Discourses of Democracy:
‘Oriental Despotism’ and the Democratisation of Iraq

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Abstract

The discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ provide for us a lens through which to view both contemporary political developments and the ideological and historical context in which they occur. Illuminating this optic is a particular vision of the past in which the West imagines itself to have an exclusive claim to democracy, to be the legitimate legatee of this advanced form of governance and burdened with the responsibility of spreading this doctrine amongst the uncivilised ‘lesser breeds’. Paradoxically, the political history of the East is viewed as a dark and brutal wasteland in which megalomania, tyranny and bloodshed has always triumphed, creating a cultural and historical landscape that is antithetical to inclusion, diversity and debate. This project therefore begins by documenting the genealogy of the juxtaposition between these ‘discourses of democracy’, tracing their twin histories back through many of the seminal texts of the Western scholarly and literary canon. Moving forward, it notes that this lens has often been brought to bear on the political history of Iraq, reducing the complexities of Iraqi politics down to an austere picture in which the benighted and savage Iraqis are seen as simply incapable of civilising, modernising or democratising. Most recently, the Western mainstream media has invoked this long-held and deep-seated picture of Iraq in its coverage of the democratic elections and referendum held across the nation in 2005. Here, the successes and complexities of post-Saddam Iraqi politics were covered in a highly racialist and overly dismissive lexicon, one that emphasised the political ineptitude of Iraq despite the best efforts of the West.

In order to see beyond the doctored image provided for us by the ‘discourses of democracy’, this thesis utilises a body of work referred to here as critical theory. By employing such scholarship, this project navigates between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’, it investigates their internal contradictions, identifies the gaps and fissures that fall between them and illuminates alternate histories and narratives of democracy as they pertain to Iraq. To develop this more complex and nuanced picture of Iraqi politics, this project focuses on four key periods in the history of Iraq that demonstrate the nation’s long struggle towards egalitarianism, collective governance and democratic reform. Beginning with ancient Mesopotamia,
this study finds the political system of ‘Primitive Democracy’ in widespread use across the region from the very earliest days of civilisation itself. During the Colonial period (1921-1958) we find that despite British occupation and Hashemite hegemony, the Iraqi populace nonetheless fosters a thriving public sphere of political dissent and pro-democracy movements. This continues throughout the series of oppressive regimes that constitute Post-colonial Iraq (1958-2003) where the central state’s manipulation of the ‘discourses of democracy’ ultimately undermines their authority and provides the vacuum in which various ethno-religious political factions emerge and strengthen. Finally, Re-colonial Iraq (2003-2005) is not only witness to extensive attempts by both foreign and domestic powers to control the parameters of debate and discourse, it is also home to an unprecedented spike in political parties and media outlets keen to encourage a more inclusive political order. A more thorough analysis of Iraq’s political history therefore reveals an alternative and more complex lens through which to view Iraq’s past and present. On the one hand it illuminates the Iraqi people’s resistance to oppression and tyranny as well as their struggle towards a more robust and democratic order. On the other, it brings to light various questions about the democratic nature of the West, undermining its claims of democratic exclusivity and probing its potential as a force of tyranny and despotism.

This study concludes with an examination of the implications and questions it raises and by identifying recommendations and opportunities for future research. Foremost amongst these however, is the projects final assertion that further work needs to be done in order to salvage democracy from discourse. It argues that we need to move beyond the reductive and simplistic ideologies implicit in the existing ‘discourses of democracy’ towards a more inclusive and robust narrative, one that includes marginalised movements, histories and stories. This would not only help to see beyond the lens provided for us by ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ as it pertains to Iraq, but to develop a more kaleidoscopic image of democracy itself.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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Benjamin Isakhan
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Aside from financial assistance, Griffith’s dedicated academics, diligent administrators and efficient librarians, as well as its dynamic student body, have provided both a challenging and nurturing environment for all of my intellectual curiosities and whims. On a more personal level I would like to thank fellow PhD students, Mitch Goodwin, Jorge Cantellano, Nungsangnaro (Narola) Changkija and Adam Muir, each of whom have shared with me not only office space, but also the tumultuous tenure that constitutes a PhD. However, foremost acknowledgement must go to my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Stephen Stockwell, whose keen intellect and nonchalant manner provided both stimulation and entertainment when they were needed most. Throughout the duration of this project he has closely monitored my progress, mentored my development and managed my journey from its very earliest days through to its closing moments. Thanks are also due to my associate supervisor, Associate Professor Nigel Krauth, whose diligence and editorial expertise helped streamline this project into a more coherent narrative and cogent argument. While I rest none of the blame for any remaining problems, oversights or errors made throughout the pages that follow on either of their
shoulders, any credit received must be tempered by an acknowledgement of their contribution and dedication.

I have also to thank my family. In many ways my own genealogy – half Western (Australian), half Middle Eastern (Assyrian) – have been central to my own need to scrutinise and question the received wisdoms that many hold in the Western world regarding the political nature of the Orient. In addition to the gift of mixed genes and ancestry, my family has provided the kind of support, both emotional and financial, that has been critical to the projects completion. More broadly, there are various other relatives and friends that have helped me in their own small way. While I cannot list all of these here, my deepest thanks go out to each of them.

Finally, I must pay tribute to the people of Iraq. Their rich, complex and heterogenous past and present has fascinated and enthralled me since well before the beginning of this project and, I imagine, will continue to do so for many years to come. I can only hope that, in some small way, this project contributes to a better understanding of this past and present and a more peaceful and democratic future.

Benjamin Isakhan
Works Published

Throughout the duration of my doctoral candidature I have been fortunate enough to publish an edited book chapter as well as several refereed journal articles and conference papers. Where appropriate, I have cited these publications throughout the body of the text. However, as per the requirements of submission, I have also listed below the chapters which paraphrase, repeat or develop elements of these publications and provided the full reference details.

Chapter 2:


Chapter 3:


**Chapter 4:**


**Chapter 5:**


**Chapter 6:**


A Note on Translation and Transliteration

I am neither an Arabic or Kurdish speaker nor a linguist of any kind. The translations that appear herein are the work, in most cases, of the original cited authors. Where such translations were not available, I have consulted various Arabic-English and Kurdish-English dictionaries, bi- and multi-lingual colleagues and friends, and a number of reputable websites. The transliterations that appear have generally been simplified to an appropriate phonetic English match due to the absence of transliteration software. I have made every effort to ensure that both the translations and transliterations are correct and consistently applied throughout the thesis.
**Prelude**

So Marduk assembled the great gods and they listened attentively while he courteously told them what to do. ‘You elected me, and that election must stand firm and supreme,’ he said. ‘It is I who make the laws.’ (Storm, 2003: 49)

*In the beginning...*

This project begins before the age of humankind.

It begins even before the heavens had been named and before the earth had taken form.

It begins with the steady rise and fall of the tides controlled by the primal mother, Tiamet, the goddess of the salty waters¹. For eons her waters ebbed and flowed according to her whim until, gradually, she surged up onto the land and stretched herself northwards, reaching into the plains of lower Mesopotamia and forming those two mighty rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. It was here that she met the god of the sweet fresh waters, Apsu, the primal begetter of life. As the salty and the fresh waters blended and bubbled, the primal mother and the great begetter of life came together. And from this mighty union came forth the mud beings Lahmu and Lahamu.

When they had matured, Lahmu and Lahamu gave birth to the upper firmament, which they named Anshar and the lower firmament which they named Kishar. Together Anshar and Kishar produced a wonderful son, the god of the sky, Anu.

It was Anu, the mightiest and most sovereign of gods, who was to be the leader of the great council. He was to rule over the universe and his word became the divine law that bound all things. Beside him stood his son, the most ferocious of gods,

¹ Much of this section is a re-telling of the Ancient Mesopotamian myth of Enuma Elish. For a version of the myth in full, see Myths and Legends of the Ancient Near East by Rachel Storm (2003: 39-50).
Enlil, the Lord of the Storm. Before them sat the other five senior gods and goddesses who held particular weight among the divine assembly. The council was made up of all the known gods and goddesses - 50 in total – and together they constituted the Ordained Assembly of the Great Gods. This assembly was called together when the gods needed to make decisions regarding any number of issues and constituted the highest authority in the universe.

Before engaging in their binding political rhetoric, the gods ate the finest of foods and drank their fill of strong wines. Following this, they each took an oath to abide by the decisions of the council and then either Anu or Enlil would usually broach a topic and the discussions would begin. At times, the gods argued heatedly but they would always listen until the pros and cons of each issue were clarified and a virtual consensus emerged. When the council reached a full agreement, the seven senior or ‘law-making’ gods would announce the final verdict and each of the members would voice their approval with a stern ‘Let it be.’ This unified command meant that the will of the assembly had become divine law; it was the decree of Anu and the duty of Enlil.

Eventually, however, the deliberations of the gods disrupted the slumber of their own mother, the great sea goddess, Tiamet. She was angered by their insolence and sought the counsel of her fellow sleepless gods. Together, they decided to wage war against the elite members of the Ordained Assembly. After many of the gods had visited Tiamet in an attempt to placate her, dissuade her from the attack or defeat her, Lord Marduk, son of Ea came forward and volunteered his services. In return, he demanded of Anshar, the father of Anu,

If I am to be your champion, if I am to defeat Tiamet and save your lives, call an assembly, name a special fate for me and make it known that henceforth I, not you, shall have control over what comes to pass. My word shall be the law! (as cited in: Storm, 2003: 43)

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2 For an erudite discussion of the democratic practices of the Ordained Assembly of the Great Gods that the myth of Enuma Elish reveals, see Thorkild Jacobsen’s essay ‘The Cosmos as a State’ (Jacobsen, 1977 [1951]-a).
After some deliberation, it came to pass that the Ordained Assembly of the Great Gods elected Lord Marduk as the new king of the gods. His word became the divine law of the universe, like that of Anu before him, and he was bestowed with the insignia of royalty – a sceptre, a throne, and a staff – as well as an invincible weapon with which to smite his enemies. Marduk then set off to engage Tiamet in battle.

After an extended and mighty struggle, Marduk finally bested Tiamet. The primal mother, the great goddess of the salty waters, lay dead.

After returning to a reception worthy of such a powerful and victorious god, Marduk’s position as king and master of all the gods of heaven and earth was confirmed. He then stated, “You elected me, and that election must stand firm and supreme… It is I who make the laws” (Storm, 2003: 49). And with that, Marduk set about creating much of the known universe, including the home of the great gods, which he called Babylon, as well as the first slaves, human beings who were put on earth to do the bidding of the great gods.

Thus began the age of humankind.
...the events in Iraq do create opportunities to examine democracy, power, tyranny, military force, cultural differences, law, civil liberties, Islam, Christianity, economic development, and even human nature. We ought to understand these issues, because they arise in our own lives and communities; because they are intrinsically interesting and morally serious. (Levine, 2004: 22)

**Studying the Iraqi Elections and Referendum of 2005**

On the 30 January 2005 the sun rose over the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk much as it had since the start of human civilisation itself. Rising with the sun, a Kurdish woman, Sabria Sharif Mohammad† felt a new sense of hope and purpose. She and her people had endured many long years of hardship, displacement and discrimination under the rule of the Baath party and the succession of Baghdad-based governments that had ruled modern Iraq since its creation by the British in the 1920s. Today was Sabria’s chance – indeed, today was Iraq’s chance – to reflect on those hardships and to elect instead an Iraqi National Assembly (INA) that might better represent the needs and interests of the heterogeneous Iraqi population and draft a constitution that would bind them together and carry them forward.

As part of their morning chores, Sabria asked the youngest of her three sons, the 16-year-old Youssef, to fetch the family’s daily supply of water by filling their urn at the local pump. Tragically, this would be the last time that Sabria ever spoke to her young son; on his way to the pump Youssef was hit by a mortar bomb that killed him instantly. Sabria and her family rushed to the scene and, upon seeing Youssef prostrate and bleeding on the city street, she quickly embraced his limp and lifeless body. The tears streamed down her face and she began to wail in grief as the crowd gathered around to witness another tragedy unfold on the streets of Iraq. Pulling

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† The story of Sabria and her son Youssef was first told in a report by Michael Howard of The Guardian newspaper (M. Howard, 2005) and later recounted by Wim Coleman and Pat Perrin in Iraq in the News: Past, Present and Future (Coleman & Perrin, 2006: 9-10).
herself together, Sabria washed her son’s body and covered him in a white burial shroud before arranging for him to be taken off to the local mortuary.

Remarkably, Sabria and her family then returned home, collected their things (including a Kurdish flag which Sabria carried proudly) and set out on the three-mile walk to the nearest polling station in the northern district of Shorjah. On arrival, the still grieving mother expressed the duality of her sadness for her tragic losses and her hope for the future by crying out, “Saddam threw me out of my house and home and now he’s killed my son. Voting won’t bring my Youssef back, but it must stop Saddam from coming back” (as cited in: M. Howard, 2005).

