saying that after 30 years under Saddam, Iraqis must learn to shed their scepticism of official state television. She also said that the spread of satellite dishes meant that competition was to be expected.<sup>434</sup>

#### **4.4.3. IMN's Competition with the Arabic Satellite Channels.**

Rassam said that besides giving Iraqis access to a source of news and information, IMN acts as a balanced media organisation to counter the "extreme anti-American bias on Arabic satellite news channels." She added that her station, Al-Iraqiyah, "is an outlet for people who want to know what the US civil administration is really accomplishing and how its plans for Iraq's reconstruction are progressing."<sup>435</sup> Yet even the Pentagon appeared to have realised that their goals of establishing an active television network, funded by the military, had failed, and that the SAIC had done a bad job. Consequently, it looked for better alternatives that could communicate the American message to the Iraqi and Arab people.<sup>436</sup> The Bush administration treated the Arab public as "either an enemy to be defeated in a war of ideas, or an object to be manipulated (via public relations). Between the failure of Al-Iraqiyah and

their harsh attacks on the Arab media channels, they decided to launch an Arabic satellite television station called Al-Hurra (The Liberal), to have a controllable voice in the Arab sphere.”<sup>437</sup> It seems that they found the solution to their problems in establishing a direct US-backed television channel, Al-Hurra, similar to previous radio projects.

“We will be on two fronts,” Norman J. Pattiz, chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors’ (BBG) Middle East committee, told TV Week recently; “we will be on satellite across the Middle East, but [we] will also provide a targeted product that will be available terrestrially only within Iraq, which will focus on Iraq.” The BBG’s main offices are based in Springfield, Virginia. It also has a broadcast centre in Dubai and news bureaus in Amman, Cairo, Kuwait City, Baghdad and Jerusalem.<sup>438</sup> However, the establishment of the Al-Hurra project did not wipe Al-Iraqiyah from existence. December 2003 was the time for the American administration to finish its contract with the SAIC and to find an alternative contractor.<sup>439</sup>

#### **4.4.4. The American’s Recruitment of Harris Corp.**

The bidding ended with the selection of Harris Corp. to run the project with a total cost of \$165 million. Harris Corp. then subcontracted the work to the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) and Al-Fawares; a telecommunications company based in Kuwait.<sup>440</sup> Management of the project, including installing the infrastructure, was assigned to the American company, Harris, while the Lebanese took responsibility of training media personalities, and programming the radio and television networks. Al-Fawares took on the role of operating and managing the Al-Sabaah daily newspaper.<sup>441</sup>

Many of the Iraqi Journalists, who were involved in the IMN, believed that changing the company would not fix the problem. Besides that, Harris specialised in designing, manufacturing and installing communications equipment and infrastructure, and whose limited experience in the media industry would not be sufficient to run a television channel in a war zone like Iraq. This worsened the disorder which was caused by the SAIC’s mistakes during the previous contract.<sup>442</sup> In contrast, a Harris spokesman, Tom Hausman, insisted in an interview with Orlando Business Journal that Harris

was the right company for the job: "Harris is very experienced in large communications integration projects. We've done significant projects worldwide. We know broadcast equipment and how to integrate it." Also, there were some concerns about the contract process, as the Defence Contracting Command had no competitive bidding process when it tendered its initial twenty four contracts.<sup>443</sup>

"The process of awarding government contracts has a number of flaws...and the process itself is political," explains Steve Weiss, Communications Director for the Centre for Responsive Politics. "It doesn't necessarily result in the best company getting the contract all of the time."<sup>444</sup> However, looking into the campaign contribution records of the Republican Party, one can find some sort of explanation, especially when one discovers that Harris is a strong supporter of the Republican party. For instance, Harris donated \$263,570 in the 2004 election to GOP political action committees and candidates.<sup>445</sup> "You could see how the government would write a contract that would be more easily won by a technology and equipment company than a media company," explained Kelly McBride, the ethics group leader for the Tampa-based Poynter Institute. "But it doesn't make a lot of sense for a tech company to be running a media network."<sup>446</sup> The same official ignored the fact that there were problems with the new management, and its perception of the needs and the tastes of Iraqi viewers and readers. Although the programmes under the new administration had improved, they consisted of mainly entertainment programmes that were irrelevant to daily life in Iraq. The programmes featured presenters speaking Arabic but with a Lebanese accent, which alienated most viewers and increased criticism of the network. Al-Iraqiyah also turned into a podium for Paul Bremer's weekly speeches, which built up the image of the station being a puppet for occupying coalition authorities.<sup>447</sup>

Al-Iraqiyah's performance did not live up to that of the many regional Arab channels vying for control of the free sphere in Iraq. The channel was increasingly losing ground as attacks against Americans were increasing, and resentment amongst the Iraqi people ran deep. It became clear that the hopes pinned by the American authorities on the new operator seemed unattainable, and were marred by chaos and financial irregularities.<sup>448</sup> The results became

clearer in April when US forces shut down the Al-Hawza newspaper; the mouthpiece of the Sadrist movement that was an opposition group loyal to the firebrand Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. The occupation authorities accused Al-Hawza of propagating lies that incited violence against the coalition forces. On the other hand, thousands of outraged Iraqis protested against the closing of the paper, and considered it an act of American hypocrisy and censorship of the media, laying bare the hostilities many felt towards the United States a year after the invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.<sup>449</sup> The shutting down of the newspaper showed the dilemma which the Americans faced while trying to achieve a balance between two of their main objectives - promoting democracy and sustaining stability.<sup>450</sup>

#### **4.4.5. Continuing the Legacy of Censorship.**

Al-Hawza newspaper was charged by Iraqi journalists of publishing rumours, especially ones of anti-American sentiment. The paper was considered to be a mouthpiece for the young Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, and it was the most critical publication of the Americans. The order to close the paper was signed by L. Paul Bremer III, the head of the CPA in Iraq, who cited several examples of its false reports, including a piece of news that said, "the cause of an explosion that killed more than 50 Iraqi police recruits was not a car bomb, as occupation officials had said, but an American missile."<sup>451</sup> The American administrator's decision was based on the CPA Order 14, which was an attempt to control any messages inciting violence or disorder. The Order gave the justification for severe governmental sanctions, including up to one year in prison and fines of up to \$1,000. For media standards and international law, "Order 14 is problematic for a number of reasons: it fails to define 'incitement' so that it meets generally-accepted international standards. It allows the government to impose sanctions directly on the media. It does not establish fair enforcement procedures, nor does it guarantee adequate due processes protections for press organisations, and it included the sanctioning of imprisonment."<sup>452</sup> In a bid to ease the crisis, the American military authorities said Al-Hawza could reopen in sixty days. However, the paper's staff said they had lost their jobs. The American practice in Iraq was considered to be one of basic irony by the Vice Chairman of the Committee of Concerned

Journalists, Tom Rosenstiel, a non-profit organisation based in Washington, who said, "If you're trying to promote democracy in a country that has never had it, you have to lead by example." Mr. Rosenstiel added, "I'm not in Iraq, but it's hard for me to see how the suppression of information, even false information, is going to help our cause."<sup>453</sup>

The US authorities used Al-Iraqiyah as a podium for US political officials and military commanders. Al-Iraqiyah provided complete coverage of the regular Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) briefings that featured Dan Senor, Brig Gen, and Mark Kimmitt. It also showed press conferences by Gen. John Abizaid, the overall US commander, and a weekly interview with L. Paul Bremer, the US administrator. The coverage made the channel appear to succumb more to the US officials' wishes.<sup>454</sup> The channel also seemed to be ignorant of the needs of Iraqis, and centred instead on the American view point, which resulted in gross misunderstandings of the Iraqi situation. This policy encouraged the Iraqis to depend on Arab and regional satellite channels like Al-Jazeera. For instance, Al-Iraqiya labelled the gunmen fighting coalition forces as "terrorists" while it called the occupying forces as "coalition" or "friendly" troops.<sup>455</sup>

The explosion of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and the abuses committed by American soldiers against Iraqi inmates aggravated the negative image of the Americans, which had developed throughout the occupation. The non-objective coverage of the scandal by the IMN blunted the credibility of the channel, as it was considered to be a part of the American propaganda machine.<sup>456</sup> The Washington Post cited occupation authority spokesman Dan Senor as saying that "IMN is not supposed to be the dominant media in Iraq, but one of many voices. We never viewed our goals to be built around a propaganda war." Ahmed Al-Rikaby, the first Director of IMN, stated that the "US overseers considered IMN the occupation authority's outlet, and not an independent entity."<sup>457</sup>

#### **4.5. Al-Iraqiyah under the Rule of Provisional Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi.**

The sudden handover of power to the US-installed government on 30<sup>th</sup> June transferred the IMN into a new phase. The interim government's Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, gave an order to form his own "Higher media commission" to establish acceptable media practice. This body was an agency that would determine operating regulations for Iraq's newly emerging media, but it was believed that it reduced the amount of freedom for Iraqi and Arab channels. In addition, Allawi handed responsibility for the National Communication and Media Commission to his friend Ibrahim Al-Janabi, previously an Intelligence Officer under Saddam Hussein.<sup>458</sup> The body imposed a number of content restrictions on media coverage, known as 'red lines', that could eventually prohibit any criticism of the Prime Minister and other government officials. This was the starting point of control and use of the media by Iraqi politicians.<sup>459</sup> As a sign of good will, the first step of the new agency was to revoke the order shutting down Al-Hawza newspaper. The action was considered to be cosmetic and was never understood among Iraqi journalists to be a transparent measure. "The action was very similar to the steps taken by Saddam Hussein to ban media reporting in certain political fields. When he gave partial space of reporting, he considered it as a practice of press freedom."<sup>460</sup>

The following August, the Prime Minister used the new regulations to close the Baghdad office of the Al-Jazeera television network for thirty days. The ban was decried by international journalistic bodies, and considered to be a backwards move towards the old regime's activity of censorship. Aidan White, the General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists said that, "Democracy in Iraq will be won by defending human rights and the people's right to know, not by returning to the bad old days of censorship and intimidation of journalists."<sup>461</sup> "There has been a loose resolution of the issue of a Higher media and its relationship to the Commission, and National Communication and Media commission, and the Iraqi Media Network. The reconstituted Council will serve, and is serving, as a senior advisory group that assists in developing policy for the government, which evaluates and assesses performance, charting new directions and identifying opportunities.

How this will work out in practice depends on the strength of the NCMC and the IMN. The NCMC, with Siyamend Othman as CEO, has recruited a deputy, held training sessions for journalists in preparation of the election”.<sup>462</sup>

The International Federation of Journalists accused the Iraqi authorities of being intolerant of professional journalism. The IFJ added, “Journalists already struggle to report freely in dangerous conditions, but the atmosphere is made infinitely worse when occupation armies and the authorities try to muscle the media through diktat and arbitrary detention.”<sup>463</sup> The policy of Iyad Allawi had failed to deal with the editorial concerns of the IMN, which included the need to keep a space in the news coverage for the actions of the Iraqi government, especially those that affected the lives of most Iraqis. Their frustration drove them to impose more restrictions on the IMN, which resulted in the resignation of the IMN Director, General Jalal al-Mashta, in November 2004.<sup>464</sup> Al-Mashta, who had been appointed as the General Director of Al-Iraqiyah in May 2004, was a former editor of Al-Nahda newspaper, and an experienced radio and television journalist at an international level during his work at the London-based Al-Hayat Daily.<sup>465</sup>

At a press conference held in Baghdad, Al-Mashta said that he had no control over the channel's management and that the budget was being wasted on buying costly foreign programmes while salaries were not being paid. He said at a Baghdad press conference that, “The Iraqi side still has no idea of how money is being spent. When we ask, the only answer we get is that Harris is dealing only with the US Defence Department, while it is all Iraqi money.” He criticised the American and Iraqi Governments’ policies, saying that “the network’s budget was being wasted on costly foreign programmes and that the sub-contracting process had left no room for local know-how.” Al-Mashta gave the example of LBCI’s Al-Mumayazun (The Outstanding Ones) game show, which was costing the IMN 28,000 US dollars per show, despite the fact that the estimated cost of producing a similar programme in Iraq would be approximately 3,000 US dollars.<sup>466</sup> Al-Mashta went on to say that the irony of the situation lay in the fact that, “the government is not paying a penny to the network despite the fact that I talked to officials about that more than once. I haven’t received my salary for five consecutive months.” He added that, “this

means more Iraqi money will be spent in vain instead of being spent on building the country. It also means that Iraqi skills are being treated with contempt.”<sup>467</sup> In contrast to Al-Mashta’s situation, the US firm, Harris Corporation, announced on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2005, that it had received a three-month, \$22 million contract from the Iraqi Media Network for training, programming support, systems integration and deployment work for the IMN.<sup>468</sup>

Seeking a new chief suitable for the task, the government’s Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, appointed Habib al-Sadr as the new director of IMN in a bid to deploy the media for delivering propaganda launched by the fledgling authority. Al-Sadr is the brother of Hussein al-Sadr, a London-based cleric from the famous Shiite Al-Sadr family who was an opponent of Saddam. The cleric, who stood by the side of the secular Prime minister during his conflict with strong Shiite factions, received a number of privileges, one of which was providing the top London-based post to his brother.<sup>469</sup> Unlike his predecessor, Jalal al-Mashta, Al-Sadr had zero experience in journalism. He had a career as a spare parts trader for cars. He had resorted to the trading job after being pensioned off from his post as a lieutenant colonel in the former Iraqi army. His dismissal from the army was attributed to his family and his late brother-in-law, Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, a famous Iran-based opposition figure and the current chief of the strong Shiite party, the Iraqi Islamic Council (IISC).<sup>470</sup>

The Iraqi Government faced big challenges after the Americans handed authority to them. They tried to use the IMN to show the power of their newly formed security forces, and their capability to hold the ground and maintain stability for the Iraqis; they deployed the channel to be a part of the battle against insurgents.<sup>471</sup>

As part of the information battle to defeat the insurgency in Iraq, the interim Iraqi authorities used all types of psychological operations, including programmes to damage the morale of insurgents and destroy their reputation among Iraqis, especially amongst those who respected them. The show, ‘Terrorism in the Hands of Justice’ was a good example of this, and featured debate over the use of the media to serve the government’s goals. Launched

in January 2004, the hour-long evening programme featured captured insurgents confessing to a variety of alleged crimes and vices, including pornography and alcohol, which are forbidden in Islam. The insurgents appeared on the show displaying obvious signs of suffering from torture, and admitted to attacking the security forces, and raping and beheading civilians.<sup>472</sup> “The televised confessions were the brainchild of a commander of the Wolf Commando Brigade, a branch of the Iraqi interior ministry. Known only by his nom de guerre, Abu Al-Waleed, the brigade commander phoned the Al-Iraqiyah bureau in Mosul [and requested for them] to send a camera crew to his police station, where there was a fresh batch of prisoners ready to be filmed”.<sup>473</sup>

The broadcasts had raised mixed reactions amongst the Iraqis. Both supporters and opponents switched on their televisions at midday or 9pm, to watch the latest confessions, which in turn became discussed issues throughout homes, offices, taxis and cafes. The programme, which was similar to the US show Jerry Springer, was regarded by journalists and researchers as the Iraqi government's most effective propaganda against the insurgents.<sup>474</sup> But still, there is a big issue from an ethical point of view, especially if we look at the practical side of this programme.<sup>475</sup>

As Colonel Ziad Al-Sheikly, an Iraqi commander in the Ministry of Interior from 2004 to 2009, explains, regarding the practice of programming from inside the events, “The Ministry of Interior (MOI) filmed and produced the show, ‘Terrorism in the Hands of Justice’, and the IMN just aired it. We had our cameramen inside the MOI, we filmed the interviews and then we sent the tape to the IMN to air it. I have to confess that the policemen were forcing many of the prisoners to confess about crimes that they had never committed.”<sup>476</sup> Abu Tabarak, a Sunni Cleric in the City of Mosul, was one of the first and most famous victims of this show as he appeared, admitting that he had killed tens of innocent Iraqis, and that he had indulged in drunkenness, gay orgies and pornography.<sup>477</sup> The big surprise came when the governmental forces released Abu Tabarak a few weeks later. This practice raised the question of whether he was guilty or not. There was no doubt that something questionable was going on.<sup>478</sup>

Abu Tabarak described the situation to Mazin Al-Khashab, a lawyer and the publisher of Al-Rabita Al-Iraqiyah (The Iraqi Rabita) blog, in detail, saying that, “The governmental security forces tortured me with a group of prisoners very heavily,” which explained why there were scars on his face when he appeared in the show. He proceeded, stating, “Then they brought a woman in the room next door and they started torturing her. I was hearing her screaming, and they told me that this lady was my wife, and if I would not confess of ‘drunkenness, gay orgies and pornography’ they would rape her. Then I told them I would sign on a blank paper and they could write whatever satisfies them, to protect my wife. After that I confessed that I killed tens of people. When they asked me about names, I gave them names of live people or names of people who died years before. This was the only option I had, because I did not kill anyone to give his name, and was not [involved in] drunkenness or gay orgies. But they forced me to say that on camera. The big surprise for me was that they gave me a few written lines to read carefully and then say the same thing on camera. So sometimes, [if] I confused or forgot some words, they started beating me and the cameraman was beating me with them as well, [solely] because I was not able to memorise it very well while he was recording, as he seemed interested in a nice shoot, but he [did] not care if it was [a] dishonest shoot.”<sup>479</sup>

Al-Iraqiyah, became a widely unattractive channel for being the Iraqi government’s mouthpiece, but when its Mosul relaying branch started feeding its main studio in Baghdad with the confessions, it became more popular as it gave the channel a national primetime hit. Many Iraqis had gotten used to the same ways adopted by the former regime for three decades. Therefore, such televised confessions were normal. The viewers paid a lot of attention to the show, even when the “confession criminals” appeared to have obvious signs of torture on their faces.<sup>480</sup> The American officials said they were not involved in the production of ‘Terrorism in the Hands of Justice’, however, they felt happy with its impact.<sup>481</sup> US officials got involved later, when they realised that the programmes had been a source of concern to human rights organisations, which regarded them as obvious violations of human rights in Iraq.<sup>482</sup>