Sabria was not alone. In total, around 8.5 million Iraqis (constituting approximately 58% of those eligible to vote) lined up for their chance to partake in the nation’s first free and fair election for many decades (Abdullah, 2006: 111; Dawisha, 2005b: 35). The security clamp-down had left the streets of the nation eerily quiet in the lead up to the election, but this soon changed as scores of Iraqi citizens – young and old, Sunni and Shia, Kurd and Arab, Christian and Muslim – filled the streets with their chatter and excitement. Some had arrived early and now paraded their purple ink-stained index fingers to the growing crowds; others arrived later, preferring to wait in the long queues as a sign of their solidarity and to discuss politics, religion and football with their friends and fellow citizens. Like Sabria, each had their own tragic story of life under the autocracy of Saddam Hussein (deceased), the hardships they had endured during the last 12 years of economic sanctions and, more recently, the tragedies they had witnessed since the US-led invasion of 2003. Also like Sabria, each was acting in defiance of the violence and chaos of post-Saddam Iraq, ignoring the blood-curdling threats issued by the head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi (deceased) who proclaimed “…an all-out war on this evil principle of democracy and those who follow this wrong ideology” (Al-Zarqawi as cited in: Sheridan, 2005).

These threats were not entirely empty. There were in fact several attacks across Iraq resulting in a number of deaths and injuries, but given the chaos of the post-Saddam era these attacks fell well short of the promised ‘bloodbath’. What was perhaps a much bigger problem was that the Sunni population of Iraq (who, despite only ever
constituting approximately 20% of Iraq’s population, ruled the nation since its inception in the 1920s) had largely boycotted the election and would therefore be massively under-represented in the 275-member INA. Indeed, when the results were announced on 14 February the Shia coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance, had won 48% of the vote, the Kurdish-backed Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (or the Kurdish Alliance) had garnered around 26%, the secular Iraqi (National) List headed by incumbent interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi had achieved a paltry 14%, while the Sunni-backed party, The Iraqis, achieved just under 2% (Dawisha & Diamond, 2006: 93-94; Diamond, 2005b: 324-327; Ritter, 2005; Stansfield, 2007: 183).

Regardless, the elected INA was charged with the rather prestigious, if laborious, task of drafting a permanent Iraqi constitution by the middle of August 2005. This, along with the need to position the candidates within the new government, brought with it the kind of political in-fighting, jostling and rhetoric that underpins a robust democracy. While the incumbent Shia and Kurdish groups went to great lengths to incorporate the disenfranchised Sunni parties, there remained much friction between the groups and lengthy debates ensued over key issues such as the official role of Islam in the new constitution as well as extended deliberations over the merits of regional autonomy versus a federated state (Dawisha, 2005b). With the stakes high and the issues thorny in nature, it is not at all surprising that the draft constitution was delayed from its initial deadline of 15 August until 28 August 2005. This new Iraqi constitution, drafted by a body of representatives elected by the Iraqi people in free and fair elections, was then circulated to all via the nation’s diverse media sector. Some six weeks later (15 October 2005), the Iraqi people were once again asked to visit the polls, only this time their ballot paper posed a simple question printed in both Arabic and Kurdish, “Do you support the draft constitution?” (as cited in: Jaber, 2005). Approximately 10 million Iraqis answered this question and, despite continued Sunni opposition to the constitution (which was strongly reflected in the polls), the overall majority replied in the affirmative (Abdullah, 2006: 111-112; McKew, 2005; Stansfield, 2007: 184-187).

With the constitution officially accepted, the Iraqi people were invited to visit the polls for the third time in 2005 (on 15 December), this time to elect a permanent
275-seat government. This was arguably the most successful of Iraq’s recent forays into democratic practises with strong Sunni participation, very low levels of violence and an estimated 67% of those eligible to vote participating in the election (approximately 11 million people) (McGeough, 2005). When the final results of the election were released in early 2006, they revealed that while the Shia and Kurdish parties had retained a significant proportion of the votes, the Sunni minority had garnered considerable political momentum after learning the hard lessons associated with their electoral abstinence in January. Indeed, the Sunni-backed Iraqi Accord Front managed to secure third place with 15% of the vote, falling behind the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance (41%) and the Kurdish Alliance (22%) (Chulov, 2006; Dawisha & Diamond, 2006: 99; Stansfield, 2007: 187-189). This political diversity brought with it a more vigorous and legitimate (if somewhat sluggish) Iraqi political landscape, as the various factions began lengthy negotiations and deliberations over the exact composition of the Iraqi government. Indeed, the nomination of the Prime Minister and the President took more than two months to finalise, with the key cabinet positions being appointed several months later (Stansfield, 2007: 187-189).

Not surprisingly, the series of democratic elections and the referendum that occurred throughout Iraq in 2005 have attracted the attention of academics, foreign policy pundits and journalists from across the political and ideological spectrum. While such work is critiqued and problematised throughout this project, suffice it to say here that to date there has been no sustained critical analysis of the complex matrix of discourses which have been brought to bear on Iraq’s recent ‘shift’ towards democracy. In addition, no published study has attempted to problematise and unhinge these discourses by juxtaposing them against a thorough analysis of the long and multifarious political history of Iraq. This project therefore attempts to fill this lacuna by addressing the following Research Questions.
Research Questions

1. What are the ‘discourses of democracy’ and how have they delineated between the democratic nature of the West and the alleged tendency towards despotism in the East?

2. How have these ‘discourses of democracy’ been utilised to construct Iraq within the Western mainstream media from the Gulf War of the early 1990s through to the Iraqi elections and referendum of 2005?

3. How might these ‘discourses of democracy’ be problematised and critiqued given Iraq’s long history of struggling towards egalitarianism, collective governance and democratic reform as is evidenced across four key historical periods:
   a. Ancient Mesopotamia and the practice of ‘Primitive Democracy’;
   b. Colonial Iraq under the hegemony of the British occupation and the installed Hashemite monarchy (1921-1958);
   c. Post-colonial Iraq from the rise of General Qasim to the fall of Saddam Hussein (1958-2003); and
   d. Re-colonial Iraq since the US-led invasion and occupation through to the democratic developments of 2005 (2003-2005)?

However, in order to identify, scrutinise and then offer alternatives to the ‘discourses of democracy’ as they pertain to Iraq, it is necessary to first come to terms with a body of scholarship referred to here as critical theory. Primarily, this body of work is concerned with the machinations of power in the social world and in critiquing the ideologies which underpin the legitimacy and maintenance of hegemony. Chapter 1 therefore begins by establishing the antecedents of this line of research and in tracing its developments from the early works of key scholars such as Marx and Gramsci, through the Frankfurt School, to more recent ‘Post-structuralist’ work such as that of Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. Despite its shortcomings and inconsistencies, this body of scholarship has recently been reinvigorated by those who have sought to apply the concepts of critical theory to the construction of the Middle East and the broader non-Western world. Here, the work of Said and ‘Post-colonialists’ such as
Spivak and Bhabha has enabled a radical new approach to the former (and current) colonies of the Western world and the myriad of peoples, cultures and stories that lie within these regions. More specifically, this body of critical theory raises a number of questions about the nature of democracy itself, arguing that it is more than the institutions, practices and historical narratives that have constructed it for us. Instead, democracy can be thought of as holding an egalitarian promise of social justice and ‘rule by the people’. In this way, critical theory provides the methodological parameters and tools that enable the deconstruction of the discourses which have underpinned the Iraqi elections and referendum of 2005. In addition, it provides the model by which such discourses might be problematised and scrutinised via the assertion of an alternative history of Iraq.

To begin this analysis, Chapter 2 addresses the first Research Question by examining the twin ‘discourses of democracy’, that of ‘Western democracy’ and its binary opposite, ‘Oriental despotism’. It is argued herein that these discourses have a parallel history that can be traced right back through the Western scholarly canon. From the time of the ancient Greeks, through the Crusades, the Reformation and the founding of modern representative democracy, an entire collection of scholars have contributed to our understanding of the West as unique in its propensity for democratic governance and the East as simply incapable of such advanced political systems. Continuing through the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries such discourses achieved the status of a received wisdom, they proliferated an ideological uniformity that was rarely critiqued or negated. However, to argue that this dialectic belongs to the annals of history severely underestimates the impact that this discursive lineage continues to have on scholarship, foreign policy and journalism that concerns itself with the Middle East. Indeed, the notion that the Middle East and its majority religion of Islam is antithetical to democracy remains a central tenet of some of the more prominent and influential scholars of the region today.

Following on, Chapter 3 closely examines the mainstream Western media’s role in constructing the Middle Eastern ‘other’, particularly since the events of 11 September 2001 and the ensuing ‘War on Terror’. More specifically, this chapter addresses the second Research Questions by illuminating the discourses present in the Western media’s coverage of Iraq since as far back as the Gulf War of the early
1990s through to the current occupation of Iraq by the US led Coalition of the Willing. It concludes that the Western mainstream media has tended to rely on pervading Orientalist imagery that serve to construct Iraq as a backward and barbaric wasteland that is governed by tyrannical despots and inhabited by bloodthirsty fundamentalists. What is particularly problematic here is that this matrix of pejorative discourses not only resembles those of the colonial era, but also serves to legitimate and sustain the notion that the West has a duty to occupy, civilise and democratise the non-Western regions of the globe. As a case study, this chapter proceeds to outline the coverage of the democratic developments in Iraq during 2005 in The Australian newspaper. It uncovers that such reportage relies heavily on the twin discourses outlined above, viewing the West as the legitimate legatee of democracy and the East as condemned to despotism and autocracy.

In order to problematise and critique these twin ‘discourses of democracy’ and the assumptions on which they are premised, this project moves forward to address the third and final Research Question over the course of three successive chapters. These chapters not only outline and define Iraq against its long and complex political history (ancient, modern and contemporary), but also seeks to posit an alternative history of Iraq, one of egalitarianism, collective models of governance and various struggles toward democratic reform. The first such chapter, Chapter 4, focuses on the pre-Athenian democratic developments that occurred throughout the ancient Middle East from approximately 3000 BC to the modern age. Despite the common misconception that the ancient Middle East was home only to a lineage of tyrannical megalomaniacs and their grand but savage empires, this chapter goes on to explore the practices of ‘Primitive Democracy’ found throughout the region from the smallest city-states to the largest kingdoms. This reveals a sophisticated public life and political culture across the region, not only raising questions about the origins of ‘Western democracy’ but opening up alternative visions beyond the Middle East’s purported tendency towards ‘Oriental despotism’.

Chapter 5 begins by making a substantial historical leap, from the ancient world to the arrival of the printing press in Iraq during the late Ottoman era. It goes on to provide a detailed account of the role this new technology played in fostering an engaged Iraqi ‘public sphere’ as the country navigated the thorny issues of
nationhood and occupation under the auspices of British colonialism and the installed Hashemite monarchy. This era of Iraqi history, referred to here as Colonial Iraq (1921-1958), also raises a number of interesting questions about the nature of ‘Western democracy’ by exposing the contradiction between Britain’s rhetoric as a harbinger of democracy and its contemporaneous attempts to quell Iraq’s free press and to curtail democratic reform. With the usurpation of the Hashemite monarchy in 1958, emerged a Post-colonial Iraq (1958-2003), an era which also witnessed the ascension of a number of repressive regimes culminating in the rise of the Baath party and the self-elected Presidency of Saddam Hussein. Throughout Post-colonial Iraq, much of the nation’s ‘public sphere’ was quashed under the repressive nature of the state. However, with the erosion of much of Saddam’s domestic support and legitimacy as well as his military might at the end of the Gulf War, a number of clandestine Iraqi opposition groups began to emerge across Iraq’s divergent ethno-religious and political divides. As this chapter goes on to demonstrate, these groups began producing their own media outlets which proved effective in supporting a renewed Iraqi ‘public sphere’ which further eroded the people’s confidence in Saddam’s authority. Far from a benighted Iraq prone to ‘Oriental despotism’ both the Colonial and Post-colonial eras reveal an alternative vision of twentieth century Iraqi history in which one finds a sophisticated political culture, deeply concerned with the machinations of democratic governance.

Exploring the final of four key phases in Iraq’s political history, Chapter 6 examines the political landscape of Re-colonised Iraq (2003-2005), following the invasion and occupation of Iraq by the ‘Coalition of the Willing’. This era has not only witnessed an upsurge in political parties and activities, it has also witnessed Iraq’s media landscape rapidly transform from a handful of state-controlled propaganda organs to a peak of around 20 radio stations, between 15 and 17 television channels and over 200 newspapers, each of which are Iraqi-owned and operated. Unfortunately, a number of foreign and domestic political entities have sought to interfere with Iraq’s complex media sphere by using them to promote their own interests, by censoring or forcibly closing them down and even by covertly planting stories in various independent Iraqi organs. As with the Colonial period under the British, the United States have left a decisive gap between their official policy of promoting democracy and their active role in silencing dissent and limiting press freedom. Despite such
problems, this chapter goes on to detail the positive role that the Iraqi media played in covering the series of democratic elections and the referendum that occurred across Iraq in 2005. Therefore, the Re-colonial period also raises questions about the common misconception that today’s Iraq is inhospitable to varied debate and discourse, to instead reveal a lively and divergent media and political landscape that is struggling towards a more robust democratic order.

This project concludes by considering the various contributions and implications of the study, by making several recommendations and by highlighting areas of future concern and research. In addition, it argues that there is much scholarly work left to be done if we are to broaden the narrative of democracy and move beyond the overly simplistic framework provided for us by the discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. By asserting alternative histories of Iraq and emphasising their democratic potentials, we not only draw a more robust and nuanced picture of Iraqi politics per se but also move one step closer to salvaging the utopian promise of democracy from the complex matrix of discourses which have constructed it for us.

However, before beginning, it is worth mentioning that in conducting a project such as this there are several key problems and limitations. First among these is the fact that it is difficult to analyse and discuss with any sense of finality the construction of Iraq in the Western mainstream media and the nation’s ‘shift’ towards democratisation. At the time of writing, each of these elements is ongoing and in flux. Daily reports from across Iraq continue to document the chaos and turmoil of the nation, including the grim and complex battles fought between the occupying forces, the Iraqi armed services, various insurgent groups and terrorist organisations, as well as those between the competing ethno-sectarian factions. This is not to mention the plights of so many Iraqis (such as the story of Sabria and her son Youssef above) who continue to endure the countless struggles and hardships of the post-Saddam era. Furthermore, such violence continues to have a toll on the democratic process in Iraq which itself is ongoing. Despite the fact that Iraqis have participated in a series of relatively free and fair elections and a referendum, seen parties and governments form and citizens elected to the ranks of Prime Minister and President, the nation is by no means a stable and robust democracy. The government
and its ministries and institutions are still relatively weak and the basic infrastructure of Iraq remains well below minimum acceptable standards in much of the country.

This also alludes to another broader limitation of this research project, namely that studying Iraq - its history, its political culture and especially its current situation - is decidedly difficult to do from the other side of the world. Indeed, the various issues, risks and costs associated with researching Iraq have meant that the strength of this study is in its synthesis and analysis of existing secondary information rather than in its collation of first-hand experience and primary sources. While it is important to acknowledge here that such a methodology brings with it certain limitations to the scope of the study and the inferences it can make, the author has made every attempt to cite reputable and established works and to cross-reference these against other materials where available.

It should also be noted here that determining whether or not Iraq will become a more robust and stable democracy, or proposing strategies towards such a goal, is beyond the scope of this study. This project does not unveil a step-by-step guide towards democracy in Iraq, nor does it contain a plan for success. Instead, this project is about ideology. It is about the ways in which Iraq and its democratisation have been constructed according to certain discourses which have for so long underpinned Western understandings of the Middle East. In addition, this project is also about scrutinising these discourses and closely examining the assumptions on which they are based. It is an investigation into the long and rich political history of Iraq and its struggle towards egalitarianism, collective governance and democratic reform.
Without significant exception the universalising discourses of modern Europe and the United States assume the silence, willing or otherwise, of the non-European world. There is incorporation; there is inclusion; there is direct rule; there is coercion. But there is only infrequently an acknowledgement that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known. (Said, 1995: 28)

Critical Theory: Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse, Deconstruction

In his cogent and erudite ‘Foreword’ to George Snedeker’s The Politics of Critical Theory: Language, Society, Discourse, Michael Brown states that “…there are three important characteristics to critical theories which distinguish them from positive theories: their intention, their form of argumentation, and the conditions of their validation” (M. E. Brown, 2004: vii). “The standard example,” Brown goes on to claim

…is the critique of ideology in which propositions held up as worthy of belief are shown to involve presuppositions about human affairs and their arrangements which cannot be made explicit without unsettling those very propositions. (M. E. Brown, 2004: vii-viii)

In this way, critical theory can be seen to involve the questioning of certain ideologies – which we might define as the received wisdoms, beliefs, values and attitudes that are held in common by certain groups of people in their everyday lives. These ideologies are examined in order to highlight the assumptions which underpin them, their internal consistency, their processes of inclusion and exclusion, their relation to other ideological positions and assumptions, and the congruent relation they may or may not hold in relation to other ideological positions. In this process ideologies are further critiqued along several lines: according to their foundation in earlier assumptions that can no longer be accepted, the problematic nature of their universal application and the degree to which certain ideologies depend on omitting that which is central to their claim of truth (M. E. Brown, 2004: viii).
Arguably the most influential example of this kind of ideological critique is Karl Marx’s body of work relating to the capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1973 [1857], 1977 [1887]-a, 1977 [1887]-b). Not only does Marx endeavour to critique the social history through which capitalism was able to develop, he also recounts that certain ideologies such as individualism, profit maximising and the need for a competitive free market arose as the emerging bourgeoisie classes sought to justify and consolidate their economic and social power. In *The German Ideology*, which remained unpublished for several years, Marx and his long-time collaborator, Freidrich Engels, articulated precisely how the ideologies of dominant social groups like the bourgeoisie came to be received by the broader social masses as legitimate. They famously stated that,

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force in society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that in consequence the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are, in general, subject to it. The dominant ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas and thus of the relationships which make one class the ruling one; they are consequently the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess, among other things, consciousness, and therefore think. In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the whole extent of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in their whole range and thus, among other things, rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. (Marx & Engels, 1974 [1846]: 64)

Here, Marx and Engels sketched out their thesis that the dominant elite, or the ruling class, in any given society are also, by default, the purveyors of society’s dominant

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4 It is worth noting here that while this thesis is guided by the work of Karl Marx in the sense that he provided a revolutionary approach to the ways in which bourgeoisie culture is able to legitimate and propagate its elite position via the assertion of certain ideologies, the author is also conscious of his position as both an inheritor and producer of Orientalist stereotypes. This inherent problematic in Marx’s work is drawn out later in this chapter via a discussion of the work of Edward Said and is expanded further in Chapter 2 in regards to Marx’s comments about the British Raj in India (Marx, 1973 [1853]) and his postulations on the ‘Asiatic Mode of Production’. Despite such issues, Marx’s work nonetheless provides a radical new approach to ideology which enabled the body of critical theory discussed herein to emerge.
ideologies, or ruling ideas. However, the question remained as to the process by which the ruling class were able to continue and maintain their position via the propagation and legitimation of ideologies that supported their authority. Marx and Engels went on to claim that this process of distributing ideologies to the masses was embedded in the machinations of what they termed the ‘superstructure’. This term was used to describe the social institutions of the time that acted as the vehicle for ideologies (such as religious or political systems). In a capitalist society, capitalism itself is not only an economic system, but it is also a way of understanding the social and cultural world – that is, capitalism is part of the ‘superstructure’ and thus ideological (Engels, 1970 [1880]). The theories of Marx and Engels concerning the ‘superstructure’ have come under some criticism not least because they tend to emphasise economic systems over other social determinants. While capital no doubt retains measures of influence over the social world, it is somewhat oversimplified to understand relations of power purely in their economic sense (Berger, 2005: 47).

It is in the rather open and relatively undogmatic Marxism of Antonio Gramsci⁵ that we discover a more detailed understanding of processes of power. As the co-founder of the Italian Communist Party, a ‘Southerner’ and a political prisoner under Mussolini’s regime from 1929-1935, Gramsci was able to forge a number of insights regarding the relationships between the socio-political world and ideology (Gramsci, 1971 [1929-1935]-d, 1978 [1921-1926]). Perhaps his most significant contribution is the notion of ‘hegemony’, where Gramsci went beyond Marx and Engels’ emphasis on the economic realm in establishing and maintaining ideology, to instead focus on the complicated matrix of political, social and cultural relations which underpinned this process. While Gramsci agreed that the elite group needed to retain control over the ‘superstructure’ in order to maintain their position, he also asserted that such a position of power – or ‘hegemony’ – “…manifests itself in two ways, as ‘domination’ and as ‘intellectual and moral leadership’” (Gramsci, 1971 [1929-

⁵As with the work of Karl Marx, it is worth noting here that Gramsci might also be accused of inheriting and contributing to Orientalist ideologies. This is discussed later in this chapter and it is perhaps also worth noting here that he briefly made claims about the absence of ‘civil society’ in non-Western nations in his Prison Notebooks (Gramsci, 1971 [1929-1935]-d). While such issues are clearly problematic, Gramsci’s contribution to critical theory nonetheless remains fundamental to the kind of scholarship being conducted throughout this thesis.
For Gramsci then, power was not a simplified assertion of authority over the masses; it was an ongoing, over-lapping and untidy process involving a myriad of competing interests and contestations in which hegemonic groups are required to both “…subjugate perhaps even by armed force” and to “…continue to ‘lead’ as well” (Gramsci, 1971 [1929-1935]-c: 57-58). Gramsci also noted that ‘civil society’ – institutions such as the media, schools, churches, universities and other socio-political groups – played a role in establishing hegemony in that they arbitrated between the private individual and the state (Gramsci, 1971 [1929-1935]-a: 12-13; 1971 [1929-1935]-b: 148-149). In summarising Gramsci’s understanding of the complexities of hegemony, Jacob Torfing writes,

The formation of a collective will is not a consequence of the imposition of the ideology of the dominant class on the other classes. It is, rather, a product of an ‘intellectual and moral reform’, which breaks up the ideological terrain and rearticulates the ideological elements. (Torfing, 1999: 29)

It is in the process of this rearticulation of ideology that presuppositions, particularly those that support the existing structures of power, come to be historicised, naturalised and eternalised, convincing the masses of the legitimacy of the state, the position of its elite and the inherently uneven distribution of power. Indeed, Raymond Williams takes this a step further, arguing that

Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of ‘ideology,’ nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as ‘manipulation’ or ‘indoctrination’… It is a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of the absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. (Williams, 1977: 109-110)

Gramsci’s work not only re-ignited an interest in Marxism and the origins of capitalism, it also led to a more complex understanding of ideology and processes of socio-political power (Davidson, 1977; Joll, 1977). Where once the socio-cultural world was viewed as the product of the power structures imposed by the elite, Gramsci illuminated an understanding of the socio-cultural as a lived and naturalised site where power is struggled over by a number of competing interests in an ongoing process of negotiation and consent. Here, Arthur Asa Berger has pointed out that
Gramsci’s work has also opened up a possibility beyond that of ideological analysis, towards a more complex hegemonic analysis (Berger, 2005: 61-63). This type of analysis requires that we “…look very deeply into the work we are analysing and elicit from it not only its ideological content but also its even more fundamental (and perhaps more insidious) ethnological, worldview-generating, content” (Berger, 2005: 62-63). Berger goes on to concede that this work is far more difficult than the more traditional forms of ideological analysis. Firstly, as Williams points out above, it is difficult to disentangle critique from lived reality and question the assumptions and ideologies embedded into the fabric of our immediate socio-cultural landscape. Secondly, the method of such critique is itself a captive of Western bourgeoisie thought, “…the very thought we hope to expose as the instrument of our own domination” (Berger, 2005: 63).

This notion was to be explored further by the collective of influential neo-Marxist scholars working out of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt in Germany (more colloquially known as the ‘Frankfurt School’). Having witnessed first hand the rise of giant corporations in Europe and America as well as the augmentation of various models of state power such as Fascism and National Socialism in Europe and Communism in Russia, the Frankfurt School understood that the manipulation and distribution of ideology by the elite “…came to play an increasingly important role in inducing consent to a diversity of social systems” (Kellner & Durham, 2001: 8) (see also: Alway, 1995; Briel & Kramer, 2001; Tar, 1977). In this way, members of the Frankfurt School such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Walter Benjamin played a decisive role in re-invincing and developing the kind of ideological critique that had been pioneered by Marx. In a series of influential works, the Frankfurt School argued that such ideological critique, or ‘critical theory’, differed from traditional, scientific modes of analysis because it required the investigator to reflect upon the complex structures that constitute the social world (Adorno, 1998 [1968]; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997 [1944]; Horkheimer, 1972 [1968], 1974 [1957-1967], 1995 [1931-1938]; Marcuse, 1968 [1934-1938], 1973 [1932-1972], 2001 [1961-1972]). Foremost amongst this body of scholarship is Max Horkheimer’s essay ‘Traditional and Critical Theory’ (Horkheimer, 2007 [1937]). In it, Horkheimer outlines the tenets of critical theory which he defines as that which seeks to challenge “The world that is given to the
individual and which [s]he must accept and take into account…” and is therefore “…wholly distrustful of the rules of conduct with which society as presently constituted provides each of its members” (Horkheimer, 2007 [1937]: 350, 352). Gradually, the Frankfurt School came to not only refine their method of critical theory; they extended this approach out towards the broader cultural landscape. One such example is their emphasis on those contemporary institutions that distribute mass culture, such as the media, which they deemed the ‘culture industries’ (Adorno, 1991 [1972-1982], 2002 [1939-1953]; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993 [1945]). Their experiences of both corporate and state controlled culture industries led them to acknowledge the powerful socialising and political role that such industries played and their ability to indoctrinate the masses on behalf of the elite.