Simon Haselock talked about the echo of the programmes in an interview with the BBC, saying that they raised the issues with Iraqi officials. "We have to understand where they're coming from here," he pointed out, "and of course, to draw the right balance between the independent, professional public approach that we would be familiar with, and the understandable urge by people here to see retribution for things that have been done to them. I think this is something that's going to take some time to put right. It's all very well for us [to cast] a frowning eye at it, but I think it's very understandable at this stage, and we have to be careful about how we approach it."<sup>483</sup>

International human rights groups have also drawn attention to the violent treatment and torture carried out by the Iraqi authorities to detainees in prisons. "Part of our job is to encourage the Iraqis to reach the international standards to which we all aspire, but it will obviously be a lengthy process."<sup>484</sup>

The show has also caused uncertainty among the Iraqi viewers, according to western media reports, as they felt that they were being manipulated by such programmes. For the media, it was also hard to confirm the authenticity of the confessions. As a Reuters report noted, "the interrogator's face does not appear on camera, and the men interrogated are shown sitting in office chairs across from a desk in a white-walled room."<sup>485</sup>

The interior ministry officials defended the show and justified its shortcomings as being part of an emergency measure. The Minister of Interior, Falah Naqib, told the Washington Post that, "it has shown the Iraqi people the reality of those insurgents. [That] they are criminals, killers, murderers, thieves." Meanwhile, the spokesman of the MOI, Sabah Kadhim, told the media in a press conference that, "the last few weeks have been incredible in terms of tips coming in from the public."<sup>486</sup>

The show also raised anger among Sunnis as they believed that they were targeted in the programme by Shiite dominated politicians, in order to destroy the image of Sunnis as a part of the sectarian conflict in Iraq, and to win more power. They marked the Wolf Brigade and its Shiite commander as committing crimes against humanity and humiliating Sunni prisoners under the umbrella of protection provided by the international community. The

Americans' claim that the reason for their occupation of Iraq was to protect the Iraqi's human rights seemed questionable when they were keeping silent about these practices while the country was under their power.<sup>487</sup> Al-Iraqiyah also played its role as state television, by broadcasting information regarding the curfews and restrictions that had been imposed across the country in the period before and during the election. More to the point, Al-Iraqiyah carried out a wide campaign to counter the threats made against the Iraqi politicians who participated in the election by Iraq's various terrorist and insurgent groups.<sup>488</sup>

In moves that did not fit with the standard of most Western state media, Al-Iraqiyah also broadcast a weekly phone-in program hosted by the Iraqi Prime Minister of the time, Iyad Allawi, who, as part of his election campaign, was patiently answering the unscreened calls from Iraqis who were keen to raise and discuss various issues with their leader.<sup>489</sup> However this show, as a part of Allawi's election campaign, raised criticism among his rivals, suggesting that he was employing his political position and his close relations with the occupying forces to use the station as leverage for his own political ambition, not for the interest of the public.<sup>490</sup>

#### **4.6. Al-Iraqiyah during Islamist Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari's Tenure.**

The winning of the Shiite Coalition in the 2005 elections flipped the fate of the IMN into the hands of the Shiite religious political parties, who were waiting for a chance to make extreme changes to the political process, utilising the IMN and other media outlets. The first thing the new Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, tried to do was impose his own point of view, through appointing figures from his Al-Dawa Islamic Party, to positions within the channel's administration. The Al-Dawa Party members then pressured Al-Iraqiyah to show certain interviews and to rerun programmes that served Jaafari's interests.<sup>491</sup> One of the more high-profile critics of Al-Iraqiyah is Jalal Talibani's media adviser, Hiwa Osman, who said, "It's supposed to be a public service broadcaster. They should be providing a service for all the people, but they are providing a service only for certain people in government."<sup>492</sup>

The Christian Science Monitor also cited Mohammed Abdul Jabbar, the editor-in-chief of Al-Sabbah, who was temporarily fired two months into Mr. Jaafari's term as Prime Minister. Abdul Jabbar had said that "Jaafari's media adviser sent me instructions on how to run the paper, including an order to stop my daily column. They wanted me to pay special attention to the news of the prime minister and got angry when we published something about him on the inside pages."<sup>493</sup>

Al-Jaafari's control of the network ended in September when Abdel Aziz Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), publicly criticised Al-Jaafari's policy to control the IMN. That strong speech encouraged the IMN's board of governors to stand and defend their independence. The speech ended Al-Jaafari's control and initiated a new era of control by the SCIRI, who competed with Al-Jaafari for influence within the Shiite Alliance.<sup>494</sup>

The new changes aided the beneficiary of IMN, Director Habib al Sadr, who had links with many media professionals, and would always look after his own interests, jumping from one official to another. Al-Sadr's policy affected media practice throughout the network, because the staff in Iraq always followed their bosses, since they would otherwise lose their jobs. Thus if we look at the history of the channel, we can see that it was always serving the agenda of someone, starting with the Americans, followed by Allawi, then Al-Jaffari and lastly Al-Hakim.<sup>495</sup> During Al-Jaffari's tenure, the fight between the big political parties to control Al-Iraqiyah reached its peak, and became very heated. Besides that, sectarian violence was about to reach the point of becoming a civil war. So, political leaders tried to reduce that tension by using Al-Iraqiyah to air some programmes to help enhance the security of the situation, and to develop the Iraqis' faith in their government.<sup>496</sup>

The network started airing new programmes based on meetings between Prime Minister Al-Jaafari and ministers, to show that the government was very determined to make the Iraqi people happy, if only the security situation would improve. Shows such as 'The Iraqi Podium' gave people the chance to make live telephone calls into the show and ask direct questions about political

affairs to the guests, who ranged from various civil society leaders to journalists, academics and intellectuals. Another programme entitled 'Open Encounter' hosted Iraqi officials and political leaders to discuss various issues, such as elections, military operations and agendas of various Iraqi political parties, with the inclusion of studio audience participation. It seemed that Al-Iraqiyah was moving towards becoming a public service broadcaster, rather than an official state channel owned by the Ministry of Information, like that of most Arab states.<sup>497</sup>

The bombing of the Shiite golden dome of Al-Imameen Al-Askareen shrine, in Samarra town, broke the short period of united discourse shown by the channel. The blast caused a wave of sectarian attacks and revenge killings. The sectarian violence drove the country to the edge of an open civil war. Al-Iraqiyah announced curfews and restrictions to be placed upon neighbourhoods in an attempt to stem the ongoing violence. It also showed televised meetings of key leaders agreeing to stop the embarrassing situation and calling for the unity of Iraqis against terrorism.<sup>498</sup>

Iraqi journalists were never far away from the sectarian clashes. A memorable incident was the murder of the Iraqi female journalist, Atwar Bahjat, a thirty-year-old reporter with Al-Arabiya. She was killed while covering the February 2006 bombing of a shrine in Samarra. To this day, it is not clear who committed the murder, as the government accused the insurgents of her killing, and the insurgents accused the Iraqi Interior ministry. The sectarian conflict closed off access to many neighbourhoods held by certain sects to journalists, preventing them from giving objective reports of the incidents. A Sunni reporter could not go to a Shiite dominated neighbourhood, as any mistake made by the reporter while in the territory would lead to imprisonment, maybe death, or at least the accusation that the journalist was linked with terrorists. The Shiite journalists would be associated with the suspicious activities of militia, or even death squads; these were ready made accusations used by Sunni militant groups.<sup>499</sup>

The fact that certain names were recognised as Sunni or Shiite complicated reporting in many parts of Iraq. A reporter with a name 'Ali' could not go to a

Sunni neighbourhood, while a Sunni reporter with the name 'Omar' would commit a grave mistake by entering a Shiite neighbourhood. Ahmed Al-Rikabi stated that the Iraqi journalist's professionalism does not mean anything to a lot of the people in the streets: "Whether the journalist is objective or whether he is normal, neutral or unbiased, he cannot help it that he has got a certain name, and that name might get him killed...that will influence his way of thinking, or of approaching the subject."<sup>500</sup>

Another stand-out example of Al-Iraqiyah's pro-Shiite tendencies took place in March 2006, when the US raided a Shiite mosque called Al-Mustafa, leaving a number of worshippers dead or wounded, and classified them as enemy fighters causing sectarian havoc in Baghdad. The Iraqi Government strongly expressed its deep concerns about the incident. Al-Iraqiyah covered the event very heavily, expressing the concerns of the Iraqi government, while it did not cover many of the American attacks on Sunni mosques, except where if it did, it would present the victims as terrorists, in spirit with the programme, 'Terrorism in the Hand of Justice'.<sup>501</sup>

The channel cited statements by Iraq's Interior Minister of the time, who denounced the United States' account of the incident and called for an investigation of the details.<sup>502</sup> In its coverage, Al-Iraqiyah took reports from eyewitnesses, who told the local media that the soldiers locked the worshippers in one room, lined them up against a wall and shot them dead.<sup>503</sup> Of course, the website of the American troops bore a different story. It reported of the operation: "Iraqi Special Operations Forces conducted a twilight raid in the Adhamiyah neighbourhood in northeast Baghdad, to disrupt a terrorist cell responsible for conducting attacks on Iraqi security and Coalition Forces, and kidnapping Iraqi civilians in the local area."

As elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Iraqi Special Operations Forces Brigade approached their objective, they came under fire. In the ensuing exchange of fire, Iraqi Special Operations Forces killed 16 insurgents. As they secured their objective, they detained 15 more individuals."<sup>504</sup> The incident manifested clearly the pro-government view of the channel and intensified the image that

it was used by key Shiite factions in their power struggle with their sectarian and ethnic opponents.<sup>505</sup>

#### **4.7. Changes made within Al-Iraqiyah under Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki.**

The election of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, in April 2006, took the channel into a new reality. The new premier, who knew well the impact of media on the political scene and the security situation in Iraq, dedicated special efforts to control the official channel. He did not, however, change IMN's structure or directorship outright, unlike previous Prime Ministers. He had taken a number of steps that restricted its coverage and ways of broadcasting, so as to organise it in a way which suited his agenda. He also assigned his media advisor Yasin Majid, a former BBC correspondent in Tehran, to be the head of the overseeing committee that controlled its activities.<sup>506</sup>

In an interview with Simon Heslock, he stated that "Al-Maliki's inauguration saw a turning point in his attitude towards the future of Iraqi media. Previously, as a member of parliament (MP), he was very helpful, and he wanted to have an independent media organisation. Once he became Prime Minister (PM) he tried to control the media for his own agenda. The problem in Iraq is that the people need to learn how the mechanisms of the media work." We see clearly here that Al-Maliki's concern for previous Prime Ministers controlling the media was not for the well-being of the Iraqi people and journalism, but rather the advantage it gave to his political rivals.<sup>507</sup>

Al-Iraqiyah's broadcasts centred on portraying Iraq as a nation recuperating from violence, fighting corruption, improving public services and restoring its position in the regional, Arab and international circles. The channel tended to show the Prime Minister as powerful, seeking a national reconciliation and encouraging ethnic solidity in the war-ravaged country. It tried to represent him as the defender of the Iraqis from the American forces' bloody mistakes, and it conducted a campaign against sceptics and opposition, who were attempting to reveal and disclose the realities of the Prime Minister.<sup>508</sup>

On 20<sup>th</sup> February 2007, another incident revealed how the channel sided with the government against the claim raised by the 20 year old Sunni girl, Sabrin al-Janabi, that members of the Shiite dominated security forces had raped her. The claim was broadcast by Al-Jazeera.<sup>509</sup> The incident occurred when the Interior Ministry forces detained her for several hours in Baghdad on 19<sup>th</sup> February on suspicion of her supporting the insurgency.<sup>510</sup> Al-Janabi told Al-Jazeera that four police officers raped her over a four-hour period. She claimed the officers threatened to kill her if she spoke out about the incident, and that they had no sense of humanity, so they took her picture in order to remember her. She also denied any links to militants. Al-Janabi was freed by US forces after they arrived on the scene.<sup>511</sup> In response, the Sunni parliament speaker Mahmud al-Mashhadani, told Al-Jazeera on 19<sup>th</sup> February: "Yesterday we were suffering at Abu Ghraib...Today, what can I say? Shall I say we [Iraqis] are violating our own honour?"<sup>512</sup> He urged Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to punish those responsible for the crime and not to go ahead with the security plan in such a mistaken way. "What is the value of the security plan if our honour is violated?". he added.<sup>513</sup> The Iraqi government initially promised to launch an immediate investigation. A few hours later they announced that al-Janabi's claim was fabricated. Government spokesman Yassin Majid told state-run Al-Iraqiyah television that the woman "was not subject to any sexual harassment at all."<sup>514</sup>

On top of this, the government announced that it would reward the officers accused in the alleged incident, and decided to take legal action against Al-Jazeera for spreading fabricated information. The incident fuelled both sectarian and tribal feelings of revenge among Sunni sects. At least one Sunni insurgent group had said it would take revenge for the attack. On 20<sup>th</sup> February in an internet statement, the Islamic Army in Iraq, a Sunni militant group, vowed to avenge "every free woman whose purity and honour was robbed."<sup>515</sup>

The Al-Iraqiyah coverage of Al-Janabi's incident shows us that Al-Iraqiyah stood side by side with the governing political parties and security forces, ignoring the feelings of the Iraqi people who felt insulted by the police officers who had raped Al-Janabi. The editorial staff did not try to practise even

minimum objectivity in its coverage of the incident. This case suggests that Al-Iraqiyah, as a governmental channel, tries to propagate for the Iraqi government. It is the mouthpiece of the Prime Minister; no more, no less.<sup>516</sup>

The sectarian leaning of Al-Iraqiyah was displayed clearly in August 2007 when the Accordance Front, the biggest Sunni bloc, announced its withdrawal from government, citing the government's monopolisation of power and lack of cooperation over releasing un-convicted prisoners. The channel launched interviews with political analysts and politicians who considered the withdrawal as pointless and serving a foreign agenda. It stood on the government's side and showed coverage with the intention of putting the withdrawn bloc down. The unbalanced stance of the public channel deepened the opposition's feeling that it sounded like a Shiite channel, or at least pro-government.<sup>517</sup>

In early 2008, Al-Iraqiyah took a new turn when the Iraqi government's forces, backed by American troops, launched an offensive against Shiite militias in Basra, which subsequently extended into Baghdad and other major cities. The channel represented the operation as enforcing law in Basra in a war against lawless gangs. However, they tended to describe the opposing militia as breakaway factions that broke with the commands of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.<sup>518</sup> Facing an unexpected situation, Habib al-Sadr, the director of Al-Iraqiyah, took a precautionary approach which met the demand of the government and cleared him from the ire of the Shiite cleric and his militias.<sup>519</sup> Yet the government and its supporting parties were angry with the lukewarm approach adopted by the channel's director, and considered it to be a collaboration with the opposition militants. Once the government managed to stabilise the security of the country's major cities, Al-Maliki gave his order for the sacking of Al-Sadr in April 2008, and appointed Hassan Al-Musawi, an ally of the Shiite Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC), as Al-Iraqiyah's new director. Like his predecessor, the new manager had no previous media career. His only previous media job was as a commentator on Shiite processions for Al-Anwar channel, which belongs to Kuwaiti Shiite businessmen.<sup>520</sup>

The new director tried to introduce a new spirit into the channel, to shape it to his own style. Yet he faced fierce opposition from journalists and heads of department, who either worked according to their supporters' agendas, or wanted to hide the rampant corruption hitting the institution's finances, which could clearly be seen within the channel's transactions.<sup>521</sup> "The director tried to make changes to some posts and management, yet he faced strong opposition from workers and, subsequently, held the new orders. Politicians from the Dawa Party exerted pressure to keep the same order and to promote programmes painting the situation in Iraq as safe, calm and also encouraging profitable investment."<sup>522</sup> Yet, the new director was unable to mobilise the channel according to the new strategy adopted by the Shiite Dawa Party, headed by the Prime Minister, who broke away from the Iraqi Alliance Bloc and decided to participate in a separate slate, entitled the Law Abiding List, in provincial polls. While Iraqi officials were debating the details of the US plan to withdraw troops from Iraq, Dawa Party officials pushed to demonstrate that the Iraqi people were standing by the Government, in order to encourage the pullout of foreign troops from major cities. These efforts were successful in propagating the Party's agenda.<sup>523</sup> They pushed forward, in order to bask in the international appraisal once the final draft of the agreement was released. Being an ally to SIIC, the director could not bend to the new directions taken by the Prime Minister's list. When the Prime Minister signed the agreement and received praise from international and domestic circles, Al-Musawi, along with the board of channel governors, was dismissed. The government cited administrative reasons for such a decision.<sup>524</sup>

Citing bad performance and management as reasons for sacking al-Musawi complicated the process of selecting a substitute. The Prime Minister was forced to look for a qualified and respected director, who would also obey his policies. Lengthy debates and detailed discussions led the Prime Minister to sift through profiles of many journalist and media specialists. One of the figures was Faisal Al-Yasiri, a journalist who graduated from the Austrian University, and director of Al-Iraq TV during the 1990's under the rule of Saddam Hussein.<sup>525</sup>

The irony of the situation was that Prime Minister Maliki, a staunch opponent to the return of Baathist figures into government posts, requested that Al-Yasiri be a director for Al-Iraqiyah. The latter rejected the offer, citing potential threats from pressure groups. "I cannot work in such an institution for fear of being killed with a silenced pistol. This institution has been built on factional bases and propagated personal interests, which turned into pressure lobbies, so anyone who sets on a collision course with these factions or persons, would be marked for killing," Al-Yasiri said to Al-Maliki in person, when turning down the offer made by the Prime Minister. Al-Yasiri also levelled at Al-Maliki the accusation that Al-Iraqiyah had been infiltrated by corrupt members, and that anyone who tried to root out the corruption from the organisation would pay with their life. Al-Maliki displayed no surprise and offered no defence in reaction to these comments.<sup>526</sup>