It was Benjamin however, who argued somewhat against the grain of the Frankfurt School, developing a more complex understanding of the utilisation of the culture industries in the arbitration of power (Docker, 1994: 36-50). In his oft-cited essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, Benjamin agreed with his colleagues in the Frankfurt School that the machinations of power and politics were being largely aestheticized in order to manipulate and mystify the populus (Benjamin, 1992 [1955]). Where he differed was in his belief that such developments engendered a more cynical and critically engaged audience, capable of dissecting the complexities and wonders of official propaganda. Given the political and ideological environ in which Benjamin and other members of the Frankfurt School wrote, it is hardly surprising that ideas of state power and propaganda surfaced in their discussions of critical theory and the culture industries. This is particularly evident in one of the last essays Benjamin wrote before his death, entitled ‘On the Concept of History’ (Benjamin, 2003 [1940]). Here, Benjamin demonstrates the power of history as an ideological tool by arguing that “Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it ‘the way it really was.’ It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger…[and is in] danger of becoming a tool of the ruling classes” (Benjamin, 2003 [1940]: 391).
As a student of the Frankfurt School, Jurgen Habermas had understandably been exposed to the nuances of critical theory and was to go on and apply this methodology in his far-reaching critique of methods of power and domination in modern society (Habermas, 1971, 1971 [1968]). For example, in his *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Habermas, 1971 [1968]) Habermas was critical of the ways in which certain ideologies (sexual, racial, religious, educational, occupational, political, economic and technological) had come to contribute to and sustain our dependency on incumbent systems of hegemony. Perhaps of foremost relevance here however is Habermas’ work on the ‘public sphere’ as first outlined in his detailed account of the development of European bourgeois public culture from the early literary salons and periodicals of the eighteenth century through to the advent of the capital-driven mass media of the twentieth century (Habermas, 1989 [1962]). In his later work, Habermas defined the public sphere quite simply as “…that [which] connects society with the state and thus has a function in the political realm” (Habermas, 1996 [1989]: 28). In other words, the public sphere is constituted by those social institutions and practices that exist between the public and private interests (Kellner & Durham, 2001: 10) and which engender a culture of open and ‘rational-critical’ debate amongst the citizenry in order to form public opinion (Edgar, 2006: 124). This debate can be carried out in person or through written correspondence facilitated by journals, newspaper and more modern, electronic forums such as the internet. However, in order to form a public sphere the people must be autonomous, have regular access to relevant information and must be willing to engage in deliberations concerning the issues of the time (Rutherford, 2004: 141-142). This ability and willingness of the people to both navigate the complex matrix of information and to engage in rational-critical debate came to be central to Habermas’ understanding of ‘democratic deliberation’ (Habermas, 1987 [1981], 1996 [1992]).

Following the end of the Second World War and into the middle of the twentieth century, many scholars continued to develop novel and sustained examinations of the structures of power, the process of legitimacy and the maintenance of hegemonic...
positions. While there is certainly not enough room here to investigate each of these scholars and their works, it is worth mentioning one key scholar of this era, Roland Barthes. Heavily influenced by the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (Saussure, 1981 [1916]), Barthes extended the study of language to hypothesize that cultural texts are themselves embedded with the ideologies of the elite. Although Barthes is famous in literary circles for his essay ‘The Death of the Author’ (Barthes, 1977 [1968]), he is also responsible for a number of other works, including Writing Degree Zero, Mythologies, Image Music Text, S/Z and The Pleasure of the Text (Barthes, 1968 [1953]-b, 1974 [1970], 1975 [1973], 1977 [1961-1973], 1987 [1957]). Throughout these works, Barthes utilised a combination of critical theory and structural linguistics to ‘read’ all manner of everyday cultural texts, including: films, literature, slogans, trivia, songs, toys, food, wine, theatre, popular rituals (cruises, stripteases, wrestling matches) and advertisements. Barthes’ distinctive approach came to be seen as Post-structural, a kind of cultural and literary method that went beyond earlier structural approaches which tended to emphasise the fixedness of meaning – or the linear and stagnant relationship between the signifier and the signified, to borrow terms from structural linguistics. Instead, Barthes seemed to propose that meaning could not be fixed and that socio-cultural analysis could no longer utilise linear or causal models of power. Here, while cultural texts continue to assert the ideological standpoint of those in power and thereby sustain the social order, they do so through more complex devices such as their ‘myth-making’ function. That is, they introduce a sense of awe, majesty and wonderment into the relatively mundane lives of ordinary people. Via this sense of wonderment, advertisements for example, can serve to further historicise, naturalise and eternalise the ideologies of the hegemonic group within a society (Thody & Course, 1999 [1997]). The political dimension to this myth-making is made explicit in one of the essays in Writing Degree Zero, entitled ‘Political Modes of Writing’ (Barthes, 1968 [1953]-a). Here Barthes argues that each regime has its own specific political language which can be utilised to both intimidate the people and glorify the privileged. “There is no doubt at all” he claims, “…that each regime has its own writing…[which] contains at one and the same time…the reality and the appearance of power, what it is, and what it would like to be thought to be” (Barthes, 1968 [1953]-a: 25).
From this point it is necessary to move to the works of a succession of three scholars from the prestigious Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris: Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. These three men influenced one another, attended each other’s lectures and achieved similar status in the canon of European philosophy, each making a significant contribution to the continued refinement of critical theory in the second half of the twentieth century. However, it should not be assumed that there is a direct lineage in their work and that they were always in agreement. While there is certainly not enough room here to explore each of their contributions in detail, nor the differences and disagreements between them, it is necessary to outline the fundamental tenets of their scholarship and its relation to the themes explored throughout this project.

Louis Althusser’s most influential work was a series of essays published between 1960 and 1965 where Althusser challenged the established views on the works of Karl Marx (Althusser, 1969 [1960-1965]). Despite the attention that Marxist doctrine had received internationally in both its political and theoretical ramifications (Mills, 1971 [1962]), Althusser illustrated that Marx’s work had thus far been “…disastrously misunderstood and underestimated” (James, 1984: 15). Althusser

7 In ways not at all dissimilar to the works of Marx, Gramsci and other critical theorists, both Foucault and Derrida (along with other ‘Postmodern’ philosophers) have recently come under scrutiny for their inheritance and propagation of the typically Orientalist tropes of the Western canon. This very problematic aspect of the work of such scholars will be drawn out further in the discussion of Said, Spivak and Bhabha below and is the subject of Ian Almond’s recent The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard (Almond, 2007). However, despite such concerns, both Foucault and Derrida have contributed concepts central to this thesis regarding the relations between power and knowledge, the constitutive role of discourse in the operation of an episteme and in their problematisation of the boundaries of Western rationality.

8 For example, Foucault was famously dismissive of Derrida’s contribution and, in turn, Derrida critiqued Foucault for having misread Descartes in his 1961 book, Madness and Civilisation (Foucault, 1961). A contemporaneous debate raged between Habermas and Derrida with both men eventually refusing to engage, quite ironically, in the kind of rational-critical debate they each advocated in their own respective way. Following the events of September 11 and the subsequent ‘War on Terror’, both scholars agreed to put aside their differences, the result of which is documented in Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida (Borradori, 2003).
believed that Marx didn’t just provide a thorough scrutiny of political economy, but an entirely new form of theory that was centred on an unprecedented dissection of knowledge itself (Callinicos, 1976; Sahay, 2007). From here, Althusser went on to develop his own views on the machinations of power based on ‘structural Marxism’, and a thorough critique of the concept of ideology. His views on this are perhaps best elucidated in his influential essay ‘Marxism and Humanism’ where he states,

It is customary to suggest that ideology belongs to the region of ‘consciousness’… In truth ideology has very little to do with ‘consciousness’, even supposing this term to have an unambiguous meaning. It is profoundly unconscious… Ideology is indeed a system of representation, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with consciousness… they are perceived / accepted / suffered cultural objects and they are functionally on [wo]men via a process that escapes them. [Wo]Men ‘live’ their ideologies… not as a form of consciousness, but as an object of their ‘world’ – as their ‘world’ itself… The ruling ideology is then the ideology of the ruling class. But the ruling class does not maintain with the ruling ideology, which is its own ideology, an external and lucid relation of pure utility and cunning… the bourgeoisie has to believe its own myth before it can convince others. (Althusser, 1969 [1965]: 232-234)

Here, and throughout much of his work, Althusser develops a number of important themes and ideas. Firstly, Althusser moves beyond Marx’s understanding of the ‘ruling class’ and their ‘ruling ideas’ to posit the existence of a ‘ruling ideology’ (otherwise known as the ‘dominant ideology’) – a complex matrix of beliefs, values and attitudes that are not only held in common by the majority of a given society but also serve to legitimate and reinforce the existence of the ruling or dominant group. Furthermore, Althusser demonstrated that such dominant ideologies were an unconscious social force (he used the term ‘unconscious consciousness’) that everyday people – from the bourgeoisie to the masses – come to accept and internalise (or ‘interpellate’). This occurs through a given society’s various socio-political institutions (rather than the cultural texts of Barthes) such as the legal and education system, religious organisations, the mass media or the family unit, which Althusser termed the ‘Ideological State Apparatuses’ (ISA’s). Paralleling the work of Gramsci, Althusser noted that the maintenance of state power depended less on the ‘Repressive State Apparatuses’ (RSA’s, those mechanisms employed to force society to adhere to the dominant ideology, such as the police) and more on the subtle and implicit power of the ISA (Althusser, 1971 [1969]). As Torfing notes, “By
exercising its hegemony over and in the ideological state apparatuses the dominance of the ruling class becomes almost total, and the possibility of historical change, therefore, becomes entirely dependent upon class struggle at the level of ideology” (Torfing, 1999: 18). In other words, Althusser was able to illustrate that not only did the dominant ideology transform itself into a kind of unconscious, natural ‘common sense’ view of the world via the ISA, it was therefore also a mechanism by which the limits of debate for a given society were determined by the dominant elite, their ideological position and their institutions.

However, it was one of Althusser’s students, Michel Foucault, who was to move beyond this neo-Marxist view to radically critique systems of knowledge and their relation to power. In fact, in the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault establishes the significance and influence of Althusser’s work by citing him positively as an example not only of the kind of radical critique of ideological systems that Foucault himself was interested in, but one that seeks to detach itself from and reveal its own ideological antecedents (Foucault, 2005 [1969]: 5). Indeed, this is arguably the major contribution of Foucault, an ever shifting critique of ideology – or more precisely the history of ideologies and their dissemination – via a re-thinking of history itself. Although Foucault’s work continues to have influence over psychology, philosophy, education, the arts, social sciences, humanities and other disciplines, his work can be seen as mostly historical, a radical new method that moves beyond Marx’s notion of history as a series of events enacted by (or over) the labour force, to a model of history which “…breaks off the past from the present and, by demonstrating the foreignness of the past, relativizes and undercuts the legitimacy of the present” (Poster, 1984: 74). To do this, Foucault attempted to move the debate over issues of power away from the hegemonic proliferation of dominant ideologies, and towards a more complex understanding of the constituent layers of power – or ‘discourses’ – which criss-crossed through the social world. Foucault developed his conception of discourse throughout two key phases in his work, that of ‘archaeology’ and ‘genealogy’.

In his earlier ‘archaeological’ work, Foucault was concerned with the ways in which discourses constitute bodies of knowledge. For example, in his detailed investigation into the construction of insanity via the discourses of psychopathology and medicine,
Foucault asserts that discourses are the “…practises that systematically form the objects of which we speak” (Foucault, 1961: 49). Here, and in much of his work, Foucault is alluding to the fact that certain bodies of knowledge (such as medicine or psychology) form discourses which enable us to discuss and define elements of the social world (such as mental disorders, sexuality and criminality) (Foucault, 1961, 1981, 1991 [1979]). Collectively these various bodies of knowledge converge to provide a given society with a particular view of the world, or ‘episteme’, which can unwittingly be underpinned by discontinuities and distortions that are embedded within the discourses themselves (Foucault, 1970). Despite their potential to be grievously flawed, each successive episteme both drives and unifies intellectual production and thereby constitutes itself as the legitimate and righteous view of the world (Foucault, 2005 [1969]). Here Foucault is not interested in the authenticity of the claims to truth of a given episteme, but instead the ways in which epistemes are mobilised via the practise of discourse and that these discourses then define the limits of deliberation and debate. Indeed, for Foucault there is “…no truth, only discursive regimes of truth or political struggles over truth” (Foucault as cited in: Rabinow, 1984: 72-75). In a lecture delivered in 1976, Foucault put this more succinctly by saying that

In a society such as ours there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. (Foucault, 1980 [1972-1977]: 93)

This quote also alludes to the ideas sketched out in his later ‘genealogical’ work where Foucault emphasised the relationship between knowledge and power. Picking up some of the Post-structuralist threads outlined by Barthes and Derrida (see below), Foucault began to perceive power as a pervasive, intangible and almost mundane element of the social world, claiming that it “…is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1981: 93) and that it should therefore be “…considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body” (Foucault, 1980 [1972-1977]: 119). In this sense, Foucault’s later work came to see discourse as secondary to the function of power
(Foucault, 1991 [1979]) or, to put it another way, discourses were a *modus operandi* for the machinations of power, the organisation and transmission of social control. In this way, the development and generation of knowledge that aligns itself with a given episteme therefore propagates certain discourses which are embedded with the structures of power necessary to legitimate and maintain that episteme. Again, Foucault himself puts this more succinctly in *The History of Sexuality I*, where he argues that

> There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. (Foucault, 1981: 101)

In this way, Foucault’s work can also be seen as a system of critique. His emphasis on the ubiquity and complexity of power challenged traditional methods of social analysis. So, while on the one hand Foucault built his analysis upon the critical theory developed through the work of Marx and Gramsci, he also challenged not only these scholars but the lineage of thinkers who had inherited and developed their criticism, such as Althusser. Alternatively, Foucault sought to

> …direct us away from ‘ideology hunting’, using our critical interpretative resources to look for the hidden messages in texts. Instead he directs us towards finding patterns, series, hierarchies in language that position people within certain roles and ways of thinking. (Matheson, 2005: 10)

This is clearly difficult to do given that Foucault not only saw power as ubiquitous and embedded in the episteme of a given society, but also because he claimed that new discourses are always emerging and power can always be challenged. This is really the fundamental contribution that Foucault provides to critical theory – an understanding of the ever changing relations and ubiquitous nature of power which constitutes the lineage of discourses and knowledges that provide a given social era with its own dominant episteme.

A student of Althusser and a colleague of Foucault, Jacques Derrida released three books in 1967 under the titles *Speech and Phenomena*, *Of Grammatology*, and
It would be easy enough to show that the concept of structure and even the word ‘structure’ itself are as old as the episteme – that is to say, as old as Western science and Western philosophy – and that their roots thrust deep into the soil of ordinary language, into whose deepest recesses the episteme plunges in order to gather them up and to make them part of itself a metaphorical displacement. (Derrida, 2003 [1967]-a: 351)

However, Derrida goes on to argue that a ‘rupture’ has occurred in our understanding of the central, guiding structures that governed these epistemes precisely because these disciplines had begun to question the “…structurality of structure” (Derrida, 2003 [1967]-a: 353). It is this questioning of structure itself, Derrida argues, that marked the

…moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse…that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. (Derrida, 2003 [1967]-a: 354)

This moment of the questioning of the structures that guide our dominant epistemes not only marked the beginning of Post-structuralism, but also saw Derrida employ the method of ‘deconstruction’. Indeed, as Alan Bass notes in his ‘Translator’s Introduction’ to *Writing and Difference*, the work effectively deconstructed philosophy itself by “…examining in the most faithful, rigorous way the ‘structured genealogy’ of all of philosophy’s concepts: and to do so in order to determine what
issues the history of philosophy has hidden, forbidden, or repressed” (Bass, 2003 [1977]: xi) (see also: Derrida, 1982 [1972]).

Unfortunately, it was Derrida’s conception of a method of ‘deconstruction’ that was to somewhat obfuscate the importance of what exactly Derrida was deconstructing. While Derrida himself eschewed the pronunciation of a deconstruction method as such, he did outline its fundamental tenets in *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1976 [1967]). For our purposes here, ‘deconstruction’ might best be outlined as a process which opens up and exposes the ‘binary oppositions’ within a given text. For example, texts use certain presuppositions that are premised on simple polar opposites (or binary oppositions) such as dark / light, good / evil or – perhaps more relevant here – occident / orient. The process of deconstruction is first to expose these binary oppositions, to establish their inherent contradictions, marginalities and structured silences and then to challenge the lineage of discourse on which they are premised. So, for example, much feminist research has sought to expose the assumptions that underpin the binary opposition of masculine / feminine where we find characteristics such as active, subject and power on the masculine side, while on the feminine side we find characteristics such as passive, object and powerless. Such assumptions are clearly ideological and embedded within the matrix of discourses which make up the social world. To appeal to so-called ‘common sense’, these discourses are inherently reductive, limiting the possibilities to a simple binary opposition. When these binary oppositions are deconstructed and exposed, the broader discourses they depend on are also exposed and their ideological premise becomes open to critique (Dooley, 2007; Lucy, 2004; C. Norris, 2002; Silverman, 1989; J. K. A. Smith, 2005; D. Wood, 1992).

While concepts such as deconstruction and binary oppositions continue to have strong influence over the humanities and social sciences – particularly philosophy, cultural studies and literary theory / criticism – Derrida’s work can also be seen as a critique of structures of power. As Andrew Milner notes, “Derrida’s insistence on the indeterminate openness of meaning is deliberately subversive of all authoritarianisms, whether epistemological, ethical or political, and of the fear of change that often inspires such authoritarianism” (Milner, 1991: 74). Here Derrida’s work parallels that of Foucault’s in the sense that they are both critical of dominant
epistememes and believe that the ideologies espoused by such epistememes are so ingrained in the matrices of discourse that envelop the social world, that it is difficult to disentangle critique from that which it attempts to deconstruct. Derrida puts this succinctly by stating that,

We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest. (Derrida, 2003 [1967]-a: 351)

Derrida’s more recent works picked up these early political tendencies and elaborated on them in some detail. In fact, Derrida’s later work moved away from deconstruction per se and towards broader moral, political and social issues which he saw as being ‘undeconstructible’, such as justice, forgiveness, democracy and cosmopolitanism (Derrida, 1992, 1997 [1994], 2001 [1997], 2005 [2003], 2006 [1993]). By undeconstructible Derrida is referring to the fact that such terms are more than the sum of those institutions, individuals and practises by which we know them. They are actually embedded with a kind of “…emancipatory promise” (Derrida, 2006 [1993]: 74), something that we must always strive towards rather than actually achieve. In this sense, democracy can be seen as much more than governments, politicians or elections, it is in fact an egalitarian promise of social justice and ‘rule by the people’. Derrida therefore believes that democracy is not owned by one group of people or another, but is a human condition. In this way, Derrida stipulates that we must always strive for a better, more robust democracy which is why he refers to it as ‘democracy to come’ (Derrida, 2005 [2003]: 78-94; 2006 [1993]: 108, 212). In what is arguably Derrida’s most political work, The Politics of Friendship he goes even further by arguing that democracy and deconstruction are implicitly intertwined to the point where there is “…no deconstruction without democracy, no democracy without deconstruction” (Derrida, 1997 [1994]: 105) (see also: Lucy & Mickler, 2006: 36-37; Thomson, 2005).

Perhaps more relevant here is Derrida’s revisiting of Marx and the concept of ideology as illustrated in his book Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International and also in his more recent paper ‘Marx and Sons’ (Derrida, 1999, 2006 [1993]). Here, as Jonathan Joseph points out, Derrida
opens up the “…possibility of revisiting the concept of ideology and reopens the dialogue between deconstruction and Marxism” (Joseph, 2001: 95). In doing so, Derrida acknowledges

…the fact that a theory of ideology is impossible in the strict sense of the word ‘theory’…does not necessarily have to be regarded as a negative limit or catastrophe. In the face of this, by now, classical situation, one needs, perhaps, to find a different way of thinking both the ‘ideological’…and the relationships between thought, philosophy, science and, precisely, ‘theory’, together with everything that interests all of us here: what still remains to ‘be done’. (Derrida, 1999: 256-257)

Derrida’s work is therefore an extension and a deconstruction of the heritage of critical theory that goes back to the work of Marx. On the one hand Derrida encourages us to deconstruct the history of critical thinking itself and to expose the structures and silences which have engendered a relatively small scope from which to analyse the social world. In this way, Derrida is advocating a position beyond ideology, a method of critique that moves away from the rather simplistic approaches of Marx, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, towards a more complex understanding of knowledge / power and a more sustained approach to the critique of dominant epistemes vis a vis the Post-structuralist shift evident in the work of Foucault and Barthes. On the other hand, Derrida also acknowledges that there is much left to ‘be done’ in the human sciences. He notes that issues such as justice, democracy and cosmopolitanism are ‘to come’ and need to be striven towards. It is at this point that Derrida’s deconstruction of ideology and his advocacy of the undeconstructible converge to posit that if we are to move closer to that which is still ‘to come’ then we must employ non-ideological deconstructive methods to reveal how the dominant ideological epistemes that govern society “…may come into contradiction with themselves or fail, and thus demonstrates the cracks and fissures, vulnerabilities and weak points, and gaps within hegemonic ideology itself” (Kellner, 1995a: 113).

It is important to note here that the Post-structuralist shift that occurred most prominently in the works of Barthes, Foucault and Derrida has had a monumental impact on the humanities and social sciences throughout the late twentieth / early twenty-first century. Their brand of critical theory has had implications for the ways
In 1978 Edward W. Said published his aptly and succinctly titled *Orientalism*\(^9\) (Said, 2003 [1978]). In order to complete this seminal work, Said conducted a discourse analysis of an astounding number of academic, bureaucratic and literary texts from as far back as the Napoleonic era (late eighteenth century) through to the mid twentieth century, a period during which European colonialism extended across some 85 per cent of the globe. What he noted was that the West\(^{10}\) (or more specifically the European colonial powers) had tended to approach the East (and here Said focused on the Islamic / Arab world) with a sense of superiority – intellectual, political, cultural – and that this superiority therefore justified the domination and domestication of the Orient. In the ‘Introduction’ to the book, Said operationalises Orientalism as a matrix of interdependent discourses, institutions and practices which framed the Orient in particular ways. Specifically, Said discusses three dimensions to Orientalism: its academic aspect in that “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient…is an Orientalist”; the mode of thought found in such academic work and in other texts including poetry, novels, policy etc which is premised “…upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the

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\(^9\) It should be noted here that while Said’s Orientalism is widely recognised as an unprecedented breakthrough in understanding and critiquing Western conceptions of the non-European world, it was somewhat pre-empted (and paralleled) by the work of several scholars (Abdel-Malek, 1963; Alatas, 1977; T. Asad, 1973a, 1973b; Grossrichard, 1998 [1979]; Jameelah, 1971; Tibawi, 1964; Turner, 1978).

\(^{10}\) The use of the terms ‘West’ and ‘East’ throughout this project is in itself problematic given that it relies on a Eurocentric vision of the world. Unlike the terms ‘North’ and ‘South’ which have a clearly defined geographical boundary in the equator, the terms ‘East’ and ‘West’ are ideological, originating in Europe to divide the Eurasian landmass between the European or ‘Western’ world and the Asiatic or ‘Eastern’ world. It is perhaps telling that while the ‘Eastern’ world has been broken down into further sub-categories such as ‘Near East’, ‘Middle East’ and ‘Far East’, there is no Near, Middle or Far ‘West’. Indeed terms such as Near, Middle and Far ‘East’ are further complicated today by their now global use. For example when someone in the United States talks about the ‘Far East’, they are really taking about their geographical ‘Near West’, while at the same time the American ‘Near East’ is, geographically speaking, Europe. Despite their Eurocentric origin and their geographical inaccuracy, these terms remain in common parlance and will be used throughout this thesis.
Orient’ and ‘the Occident’; and the interchange between these two which generates “…corporate institutions for dealing with the Orient” amounting to “…a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 2-3).