Finding a director who combined practical qualifications and political leniency made the Prime Minister's choice difficult, and he subsequently preferred candidates based on their political apathy, rather than the ability to deliver professional performance. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009, the Prime Minister appointed Abdel Karim Al-Sudani, an audio-visual media teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad, as the new director. In spite of his high academic qualifications, Al-Sudani had no practical broadcasting experience.<sup>527</sup> The new director pledged to show a new perspective and improve the skills of the channel's staff. Yet he was on a collision course with the same strong lobbies who were working within the channel. The Dawa Party set about a new strategy by deliberately ignoring the coverage of officials from other blocs or parties, and holding interviews with the Prime Minister and members of his party as often as possible.<sup>528</sup> "Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and his two deputies complained and wrote letters about the blackout practised against their activities inside and outside Iraq," Khalid Muhsen, the Media Director for the Iraqi Presidential Board said. "The president met Al-Iraqiyah channel and asked them directly whether they felt any pressures [from the Prime Minister's lobbies] and offered them legal protection."<sup>529</sup>

The politicians' concerns and criticism of Al-Maliki's policy to control the channel were raised. Baha Al-Araji, an Iraqi lawmaker and MP from the

Sadrist Trend loyal to the Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, called for changing the coverage of Al-Iraqiyah. He accused the channel of showing statements of Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki and members of his party, while deliberately ignoring politicians from other blocs.<sup>530</sup> The MP called for shutting down the channel, on that grounds that it had used public funds in the interest of the ruling party only.<sup>531</sup>

The statement came amid heated debate among Iraqi statesmen, ahead of elections scheduled in January 2010. Lawmakers from the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance and Sunni Accordance Front, called for reviewing the rules and bringing the general director to parliament for questioning. But all agreed that the Al-Iraqiyah administration must be subject to parliament and not the government, citing articles from the constitution stating that the channel is funded by state money, and is meant to be a neutral, non-sectarian and non-partisan media outlet. The struggle over the channel had escalated ahead of decisive elections scheduled to be held in January 2010. Yet successive governments have kept the channel as a fixture of their electoral politics, always ensuring that the directing staff were at least sympathetic to the governments' agendas.<sup>532</sup> "If there ever was hope for [Al-Iraqiya] to become another BBC or NCBS, it has not yet been fulfilled. [Al-Iraqiyah] went from being viewed as a mouthpiece for the Coalition Provisional Authority to being tightly under the control of the Iraqi Government. Some have even criticised it for serving as a propaganda tool for Iraq's Shiite politicians. Interestingly, a survey commissioned by IREX, released in April 2010, found that only 21 percent of Iraqis trust the IMN TV station, Al-Iraqiyah, as a news source. In Kurdish northern Iraq fewer than 5 percent find it trustworthy. In Sunni-inhabited central Iraq 15 percent trust it, but in Shiite-dominated southern Iraq viewers' trust of Al-Iraqiyah rises to 44 percent."<sup>533</sup>

"The problem with Al-Iraqiyah was that the Americans had tactical objectives rather than strategic ones. They wanted a media machine that could help them propagate their version of the Coalition's activity on the ground in Iraq. Their need for the channel would grow even more at a later stage to counteract the propaganda of the insurgency. The Iraqi Government used Al-Iraqiyah to the same ends. So, frankly speaking, Al-Iraqiyah is state-run TV

masquerading as a public service broadcaster. The reason why the Coalition and the Government used the channel to promote their spin was simply because they were not abiding by the Athens Framework law. The Athens Framework was the best media law in the Middle East, but for politically strategic reasons, the politicians did not follow its guidelines.”<sup>534</sup>

## **Conclusion.**

Over half a century after the American occupation of Germany and Japan, the US applied policies in Iraq which had many parallels to those of the previous occupations. This reflects a fatal lack of understanding of the stark cultural, socio-political and geographical differences between the different nations.

Consequently, the US army dissolved the Iraqi media as the first step in a plan to launch a new ‘custom made’ media landscape. They promised that they would build a media institution that would match the independence and professionalism of the BBC. These promises seemed to usher in a new era of professionalism in the history of Iraqi media. However, US policies quickly lifted the veil on their claims, exposing the strategic and tactical intentions behind their creation and supervision of the new Iraqi media organisations. This came as a big disappointment for Iraqis, as they had been promised a new era in freedom of speech.

A group of exiled Iraqis were selected by the US to work at the centre of the new Iraqi media. These people were used during the war as part of the American psychological warfare that coincided with military operations. The exiled Iraqis also played a central role within the US’s task of ensuring that the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) served its purpose as a mouthpiece for the occupying forces. But their contribution did not enrich the quality of the organisation’s performance, and allowed unethical and gravely unprofessional practices. This left the institution vulnerable to hard criticism, affecting its stability and credibility.

The US army awarded the central contract for the establishment of the new large-scale organisation to US companies, including the Science Applications International Corporation SAIC company; all of these companies had

absolutely no experience within professional media. This step made the situation even worse, and left the new Iraqi media with far from professional standards.

The Americans used the IMN as one of their tools of psychological warfare. They used the channel massively, until the IMN became the mouthpiece of the US army and the CPA. They used the channel for tactical purposes to win the war, regardless of their promises made before the war to create an independent media in Iraq. The result was that the IMN lost its credibility as a professional and impartial deliverer of news.

In spite of being the beneficiary of contracts worth tens of millions of US dollars, the performance of the channel fell far short of international standards of quality and professionalism. This was due to the fact that the controllers of the organisation saw the role of the channel as a tool to be used to achieve the goals of the Iraqi and American authorities. This fundamental view overlooked the fact that the role of such a channel is to act as a public service, with the fulfilment of its duties to deliver uncoloured, impartial and professional information to the public.

There was, therefore, an urgent need for new media legislation to establish rules and regulations that ensured the relationship between the media and the government consisted of sound ethics, that employees of media institutions were allowed to report objectively without fear, and that there was integrity in the reports that were broadcast to the public.

But the US and Iraqi governments failed to establish the necessary new legislation as, although they saw the need, they were also aware that the laws would protect the IMN from their influence, preventing them from using it as a propaganda tool.

## **5. Chapter Five: Special Cases.**

### **Introduction.**

As explained in the previous chapter, the AlIraqiyah TV Channel was a central project for the Americans, and they tried to use it to reach and influence Iraqis. However, they felt that the TV station was not enough, so they tried different techniques. News scoops and WikiLeaks have revealed new episodes in the saga of the Bush administration's manipulation of media in Iraq, in which it attempts to bolster its status in Iraq and to continue its 'War on Terror' spin.<sup>535</sup> A Pentagon report to Congress identified reports that the US military's public relations officers were systematically trying to influence local Iraqi media to provide a pro-US spin on news events.<sup>536</sup>

Documents released by WikiLeaks showed that these efforts were part of a campaign to control local Iraqi media which, in turn, was the first stage of "Information Dominance" as part of the US doctrine designed to win the battle for hearts and minds.<sup>537</sup> The resulting need for positive news became a priority, and a new team of specialists, called public affairs officers (PAOs), were then trained in military public relations.<sup>538</sup>

The US army opted to use a newspaper to take its initial step into the Iraqi media landscape. To achieve this end, the US army organised a training course and selected five out of a hundred and twenty journalists, to participate in a training course according to a document issued by the Department of the US army.<sup>539</sup> The document showed that the First Division Public Affairs office organised the course from July 2003 to 28<sup>th</sup> August 2003.<sup>540</sup> The classes ran for six hours a day, six days a week, covering the following lessons:

- 1) "Fundamentals of US news writing and news writing style.
- 2) Press in free society.
- 3) The Associated Press style book.
- 4) Defining news and its sources.
- 5) Defining the journalist's role.

- 6) Ethics for reporters.
- 7) News beats such as small town, government, police, politics and US Army”.

The American First Division certified the candidates after successful completion of the ‘introduction to journalism’ course.<sup>541</sup>

Audai Lutfi praised the training course organised by the US army, stating that it was very ‘useful’: “The best thing I learned was accuracy. The Army raised the idea that there were no ‘red lines’ imparted upon our reporting. All subjects and stories were to be covered, but accuracy in our reporting was always stressed above and beyond all things. More importantly, they taught us ethical reporting skills and, additionally, how to avoid being under the influence of the politicians. I enjoyed these lessons of ethics in journalism and valued their advice on how to remain neutral and impartial.”<sup>542</sup> The first assignment given to the selected Iraqi journalists by the US Army was the establishment of an Arabic-English newspaper in Baghdad called Baghdad Now.<sup>543</sup> The Public Affairs department of the American Army was the newspaper’s publisher. US soldiers distributed the newspaper across “Baghdad for free”.<sup>544</sup> The newspaper’s coverage was centred on the Iraqi and US militaries. The content of the newspaper varied with each weekly or bi-weekly publication, and circulated between 70,000 and 75,000 copies per edition.<sup>545</sup>

The newspaper highlighted “the accomplishments of US-led coalition and Iraqi community members in the rebuilding of the country. The aim of the newspaper is to inform the Iraqi people of the coalition forces’ intentions.”<sup>546</sup>

#### **5.1.1. The Baghdad Club Scandal.**

The revelation of the Baghdad Club’s practices has been attributed to a report by Times staff writers Mark Mazzetti and Borzu Daraghi. The report found that the story was disclosed first by formerly known Knight Ridder’s reporter, Nancy Youssef, and her interpreter, Alaa Majid. However, the latter delayed their announcement after receiving death threats from two of the club’s Iraqi members, Nasir al-Awam and Husham Muhammad. The two men worked for

the Iraqi Al-Mada newspaper.<sup>547</sup> Nevertheless, both the Knight Ridder and Los Angeles Times agreed that the body which the US military established to secretly pay Iraqi reporters in return for publishing stories, portrayed the efforts exerted by the US army accurately and tarnished its image among Iraqi locals. These claims were made according to a number of documents and interviews conducted with reporters and the body liaison officer.<sup>548</sup>

Iraqi reporters were asked to write articles in Arabic, as well as reports on information translated from English to Arabic, dealing with projects and actions taken by US troops.<sup>549</sup> Abbas al-Salihi, an Iraqi reporter who worked as coordinator for the Baghdad Club, said that “the US troops asked us to report on projects carried out by US-Iraqi troops in Baghdad. The club officers paid \$25 for any report on these projects.”<sup>550</sup> The Iraqi reporters who were involved sent the reports in question as independent journalistic assignments with tacit approval, or even without the knowledge of their organisations. Their reports dealt with US efforts to rebuild the country, deliver services for Iraqis and denounce the insurgents who opposed US-Iraqi forces.<sup>551</sup>

Al-Salihi pointed out that “the US troops did not compel any reporter to write positively on these projects. However, reporters felt that the US officials would not accept any article reporting negatively on US actions in Iraq. Journalists were concerned about losing the money they were receiving from the club, especially if we consider [that] their salaries were around \$150 month.”<sup>552</sup>

Dhurgham Muhammad Ali, an Iraqi reporter working with Al-Mashriq newspaper and now a sub-editor for Al-Iraqiyah, said he rejected the bonus offered by the club because, in return for the bonuses, journalists were expected to submit reports with positive slants towards the US and Iraqi governments, and conceal any information that might show them in a negative light. He added that they even requested certain headlines such as ‘Iraqis defy terrorism’ and ‘Iraqis living despite violence odds’.<sup>553</sup>

Uday Lutfi, an Iraqi liaison officer, agreed with Al-Salihi’s statement, saying that the Baghdad Club was established to serve and help Iraqi reporters face both financial and professional challenges.<sup>554</sup>

The US army assigned tasks related to the Baghdad Club to a small Washington-based company called Lincoln, formerly known as Iraqex. These contracts held a potential value of \$100,000,000 and included activity in media approach planning; prototype product development; commercial quality product development; product distribution and dissemination; and media effects analysis, for the joint psychological Operation Support element and other government agencies.<sup>555</sup> According to the website of the Lincoln Alliance Corporation, the company was in charge of providing a unique service for the private sector of the Iraqi media: drawing professional and legal strategies for the sake of fledgling Iraqi journalism.<sup>556</sup> The company has four Iraqi based offices located in Baghdad and Basra. The Lincoln contract involved developing video and print publications, purchasing of TV and radio time, and overseeing public affairs and advertising for MNC-I. The primary goal of these tasks was to ensure “that the Coalition gains widespread Iraqi acceptance of its core themes and messages.”<sup>557</sup> The US company had recruited five Iraqi journalists from Baghdad Now into the Baghdad Press Club. Military spokesman Lt. Col. Barry Johnson maintained that “The Baghdad Press Club was created in 2004 by the US military as a way to promote progress amid the violence and chaos of Iraq.”<sup>558</sup>

The Army acknowledges the funding of the club and offers “reporter compensation” as part of their package, but insists that officers did not demand favourable coverage and that the military exercised no editorial control over coverage. “Members are not required, nor asked, to write favourably,” said Lt. Col. Robert Whetstone, “they are simply invited to report on events.”<sup>559</sup>

#### **5.1.2. The “Work Statement” of the Baghdad Club.**

The Work Statement of the Baghdad Club indicated in paragraph 3, that “the Baghdad Press Club was formed in order to get local Arab media to cover US military commanders’ press conferences and special media events. The Baghdad Club consists of just over forty of the most prominent journalists in Baghdad. These veteran journalists must be the best reporters they can be in Iraq, and represent print media as well as radio and television reporters in

Baghdad.”<sup>560</sup> “The reporters must cover major events and projects that the US Army is engaged in throughout Baghdad, without controlling content. On any given day, we will use between 6 and 20 of these reporters. Also, for special events such as the commander’s press conferences, we are able to have as many as forty of these reporters show up. This ad hoc group of reporters will play a crucial role in our ability to get our side of the story out to the Iraqi populace in Baghdad.”<sup>561</sup> Paragraph 4 points out that, “the Public Affairs Office (PAO) section requires the service of local Iraqi journalists, in order to facilitate Arab media coverage of commanders’ conferences and military operations in and around the Baghdad area.”<sup>562</sup> Paragraph 5 indicates that, “the director must work with the Public Affairs Office to help determine media events to be covered and how they will be covered. The contractor will have to provide daily bus and taxi transportation for the media during week days, including Fridays. The media director must pay the costs for all Iraqi media members attending media events.”<sup>563</sup> “The media director uses his or her extensive contacts in the Arab media profession, both in and out of Iraq, to provide important media advice and media strategies to the division [of] PAO. The media director will provide a timely analysis of all Arab media articles and broadcast products. The media director will ensure [that] members of the Baghdad Press Club are available to cover press conferences for the 1st Cavalry Division.”<sup>564</sup>

In an effort to maintain ethical journalistic accountability, the US military launched an investigation in 2004 into accusations of violations of ethical guidelines. Led by Rear Adm. Scott Van Buskirk, the investigation gave consideration to corruption as many claimed to have been paid off by the government to publish or air stories that showed only positive views of the American presence. Paying reporters to write one-sided stories directly violates clear ethical guidelines within the journalistic realm.<sup>565</sup>

The administration has taken these allegations quite seriously. National Security Advisor, Stephen Hadley, has expressed concerns over reporting: “it’s got to be done in a way that reinforces a free media, not undermines it.”<sup>566</sup>

However, the Club’s Work Statement in Task 3 indicates that “the contractor

shall pay for all expenses the media incurred during coverage of US military events.”<sup>567</sup>

“The contractor shall have a translator dedicated to quickly translate all print stories and broadcasts, for analysis by the leadership of the 1st Cavalry Division to assess what Baghdad media is focusing on.”<sup>568</sup>

“The contractor must maintain a ledger of expenses, receipts and invoices for Arab media expenses. He or she must provide a record of expenditures and a record of bookkeeping upon request of the 1st Cavalry Division.”

Task 5 in the work statement confirms that “the contractor shall assist the Public Affairs Officer in assessing the overall effectiveness of the local media coverage.”<sup>569</sup>

“The contractor must observe the local news media of all types in the Baghdad area, from the articles and video coverage of US military press conferences [to] media events such as construction sites in order to determine how well the desired information is being put on.”<sup>570</sup>

“The contractor must be prepared to adjust the invited members and organisations of media pools accordingly, in order to help achieve the desired media coverage.”<sup>571</sup>

“The media’s coverage of desired events must result in factual articles appearing in the local newspapers and reports produced on Arab radio and television stations.”<sup>572</sup>

Task 6 of the work statement mentions that, “the contractor must provide and/or subcontract reliable bus and taxi transportation (including fuel and maintenance) for Baghdad Press Club members to attend all scheduled events, including multiple or simultaneous events on the same day.”<sup>573</sup>

Task 9 of the work statement confirms “the contractor must not attempt to control content decisions by the participating members of the media in any way.”