The point here was not that Said was attempting to uncover any ‘true’ Orient that lay dormant under the layers of Orientalist discourse and nor was he attempting to preclude all future research and investigation into the Orient by those in the West. Indeed, as he points out towards the end of *Orientalism*, Said believed that

> The methodological failures of Orientalism [the process of Orientalism, not the book] cannot be accounted for either by saying that the real Orient is different from Orientalist portraits of it, or by saying that since Orientalists are Westerners for the most part, they cannot be expected to have an inner sense of what the Orient is all about. Both of these propositions are false. It is not the thesis of this book to suggest that there is such a thing as a real or true Orient (Islam, Arab, or whatever); nor is it to make an assertion about the necessary privilege of an ‘insider’ perspective over an ‘outsider’ one. (Said, 2003 [1978]: 322)

Instead, Said’s point was that the discourses which constituted Orientalism were an ideological fantasy, a fantasy that bore no relation to the reality and complexity of Middle Eastern society – its myriad of cultures, religions, peoples, customs, histories etc. Firstly, this Orientalist fantasy served to homogenise, demonise and stereotype the Middle East according to fairly reductive and negative terms, such that the Oriental was viewed as the ‘other’. Here, Said pointed out that the hegemonic group or colonisers generate certain forms of knowledge about those that are subordinated or colonised, and that this knowledge is disseminated to the general public in various ways. During the nineteenth century, these knowledges were distilled down from “…essential ideas about the Orient – its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness – into a separate and unchallenged coherence” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 205). Clearly the unquestioned tendency to view the people of the Orient as deficient and inferior ‘others’ served the colonial agenda in continuing to dominate and control sections of the East. Secondly, the ideological fantasy of the Middle East which is embedded within Orientalism had the effect of marginalising or, more accurately, silencing, the histories and cultures of these ‘others’. In this way, Said concluded that the people of the Orient have been
“…rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or – as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory - taken over” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 207).

_Orientalism_ is however only the first instalment in a collection of books by Said which seek to expose the discourses which have subordinated the East under the auspices of Western colonial power. In the second instalment, _The Question of Palestine_ (Said, 1979) Said seeks to apply the fundamental concepts outlined in his earlier work to the historical discourses – again, academic, bureaucratic and literary – which have contributed to the Western understanding of Zionism and the plight of the Palestinians. Remembering of course that Said was himself a Palestinian Christian, he writes

> Most of all, I think, there is the entrenched cultural attitude toward Palestinians deriving from age-old Western prejudices about Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient. This attitude, from which in its turn Zionism drew for its view of the Palestinians, dehumanising us, reduced us to the barely tolerated status of a nuisance. (Said, 1979: xiv)

While Said was to return to the issues of Palestinian dispossession, self-determination and the peace process several times throughout his career (Said, 1995 [1969-1994], 2002 [1995-2002], 2004 [2000-2003]), perhaps more relevant here is his _Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine how we see the Rest of the World_ (Said, 1981). As with _The Question of Palestine_, in _Covering Islam_ Said attempts to apply the methodology that he had so rigorously outlaid in _Orientalism_, this time to the function of the Western media (particularly that of the United States) and its coverage of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. Here, Said moves beyond the annals of colonial history and literature to demonstrate that the legacy of Orientalism continues today via not only the West’s ongoing dominance of the East, but also via more subtle forms such as the media. In an extended quote that seems eerily prophetic given the current ‘War on Terror’ and its media coverage, Said wrote,

> For most Americans…and, presumably, other Westerners…the branch of the cultural apparatus that has been delivering Islam to them for the most part includes the television and radio networks, the daily newspapers, and the mass circulation news magazines…and the]…cinema. Together, this
powerful concentration of mass media can be said to constitute a communal core of interpretations providing a certain picture of Islam and, of course, reflecting powerful interests in the society served by the media… Thus, if the Iranian crisis is regularly rendered by television pictures of chanting ‘Islamic’ mobs accompanied by commentary about ‘anti-Americanism’, the distance, unfamiliarity, and threatening quality of the spectacle limit ‘Islam’ to those characteristics; this in turn gives rise to a feeling that something basically unattractive and negative confronts us. Since Islam is ‘against’ us and ‘out there’, the necessity of adopting a confrontational response of our own towards it will not be doubted. (Said, 1981: 43-44)

Several years later, Said was to extend this argument regarding the media’s role in propagating Orientalist stereotypes to the broader landscape of Western ‘high culture’ (particularly the novel) and its complicit role in Western imperialism (Said, 1994 [1993]). Taking to task authors such as Joseph Conrad, Jane Austen and Albert Camus, Said demonstrated that throughout such work

…the source of the world’s significant action and life is in the West, whose representatives seem at liberty to visit their fantasies and philanthropies upon a mind-deadened Third World. In this view, the outlying regions of the world have no life, history, or culture to speak of, no independence or integrity worth representing without the West. And when there is something to be described it is…utterably corrupt, degenerate, irredeemable. (Said, 1994 [1993]: xxi)

However, a discussion of Said’s work is not complete without providing some understanding of the contentious and complex relationship between the lineage of critical theory outlined above and the development of Said’s central argument. On the one hand, Said acknowledged the influence of critical theorists such as Gramsci and Foucault11 in identifying the processes by which the colonial powers generated knowledges about the Orient. Specifically, Said’s understanding of the domination of the Orient enacted by the colonialists is, in many respects, similar to Gramsci’s concept of hegemony which Said recognised as “…an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 7). Here Said acknowledged that hegemony was maintained through struggle and negotiation,

11 It should be noted here that while Said draws heavily on the works of Gramsci and Foucault, he also pays homage to the scholarship of various other critical theorists throughout his work. For example, throughout Orientalism he regularly cites Benjamin, Barthes and Althusser (Said, 2003 [1978]).
and that this “…form of cultural hegemony…gives Orientalism…[its] durability and…strength” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 7). In one of his later essays, Said found Gramsci’s unfinished piece ‘Some Aspects of the Southern Question’ (Gramsci, 1978 [1926]) useful in that it demonstrates Gramsci’s thoughts on how one goes about discussing ‘others’ – in this case the disenfranchised and poor of southern Italy. Applying Gramsci’s line of thinking on this issue, Said goes on to question the ways in which the colonial powers were able to maintain their hegemony via a “…consent gained and continuously consolidated for the distant rule of native peoples and territories” (Said, 1995: 28).

Likewise, Said found it useful to “…employ Michel Foucault’s notion of a discourse, as described by him in The Archaeology of Knowledge and in Discipline and Punish, to identify Orientalism” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 3). This enabled Said to demonstrate the ways in which key texts on the Orient can generate received wisdoms that permeate subsequent scholarship, practises and policies and thus “…can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 94). In this sense, Said’s work can also be understood as an application of Foucault’s conceptualisation of the power / knowledge nexus, where the colonial process of generating forms of knowledge regarding the Orient therefore propagates certain discourses which are embedded with the structures of power necessary to legitimate and maintain colonial rule (Said, 1981: 126-164). In this way, Said’s reliance on the works of scholars such as Gramsci and Foucault has seen him inherit a body of critical theory dating back to the early works of Marx so much so that one of his essays appears in a collection entitled Contemporary Marxist Literary Criticism where the editor introduces Said’s essay ‘Jane Austen and Empire’ (Said, 1992 [1989]) by claiming that Said is “…writing in solidarity with Marxism rather than as a declared exponent” (Mulhern, 1992: 97).

This would, of course, appear relatively unproblematic if it was not for Said’s sustained critique of this same lineage of critical theory. As Leela Gandhi notes, “…Said has been consistently critical about the epistemological and ontological insufficiency of Marxist theory” due to “…their inability to accommodate the specific political needs and experiences of the colonised world” (Gandhi, 1998: 70, 71). Building on this, Said also notes the ways in which the move towards Post-
structuralism in the work of scholars such as Derrida and Foucault is clearly Eurocentric in that it challenges the philosophical parameters of the West not only from within the confines of those same boundaries, but that it curiously neglects the colonial world outside of (both geographically and academically) these same borders (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 75-113; C. Norris, 2002: 84-88). Therefore, while Said’s work is clearly underpinned by some of the guiding principles of critical theory, it is also a critique of and reaction to those scholars who enabled his line of thinking (Said, 1999 [1986], 2001 [1976], 2001 [1985], 2001 [1987]; 2001 [1996]: 268-269; 2001 [1998]: 334-335; 2004).

This has resulted in a number of subtle contradictions within Said’s work. For example, in the essay which cites Gramsci’s ‘Southern Question’, Said goes on to state several pages later, “To read most cultural deconstructionists, or Marxists, or new historicists is to read writers whose political horizon, whose historical location is within a society and culture deeply enmeshed in imperial domination” (Said, 1995: 34). Clearly, the work of Gramsci and Foucault could be implicated in such an accusation. However, such contradictions need not be thought of as undermining Said’s work. Instead, they might be seen as indicators of the importance of his contribution. As Leela Gandhi notes, not only does Said’s work exhibit “…all the limits and constraints of its historically specific relation to Marxism, poststructuralism and the third world, it is also able to push against these structural and formal limits in interestingly ‘subjunctive’ ways” (Gandhi, 1998: 70). Thus, Said was not only able to consistently demonstrate the ways in which colonial authority had generated the discourses which both defined and limited understandings of the Orient and its people; he was also able to move through the confines of the Western scholarly tradition which had enabled his observation. Here, Said developed new approaches to critical theory which sought to provide a dimension to the understanding of power that had previously eluded Western scholars. He enabled a consideration of the ways in which existing social analysis techniques had themselves inherited a lineage of theory that had thus far served to subordinate, demonise or completely exclude the ‘other’.

Said’s ground-breaking work has been central to much recent discussion in the humanities and social sciences and, more specifically, to the development of ‘Post-
colonial’ studies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995; Desai & Nair, 2005b; Gandhi, 1998; Guha, 1988; Loomba, 2005; Loomba, Kaul, Bunzl, Burton, & Esty, 2005b; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Prakash, 1995; Young, 2001). These studies not only carry forth Said’s work in critiquing the impact that the colonial era had over much of the world, they also utilise other Post-structuralist concepts – most notably Derrida’s deconstructionist approach – as methods of examining, critiquing and postulating Post-colonial narratives and spaces which might best help theorise the position of the ‘other’ after colonialism. In a recent collection edited by Gaurav Desai and Supriyar Nair, they sketch out the boundaries of the vast array of Post-colonial scholarship by stating,

The central questions of coloniality, power, and knowledge have, in this domain, been increasingly cast in a comparative framework, raising, in turn, more questions about the historical parameters of colonialisms, the relevance of regionalisms in an increasingly interconnected world, and the possibility of a post-colonial politics that speaks at once to local goals as well as to universal human rights. (Desai & Nair, 2005b: 1)

Similarly to Said’s work above, this body of literature has both built on and negated critical theory, from Marx’s critique of ideology through to the Post-structuralism in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. While much Post-colonial theory has been antagonistic towards the approaches to power and the ignorance of the non-Western world found in Marx and other structuralist approaches, it has been more receptive to Post-structuralism, from which it has learnt “…to diagnose the material effects and implications of colonialism as an epistemological malaise at the heart of Western rationality” (Gandhi, 1998: 24-26). Mostly, Post-colonial research has set about the deconstruction of both the canonical texts of Western literature and the bureaucratic documents produced during the colonial period. Here, they have uncovered the binary oppositions that guided the colonial project and served to construct the colonised subject, those of East / West, coloured / white, primitive / civilised, savage / cultured etc. By uncovering such distinctions, Post-colonialism has attempted to expose these inherently reductive discourses and to demonstrate the lasting damage – both physical and ideological – that such discourses have enacted on the colonised world and its people. Post-colonial scholarship can therefore be understood as a movement which attempts to retrieve the silent histories that lay behind such reductive binaries, “…both in terms of the objective history of subaltern or
dominated, marginalised groups, ‘counter-histories’, and in terms of the subjective experience of the effects of colonialism and domination” (Young, 1995: 58).

This is perhaps best demonstrated in the works of two Indian-born Post-colonial scholars, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha. Spivak first came to prominence with her astute translation of and critical introduction to Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* in 1976 (Derrida, 1976 [1967]). Described as a “…Marxist-feminist-deconstructionist” (Chrisman, 1998: 53), Spivak went on to develop her own approach to Post-colonial studies as is best illustrated in her 1988 essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (Spivak, 1995 [1988]). Here, Spivak outlines her central critique of the canon of Western academia and its continued legacy of marginalising its former (and current) colonial subjects. She writes that “It is impossible for contemporary French intellectuals to imagine the kind of Power and Desire that would inhabit the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe” (Spivak, 1995 [1988]: 24) (see also: Spivak, 1987; 1999). However, like Said before her, Spivak utilised those very methodologies which were a direct product of the tradition she so often critiqued. It is perhaps no surprise given her early career that Spivak came to prefer the work of Derrida to Foucault and other Post-structuralists. Although she was at times critical of Derrida’s work as part of that same canon that had ignored the marginalised colonies, she attempted to test its conceptual boundaries by applying deconstruction to the non-Western world.