Finally, task 7 of the work statement indicates that one of the responsibilities

of the contractor is that “summaries of the published and broadcast reports must be provided to the Public Affairs Officer of the 1st Cavalry Division.”<sup>574</sup>

### **5.1.3. The Baghdad Club’s Techniques.**

Interestingly enough, the Liaison officer of the Baghdad Club, Uday Lufti, asserts; “We were regularly informed by the American Army about their activities and operations in an attempt to gain coverage. We wrote about the positive and negative things in the American soldiers’ behaviour. The Americans were keen to have us covering their military operations, as documented coverage would allow them to be free of accusations of mistreatment towards the Iraqi people and other forms of law breaking.”<sup>575</sup>

“One of our ‘achievements’ was that we distributed leaflets in English to the American soldiers to inform them of the Iraqi culture and traditions. For example, the demanding of a woman to remove her veil during military checks is a major insult in Iraq; the consequences of insults such as this would lead to further retaliation against the US forces. Also, we balanced out these leaflets with information in Arabic distributed to the Iraqis regarding advice on how to deal with the American soldiers.”<sup>576</sup>

“The journalists of The Baghdad Press club were provided with cameras, laptops, mobile phones and expenses, and the [overall] budget for Baghdad Club [expenses] was \$15,000 a month. Additional claims were made that insisted that journalists attending American Press Conferences were paid anywhere from \$25-\$35 for print or radio stories aired, and \$50 for TV stories.”<sup>577</sup> Lufti maintains that “the stories of the US military operations and press conferences were a priority of the Baghdad Club, and little attention was paid to the assortment of media organisations covering these issues.”<sup>578</sup>

Eight US officials agreed to discuss the situation of payments to Iraqi reporters. They feared that the unethical journalistic efforts of the Baghdad Club were promoting practices that were unacceptable for the progress of a democratising country. “We are teaching [Iraqi journalists] the wrong things,” said one military officer, “ironically, these officials requested anonymity to avoid retaliation.”<sup>579</sup> “The senior military leaders were working with us in a good manner and they worked in the interest of a free Iraqi media, yet some

of the junior officers were mistreating us. One of our duties was to minimize the gap between the American Army and the Iraqi community, but it was so hard to do because there were many problems among the American Army and the Iraqis.”<sup>580</sup> “How could we persuade those who had their wives raped and houses stolen by the American troops to conform to these ideas of cooperation? It was a very hard environment [in which] to instigate progress.”<sup>581</sup> The American embassy supported the Baghdad Press Club by establishing the Round Table, where exclusive interviews were held every Wednesday using the best eight journalists in the Baghdad Press Club. Iraqi and American Senior officials, such as the Iraqi President Ajeel Alyawar, the Prime Minister Ayad Alawi and US Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld, were among the interviewees.<sup>582</sup>

Haithm Hadi, an Iraqi Journalist and the head of Asharq Research Centre, said, “I worked for a while at the Baghdad Club, and then decided to leave because I felt [the initiative] had failed [to achieve its stated objectives] and represented the lack of the Americans’ understanding of the Iraqi community. Failing to influence the minds of the Iraqi people was a major consequence of the Baghdad Club; they tried to [appeal to] the Iraqis’ hearts and minds through their tactics, [but] the Americans worked with unprofessional Iraqi people and the price was flagrant propaganda.”<sup>583</sup>

The Baghdad Club was using Iraqi journalists to cover the American army’s reconstruction projects in order to persuade the Iraqi community and the Arab communities that they were useful ventures. But the Iraqis did not respect these messages and projects because the implemented work was minimal. There was a big gap between the Iraqis expectations and the harsh reality following the occupation. The Baghdad Club was a business project for the Iraqi journalists and a propaganda project for the Americans.<sup>584</sup>

Emad Jaber pointed out the ups and downs he experienced during his work for the Baghdad Club. Jaber said that he was happy with his work and progress in the Baghdad Club: “The Americans did not try to control the editorial aspects of our stories and they did not pressure us. We were free to write what we would like to write. Even when we criticised the American

army's corruption in the reconstruction projects and disclosed information...no one charged us. One day, I had an argument with an American military officer, Captain Minchick, when he said to me, "why are you criticising the American Army when you (the Iraqi journalists) get paid money from us?" I answered that the Baghdad Club works without red-lines."<sup>585</sup>

Uday Lutfi agreed with Jaber's statement and cited a US military spokesperson as saying, "members are not required or asked to write favourably" about the United States.<sup>586</sup> He highlighted that the US forces were concerned that the payments to Iraqi journalists had become so extensive that they were destroying efforts to build democracy, while undermining US credibility. They also worried that information planted in the Iraqi press could 'blow back' to the American public.<sup>587</sup> Moreover, defence and military officials claimed the US public to be at risk in the instance that these planted stories should be published in the international press. Finally, military and defence officials said "the more extensive the information operations, the more likely they'll be discovered, thereby undermining the credibility of the US armed forces and the American government."<sup>588</sup> Uday Lutfi said that the turning point of America's handling of the club took place when an American officer, Major Latmer, ordered journalists to write positively about the American Army operations. In a meeting with the Baghdad Club he announced, "we are paying you US Dollars", and explained that they did not like criticism of the US in the stories.<sup>589</sup> "I found that the American Army wanted to change the deal. Then the Baghdad Club standards were changed and the American forces turned our duties upside down. We started our work by disclosing the American Army's mistakes, but they wanted to prevent us from doing our job in a professional way."<sup>590</sup>

Abbas Al-Salihi pointed out that, "the US army gave [journalists] new editorial demands, asking Iraqi club members to write positively about its actions."<sup>591</sup> "They asked us to cover irrelevant issues such as the American soldiers' attempts at charity in distributing used clothes and shoes to Iraqi children in schools. We had to report [these stories] as achievements of the American Army."<sup>592</sup>

The US army did not only make editorial changes, but it also reshuffled the management of the Baghdad Club. Uday Lutfi said, "While I was in Amman, the Americans contacted me to tell me that they were going to hold elections to appoint a director to Baghdad Club. They asked me to participate in the election, yet also informed me of changes that were to be made to my previous contract. The main changes were that the American Army was going to pay money to the reporters for their coverage, and that the news would be classified into two types; positive and negative. Only positive coverage would receive compensation."<sup>593</sup>

Abbas al-Salihi disagreed with the reasons given by Uday Lutfi. He said that, "the US army and the office responsible for the Baghdad Club discovered irregularities in payments for journalists made through Uday Lutfi, and accused him of stealing the bonuses of journalists."<sup>594</sup> Al-Salihi added, "The US army asked us whether we received the laptops or bonuses and we told them about the unpaid fees."<sup>595</sup> However, Al-Salihi agreed with Lutfi about the new order asking journalists for positive coverage only, and that the new fees scale was dedicated to favourable reports.<sup>596</sup>

Lutfi pointed out that the new payment plan was set to range from \$15 to \$45, depending on how positive the written report was.<sup>597</sup> He added, "The US army contacted me about electing a new director for the club, and that I have to accept him and cooperate with him."<sup>598</sup> "The US army appointed a new director who worked as a policeman under [the] Saddam regime. As a result, 168 journalists left the club, while only 20 chose to stay. This was the Baghdad Club's endgame."<sup>599</sup>

An LA Times article drew the attention of reporters in Washington, who brought it up at press briefings at the White House, the State Department and the Pentagon, where official spokesmen insisted that they needed more facts before they could respond to journalists' questions.<sup>600</sup> Knight Ridder writer Jonathan Landay said that the revelation of the Baghdad Club highlighted that the US military in Iraq turned from telling the truth to telling propaganda: "Public affairs staff at the American-run multinational headquarters in Baghdad have been combined with information operations experts in an

organisation known as the Information Task Force. The unit's public officers are subservient to the information operations experts, military and defence officials said. The result is a 'fuzzing up' of what's supposed to be a strict division between public affairs, which provides factual information about US military operations, and information operations, which can [be] used [as] propaganda and doctored [with] false information to influence enemy actions, perceptions and behaviour."<sup>601</sup>

In 2006 the US Defence Department investigation resulted in the closure of the Pentagon financed Baghdad Club, for fear that the body was causing damage to American credibility.<sup>602</sup>

## **5.2. Yathrib Newspaper.**

As well as the TV stations, the Americans targeted communities by financing the publication of local newspapers, such as the weekly Yathrib. The newspaper was named after the small town of Yathrib where it was published, in Sallahdin Province, 80km north of Baghdad. The first issue was published in August 2003 and the issue number was marked 'bism Allah' (By the name of God).<sup>603</sup>

Yathrib hosts the largest military airbase in the Middle East, built by the former Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, and now used by American troops (renamed 'Anaconda').<sup>604</sup> After the Iraqis took up arms against the American troops, in the wake of Paul Bremer's decision to dissolve the Iraq's army, security forces and its media establishment, the Americans launched a media operation aimed at winning the Iraqi people's hearts and minds, preferring to use the media rather than deliver good policies on the ground.<sup>605</sup>

The editor-in-chief of Yathrib, Aziz Almoslih, made clear why the Americans were supporting media organisations in Iraq at that time: "The Americans were supporting us financially for many reasons. First of all, they want[ed] us to represent them in a good way; to purify their image inside our community by presenting their effort to develop the area. They asked us to write against the violence, denounce the insurgents, promote the people's participation in the Iraqi election and democratic process, and they asked me personally not

to criticise the Iraqi government, because the Iraqi high officials were still new to their jobs and in the very beginning of their [posts].”<sup>606</sup>

The newspaper was headed by the mayor of Yathrib, Shaoket Abdulrahman. He was appointed as a chairman of the board of directors. He had been a colonel in the Iraqi army under Saddam, and after the invasion he worked as a translator for the American Army who appointed him as a mayor. The editor-in-chief, Aziz Almuslih, had trained at *AlJomhoriah* (The Republic) newspaper, one of the state newspapers in Iraq under Saddam. He and two club reporters constituted the paper's entire staff.<sup>607</sup>

The Americans dismissed Iraq's media organisations, believing that Iraqi journalists were merely unqualified propagandists. They seemed unaware of the irony that by appointing a former military officer as the town's mayor and chairman of the board of directors of Yathrib, they were simply continuing Saddam's policies of installing loyalists in prominent positions.

Turning to Yathrib itself, the newspaper consisted of eight pages. Page 1 contained local news, and it always had a piece covering the achievements of the Americans, such as the building of a school or the fixing of a road. Its appreciation of the American role was obvious. Next to that, there was always an article from the chairman of the board of directors himself, in which he wrote about democracy, human rights and criticised Saddam's regime. In his article it was clear that these things were in harmony with the American troops' agendas and policies. Page 2 delivered international and national reports, the text of which was always copied straight from the internet. Page 3 featured local and national Iraqi issues, such as the lack of fuel. Page 4 covered Islamic issues. Page 5, a cultural page which contained new poems, book reviews, theatre news, etc. targeted the educated who were interested in cultural items. Page 6 was for entertainment and contained light hearted stories, jokes and such like. Page 7 was the sports page, the contents of which were almost always copied from the internet, and which never covered local sports or activities. Most bizarrely though, page 8 was reserved for pictures of women in sexy dresses, which did not fit with the traditions of the conservative tribal community. These materials too were taken from the

internet without accrediting any sources.<sup>608</sup> All this suggests that the Americans dissolved Iraq's media organisations to create their own, with little regard for professionalism or standards of journalism.

"Two thousand copies of Yathrib were published, but although the paper was designated a weekly, its publishing was unstable. If the American army made the payment, then the newspaper would be published. If they did not make it, then we would not publish the newspaper. Because the Americans financed the newspaper to improve their image in the area, if we published something they did not like then they would stop the payments."<sup>609</sup>

Editor-in-chief Azziz Almuslih, was clear about the American role, saying: "The Iraqi officials, the Americans and some journalists held a meeting in Salah Ad Din Province to discuss the difficulties which the media faced in the area. The Americans asked why some of the newspapers stopped publishing their papers. We answered them, [stating] that we stopped because we do not have the financial support and the security situation does not help us work. Since then, they started paying us a monthly payment of \$5,000 and provided us with computers and three digital cameras."<sup>610</sup>

The editor-in-chief and his staff have different points of view about whether the Americans wanted to sponsor and control their newspaper, or not. Almuslih said that the Americans were not annoyed when the paper published stories about their military operations, and that if they demolished or burnt a house "they asked us to [enquire] why they did such and such."<sup>611</sup>

But the editor, Amer Wahab, has a totally different point of view. He said that there were two kinds of control on the newspaper. The first filter was before publication, as the board of directors and the editor-in-chief used to go through the material and delete anything they didn't seem to fit with the American view. The second control was directly from the Americans, as every issue of the newspaper was subject to the approval of an American officer, via the editor-in-chief and the board of directors, before it would ever reach the hands of the readers. "For example, the Americans withheld issue number three because we wrote about one of their military operations in which they killed six civilians and burnt them in their vehicle on their way back from the

mosque after nights of prayers in the holy month of Ramadan. This story quite annoyed the Americans, so they shut down the newspaper for three months and then [allowed] it back again on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004.”<sup>612</sup> When I challenged editor-in-chief Almuslih about these actions of the American Army, he could not deny that they had occurred. He even added that the Americans had attempted to arrest him because of a story, and that he had fled from the area to Baghdad for nearly three weeks before returning home.<sup>613</sup>

After that, the policies of the editor-in-chief and the board of directors became even harsher. The editor-in-chief started to reject any story that criticised the Americans, cast aspersions on their image and policies, or documented any negative American behaviour.<sup>614</sup> Still, the publication carried a big title in the middle of the first page, saying: “A Weekly Independent Newspaper.”<sup>615</sup> These words show the dishonesty of the media operations planned and led by the US, which the Iraqi community faced following the 2003 invasion. The goal of the newly formed media landscape was to heavily influence Iraqis’ favourable opinions of the Americans and the occupation. The monthly payment for the editors was \$150 each.<sup>616</sup>

The newspaper was distributed for free by the Iraqi security forces, even though a price of 250 Iraqi dinars was printed on the top of the first page.<sup>617</sup> The paper was finally shut down when the Americans stopped their financial support without notifying the staff. “It was a very big surprise when I discovered that the American guy who was in charge had left the country without telling me. And after his leaving, the financial support stopped, so we stopped publishing the newspaper. The last issue was [number] 54, on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2006.”<sup>618</sup>

This raises another point regarding the American failure to establish a functioning media organisation in the tribal communities, either as a professional operation or as a propaganda tool.

The staff of Yathrib also suffered from the lack of security, especially where it involved the political process. Almuslih said: “The insurgents also tried to force us and control the newspaper for their own interests by telling us what to write and what to avoid, but I did not obey them so they attacked me on 17<sup>th</sup>

June 2004 with a car bomb. It left 72 injuries on my body. The surprising thing was that Almanar TV, the Hizbu Allah station, filmed the attack and they were there before it happened, which very obviously means that they had information about it in advance.”<sup>619</sup>

Almuslih summed up his experiences with Yathrib and the Americans: “I think that the Americans tried to support media projects [via] TV, newspapers and radio, but we did not deal with this opportunity as we should have. And from the American side, it was run by the military and [was] unprofessional. A good example of that was Salah Ad Din TV, the contract for which was given to a shepherd.”<sup>620</sup>

## **Conclusion.**

The Baghdad Club was a very good example of the real intentions of the US towards the media in Iraq, and illustrates how they used the press club to polish their image. The US's involvement in the Baghdad Club was considered a fatal mistake as their activities broke the ethical rules. And obviously they tried to pay for positive coverage from Iraqi journalists without informing their organisations. This new technique made it clear that the psychological warfare continued even after the toppling of Saddam's regime. The Pentagon tried to justify their mistake and deny the allegation, but the secret documents and the in-depth interviews with staff and members of the Baghdad Club could prove their attempt to buy positive coverage and break ethical rules.

## **6. Chapter Six: *Salah Ad Din* Satellite Channel.**

### **Introduction.**

Salah Ad Din is a city north of Baghdad and is the hometown of the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein. Before the US invasion in 2003, the city had no television station or newspaper and did not feature in the history of Iraq's media. The Tigris River runs through this tribal province, providing its 1.25 million inhabitants with their main source of income: agriculture. There are no factories or any local industries to speak of. When Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979, a lack of alternatives encouraged most of the city's youth to join Saddam's security and intelligence services.<sup>621</sup>

Saddam felt confident that the people of Salah Ad Din would best protect his safety and he cultivated a strong alliance with his hometown. As a result, the province was badly affected by the US purge of Saddam loyalists from the Iraqi Army, security forces and the ministry of information. Tens of thousands of the province's residents suddenly found themselves unemployed and on the street. The province soon became one of the most dangerous areas in Iraq and formed the epicentre of anti-American violence. As the number and ferocity of attacks escalated, the US military focused their efforts on pacifying the province. However, local people began to feel unjustly targeted by the invaders. The US commanders were facing a growing problem: they lacked the means by which to communicate with local Iraqis, and any military action they took became a recruiting tool for insurgents. Without a way to justify their activities, the gap between coalition forces and the Iraqi citizens widened as the years passed.<sup>622</sup>

### **6.2. The Establishment of Salah Ad Din TV.**

Raad Khatab was a military officer under Saddam and after the invasion became a political advisor for the US headquarters in Salah Ad Din. He described how the idea for a regional TV station was suggested at the end of 2005: "The Americans decided to launch a TV station when they felt the need for a way to encourage dialogue instead of violence. So we started

negotiating the idea of establishing a TV station based in Tikrit, the centre of Salah Ad Din province. We held a meeting with Gen. Josef Toliteo, the commander of the 42<sup>nd</sup> American Division, where he promised that this project would become a reality. We then held several meetings between US military media professionals and local Iraqi people interested in the media sector. The project was approved and agreed with the American military leaders, and Sheik Kanaan Hawas Al-Sudaïd, a tribal advisor for the American headquarters in Tikrit, was posted as the director of the new station. They decided to call it Salah Ad Din TV, named after the province in which it was based.”<sup>623</sup>

Mr. Saad Alsalihi, a military doctor of Brigadier rank under Saddam, was the Coalition Arabic Spokesman for northern and central Iraq from 2003 to 2008. Like the US military, Mr Alsalihi saw the media as a weapon to be used during wartime. “I insisted that we have to build up a TV station in Salah Ad Din province; I told them that the media is a battleground to fight terrorism by deploying the Iraqi people through the screen. If we compare the cost, in both money and the lives of American soldiers and Iraqi people, between using the media to fight terrorism with using armed troops, we will find that it costs 10 percent less. [The case was presented that] the media is much better and more effective, so the Americans agreed to finance the project of the TV station and paid all operating costs.” A delegation of American Forces, Iraqi staff and journalists then negotiated a deal with the Egyptian satellite company Nilesat, for a space to broadcast the channel.<sup>624</sup>

The Americans selected tribal leader Sheik Kanaan Hawas Al-Sudaïd as both the main contractor and the channel's new director. According to Alsalihi, the US picked Sheik Al-Sudaïd because of the protection afforded by his tribe's power in the area. Al-Sudaïd was also a wealthy and educated man, having graduated from business college, with extensive contacts and good relations with Arab tribes in the area. This gave him a high social and political status in Salah Ad Din province.<sup>625</sup>

The project failed to attract media professionals from the start, as there was little harmony between journalistic standards and the operations within the

new channel.

Dr. Salam Khatab is a professional Iraqi journalist and a lecturer at the College of Media in Salah Din University. He was involved in the project from the very beginning and described it from a professional point of view as a “bad experience”. “We [had] been invited to launch the channel as a project which would be run by the Governorate of Salah Ad Din. We had been told that the channel will be [situated] in one of Saddam Hussein's presidency palaces. Then they asked us to write up the channel's structure and to build it accordingly. We travelled to Egypt and the Americans financed the expenses of the trip. We met professionals from the Lebanese Sat Production Company and asked them to form the structure. We met processing companies and got their offers to supply us with the equipment. After that, we visited the Egyptian satellite company NileSat to get a quote for a signal on their system and they offered us a booking with a price of \$75,000 per year. We agreed to rent a studio in the Media City in Cairo, and then headed to Iraq with the offers and the structure, but a surprise was waiting for us in Iraq. When we got back, we found out that the Americans had given the contract for the channel to Sheik Al-Sudaïd and appointed him as director. They then appointed a Board Council to the channel. I was one of its members, alongside Mohanad Jasim, a historian, and Ali Gazi, an engineer. The Americans asked us to work with Al-Sudaïd for the interest of the governorate and its people. Very soon, we discovered that Sheik Al-Sudaïd knew nothing about the media world. He imagined that television is produced with just a microphone and satellite dish. Suddenly, Sheik Al-Sudaïd went off to Cairo and booked a signal with NileSat before we had even finished selecting our staff. The big surprise for me was that the Americans insisted we had to start airing before the General Election of December 2005. That was illogical at the time, because we did not have enough staff, nor did we have any archive footage. I asked them to give us a chance for a three-month experimental airing to test our abilities, but they did not agree. For me, that does not make any professional sense. Then we as a Board discovered that there were political and tactical aims behind the project. The Americans were trying to reflect the success of their “Democratic project” in Iraq. From my own experience, I could say that the Americans established

the channel for their own agendas and not to create a professional TV station in the province.”<sup>626</sup>

The contractor, Sheik Al-Sudaïd, denies the claims that the Americans financed the project, and that they intended to use it as a political and military tool. “Before the Salah Ad Din TV Channel, we did not have a free media to deliver our people’s opinion. So when we established the channel, it was a great chance to support our democratic rights in this country. The Americans did not provide us with any support; most of the station’s equipment was available in the province before 2003. All we did was develop it into a TV channel and all the Americans did was supply us with some needed equipment. If the Americans really did support us in the project, you would see a different channel with a much better performance.”<sup>627</sup>

However, a US military document obtained by me tells a different story. It details a transfer of \$880,000 to Sheik Al-Sudaïd on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2006 for his services as a contractor for the Salah Ad Din TV project. The details of this transaction are as follows:

“Depositor Account Title:

RAWAFED ALSUDAID FOR COMMERCE & GENERAL  
CONTRACTING

Name of Corresponding Bank:

Warka Bank For Investment & Finance

Address: Warka Investment Bank – main branch SULAIMANIA/IRAQ

Email:[warkabank@hotmail.com](mailto:warkabank@hotmail.com)

SWIFT (BIC) Number:

808

Account Number of Bank Listed above:

402242

Signature of Payee:

Kanaan Hawas Al-Sudaïd

Date:

Aug.12<sup>th</sup>.2006.”<sup>628</sup>

The statement of work in the contract order states that the contractor must “provide one year of services to the satellite station to be used toward developing quality programming, broadcasting news, educational and entertainment shows [suited to] the interests of local audiences, and [present] information with an accurate and truthful perspective.”<sup>629</sup> In the same section of the contract order, it states that the contractor must broadcast at least thirty minutes to every three television hours about the Iraqi governmental development, democracy (meaning the American political process or project in Iraq) and educational programming.<sup>630</sup>

There is an inevitable conflict between giving an “accurate and truthful perspective” while, at the same time, requiring the broadcaster to devote up to three hours a day reporting on the democratic development of Iraq. Perhaps this answers the question of why the Americans chose Sheik Al-Sudaïd, a tribal leader with no professional media experience, to run the channel. His lack of experience meant he would accept such interference in the editorial decision-making of the station. A media professional would see the contradiction between what America wanted the station to say and what was actually happening in the Iraqi streets. Anyone in Iraq at that time would have found it difficult to speak positively about democracy and the political process in Iraq.

Raad Khatab confirmed that the American forces paid Sheik Al-Sudaïd \$880,000 to establish the channel. He claims they also paid him the salaries of the staff and all the other expenses as an operating cost.<sup>631</sup> “As a matter of fact, the American forces financed the channel for two years and they were paying the whole operating cost, regardless of any financial return.”<sup>632</sup>

### **6.3. The “Statement of purpose”.**

The Americans wrote the statement of purpose for the channel's charter. It outlined the purpose of establishing Salah Ad Din TV, including specification of what its priorities were.

“Salah Ad Din TV was established as a public and private partnership for the benefit of Salah Ad Din Citizens with the following purposes:

- 1) To provide independent, comprehensive, impartial and in-depth coverage and analysis of news and current affairs in Salah Ad Din province, Iraq and the world (including the activities of public and private institutions).
- 2) To provide feature programming that contributes towards intellectual, scientific and cultural developments, promotes informed and many sided debate, and stimulates critical thought, thereby enhancing opportunities for citizens to participate in local, national and international life.
- 3) To promote the education of the Iraqi people on the functioning of democracy and the sovereign Government of Iraq.
- 4) To provide programming and program planning that includes the views of all citizens of Iraq, regardless of ethnicity or religious preference.
- 5) To assist the sovereign Government of Iraq in maintaining domestic order throughout Iraq by providing public service announcements.
- 6) To provide a forum to discuss the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Iraq and to denounce all violence against Iraqi citizens, Iraqi security forces and coalition forces.”<sup>633</sup>

Professor Salam Khatab, an Iraqi journalist and lecturer at the College of Media, Tikrit University, was one of the first members of the Board. He was unequivocal about the source of the broadcaster's finance and the purpose of it. He said, “the channel is financed by the Americans to serve the American project in Iraq.”<sup>634</sup> “From the very beginning, the channel was a failure and it seemed unpromising for many reasons: first of all, we tried to attract professionals to be members of our staff, but the contractor, Sheik Al-Sudaïd,

interrupted our work and did not care about that. All he wanted to do was to go to air despite of the station's lack of professionalism. We as members of the Board had no authority in the channel: we were just a formality and did not have an active role in the channel's performance. Besides that, not all the board members were professionals and they had no experience in the media at all. All the power was in the hands of Sheik Al-Sudaïd, so I struggled a lot and I had to fight with him. I spoke to the Governor and the Governing Council about the difficulties and I told them that the channel is an American project to serve their agenda in Iraq, and this is why they were financing it. The Governor, Ahmed Alshagti, asked me to stay at the channel and told me that 'it does not matter who finances it, it matters how we use it'. But it was impossible to work with someone with no experience of the media and who suddenly finds themselves running a media organisation. For instance, Sheik Al-Sudaïd visited a music video TV Station in Jordan, Amman, and he found three members of staff running the station. That kind of station just needs technicians, because all the material has been recorded, so they were just changing items. When he got back to Iraq, Khatab fired thirty employees from the staff and he told us, 'I want it to be like that TV station which was run by three people.' This is when I decided to leave the channel; I felt that it was impossible to work in such a farce.<sup>635</sup> In accordance with US employment laws, Sheik Al-Sudaïd was required to give written contracts to all his employees to protect them against such mass firings."<sup>636</sup>

In spite of the station's poor performance, and complaints from its employees and Board of Directors, when the contract entered its second year, the Americans insisted on no changes to the channel's operation. Professor Khatab described a tense meeting about the channel's future: "When the contract's first year came to an end, the governor and the Governing Council held a meeting with about ten professional journalists, and they told us that the channel would be handed to Governorate. They wanted to fix the problems in the channel and asked us to form the new Board, to lead changes to improve the channel's performance. We discussed the mechanism and the policy which we should follow, but during the meeting we were surprised when American military representatives entered the room and took part in the

discussion. They told us that the mechanism will stay the same and the whole project of the channel would carry on as a contract. They said that anyone who could give a lower price would win the contract. I asked them, 'even if the contractor was a vegetable dealer?' Their answer was 'yes'. Of course they did not like media professionals, because they would not follow their rules and agenda."<sup>637</sup>

Jamal Asker, an Iraqi journalist and a lecturer at the College of Media, Tikrit University, attended the same meeting, and was surprised by the American attitude. "I asked them to give the station's budget to the Governorate Council and then the Council could choose the right people to run the channel, but they refused and told us that American law prevents them from doing that, and that the contract should be a tender. Any bidder could go to their website ([www.baghdadbusinesscenter.org](http://www.baghdadbusinesscenter.org)) or send an email ([tikritcco@hotmail.com](mailto:tikritcco@hotmail.com)) with an offer. Also, the American representatives said that they [had] the right to follow up the programmes and give their point of view; this right extended to drawing up the channel policy. Besides that, they made it very clear and told us that the contractor has the first and final word of drawing up the channel policy. So we all left the meeting and decided that there was no way to participate in this project."<sup>638</sup>

#### **6.4. The Establishment of the Board of Directors.**

The orders from the American officials directly contradict their charter for the channel. In Article 2 of the contract, it gives guidelines covering the performance and duties of the Board of Directors:

- 1) "Purpose: The Board of Directors (or "Board") are the primary enforcers of the service contract and performance for Salah Ad Din Television. Members should be prominent members of the community or media experts. Members of the military and government employees may not serve in the Board. No more than three members will be appointed from Salah Ad Din provincial council.
- 2) Membership: a seven member Board of Directors will be appointed. The

initial Board will be appointed on agreement by the Governor and the Deputy Governor of Salah Ad Din province, in consultation with prominent provisional-level business and government leaders. Vacancies on the Board will be filled upon selection and unanimous vote by the entire Board. Appointments to the Board will be done in writing.

3) Powers and Duties of the Board: the Board's primary authority is to report to the Salah Ad Din TV funding authority and the citizens of Salah Ad Din province, on the service provider's performance adherence to contract requirements for the service:

a) The Board is responsible for reporting to the funding authority on the performance of the service provider's adherence to the contract, from both the service's requirements and financial accounting of funds.

b) The Board of Directors will meet quarterly with the funding authority.

c) If the Board finds that the service provider is not in compliance with at minimum one provision of the contract, the Board may suggest the cancellation of the contract with the service provider and recommended a new contract service provider be selected via a competitive process.

d) The Board also serves as the approval authority for the service provider's selections for each of the key positions:

i) General Manager

ii) Programming Director

iii) News Director

iv) Chief Engineer

v) Business Manager

vi) Accounting Director

e) All other hiring is done at the discretion of the service provider. All

employees of Salah Ad Din Television will be qualified for the position that they fill.

- f) The Board receives the quarterly financial statement of the service provider.
  - g) The Board may periodically review the quality of the programming and station operations, and make recommendations for improvements to the contractor or funding authority.
  - h) The Board may amend this charter upon unanimous vote and with approval from the funding authority.
- 4) Terms of the Board, including compensation: Board members shall serve a term of two years. After two years, Board members may be re-nominated by agreement of the then serving Governor and Deputy Governor. While away from their homes or regular places of business, Board members shall be allowed travel, and actual, reasonable and necessary expenses will be subsidised from a general expenses fund set aside for that purpose.
- 5) Officers: The officers of the Board of Directors will be selected by a simple majority vote. The Board will select a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary/Treasurer who will account for travel and other actual, reasonable and necessary expenses, and pay these to Board members out of the dedicated funds.
- 6) Meetings and administration: The Board will meet quarterly (once every three months) at a minimum. A quorum of five members is required to hold a meeting and vote. Decisions by the Board require a minimum of five affirmative votes. Meetings and decisions of the Board will be recorded by the Secretary/Treasurer.
- 7) Termination of the Board of Directors: Members[hip] of the Board may be terminated for non-participation, malfeasance or criminal activity and a replacement will be named. Board members may also resign for personal reasons. The Governor and Deputy Governor, in consultation with provincial-level business and government leaders, must agree on a

nomination for replacement Board members, and the remaining Board members will then vote on that nomination.”<sup>639</sup>

But looking at how the Board actually operated, it seems that the rules in Article 2 were nothing more than ink on paper. I travelled to Iraq and went to the American military base named Speicher, based in Tikrit. I requested an interview with Major Roger Henderson, the man in charge of the Salah Ad Din TV project, but received no response. I also tried to contact Major Henderson by email, but again received no response. Jamal Asker was one of the first people invited onto the Board. He confirmed that “the first Board members were appointed by the Americans, there was no election; it was a selection.”<sup>640</sup>

According to Dr. Amer Ayash, the Board Director of Salah Ad Din TV and the Dean of the College of Law at Tikrit University, “there is a big gap between what was written in the charter and the practical side of the Board's powers to monitor the policy of the channel and its performance.” He continued, stating; “We have no authority, the contractor is the most powerful person at the channel because the Americans gave him the authorisation to make changes. We tried making some changes in the charter of the channel, which was written by the Americans, but the Americans refused the idea of taking power out of the hands of the contractor. They favoured Sheik Al-Sudaïd, as his loyalty was guaranteed by the money [they] paid to him.”<sup>641</sup>

Jamal Asker described how the Board of Directors operated in practice: “The meetings of the Board were 'cup of tea meetings'. The members of the Board just go to the channel meeting, drink cups of tea and then leave. That's the reality of the Board, because they do not have any authority in the channel. Yes, they could make some recommendations to the contractor or the Director, but he can just ignore them.”<sup>642</sup>

Article 3, named ‘Channel's Charter’, written by the Americans, outlines how the broadcaster should operate:

1. “Operations: Salah Ad Din Television will be managed solely for the benefit and education of the citizens of Salah Ad Din province and Iraq,

offering an impartial provision of news and programming. Salah Ad Din Television will not be managed for the financial benefit of an individual or group. Management will be pre-formed by the holder of Salah Ad Din contract, with oversight from the Board of Directors. Salah Ad Din Television is encouraged to seek independent sources of revenue for the purpose of improving the quality of the programming, the purchase of news equipment and improvement of the station overall. Equipment purchased by Salah Ad Din Television becomes the property of the station. Revenue received from independent sources will be reported in the quarterly financial reporting. While operating for the benefit of the people of Salah Ad Din province and Iraq, in order to maintain that independence, Salah Ad Din television will operate without interference or influence from any government agency, official, political party, individual or group.

2. Finance: Salah Ad Din Television will provide quarterly financial reports to the Board of Directors and the funding authority using International Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).<sup>643</sup>

The Board Director, Dr Ayash, confirmed that the contractor did not provide any quarterly financial reports, or any financial reports at all, to the Board of Directors. He again described the contract rules as just 'ink on paper'. Another issue was a confusion throughout the organisation, and among its sponsors, over the intended scope and content of the channel's coverage.

The American charter defined it as covering news from the Salah Ad Din province, Iraq and the rest of the world, as well as educational, entertainment and cultural programs.<sup>644</sup> But the head of the Board, Dr. Ayash, saw the station as a news channel: "Its focus should be on the Iraqi audience inside and outside Iraq, so it is a local news channel. It covers the news in Salah Ad Din; the issues of the local people and the official side."<sup>645</sup>

On the other hand, the News Editor, Mohammed Al-Azawi, insisted it is more than a news channel, claiming that Salad Ad Din TV should provide political, cultural, social, music and entertainment coverage: "Our news coverage is limited because our abilities are not strong enough. For example, we do not

have SNGs (portable satellite dishes) to do live coverage; we have to record onto tapes and send them by car to the studio. The channel has only one reporter in Tikrit. So we get most of our news coverage from Reuters. Still, Al-Azawi believes that 'the channel is an International channel'."<sup>646</sup>

I spoke twice to Dr. Dawlat Aldahash, the current contractor and the owner of the channel, attempting to interview him. He refused to answer the questions and instead asked me, "why don't you make the study about another TV station, not Salah Ad Din, as there are a lot."<sup>647</sup>

The channel started transmission on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005 for three hours a day. The channel is now available in 26 major cities and towns across Iraq, and broadcasts on NileSat frequency 11747. Since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2006, it started broadcasting 24 hours a day.<sup>648</sup> The fact that it is the only Iraqi channel without a website address in either Arabic or English, is a strong testament to the low levels of professional performance.

### **6.5. Main Programmes.**

The channel's schedule is determined by the main contractor and owner, Dr Aldahash. It features a mix of political discussion programs and light entertainment, some of which are detailed below:

#### **Political Programmes:**

Discussion of a Case: a weekly program presented by Kameran Salah Ad Din, 20:15 Baghdad time on Saturdays. A government official, a professional or a politician takes part in a studio discussion with the presenter about a specific issue.

The Council: a weekly program presented by Ahmed Adnan, 19:00 Baghdad time on Sundays. This programme focuses on the issues relating to the Province Governing Council. A member or two from the local Governing Council are present in the studio, who discuss a selected major issue and its possible resolutions.

A Special Interview: Occasional interview with a political, economical, religious or social figure by Kameran Salah Ad Din. Aired at night and follows the same format as 'Discussion of a Case'.

#### Cultural and art programmes:

A Creative's Biography: An occasional interview with a creative figure by Waleed Almadani in the studio. The presenter discusses the lives and works of the interviewees.

The Most Important Cultural Stations: A weekly programme at 19:30, that presents a report taken from Reuters about a specific cultural idea, city or establishment.

#### Family Programmes:

The Family Studio: A weekly programme presented by Dr. Samer Maolood, at 20:15 on Wednesdays. A guest in the studio, who is almost invariably female, will take part in a discussion during which the presenter takes phone calls from the viewing public.