Spivak’s work also differed from Said and other Post-colonialists in that she was concerned with counter-discourse and counter-hegemony (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 75). In this way, Spivak extended the field by focusing less on the structured, linear approach to power where the colonialist simply constructed the world of the ‘other’, to a more complex reading of the subaltern narrative. In some of her earlier work, Spivak grapples with the difficulty of such a project given that, as she claims,

> No perspective critical of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self. (Spivak, 1986: 272)
However, she moves beyond this by noting that the domesticated ‘other’ or colonised subaltern is nevertheless “…irretrievably heterogenous” (Spivak, 1995 [1988]: 26). Essentially, Spivak wants us to recognise the differences in the experiences of the myriad peoples and groups left in the wake of the colonial exercise, the differences for example between the Diaspora and the local, migrants and refugees, etc. Her particular emphasis is on the subalterns – subsistence farmers, peasant labourers and the extremely poor (Spivak, 1990; Spivak & Gunew, 1993 [1990]) – and, more specifically, the female subalterns, acknowledging that they are “…even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak, 1995 [1988]: 28). In this way Spivak challenges us to acknowledge that

…the subaltern is still, characteristically, only heard through the mediation of the non-subaltern, or that while the subaltern can speak, the West may choose not to hear, or that the terms in which the subaltern speaks may be overdetermined, so that no ‘pure’ form of subaltern consciousness can be retrieved. (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 108)

However, like Said before her, Spivak is not arguing here that the Western scholar can no longer take interest in the colonised and marginalised territories (Spivak, 2001). Indeed, in answering her own question regarding whether or not such subalterns can speak, Spivak refers us back to the work of Said, claiming that his work has “…blossomed into a garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken, even spoken for” (Spivak, 1993: 56).

Homi K. Bhabha, like Spivak, was also heavily influenced by the work of Post-structuralists and applied the theories and methodologies developed within this school of thought to the emerging Post-colonial world. Adopting a rather difficult discursive style and an eclectic approach to theory, Bhabha’s essays offer both a sustained critique of Western critical theory and a rigorous application of it. In the ‘Introduction’ to his collection of essays, The Location of Culture, Bhabha notes that while critical theories are problematic at least in terms of their epistemological limits and Eurocentrism, they retain significance due to the possibilities they open up for the further critique and analysis “…of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices – women, the colonized, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities” (Bhabha, 1994: 4-5). To some degree, Bhabha can be seen as going
further than Spivak here in that he not only critiques and applies critical theory, he also emphasises new methods and approaches. For example, in one essay he suggests that Post-colonial theory needs to

…shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse… I do not intend to deconstruct the colonial discourse to reveal its ideological misconceptions or repressions, to exult in its self-reflexivity, or to indulge its liberatory ‘excess’. In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject its representation to a normalising judgement. (Bhabha, 1994 [1992]: 67)

In this way, Bhabha is attempting to move beyond the parameters of deconstruction as defined by the search for and exposure of binary oppositions. Instead, Bhabha proposes that the existence of binary distinctions, such as Orient / Occident for example, should be taken as a given. An acknowledgment of these presuppositions can then underpin the broader project of understanding and coming to terms with the imbalances evident in such binaries and the practises of power which establish and continue to legitimate the associated imbalances. Such a shift, Bhabha seems to claim, would enable the Western world to maintain less violent and hegemonic relations with the non-Western world (Bhabha, 1990a, 1994 [1985], 1994 [1989], 1995, 1996, 1995 [1990]).

One such method for coming to terms with the West’s ‘regime of truth’ and the continued imbalances that it has engendered is via a recognition of the twin histories of Western civilisation. Indeed, Bhabha argues that the guiding discourses of the modern Western world – justice, democracy, liberty etc – were created at exactly the same moment when the West was involved in the tyranny of the colonial project. Bhabha elaborates on this point in an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, where he states that

I think we need to draw attention to the fact that the advent of Western modernity, located as it generally is in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was the moment when certain master narratives of the state, the citizen, cultural value, art, science, the novel, when these major cultural discourses and identities came to define the ‘Enlightenment’ of Western society and the critical rationality of Western personhood. The time at which these things were happening was the same time at which the West was
producing another history of itself through its colonial possessions and relations. That ideological tension, visible in the history of the West as a despotic power, at the very moment of the birth of democracy and modernity, has not been adequately written in a contradictory and contrapuntal discourse of tradition. Unable to resolve the contradictions perhaps, the history of the West as a despotic power, a colonial power, has not been adequately written side by side with its claims to democracy and solidarity. (Bhabha, 1990b: 218)

This passage is of particular importance to the project being undertaken here because Bhabha herein exposes a key binary distinction between the twin histories of the modern Western world, both of which have their origins in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. On the one hand, this era of Western history, otherwise known as Modernity, is typified by its rapid technical and scientific advancement as well as its associated urbanisation. In terms of the socio-political landscape, Modernity also represents the emergence of many of the guiding principles of Western civilisation as we know it today. For example, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also witnessed a series of social upheavals and political struggles in Brittain, Western Europe and in North America which paved the way for modern, representative forms of democracy. These developments have not only had a fundamental impact on the development of the central discourses of Western civilisation, they also serve as the benchmark for the rest of the world, setting the standard for human rights, democratisation, liberty and justice. However, as Bhabha keenly notes above, there is another narrative which parallels these developments. At precisely the same time that the West was confronting its own political instability and forging states based on egalitarian models of social justice and collective governance, it was spreading out across much of the globe in the quest for resources and power. In other words, while the Western world fought for a government that acknowledged and responded to the needs of the citizen, the non-Western world was being folded under the administration of a foreign, occupying force. As Europe confronted the desire for individual rights and freedoms, the people of the colonies were subject to slavery, abhorrent abuses and extermination.
Conclusion

Critical theory therefore provides us with a model by which to understand and scrutinize the ever changing relations and ubiquitous nature of power and knowledge which constitute a given episteme. Recently, this kind of critique has been extended to the Middle East and other regions of the world that were once – or are still – folded under the auspices of Western hegemony. Despite its contained differences and conjectures, this body of critical theory is inherently political in nature and encourages us to expose and critique systems of exploitation, manipulation and control. Indeed, returning to the work of Michael Brown which opened this chapter, we find that he concludes by stating that

…thinking about politics requires thinking about theory, and thinking about theory can only be worthwhile if theory involves more than insight and if one respects the complexity required if it is to be critical in the sense discussed above. It would be difficult for anyone seriously interested in the idea of politics of resistance and opposition…to justify avoiding…the great tradition of criticism, critical studies, and critical theory. (M. E. Brown, 2004: xi)

Indeed, this body of critical theory – from Marx to Bhabha – provides the methodological parameters and tools that enable the deconstruction of the ‘discourses of democracy’ as they pertain to the democratisation of Iraq in 2005. To begin with, critical theory demands that we scrutinize the history, practise and institutions of democracy in order to highlight the binary oppositions it has constructed between the West’s supposed tendency towards democracy and the East’s purported predilection to despotism. Further to this, critical theory asks us to trace through and examine the lineage of such oppositions and to identify the erroneous assumptions which underpin them. Finally, critical theory challenges us to undermine such assumptions via the assertion of alternative narratives, histories and discourses. In other words, it is through the paradigm of critical theory that this project addresses each of the central Research Questions: to identify the ‘discourses of democracy’; to examine the ways such discourses have been used to construct Iraq within the West (especially the construction of Iraq’s democratisation in the Western media in 2005); and to offer alternative visions of Iraqi politics via a steady analysis of key periods in its complex history.
The orientalist view of Asiatic society can be encapsulated in the notion that the social structure of the oriental world was characterised by the absence of a civil society, that is, by the absence of a network of institutions mediating between the individual and the state. It was this social absence which created the conditions for oriental despotism in which the individual was permanently exposed to the arbitrary rule of the despot. The absence of civil society simultaneously explained the failure of capitalist economic development outside Europe and the absence of political democracy. (Turner, 1994: 23)

The Discourse of ‘Western Democracy’

The etymology of the English word ‘democracy’ can be traced back to the sixteenth century when it was adapted from the French word democratie (Held, 2006: 1). Further back, the Late Latin term demokratia had its origins in a Greek word that is itself a composite of two other words, demos and kratos. The latter translates to mean ‘power’ or ‘rule’ and appears today in English words such as aristocracy (rule by the aristoi, the best or elite), autocracy (rule by the autos, the self), monarchy (rule by the monos, alone or one), and oligarchy (rule by the oligoi, the few or little) to name only some. The word demos, on the other hand, was a protean word that had several different, but related, meanings such as ‘citizen body,’ or ‘lower classes’ that can be generally translated to mean ‘the people’ (Finley, 1973: 12-13). Together, then, demokratia literally means ‘people power / rule,’ or perhaps more eloquently, ‘rule by the people’.

The word demokratia is believed to have first appeared in the writing of the ‘Father of History’, Herodotus, around 460 BC. In his seminal text, Histories, Herodotus presents the origins, context and events of the Greco-Persian Wars of 490 BC and 480-479 BC with a remarkable penchant for detail and a vast knowledge of cultures and lands beyond those of his native Greece (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]). Throughout his work, Herodotus repeatedly praises the freedom and democracy of Greece (Fornara, 1971: 48-51). For example, when Athens is liberated from the despotic rule
of Pisistratidae (who owed his allegiance to Persia instead of Greece), he seizes the opportunity to juxtapose the tyranny, oppression and civic weakness of despotic rule against the liberty, egalitarianism and civic strength of democracy (Forsdyke, 2001). Indeed, having thrown off the shackles of despotism,

Thus did the Athenians increase in strength. And it is plain enough, not from this instance only, but from many everywhere, that freedom [elsewhere translated as democracy (see: Forsdyke, 2001: 333)] is an excellent thing; since even the Athenians who, while they continued under the rule of tyrants, were not a whit more valiant than any of their neighbours, no sooner shook off the yoke than they became decidedly the first of all. These things show that while undergoing oppression, they let themselves be beaten, since then they worked for a master; but so soon as they got their freedom, each man was eager to do the best he could for himself. So fared it now with the Athenians. (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]: 419)

Well before Herodotus’ use of the term *demokratia* however, the Greeks were practising various forms of ‘rule by the people’. Perhaps the earliest such examples exist in the epics recounted by Homer somewhere between 800 and 600 BC, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Homer, 1950 [700 BC], 1965 [700 BC]). The series of events that make up these immortal classics of the Western literary canon are believed to have occurred much earlier, around 1300 to 1200 BC. In both epics we find regular reference to councils and assemblies presided over by the ruler or king. Each attendee (free adult males) appears to have had considerable freedom of speech and those who were successful in having their ideas translated into policy utilised a powerful rhetorical style to convince the whole assembly (Easton, 1970: 186-187).

Such early methods of collective governance appear to have waned during Greece’s Dark Age from approximately 1200 to 800 BC, but resurfaced again not in Athens, but in Sparta. Here, around 600 BC, the Spartans are credited with developing a constitution which stipulated that a council was to discuss and deliberate over key issues of the state before referring the final decision to a popular assembly, which all citizens were expected to regularly attend (Plutarch, 1952 [100 AD]: 32-48). However, it was the Athenian aristocracy, having witnessed the tendency for oligarchy enabled by the Spartan system, that issued Kleisthenes a mandate in 508/507 BC to formulate a political system that would eschew the centralisation of power (Dunn, 1992b: v; Hornblower, 1992: 1-2). Kleisthenes, an adept and popular
politician who had long advocated a system of ‘rule by the people’, devised a sophisticated method of participatory democracy centred on the notion of the *polis*, meaning the ‘city and its citizens’ (Aristotle, 1984 [332 BC]: 62-65). To govern the *polis*, the Athenians convened in an assembly, an outdoor meeting which presided over issues as vast as “…war and peace, treaties, finance, legislation, public works, in short, on the whole gamut of governmental activity” (Finley, 1973: 18-19). All adult male citizens were encouraged to attend these assemblies, which convened about 40 times a year, and were permitted to *isegoria* – the freedom to voice their concerns in front of their fellow citizens. Furthermore, the assembly elected a few key officials and experts to positions of authority, while every citizen had more than a good chance of being chosen by lot for a short-term position in public office (Dahl, 1998: 12; Easton, 1970: 192-195). However, after nearly two centuries of ‘rule by the people’, the Athenian *polis* was conquered by and subjugated under the authority of the Macedonians.

Concurrent to the rise and fall of *demokratia* in Athens, was the development of the Roman Republic. Interestingly, the etymology of republic comes from the Latin words *res* (meaning ‘thing’ or ‘affair’) and *publicus* (or ‘people’) which together make ‘the affairs of the people’, not altogether dissimilar to the Greek notion of ‘rule by the people’. Despite this similarity and the fact that the Roman Republic outlasted the Athenian *polis*, by Greek standards Rome was far from being a democracy (Dunn, 1992a: 244). While in early Roman history the workings of the Senate (originally composed by the heads of clans) and the *Comitia Curiata* (the general assembly of all arms-bearing men) were complex and relatively egalitarian, the Republic quickly descended into the kind of oligarchic power structures that the Athenians had been so determined to avoid (Easton, 1970: 307-315). Although the *plebs* (or ‘common people’) eventually gained access to the inner workings of the Republic after having fought vehemently for the privilege, the Republic remained the domain of the elite and, as the empire spread out across the known world, an increasing number of Roman citizens were disenfranchised (Dahl, 1998: 13-14).