#### Sports Programmes:

The Weekly Sport Bulletin: Weekly sports news, giving the most important sports coverage in the world, presented by Adeeb Aljuburi, at 21:00 on Friday. There are no guests in this programme as all the news is taken directly from Reuters.<sup>649</sup>

#### News:

|                      |         |
|----------------------|---------|
| 10:00 News Summary.  | (10min) |
| 15:00 News Summary.  | (10min) |
| 20:00 Main Newscast. | (20min) |
| 24:00 News Summary.  | (10min) |

## **6.6. Salah Ad Din TV's Ownership.**

The Government's influence on the channel continues to the present day. Dr Alsalihi described the limitations this imposed on the channel's journalistic coverage: "The local Governorate manipulated the channel, so it could not criticise the government or give impartial coverage to the main issues. Actually, this influence comes from the circumstances of the channel's establishment and its legal status. Initially, the channel was under the American administration, who then gave it to contractors to run. So they gave it to the Al-Dahash family to do so, but its legal status is still unsettled. The Al-Dahash family says that the channel is theirs, but, on the other hand, the Governorate insist that they own it."<sup>650</sup>

Dr. Saad Almashahadani, a journalist and lecturer at the College of Media, Tikrit University, describes how the station's unclear ownership status has affected its coverage: "The channel's current owner and director, Dr. Aldahash, does not like to criticise the Government [as it may result in] fuelling the anger of the high officials, which could drive them to put an end to the illegal ownership of the channel. There is no doubt that the channel is legally owned by the Governorate of Salah Ad Din properties, but the Americans decided to make it a private project instead of being owned by the people of Salah Ad Din. So I am quite sure that if the channel criticises government officials, they will work to take it from [the] Al-Dahash family and give it back to the Governorate properties and establishments."<sup>651</sup>

But to observers, the contractors' fear of speaking out does not come as a surprise. In the US contracts 'Statement of Work', there is clause stating that "the contractor shall not broadcast any material that incites violence, is anti-government or anti-coalition."<sup>652</sup> This vague paragraph severely restricts the station's coverage, as its interpretation could be used to justify the banning of any negative reports about either the Coalition or the Government of Iraq.

A leaked document from the American army shows that they were so confident in their influence over Salah Ad Din TV station, that they expected a press release justifying their troops' wounding of two Iraqis to be broadcast on the station without challenge.<sup>653</sup>

Dr. Aldahash signed the contract with NileSat with his own name, and not the Governorate of Salah Ad Din. He considers this as proof of his ownership of the channel. However, the governorate disagrees, and insists that the buildings, most of the equipment and the name of the channel are owned by the province of Salah Ad Din.<sup>654</sup>

In 2008, Dr. Aldahash's prediction came true when the Americans decided to give the channel to his family as a gift when the contract came to an end.<sup>655</sup> However, the Americans forgot paragraph J – Section C in the Statement of Work, which states: "Equipment purchased for Salah Ad Din Television becomes the property of the station and does not transfer to the contractor."<sup>656</sup>

But on the ground they handed the whole station, along with its equipment, as a gift to Aldahash, to become part of his property. The American decision led to a major issue in the province: if the contract states that the station is owned by the Governorate, then how could the Americans simply give it away to the contractor?

The American involvement with Salah Ad Din TV created a non-institutional form of ownership. It was set up by the American military, owned and run by a single contractor, and financed with Iraqi money confiscated from frozen bank accounts, which was given by international donors. This policy created a new ownership structure without any legal precedence. Legitimate issues and complaints could not be resolved due to this confused situation about the real ownership of the station. While the Americans did provide some equipment for the channel, much of it was equipment left over from Saddam's era and was owned by the Governorate. Dr. Almashahadani sums up the situation in a single phrase: "the Americans gifted what they did not own, to those who did not deserve it."<sup>657</sup>

#### **6.6.1. Salah Ad Din TV's Performance.**

In its news coverage, the station relies on a lot of footage from other media organisations and does not have the resources to produce enough of its own indoor or outdoor reports.<sup>658</sup>

Sheik Al-Sudaïd, the first contractor and director of the channel, blamed the

channel's poor performance and reputation on two reasons: "Firstly, it has weak financial status and, secondly, one of the most complicated difficulties which faced the channel was the Governorate administration and the local authorities. We could not criticise them as we were airing from inside the country, so we were completely under their influence."<sup>659</sup>

There was a financial incentive for the contractor to cut down costs as much as possible to achieve interest on its unspent budget. This affected the quality and professionalism of the station's coverage. The channel's problems are still not improving as it does not have a mechanism to systematically review its performance and programmes. These weaknesses continue to make it impossible to compete with other television channels. As a result, Salah Ad Din fails to attract either the global Arabic audience, or the domestic Iraqi audience. Besides this, the channel differs from its competitors by not providing platforms for its audience to participate in the programmes, resulting in a lack of feedback from the viewers they are targeting. There are significant gaps in the station's journalistic coverage as well as a lack of entertainment programmes, especially for children. A study about the entertainment programmes on Salah Ad Din TV by Adhra Ismail Ziadani, a tutor from the College of Media, Tikrit University, found that the most successful programme was Mazaif Ahalna (The Receptions of our People).<sup>660</sup> This programme was produced under Saddam for the state satellite channel and featured tribal Arab poems that proudly glorified the local tribes. Salah Ad Din TV invited Mazaif Ahalna's producer and presenter to make the programme again for the channel.<sup>661</sup>

Under Saddam, the poetry was turned into a political tool to attack the Arab Gulf leaders after his invasion of Kuwait. This was a very powerful weapon, as its target audience was also rooted in tribal communities.<sup>662</sup>

The programme is now a weekly show broadcast at 21:00 and repeated at 22:00 on Fridays. The presenter, Abdulhakeem Zalan, is always filmed outside the studio at the reception of a local tribal Sheik.<sup>663</sup> This tactical location makes the programme feel closer to the local tribal audience from the same background, but it also alienates the other communities, especially from

the more modern communities. Even the dialects and the accents of the show cannot be understood by many other Arab communities. This localisation is another example of how the channel fails to understand the basic principles of a satellite broadcaster.<sup>664</sup>

Dr. Farid Saleh, lecturer at the College of Media, Tikrit University, thinks that the channel is ignoring its commitment to developing local communities: “There are a lot of local fans, but it is very clear and understandable that the channel does not drive the community forward, but instead brings them backwards.”<sup>665</sup>

The channel’s equipment and services are not of high technical standards, and some are even outdated. The channel is also booking a weak bandwidth with NileSat which affects the quality of the footage.<sup>666</sup>

Like most organisations in Iraq, the channel suffered from the lack of security in the country. According to Isa Ayal, an Iraqi journalist and lecturer at Tikrit University, the station’s employees were targeted and killed by insurgent groups who considered the channel part of the American project in Iraq. Hussein Altikriti, head of the technician department, was killed in front of his house in 2005.<sup>667</sup> The Americans put security procedures in place to protect the contractor from the threat of kidnapping. The US military was committed to protecting its contractors, as the Salah Ad Din TV contract stated that, “the security and safety of our contractors are paramount to the success of Project and Contracting Office’s (PCO) Iraq reconstruction mission.”<sup>668</sup> However, this protection did not extend to the journalists working for the station. It is worth noting here that any missing, kidnapped or killed Iraqi journalists would not affect the project, but losing a contractor meant they also lost the money they had paid out.

Dr. Alsalihi said, “I supervised the channel for the first three years without being a member of the Board for security reasons. After my time there, I concluded that the news was almost always local and traditional as well. That did not surprise me, because there is a shortage of staff, especially the reporters. But when the Americans were financing the channel, there were more reporters, as the Americans were paying their salaries regardless of the

cost. Yes, it is a satellite channel but there is nothing international about its performance. One of the main reasons for this is that the staff are local. They could not see past this point and it created a mental barrier that affected the work of the station. Staff were open to influence from relationships with local contacts, compromising the station's impartiality. This is known as localisation sickness. But still the channel achieved the goal that prompted its creation, by reducing the violence in the province, and contributing to the defeat of Al-Qaeda groups. So I think it protected the souls of many of the Iraqis and the American soldiers. Besides that, it helped activate the political process in the province and the country through its programmes about the election and democracy.”<sup>669</sup>

Today's Board Director, Amer Ayash, describes the station in a few telling words: “The channel is a part of the chaos which covered Iraq after the invasion of 2003,”<sup>670</sup> the exact same words that Simon Haselock used to describe the Al-Iraqiyah project.<sup>671</sup>

## **Conclusion.**

Besides the strategic US plans, there were tactics for the use of the media in psychological warfare. In other words, sometimes they fixed their plans in response to the challenges they faced on the ground. So they created a plan which enabled the military to launch television channels in other provinces, or what are called ‘local channels’, the aim being to influence the locals and improve their opinions of the US forces. They felt a strong need for such projects, especially after their failure to win the hearts and the minds through Al-Iraqiyah. And their troops started facing hard resistance on the ground in specific provinces or cities. A telling example of one such station is Salah Ad Din TV, which was very much a case of challenge and response, as day by day the American troops started facing more attacks in the province of Salah Ad Din (the hometown of Saddam Hussein), so they had to try all the means they had to reduce these attacks. Salah Ad Din Channel was launched for tactical purposes and to serve the US military’s agenda. Also the US used it to justify their serious mistakes, for example killing civilians. This is why the US army gave the contract to non-professional individuals who were far from the

central media, making it easier for their soldiers to use them. It is important to highlight that there is a very big gap between what the US army wrote in their secret documents about the purpose of establishing Salah Ad Din Channel and their practices and its usage on the ground. Their documents say that it should be an independent and free channel, but on the ground they were controlling the editorial side of the channel and they used it to promote their point of view.

## **7. Chapter Seven: Personal Experience.**

### **7.1. First Impressions.**

I do not exaggerate when I say that it would be as easy as forgetting my own name, to forget the day the American forces began their invasion of Iraq. In March of 2003, when the invasion began, I was a military officer in the Iraqi army. I was in limbo about the situation. As a military officer, I had no choice but to defend my country. The problem was that I was defending not simply my country, but the regime of Saddam Hussein. The Americans' promise of democracy, free speech and liberty sounded enticing and something much needed in Iraq. I believed the American promises and the image in my mind, as American forces marched in on Baghdad, was of soldiers who would treat the Iraqi people as they would treat their own people. After all, they had arrived to share the ideals of America, and most importantly, ideals of freedom. I made my choice. I would leave the battlefield without shooting a single bullet. It was a difficult decision because I was sure that Baghdad, our beautiful capital, would collapse under foreign occupation, but perhaps that was the price for getting rid of Saddam.

I was a military officer with twelve years of hard service in the army, but I suddenly found myself out of work, sitting in the street. I felt I had lost my dignity. This was an unanticipated feeling, but it was only one of many unexpected things in the weeks after the 'liberation'. On 7<sup>th</sup> June 2003, at one o'clock in the morning, American troops raided my family home in my village of Duluhya, 80 km north of Baghdad. Infantry soldiers swarmed from every direction, backed by armed vehicles and tanks on the ground, helicopters from the sky and military boats from the river Tigris; the same river where we had once sat as a family, enjoying the moonlight, the palm trees and the sound of bird song as a gift from heaven.

After this harrowing experience, the Americans killed two of my uncles in cold blood. Four hundred people from my village were arrested, most of whom were friends or relatives, including my nephew who was five years old at the

time. The operation had been dubbed by American forces, "Peninsula Strike". They gave no reason for their actions and later recorded them as military 'mistakes', according to the American Military Commander in Iraq, General Sanchez.<sup>672</sup> I asked a very young American soldier what we had done to deserve all of this. I asked why they had killed my two elderly uncles. It took him a while to respond, and when he did he had tears in his eyes. He told me that, after what he had seen, when he finished his time in the army he would leave and never re-enlist. The media coverage of the operation in my village would later prove to be a huge disappointment. Every newspaper and television station reported the story from conflicting angles. Now working as a journalist, I too reported the story in my newspaper, Iraq Today, trying to record it as it should have been recorded.<sup>673</sup> Shortly after, General Sanchez asked to see me following a press conference in the Convention Centre in Baghdad. He told me that my story was incorrect. I responded that it was true, but he insisted that my story on Peninsula Strike had no truth behind it. His tone grew angry and he proceeded to call me a liar. My final response to General Sanchez was, "It is true. I know it to be true because it happened to my own family and I was a direct eyewitness." He gave an odd little smile and took his leave.<sup>674</sup> I feared for some reprisal following my encounter with General Sanchez, but none came.

## **7.2. The Gap between American Promises and Practices.**

Like many Iraqis living under Saddam Hussein, I dreamed of exercising my right to freedoms of speech and expression; but under a totalitarian regime that suppresses free speech and seeks to control public opinion to keep itself in power, it could only be a dream. Saddam used the media as a means of control. The public was fed only information dictated by the regime. The Iraqi government at that time was running the media for its own ends and, as a result, local media organisations were an unquestioning reflection of the government's policies, views and agenda. Like most governments in the Middle East, Iraq's government saw the media as a means to achieve its own goals. For that reason, I couldn't work as a journalist until Saddam's

government was toppled. Naively, I thought that the right time for me to step into journalism had come, along with the invading troops and the values their nations stood for. I was lured by the promise of free speech and unprecedented media freedoms, as conveyed by top American officials and generals before the invasion.

I had served as a major in the Iraqi army before the invasion, and when western powers came to the streets of my hometown, I felt the urge to start reporting on the new Iraq, despite the many calls to resist the occupation I received from some of my former Iraqi army colleagues. While my colleagues thought the only way to regain Iraq's sovereignty was through armed resistance, I firmly believed that the written word would be the way forward. Amid the worsening security situation and the declining living conditions in post-invasion Iraq, I would be a defender of my country, not by way of the gun, but by a notebook, a pen and a rather new contraption to me at the time: a digital camera. But my hope of exercising free speech in a free media was quickly shattered. It happened while I was reporting a story for Iraq Today, a post-Saddam English language newspaper that I joined after the invasion. The story detailed the killing of a former Iraqi colonel, Amer Al-Obaidi, who was killed in cold blood in front of his family. Colonel Al-Obaidi was killed in his house by American forces, who alleged that he was involved in fighting American troops in an area in Saladin province. Al-Obaidi was killed without any charges or court hearings.<sup>675</sup>

Soon after the story came out in Iraq Today, I was threatened by a Lieutenant Colonel Sprinman, fourth battalion commander, fourth division of the US army. Although I had documents and interviews that supported all the details in my story, he accused me of publishing lies. He was speaking to me with anger and his right hand was on his pistol. It was another hard lesson for me.<sup>676</sup> The incident awakened me to a hard truth: Iraq's occupiers had no respect for human rights and little time for a free media. They were using the media as another weapon in their war, and any critical material it might put out was unwelcome. Until then, I had not given up on the state of the media in Iraq, hoping that the new Iraqi officials who had lived in exile in Europe and the US, might stand up to any violations. But not long after the formation of

the first democratic Iraqi government, I started to realise that the new leaders were not so different from Saddam Hussein when it came to controlling the media and harnessing it for their own political ends.

It is true that since the invasion in 2003, a media revolution of sorts has taken place in Iraq. The number of new newspapers, news channels and radio stations has multiplied significantly, but that plethora of media outlets came at great expense.

Before the war, media organisations were governed by laws and regulations, including many of a severely restrictive nature. After the war, our journalists and media organisations had to abide by three inadequate legal provisions introduced by Paul Bremer, an American and the administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq at the time. These new laws were ineffective. They did not protect journalists, nor their organisations, from interfering local and foreign authorities, or even individuals. At the same time, neither the public nor the authorities were themselves protected from the media. As a result, the government adopted a range of punitive measures against journalists, starting with criminal and anti-terrorism laws. It is easy to imagine the hurdles that local journalists had to try to overcome under these circumstances, if they were to have any hope of reporting with integrity.

After Iraq Today was shut down, I started looking for an independent media organisation to work for, but despite the multitude of media outlets, I was unable to find one. What I found instead was far from perfect. Instead of dealing with a central dictatorship as in the past, I found that journalists now had to deal with many different dictatorships; regional, sectarian and partisan. It has become so difficult to work in this environment that most journalists found they had to be of a certain ethnic or religious group, or have certain party affiliations, to hold the ability to report on stories. I therefore considered myself very fortunate when Reuters started a new Iraqi news agency, Voices of Iraq, and offered me a position from its launch.

My experience at Iraq Today and the Reuters venture exposed me to British journalists with high journalistic values, from whom I sharpened my skills as a reporter. This exposure made me keen to find new opportunities, such as

studying journalism at British universities to gain a better understanding of the profession. I then applied for courses in Britain and held hopes that the situation in Iraq might improve by the time I finished any overseas studies.

### **7.3. Learning Media Practices from the Home of Journalism.**

In 2005 I was admitted to City University in London to do an MA in journalism, and I found the experience enriching, although the course was based on televised journalism, which I had no experience in. I did not even know the term 'piece to camera'. I therefore found myself climbing an incredibly steep learning curve to keep up with the course's syllabus. In August 2006 I finished my degree, which was a great personal conquest, but the real challenge came when trying to get a foot-hold in the door of British media. By then, the situation in Iraq had turned from bad to worse, delving into utter chaos. Sectarian or ethnic cleansing campaigns were under way and some of Iraq's new leaders were involved, using their clout and powerful positions. Iraqi security forces, made up predominantly of Shiites, were used to kill people from other sects using the so-called 'War on Terror' as a pretext. On the other side of the conflict, Sunni militias were responsible for killings of both Sunni and Shiite civilians.

The Iraqi media's position on this conflict was a big disappointment. Instead of being independent, the media supported the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), which was infiltrated by Shiite militias, especially Al-Mahdi Army and Bader Brigades; to kidnap, arrest, torture and kill Sunnis. Every day there was a massacre, with the situation particularly severe in Baghdad, as the conflict over who would control the capital continued.

### **7.4. The Death Squads.**

While all this violence was happening in Iraq, I was contacted by Deborah Davies, a journalist for Channel 4 in London. She wanted to work with me on a Dispatches documentary in Iraq about the death squads in the MOI. We met

at the Channel 4 building where she explained the project to me, and I agreed to participate as an associate producer and cameraman, even though I was aware of the risks involved.

I asked myself whether telling the story was worth the personal risks and decided that it was. I knew there were thousands of people who would likely be tortured, raped or murdered and I found it my responsibility as a journalist to tell the story. I was also hoping to expose the reality of the American scheme in Iraq and their new 'democratic' Iraqi government in Baghdad. I wanted to raise awareness in the international community about the crimes committed in the name of democracy and human rights, and I hoped that by doing so the international community would be involved in helping save millions of lives.

Even for a professional journalist such as Deborah Davies, doing the documentary would be a challenge. "My biggest concern was the lack of access to people because it's always about talking to ordinary people. So if we went to Baghdad in those bad old days, we would have to stay in the Green Zone because for us, as a western TV crew, to go outside the Green Zone is suicide," Deborah Davis said. "So we had to ask someone to do it [with] us, and that person was you."

"For me, that was the biggest problem. We even considered embedding with the US or British Army, which wasn't ideal, but we thought it might be a way at least to go out on the streets. Neither the Americans nor the British allowed it, however, leaving us without any support. We finally managed to get some footage by contacting local cameramen who agreed to sell us footage they had already taken, or that they would shoot for us in dangerous places like Sadr City. In Basra, the Americans did not understand what we were doing because we were not reporting breaking news, nor were we doing a straightforward documentary about their troops, which was what most of the other networks had done up to that point. We were also unable to disclose what we were exactly doing, since it was critical of them and the Iraqi government at the time. So the first couple of days were frightening and

challenging. Our first reaction after arriving there was how would we get anything at all out of the trip?"<sup>677</sup>

I was worried about the future of my family who were all in Iraq at that time. I was afraid that doing the documentary would endanger them by making them targets for militants seeking revenge. But, despite this, I went ahead with the project and started working with the team which consisted of Deborah Davies, producer Charlie Haws, and myself. From the beginning, it was easy for us to find stories about the victims of the death squads on the internet. The hard part was to find the people affected and get in touch with them; a task that naturally fell to me as the local journalist in the team. Conducting the research with Deborah and Charlie was very beneficial to me, and I learnt many lessons about high-standard journalism working with them.

Deborah Davies relied very much on the research I had done as she tried to get to the bottom of story. She told me: "Before I met you I spent a lot of time researching who was being killed in Iraq. I wanted to understand who was killing who and why, and it was clear to me that it went beyond the casualties from suicide bombings. I wanted to understand why so many bodies were being found every day, especially in Baghdad. We knew that what was needed to tell this story were the painful experiences of ordinary people. So we needed you to find at least two strong stories that accurately reflected the bigger picture to explain what was going on. We wanted to combine your abilities with our way of working, and actually you did incredibly well; we could not have made the programme without you."<sup>678</sup>

After the research, the team bought me a camera, taught me how to use it and how to get useable footage. I then flew to Baghdad on my own to arrange things for the rest of the crew; establishing contacts, arranging footage and gathering stories. When I left Heathrow airport, I kept looking from the window of the plane because I worried I might not make it back to London. I was going to film the death squads in Iraq, so I knew I had to be in close proximity to them and their victims to get the right footage to tell the real story. I couldn't help but imagine what they would do if they found out someone was filming an exposé on them.

Secondly, being Sunni, with a Sunni name, I could be considered a natural target of the Shiite death squads. I could have been stopped at any checkpoint and killed for no more reason than my ethnic background. Thirdly, I was acting as an agent of western media, which to them, made me a traitor who deserved to die. Finally, in my hometown, which was controlled by radical, Sunni militias, many people knew that I was studying in the UK, something that might also get me killed. I was constantly troubled by these thoughts. The glimmer of hope that kept pushing me forward, however, stemmed from my belief that it was simply a case of doing the right thing.

I planned to stop by my family, my parents and my nine siblings, the day I arrived in Iraq and spend the day with them in Duluhiya. As I landed in Baghdad, I had to think immediately about how to get through airport security, being one of the places where the death squads identified their victims. I was faced with two problems. The first was carrying a camera, which could reveal me as a journalist. Journalists were keenly wanted by the death squads in a general attempt to quell any reports on their atrocities; especially within western media.

It did not take long for my concerns to be justified. I was stopped by airport security, who proceeded to interrogate me about the camera, but, in a turn of fate, a passing American patrol ordered that they let me through. I took a cab and spent a few hours with my uncle in Baghdad, waiting for nightfall to drive to my hometown covertly. I arrived at my family's house after sunset that day and was shocked to see cars of Sunni militias patrolling the main street. I wondered where the American or Iraqi troops were. I could not even see any Iraqi police amongst the streets. My uncle told me to "just keep quiet and no one will recognise you." I then felt that I was in very dangerous circumstances. I arrived home and spent the first night sitting nervously with my family. When I went to sleep, I took a rifle with me to bed just in case of an emergency. I spent two days indoors for fear of being seen in the neighbourhood.

I decided I had to tell my father about the story, who encouragingly said, "If you can do something for those innocent people who are losing their lives for

no reason, without being guilty yourself, then do not hesitate to report on them; but always take care, and remember that we love you.” I told my family that I could not come back to see them again throughout the visit and, the following morning, I set out.

I travelled to Baghdad with my uncle. We left in the early hours to avoid being stopped by the militants at one of their checkpoints. The first thing I had to deal with when I got to Baghdad was my accommodation. Channel 4 had booked me a place at a western company close to the Green Zone. The place was full of bodyguards for Iraq’s top officials, so I decided it was a bad idea and that the best thing I could do would be to live as close as possible to ordinary Iraqis. By doing so I would be safer, and I would also have better access to their stories. I could find out what was really going on.

I chose to stay in Al-Khadraa district because it was mainly a Sunni district, but that was problematic too because I might be captured by Sunni militants or Al-Qaeda fighters operating in that area.

So, the first lesson I learned was how to work in a hostile environment, and it was the toughest lesson I have faced. I had to survive, find stories, film them and get out with the footage. Time seemed to pass very slowly indeed, and I found myself wishing I could be like an ordinary Iraqi and be a target to just one group or the other, instead of being a journalist and being targeted by both Sunni and Shiite militants.

I was lucky to find two friends who were willing to look after me, and even join me sometimes when I went out to work. They helped me as I fixed a timetable for my work and made a list of the places I needed to visit. I started with NGOs, such as the Red Crescent, in order to find out what was going on and gather any stories they might be able to share. Then I went to the Iraqi television stations, including Baghdad TV, but they were of little help because they had not covered any relative stories and did not want any involvement in my work. Some reluctance to have affiliation with reporting of such a dangerous topic was to be expected, and sometimes people asked me to come by again instead of a flat refusal, although I never made a return visit to any establishments in order to keep my movements from being easily traced.

I started to realise that it was my personal contacts who were the most helpful, and I asked them to lead me to the families of the death squad victims. I knew the stories would be shocking, and the first one I came across was just that. It was the story of Sheik Hameed Al-Sarheed and his seven sons. The Death Squads had visited his house one night in a military-style raid. They murdered him and five of his family members, leaving six widows and more than ten orphans behind. As a journalist, I wanted both sides of the story, but the death squads were violent and untrustworthy and, after speaking with their government representatives, I was still unable to speak to any of their members.<sup>679</sup>

I was disappointed with the results of the trip, but Deborah believed my role was essential, which uplifted me. "The programme without you would not have happened," she told me. "We got a lot of material from Baghdad that you shot, like the story of the house of six widows, the man in the mosque, and the widow who was living in a school with her children. We did the analysis and you brought the stories to illustrate that. So it was a mix between analysis and reportage."<sup>680</sup>

In some cases there was considerable risk, such as my visit to the Headquarters of the Muslim Scholars Association in Baghdad's Umm Al-Qura mosque. The place was known to be hostile towards western media and was suspected of involvement in the violence. My close friends begged me not to go, but I knew victims' families and displeased Sunnis too scared to venture into the Green Zone to complain, who visited the place to register their names and ask for help. I thought it was important to film it and I went to ask for their permission. They granted my request.

Two weeks later, the English staff arrived in Baghdad, which made me even more nervous. The western media were widely considered to be collaborators with the coalition forces in Iraq, and all the militant groups were therefore hostile towards them. I felt I was responsible for the safety of the crew as I knew the country much better than they did, and they put their trust in me. I wanted to prove that I was worthy of their trust by delivering them safely to their families. The troubles in Iraq had made many people in Baghdad highly

partisan, loyal to one or other militant group, and I knew I had to keep the crew away from these people as best I could, if everyone was to leave Iraq safely with the material to finish the documentary.

Deborah Davies told me: "I said when we met...[that] leaving the Green Zone was suicide, and to ask Iraqis to meet us inside the Green Zone was equally dangerous for them. Many people have been spotted coming into the zone and then murdered because they were accused of collaborating with the US. So we couldn't get out to meet people, and they couldn't get in to meet us."

Despite the difficulties, the team still needed to be in touch with regular people if they were to record their pain and suffering. The first trip outside the Green Zone that I arranged for the team was to meet Mohammed Al-Daini, an Iraqi MP who had documents purporting to show the abuse, torture and murder of prisoners at the hands of the Iraqi police, which was infiltrated by the militias and their death squads. Al-Daini met us with six cars full of his bodyguards. I was wary, even of high officials, because all the militias had representatives in the Iraq government. I therefore asked him to let me drive one of the vehicles and requested that he travel in it alongside the crew. I felt relieved to see that the driver, while I was unaware, had left me a Kalashnikov by the car seat. Even though under normal circumstances it wouldn't be an ethical practice for a journalist to be armed, this was, in no uncertain terms, a matter of life and death.

As a note of reassurance in my first television expedition, under difficult circumstances, Deborah Davies said to me, "Every day you amaze me...in terms of trusting you in a place like Baghdad, in such a serious situation, we would not have gone ahead unless we were certain that we could trust you." These words meant a lot to me at that stage of my career.

When we left Iraq we worried that the mini-cassettes which had all our material would be taken at Baghdad airport, so our cameraman hid them among his equipment and we left without any problems. To protect myself and my family, I decided my involvement should be un-credited. My decision to remain anonymous was because the story revealed the involvement of

powerful American and Iraqi figures, and I deemed the risks to my family too big to take.

There is no place in the “new democratic Iraq” for the truth. All journalists there are expected to do is appreciate the authorities’ nonexistent achievements. We are told that we should act like the new Iraqi media organisations formed by the US, and never criticise their policies. It would be hard for the leaders of the “new democratic Iraq” to be criticised by a programme on a British channel. They find it hard to accept that criticism from an allied country’s media is acceptable, but this is not how the British media operates.

Deborah Davies told me: “We had no limitation in terms of our brief, only from the safety point of view, but nobody told us not to do something; just whether we could prove it from a journalistic and legal point of view. We had to satisfy the editor and the lawyer. The allegations in our programme were so strong, and the harder the allegations, the greater the corroboration you need. And in our case, all our sources - Iraqi , British and American – all fitted together.”

I never expected the Iraqi media to report this story, but what surprised me most was the reaction from America’s CNN. The American network bought our footage to make a version for CNN, but their version was nothing like ours. CNN's bureau chief was very concerned, for good reason, that broadcasting the film on CNN would make the channel appear to be anti-Shiite and biased towards the Sunnis. In Baghdad, that would be a death warrant for their own staff who were already risking their lives.

It was a subject of huge debate at the channel. I spoke to a senior CNN executive in the UK who saw our version. She said she thought it was fantastic, and that her first reaction was that “we should put this out totally unchanged. But back in the US, the people at CNN decided it would be unwise to do that because it also showed the Americans as deserving some of the blame. So they put it through what they call their ‘filters’ to add in more US voices, and they also did an embed with US soldiers and used their own correspondent. The end result was a much less edgy programme.”<sup>681</sup>

Our film won a Royal Television Award (2005-2006) and, at a large ceremony in London attended by some of the most famous people in the media world, I stood alongside the crew to collect the trophy. Everyone asked me not to go up on stage with the crew because they were concerned about my safety, but I told them that we should not hide from those who might wish us ill; instead, we should show ourselves and they should be the ones to hide. I stood on the stage proudly as our film was described as the best documentary aired in the UK that year. On my way back to our table someone stopped me and asked me how long I had worked on documentary films. I told him this was the first TV work for me after finishing my course at City University. He said, "Do you know that I have been working in the TV world for twenty years and I did not get this award?" "There is no story in Hyde Park," I told him, "The stories are in the nations where there is conflict and danger, so we have to go there to make a strong one."

I still believe that. If we want to tell a good story we have to brave hostile environments and find the untold stories. That was one of the lessons I learned from making the death squads film.

The last important lesson I learnt was in London, and it was a hard one. At the ceremony they gave us a trophy. The Managing Director of Quicksilver Media, Eamonn Matthews, told us that we would each receive our trophy, which would be mailed to our addresses. Everyone in the crew received their trophies except me.

I called him to ask about it and he told me that he would send it, but it never arrived. It was hard for me because I compared his attitude towards me in his country with my attitude towards his crew in Iraq. I risked my life and in return he simply discriminated against me.

This hurt me a lot because I am quite sure that he did not send me the trophy because I am Iraqi. This was the last lesson: that there are some people in the media who think it is acceptable to use others for financial gain, while failing to display appreciation for their work. It should be an ongoing goal to show such individuals within the industry that we must live and work together as equals.

### **7.5. Working within an Iraqi-Exiled Channel**

Following the documentary, I worked for two and a half years as a TV reporter for Al-Sharqiyah TV, an Iraqi station based in London.

I enjoyed my experience with Al-Sharqiyah, where I ran talk shows with selected figures and produced and presented a weekly fifteen minute programme called Morasiloon (Reporters). It focused on cultural, historical and educational issues. I had a great deal of editorial freedom and tried through this programme to give my fellow Iraqis an insight into Britain, ending each time with a message to them about the UK: how the British think, how they behave, how they respect their history and preserve historic sites. I enjoyed making the programme a great deal, especially the autonomy to make the programme how I wanted, without restriction. But after two years of working within the channel, they recruited a news director, who had no experience within the editorial side of media practice. I found working underneath such an inexperienced director very difficult, especially communicating with him about the day-to-day work of the channel. When I finally decided to leave, he asked me why I was leaving, stating that he liked my work. My answer to him was frank and honest; that I could not stay because the communication between him and myself was not effective. My surprise overwhelmed me when he responded with the question, “What does ‘communication’ mean?” I could not have asked for firmer reassurance that my decision to leave was the right one. What is perhaps most amazing, is that the comparison between Al Sharqiyah and other Iraqi channels, leaves Al Sharqiyah standing in a very positive light against the extremely unprofessional practices of other stations.

### **7.6. Back to International Standards.**

Seeking a more professional environment in which to work, I joined a British team working for the Bureau of Investigative Journalism based at City University. The project was a documentary film for Channel 4 and Al Jazeera English, about US documents from the Pentagon that had been leaked by the

whistle-blowing website Wikileaks. The aim was to turn these leaked documents into a documentary film.

It was a great experience for me, but it was also very painful. While I was reading some of the American documents, I saw how much disrespect the Americans paid Iraqis, especially when it came to the lives of innocent people. I saw how easy it had been for American soldiers to put an end to the lives of tens of thousands of Iraqis. But I took some comfort from the fact that I was working with a British media organisation that was determined to tell the true story of the war, instead of working to justify the mistakes of the politicians. After collecting some strong stories from the leaked files, I did my best to find the Iraqis who were a part of these stories; eye witnesses or victims, and then compare what happened on the ground with how the Americans had reported it. There was often a yawning gap between reality and the American reports.

Since some of the documents had gone through the public affairs office of the American Army in Iraq, it meant that the public had been deceived by the official American military statements. I felt that this was an area that would benefit from further study, and while going through the documents, I came across some that I will use in my academic work.

As a part of our work, we established iraqwarlogs.com. This allowed us to give further exposure to the leaked documents' contents which exposed America's actions and policies throughout the occupation. The website has won the Amnesty International award on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2011. Amongst the other nominees were The Guardian and Channel 4.

### **7.7. Face-to-Face with Embedded Journalism.**

About two weeks after the film aired on Channel 4 and Al Jazeera, I received an email from the American State Department offering me, along with five other Arab journalists, a media tour to Afghanistan for six days from 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

I thought it would be a good opportunity to see the situation first hand, deepen my knowledge and add something new to my journalistic career. So I accepted the offer and went as a one man team; I was the cameraman and the reporter at the same time. It would be hard to do, especially in a country like Afghanistan, but I accepted the challenge. In the back of my mind was that, in my thesis, I had written about embedded journalism, and I thought this would be a good chance to experience it myself and perhaps make a more informed judgment.

I travelled to Kabul where I met a representative from the American embassy, a public diplomacy officer named Mattern Daniels. I was surprised when he handed me the schedule of our tour, since it consisted mainly of meetings with American and British high officials. There were also planned visits to a media centre, a seed factory, some traditional industries and a candy factory. I asked him how I could make my television story without being in touch with the people of Afghanistan; without having a tour of the market? How could I do a story from a candy factory? How can I do a story about the seed industry without visiting a single farmer at work on his farm? I told him that the basis of television work is that if you do not have the footage, you do not have a story. The Americans did not give us a chance to film what we needed of normal life in Afghanistan. I found plenty of stories, but I had just the American side and nothing about the Afghani people themselves. When I got back to London, I realised that the imbalanced nature of the material gathered would not be sufficient for me to produce an objective report. This ultimately meant that, given the expenditure of time and money, and even the risk to my life, the project did not result in any tangible outcomes. My professionalism within my journalistic role, therefore, overrode any sense of loss.

The experience was a fair representation of American techniques when dealing with journalists in a post-war environment. Although they did not prevent us from filming, nor from criticising their work at all, they did occupy us with a very busy schedule, taking us only to the sites that they had planned for beforehand. It was a sophisticated form of media manipulation.

Throughout my journey, I have realised that a small article could do what thousands of fighters could not, and do it peacefully; effectively embedding opinions in the minds of the masses. I made a commitment to harness this power for good, but I knew that with that choice I would have to be a stranger in my own community, because most of my community do not believe in the media. They hold what I consider to be a very out-dated belief: that fighting is the only way to achieve change. I have truly learnt firsthand how dangerous the media can be, how it can be more dangerous than any physical weapon known to man.

## **Conclusion: Summing up the Research Outcomes.**

It is clear from the outset that to establish genuine democracy you cannot simply export it from overseas countries; the political, military and economic agendas will control the scene and influence the plans. The American occupation of Iraq is a good example of this: their democratisation projects looked good on paper, but on the ground these genuine projects came up against the interests of US politicians and the US military, so they weren't followed through on. They promised freedom of speech, but when this freedom hurt the US's image, showed their mistakes or disclosed the hidden side of their agendas, they did not want to promote it.

In approaching the conclusion of this study, I would like to highlight the general argument in a few lines. Going back over the history of the USA as a dominant global political and military power, one can conclude that psychological warfare has been one of the priorities within US tactics and strategic operations. It seems to be a part of their military dogma, and it has a major influence on their plans and performance. And they always attempt to use the media as a tool in their psychological war, especially when they occupy countries, and supervise and build up the media organisations in these countries.

For instance, during the American occupation in Germany and Japan, American troops used psychological warfare, exploiting the German or Japanese media to promote their occupation and political plan as positive to the countries' populations. To enhance US goals, the American army dissolved the local media in both countries and created entirely new media establishments. They deployed the media in these occupied countries to promote their image, and criticism was not allowed at all. Yet still they were speaking about freedom of speech and how it was essential to build up a democratic country. From the outcomes of the research I cannot see any difference between the dictator's point of view about free media and the US point of view. Both speak about freedom of speech, but the voice which they give to the media only allows journalists to appreciate them, not to criticise.

The surprise came when America invaded Iraq in 2003, over half a century after the last conflict with Germany and Japan, and they applied policies in Iraq which had many parallels to those of the previous occupations. There was a fatal lack of understanding of the stark cultural, socio-political and geographical differences between the different nations. Consequently, the US army dissolved the Iraqi media as the first step in a plan to launch a new 'custom made' media landscape. They promised that they would build a media institution that would match the independence and professionalism of the BBC. These promises seemed to usher in a new era of professionalism in the history of Iraqi media. However, US policies quickly lifted the veil on their claims, exposing the strategic and tactical intentions behind their creation and supervision of the new Iraqi media organisations. When the Iraqi TV shift from Saddam's speeches to Paul Bremer media conferences. This came as a big disappointment for us, as we had been promised a new era in freedom of speech.

The US had the intention of using the media in Iraq for their own sake so they selected a group of exiled Iraqis, who were supposedly journalists and other professionals before the war, to assemble a team to work in the body of the new Iraqi media. However, the intention behind this recruitment drive was thrown into question, when they used these individuals during the war as part of the American psychological warfare that coincided with military operations. Those selected Iraqis (many of whom were previously exiled) played a central role within America's task of ensuring that the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) served its purpose as a mouthpiece for the occupying forces. But from a professional point of view, their contribution did not enrich the quality of the organisation's output, and allowed unethical and gravely unprofessional practices. This left the institution vulnerable to hard criticism, affecting its stability and credibility.

Instead of judging the existing professional Iraqi journalists on their individual merits, the Americans, along with their imported Iraqi exiles, considered them all to be Ba'ath sympathisers at best, if not Saddam loyalists. They then proceeded to push the journalists out of the organisation, and replaced them with staff that did not hold the necessary qualifications and experience to fulfil

the roles. Many of the journalists who were fired worked for international media organisations, and they were very successful. Because they had the skills, all they needed was the right environment. The lack of experience of the staff who were employed by the US resulted in many fatal problems, like the weak performance of the media, and the unjustified ethical mistakes.

The US army awarded the central contract for the establishment of the new large-scale organisation to US companies, including the SAIC company; all these companies had absolutely no experience within the sphere of professional media. This outcome showed that it does not matter who you are, but who you know. This is why SAIC won the contract. This step greatly contributed to the worsening of the situation, widening the gap between professional standards and the performance of the new Iraqi media. The Americans awarded the contract to SAIC because it was not a matter of what the Iraqi media was going to be, but what the media could do for the American politicians and army. It was built up to play a vital role in the psychological warfare.

During that time, the US army started suffering on the ground from the insurgents' pressure on their troops. The number of US casualties rose day by day. A valid theory is that they started paying the price for their unfair policies in Iraq, such as dissolving the Iraqi army, security forces, media establishments and many other entities, as well as the terrible treatment of Iraqi civilians, including random killings of innocent people. These events created a large gap between the US troops and the Iraqi community, resulting in America's failure to fulfil any sincere intentions that they might have had to stabilise and develop the country after their invasion.

The American Civil Administration in Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), felt that they had lost their prestige and reputation in Iraq more than anywhere else in the world. They therefore decided to launch a new psychological operation to win the 'hearts and minds' of the people.

One of the many tools of the US's psychological warfare was the IMN. The Americans used the channel massively, until the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) (*Al-Iraqiyah*) became the mouthpiece of the US army and the CPA. They used

the channel for tactical purposes to win the war in Iraq, regardless of their promises made before the war to create an independent media in Iraq. The result was that the IMN lost its credibility as a professional and impartial deliverer of news, and the subsequent fall in ratings was further proof of the fact.

In spite of being the beneficiary of contracts worth tens of millions of US dollars, the performance of the channel was far from international standards of quality and professionalism. This was due to the fact that the controllers of the organisation saw the role of the channel as that of a tool, to be used as necessary to achieve the goals of the Iraqi and American authorities. This fundamental misunderstanding overlooked the fact that the role of such a channel is to act as a public service, with the fulfilment of its duties to deliver uncoloured, impartial and professional information to the public.

There was, therefore, an urgent need for new media legislation, to establish rules and regulations that ensured the relationship between the media and the government consisted of sound ethics; that employees of media institutions would be allowed to report objectively without fear, and that there was integrity in the reports that were broadcasted to the public.

But the US and Iraqi Governments failed to establish the necessary legislation as, although they saw the need, they were also aware that the laws would protect the IMN from their influence, tying their hands from using it as a propaganda tool. As a result, they ignored the huge effort that was undertaken by international professionals and NGOs to help build a framework of new media legislation in Iraq. Many of the channels established did indeed have charters drawn up by the Americans. The ideals within these pages of policy were indeed admirable, but the reality is that they were nothing more than protective measures to distance the American authorities from any blame of misconduct. The implemented policies of the Americans within the organisations contradicted these charters to the degree where a total lack of journalistic integrity resulted from them. The violation of the charters' policies was so widespread and far-reaching, that the actual ownership of channels

that should be publicly owned was often given to the Iraqi Government, and even individual citizens.

The remarkable development in the number and variety of television channels, radio stations and daily papers after the invasion was a natural catalyst for the deliverance of more objective reporting, ushering in more criticism of the US's policies and mistakes in Iraq. In reaction to this, the US established the Baghdad Club, recruiting and training Iraqis to implement the directives of the project. The club's aim was to buy coverage from Iraqi journalists, without the knowledge of the journalists' broadcasters or publishers. In return for payment, the journalists would cover specific events chosen by the US army in a specific light, and publish or air the resulting stories. This new technique, which to this day America still denies took place, enabled the Americans to further spread its control and influence over other areas of local media. The American Army broke ethical rules by trying to publish biased information through the media which show the real role of the media from their perspective. They also encouraged Iraqi journalists to carry out non-ethical practices, regardless of the impact such policies would have on the future of the Iraqi media.

The Americans felt it was not enough to have a central channel in Baghdad, so they set about a plan which enabled the military to launch television channels in other provinces, a part of their tactical psychological war operation, the aim being to influence the locals and improve their opinions of the US forces. These local media projects were supposed to help provide safety for their troops. They felt a strong need for such projects, especially after their failure to influence Arabic channels like Al-Jazeera and *Al-Arabiah*; these two channels played a vital role in the coverage of Iraqi issues in a notably professional way, or, at least, outside of the American and the Iraqi Governments' influence. A telling example of one such local station was *Salah Ad Din* Channel, which was very much a case of challenge and response, as opposed to conducting carefully considered plans in dealing with the reconstruction of Iraq after the invasion. The US established this channel in the hometown of Saddam Hussein, because it was one of the hot spots from a security point of view. The gap between the US and the locals was very

wide, so the Americans needed a bridge between them and the local people in this province, especially as their troops were under heavy attacks. This was the main reason behind the establishing of *Salah Ad Din* Channel: to reduce the attacks by reaching the hearts and the minds of the local people by broadcasting positive messages on the channel. So *Salah Ad Din* Channel was part of the psychological warfare strategy to support the military operation on the ground.

Once the US army had finished their military operations they handed the *Salah Ad Din* Channel over to the channel's contractor, in spite of documentation saying that the channel is owned by the people of *Salah Ad Din*. They did this as a reward for the contractor who had served the US during the difficult times. The contractor then insisted the channel contract was given to a tribal sheikh who had no link with the media at all and ignored all the professionals' demands to give the contract to someone who has experience in journalism. This was done because they needed someone who could turn the channel to serve the US agenda in the province; someone who would not say 'no' or not obey an order.

Also the US army published local newspapers in small villages, like *Yathrib* newspaper, to secure their forces. They would pay a group of non-professionals to publish a local newspaper in *Yathrib* Village near the biggest US military base to publish positive news about the Americans' reconstruction projects in the area, to reconcile the people to their presence in the Area in the hope of avoiding attacks. They would punish the newspaper staff if they criticised the US army by cutting the money. So the staff got paid if they wrote positively and the payments got stopped if they criticised the US army or wrote negative stories about killing civilians, corruption, or any other wrong behaviour of the US army. So again the staff of *Yathrib* newspaper had the freedom to appreciate the US army policies and practices but they did not have the right to criticise them. Here I would like to highlight that similarly, Iraqi journalists had the full right to appreciate Saddam's government under Saddam, and similarly there were no limits placed on the appreciation. There appears to be no difference between dictatorship and superpowers – they both want us to pray for them.

After the US handed authority to the Iraqi Government, they continued with the same policies, attempting to control the media. The Iraqi Government ignored all efforts to establish new media legislation and kept using CPA law number 14 to justify their aggressive policies towards other organisations who refused to dance to the same tune. They also kept to the same course for *Al-Iraqiyah* (IMN) and their other organisations. To this day Iraqis are living with the consequences of the establishment and maintenance of a state-run media that, instead of serving the people in the deliverance of useful and truthful news, continues to manipulate what should be a public service, to ensure the privileged at the top of Iraqi society retain their position. The impact of ignoring the establishment of media legislation to organise the relationship between the media, the government and society continues to be felt up to the present day, as the Iraqi Government also followed the same US rules of using the media for their political agenda and military purposes. We are therefore back to the state-run media again, a free media to serve politicians and not to criticise.

This study shows that the media in Iraq has always been used to serve the politicians' and military's agendas. And the media cannot perform its genuine roles effectively when they are controlled, gagged or suppressed by the military force or political leaders in an authoritarian state. Building a true healthy society needs a truly free independent media in order to establish a stable and safe country.

### **Future Research.**

The Iraqi media under the American occupation has experienced tremendous changes. It has been expanded from a draconian state-run press into a relatively free and open arena. However, the US management of this media has performed poorly, as detailed in this thesis, due to cultural misunderstandings and dictation by US military and foreign policy managers. This mistaken and wrong-headed approach has resulted in a sectarian media divided along ethnic and sectarian lines.

Moreover the mismanagement has ushered in fragile institutions which fall

short of the standards hoped for in the post occupation Iraq. One suggested field of future research would be a study into ways that could improve the current media situation in Iraq, and assist in establishing sound, grassroots institutions and media regulating boards. Such research could also help identify ways to decrease the detrimental effect of media institutions which are not independent and most importantly help to ascertain professional means through which the Iraqi media might conform to accepted international standards. It is important that Iraqi journalists should know the difference between being a journalist and being a propagandist.

## End Notes:

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- <sup>622</sup> Face to face Interview with Former Gen in the Iraqi Army Amer Shia, and the former Dean of The war Collage – Alabaker University for the strategic military studies, 5Aprile2010.
- <sup>623</sup> Face to face interview with Mr. Raad Khatab, the American Army advisor in the province of Salah Din, 2003-2010, date, 29-2-2010.
- <sup>624</sup> Email Interview with Mr. Saad Alsalihi, the spokesman of the Collation Forces in the North and Middle of Iraq 2004-2008, date 10-July-2010.
- <sup>625</sup> Phone Interview with Mr. Saad Alsalihi, the spokesman of the Collation Forces in the North and Middle of Iraq 2004-2008, 30- date July - 2010.
- <sup>626</sup> Face to face interview with Dr. Salam Khatab, a member of the Board of Salah Din channel, then a lecturer at the collage of media-Tikrit University, date 14-Augest-2010.
- <sup>627</sup> Phone interview with Sheik Hawas , the first contractor and Director of Salah Din TV Channel, 2005-2006, date 20-8-2010.
- <sup>628</sup> The American Army Documents, 12 August, 2006the wire transfer of the money Transfer form.
- <sup>629</sup> The American Documents, Solicitation /Contract/Order for commercial items, Section C – Statement of Work, p2.
- <sup>630</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>631</sup> Interview with Raad Khatab, op. cit.
- <sup>632</sup> phone interview with Mr. Saad Alsalihi, the spokesman of the Collation Forces in the North and Middle of Iraq 2004-2008, 10-July-2010.
- <sup>633</sup> The American Forces Documents, 2005, Salah Ad Din TV Charter, Statement of purpose, Article 1, p1.
- <sup>634</sup> Interview with Dr. Salam Khatab, op.cit.
- <sup>635</sup> Ibid. Also face to face interview with Jamal Asker a journalist and a Tutor at the Collage of Media- Salah Din University, 17 August 2009.
- <sup>636</sup> The American Army Documents, 2005solicitation contract, Op.cit, p5.
- <sup>637</sup> Interview with Dr. Salam Khatab, Op. cit.
- <sup>638</sup> Face to face interview with Jamal Asker a journalist and a lecturer at the Collage of Media- Salah Din University, 13-8-2010.
- <sup>639</sup> The American Forces Documents, 2005, Salah Ad Din TV Charter, Statement of purpose, Establishment of the Board of Directors, p2-3.
- <sup>640</sup> Interview with Jamal Asker, op.cit.
- <sup>641</sup> Face to face interview with Dr. Amer Ayash, the head of the Board of Salah Ad Din Channel and the Dean of the college of law in Tikrit University, date 10-8-2010.
- <sup>642</sup> Face to face interview with Jamal Asker, Op. cit.
- <sup>643</sup> The American Forces Documents, Salah Ad Din TV Charter, Statement of purpose, the Operation of the Satellite TV, article (3), p3.
- <sup>644</sup> Ibid, p1-2.
- <sup>645</sup> Face to face interview, Amer Ayash, op.cit.
- <sup>646</sup> Face to face Interview Mohammed Al-Azawi, the News Editor of Salah Ad Din

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Channel, 5 August 2010.

<sup>647</sup> Phone Interview with Dr. Dawlat Aldahash, the last contractor and the recent owner of Salah Ad Din Channel, 30 August 2010.

<sup>648</sup> Phone Interview with Abdulrahman Al-Dahash the program Director in Salah Ad Din Channel, 1August 2010.

<sup>649</sup> Watching and following up the Salah Ad Din Channel program myself. Also Face to face interview with Amaar Saleem a news presenter in Salah Ad Din Channel, 12 August2010.

<sup>650</sup> Email interview with Saad Alsalihi, the Spokesman of the American troops in north and middle of Iraq, 30July 2010.

<sup>651</sup> face to face interview with Dr. Saad Almashahadani , a journalist and lecturer at the collage of Media Tikrit University, 17August 2010.

<sup>652</sup> The American Army Documents, Statement of Work,2005, op.cit, p3.

<sup>653</sup> US military SIGACTS (significant actions) database. 30/01/2007.The American Army Documents, Statement of Work,2005, p3.

<sup>654</sup> Phone Interview with the former Governor of Salah Ad Din (2005-2008) Ahmed Alshgti, 1 August 2010.

<sup>655</sup> Phone interview , Saad Alsalihi, Op. cit.

<sup>656</sup> The American Army Documents, Statement of Work, 2005op.cit.

<sup>657</sup> phone interview with Dr. Saad Almashehadani , an Iraqi Journalist and a lecturer at the collage of Media – Tikrit University, 17-11-2010.

<sup>658</sup> Watching and following up the Salah Ad Din Channel program by the researcher for the period from 1April 2010 to 30 April2010.

<sup>659</sup> Interview with sheik Kanan Hawas, op. cit.

<sup>660</sup> Adhra Ismail Ziadani, The Entertainment programs in Salah Ad Din TV, Tikrit University Magazine for the Sciences of Art, issue 5, Page 332.

<sup>661</sup> Fcae to face interview with Dr. Saad Almashehadani, Op. cit.

<sup>662</sup> My Country Kuwait Blog, 6-6-2010, where was your Nationalism, available: [http://alkuwait-kw.blogspot.com/2010/06/blog-post\\_06.html](http://alkuwait-kw.blogspot.com/2010/06/blog-post_06.html) , retrieved 11 January 2009.

<sup>663</sup> Interview with Mohammed Alazawi, Op. cit.

<sup>664</sup> Adhra Ismail Ziadani, op.cit, Page 335.

<sup>665</sup> Face to face interview with Dr. Farid saleh, lecturer at the Collage of Media -Tikrit University , 20- August-2010.

<sup>666</sup> American army Documents, collation provided equipment inventory, to Tikrit Media Center- satellite TV services, statement of work, p1-4. Also face to face interview with Dr. Salam Khatab , op.cit.

<sup>667</sup> Face to face Interview with Isa Ayal, an Iraqi Journalist and lecturer at Tikrit University- Collage of media, 10 -8-2010.

<sup>668</sup> The American Army Documents, Statement of Work, op.cit, p 5-6-7.

<sup>669</sup> Interview with Dr. Saad Alsalihi, op. cit.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

<sup>671</sup> Face-to-Face Interview with Simon Haselock, Op. cit.

<sup>672</sup> Abdulrahman Aljuburi, 2003, US Army raid based on false information, Iraq Today , Issue 5, pages 1-3.

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> The Editor of Iraq Today newspaper (the paper which I was working for) Hassan Fattah was present during the conversation .

<sup>675</sup> Abdulrahman Aljuburi, 2004, Fedayeen Mystery , Iraqi Today, issue 29, page 1-2.

<sup>676</sup> The Incident happen in the attendance of Captain Saad Bunian ( an Iraqi police officer) at the police station of my village.

<sup>677</sup> Face to face Interview with Deborah Davies, London , 29-3-2010.

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<sup>679</sup> Death Squads, 2006, Channel 4, dispatches, available: [www.liveleak.com/view?i=82f\\_1193118431](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=82f_1193118431), retrieved on 13 May 2006.

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