Eventually, the authority of Rome was undermined by a series of wars, corruption scandals, and a decline in the civic spirit that had underpinned the birth of the Republic. Thus, the concept of ‘the affairs of the people’ administered by popular
governance appears to have all but vanished form Europe for nearly a thousand years (Dahl, 1998: 14-15). Although the Vikings and other Northern Europeans held assemblies as far back as 600 AD, it wasn’t until the northern city-states of Italy began to develop systems of popular rule around 1100 AD that democracy began to re-emerge on the continent (Dahl, 1998: 15, 18). This was a time of a thriving socio-economic and cultural atmosphere that paralleled that of ancient Greece and is now acknowledged as having given rise to the Renaissance (Dunn, 1992a: 245). Although the authority over the early political machinations of these city-states was restricted to the aristocracy, who were granted supreme judicial authority, the system eventually evolved to include the popolo (the people of the middle classes) (Dahl, 1998: 15). By the middle of the thirteenth century there were written constitutions which guaranteed the each individual state their own “…elective and self-governing arrangements” (Skinner, 1992: 57). Shortly after this however, these city-states descended into economic hardship and forms of oligarchy and autocracy replaced these increasingly unstable and short-lived democracies (Skinner, 1992: 58).

Meanwhile, in Medieval England, King John established the Magna Carta (Latin for ‘Great Paper’) in 1215 which prescribed that the authority of the king was to be shared with a Great Council constituted mostly by noblemen and ecclesiastics. Eventually, this Great Council evolved into the more familiar Parliament (from the French parler, ‘to speak’) during the reign of Edward I (Dahl, 1998: 21). Under the auspices of his grandson, Edward III, the parliament was split into the House of Lords and the House of Commons in the middle of the fourteenth century. This relatively complex system enabled the power of the king to be negated by the Parliament – which itself was divided between the powers vested in the two chambers. Although the introduction of the House of Commons has clearly influenced the development of representative democracy, it must be remembered that it consisted of borough representatives who had been elected by the mere 10 per cent of the adult male population who were eligible to vote (Wootton, 1992: 71).

Then, in the middle of the fifteenth century, German national Johannes Gutenberg converted a winepress into the world’s first movable-type printing press thus giving birth to the modern mass media (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003: 9). This led to the development of several twice-yearly journals that detailed the important political
events of Europe throughout the sixteenth century and – in 1605 – the modern, weekly newspaper began in Strasbourg (J. Weber, 2006: 389-391). Following the onset of the Thirty Years War in 1618, Europe was inundated with a flood of fledgling newspapers and, by the middle of the seventeenth century, “…political newspapers had the largest circulation of all contemporary forms of printed material, or were at any rate the most widely distributed form of secular reading matter” and these papers “…exemplified a norm of neutrality that has remained unequalled ever since” (J. Weber, 2006: 399, 402). The same is true of England, where the Civil War of 1642-1651, saw comparable developments in the nation’s press sector, leading to the development of the “…first daily newspaper, the Daily Courant” in 1702 (Keane, 1991: 9).

By the 1670s, the newspapers of Europe had laid the foundations for the emergence of a new genre, the historico-political journal. It was these journals that fed into the emerging bourgeois civil society that was to prove so influential in the series of political events and revolutions that paved the way for the materialisation of modern democracy (J. Weber, 2006: 407-409). The common newspaper played a critical role in transforming the once esoteric world of kings, courtiers, politicians and ecclesiastics into legible fodder for the common person. This helped aid the transition towards a more politically enlightened citizenry, a body of people who at the very least began to understand the inner workings of the elite. Indeed, at the time of the French Revolution (1789) many previously clandestine newspapers, journals and pamphlets flooded the streets of the nation, garnering the force of public opinion which was to prove so influential in “…undermining the credibility of established authority and spreading new ideas of religious scepticism, social criticism and reform” (Fontana, 1992: 111). This led the rebellious few who constituted the representatives of France’s Third Estate (the middle classes and peasants) to found the National Assembly and vow to revolt against the existing monarchy, advocating a system of “…popular sovereignty vested in the whole of the French nation” (Fontana, 1992: 114). This call was heeded by the citizenry and a bloody rebellion swept across much of France. Chanting Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, ou la Mort! (‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death!’) these insurgents went on to storm the Bastille prison in Paris on 14 July 1789, effectively setting in motion a series of events that saw the power of the monarchy greatly diminished. Later the same year, the French
Constituent Assembly adopted ‘The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen’ (The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1997 [1789]), which, in 1791, formed the preamble for the constitution and set in place a representative democracy with near universal male suffrage (Fontana, 1992: 119).

Paralleling these developments, the newfound colony of America threw down the shackles of monarchical government following the American Revolution and the 1776 Declaration of Independence (The Declaration of Independence, 1997 [1776]) (G. S. Wood, 1992). Here, the Framers of the United States Constitution deliberated and re-drafted their document until it was completed in Philadelphia in 1787 (The Constitution of the United States, 1997 [1787]). Although, the constitution had its imperfections, it was cleverly crafted to eschew the authority of a monarch while retaining what Americans saw as the merits of the English system (Dahl, 1998: 21). Finally, in 1789 the newfound republic began operating under the authority of the document following its ratification (Pickles, 1970: 48). Understanding the role of the press in a democratic state, the United States of America passed its First Amendment in 1791, ensuring that “Congress shall make no law…abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press” (as cited in: Keane, 1991: 128).

Meanwhile in England, the defence of Thomas Paine (author of Rights of Man) against charges of ‘seditious libel’ by his attorney, Thomas Erskine, was premised on the notion of ‘freedom of the press’. As John Keane skilfully recounts in his The Media and Democracy, Erskine denied that

…a free press would lead to rebellion and disorder, Civil disputes conducted in ink would not end in bloody civil war. On the contrary, rapacious governments are the prime cause of civil disorder, whereas government based on public discussion among citizens with a conscience is naturally peaceful, if noisy. (Erskine 1793, as cited in: Keane, 1991: 4)

However, it wasn’t until 1803 that journalists were first granted access to the House of Commons, allowing the birth of a more critical British journalism (Edgar, 2006: 125). The space where these media professionals sat came to be known as the ‘Fourth Estate’ (J. Schultz, 1998: 2), a term first coined by Lord Macaulay in 1832 to illustrate the comparable power that the press held to the other three estates: the secular Lords
Temporal, the representatives of the clergy or Lords Spiritual and the members of the House of Commons (Kellner, 1990: 12). This role of the media as the Fourth Estate of democracy has more recently come to symbolise the industry’s responsibility in not just reporting the news but in serving as the people’s ‘watchdog’ over the elite. In other words, the journalist’s democratic responsibility was to “…highlight problems and weaknesses in government policies and performance, in order that corrective action might be taken” (Romano, 2005: 8). In this watchdog role, the media helped to hold governments accountable to their constituents, thereby highlighting abuses of power such as corruption, detailing incompetence and scrutinising governmental policy and administration (Baker, 1998; J. Schultz, 1998; Sen, 1999). As has been discussed earlier, it was Jurgen Habermas who first noted that these developments in the printing sector – from the early periodicals of the sixteenth century through to the upsurge of political organs which underpinned the English, French and American Revolutions – served as the vehicles for both providing information to the populace and propagating debate (Habermas, 1989 [1962]). In this way, the humble newspaper played a central role in the emergence of modern democracy by creating an informed citizenry with a propensity for varied debate and discourse, which Habermas deemed the ‘public sphere’ (Habermas, 1996 [1989]: 28).

To state that these democratic developments were heralded as a triumph is something of an understatement. Having witnessed the European events first-hand, French philosopher Destutt de Tracy12 stated that “Representation, or representative government, may be considered as a new invention…[it] is democracy rendered practicable for a long time and over a great extent of territory” (de Tracy (1811), as cited in: Koch, 1964: 152, 157). Later, the oft cited British political scientist, John Stuart Mill claimed that

There is no difficulty in showing that the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty…is vested in the entire aggregate of the community; every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but being…called on to take an actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public function. (J. S. Mill, 1962 [1861]: 57)

12 Incidentally it was Destutt de Tracy who first coined the term ‘ideology’ in his four volume The Elements of Ideology (de Tracy, 1801-1815).
Throughout much of the nineteenth century, Europe also witnessed the rise of the Industrial Revolution. This engendered a system of capital whereby the wealthy continued to cultivate their riches and the masses were increasingly forced to work in abhorrent conditions for less and less recompense. These harsh conditions led to a series of further democratic revolutions across Europe in 1848. In France, bloody protests led to the formation of the Second Republic with an emphasis on universal suffrage and unemployment relief. News spread quickly of the events in Paris and it was not long before a series of violent protests and subsequent democratic reforms occurred across the Habsburg’s Austrian Empire, Germany, Italy and Poland.

Arguably the increasingly divergent worlds of the wealthy citizens and the workers also gave rise to a concurrent political model that, like democracy, has a long and complex history and came to have substantial influence over modern politics. Aside from their work on the ideological dimension to the rise of capitalism, Marx and Engels also collaborated to write *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Marx & Engels, 1973 [1848]: 62-98). In it they sketched out the need for a proletariat revolution which would overthrow capitalism and replace it with communism, “…a rationally planned and collectively controlled mode of production based on modern industry” (Fernbach, 1973: 31). Although these ideas had little impact on European politics in the nineteenth century, Marx’s body of work was to provide V. I. Lenin with a model for a proletariat uprising that proved crucial to the Russian Revolution of 1917 (Harding, 1992). Sadly, Lenin’s cold pragmatism in interpreting Marx arguably paved the way for the megalomaniacal tyranny of Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong in Russia and China respectively.

Indeed, the early decades of the twentieth century did not look good for democracy. Although the dissolution of the great Prussian, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires at the end of the First World War led to the creation of several nominally democratic nation-states in Europe, the Great Depression brought with it significant economic hardships and a subsequent dissatisfaction with the existing political order. Under these conditions the 1920s and 1930s witnessed “…the establishment of varied forms of dictatorship and totalitarianism of the left and the right in Russia, Germany, Italy, Japan and other countries” (Saward, 2003: 37) as well as the emergence of non-democratic regimes in parts of Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia. As David
Held has recently pointed out, these events suggest that democracy is a “…remarkably difficult form of government to create and sustain” and that the forces of “…fascism, Nazism and Stalinism came very close to eradicating it altogether” (Held, 2006: 1).

However, with the success of the Allied powers at the conclusion of the Second World War “…all of the main alternatives to democracy either disappeared, turned into eccentric survivals, or retreated from the field to hunker down in their last strongholds” (Dahl, 1998: 1). This, coupled with the successful democratisation of the occupied nations of Germany and Japan as well as the growing economic strength of the West during the 1950s and 1960s, meant that democracy was once again flourishing across much of Europe and the Western world, even spreading to parts of South America and Asia during the 1970s and 1980s. However, the end of the Second World War also saw the USSR emerge as one the world’s two leading superpowers (the other being the United States) and the power vacuum created by the defeat of Nazism, led to the “…mutual suspicion and vilification, arms building, proxy confrontation and ideological posturing of the Cold War” (Saward, 2003: 43). But the economic pressures of the 1980s, as well as internal resentment of communist oppression and external demands for democratisation, caused the socialist republics of the Eastern Bloc gradually to give way to form more liberal, democratic governments (Ascherson, 1992). Then, in 1991, under the weight of these same pressures the USSR disbanded and the long, Cold War was over.

The end of the Cold War prompted many Western intellectuals to herald the triumph of the Western world and its ideology of liberal democracy. Foremost amongst this body of work was Francis Fukuyama’s controversial thesis that the world was witnessing

…not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. (Fukuyama, 1989: 1)

This idea is drawn out further in The End of History and the Last Man where Fukuyama postulates that the end of the Cold War signified the end to those forms of
government – monarchies, oligarchies, communism, socialism and totalitarianism for example – which were alternatives to liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992). In this way history, or at least the history of humankind’s political struggle towards democratisation, had come to an end.

Whether or not Fukuyama’s central thesis is correct, democracy certainly continued to spread across much of the globe throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. Indeed, much has been made of this Third Wave (Huntington, 1991) or Global Resurgence (Diamond & Plattner, 1996) of democracy. Along these lines, one influential Freedom House Report claimed that the twentieth century had been ‘Democracy’s Century’, an era which witnessed the transformation of democracy from a handful of ‘restricted democracies’ in 1900 to a situation where more than half of the world’s population lived and thrived in ‘electoral democracies’ by the end of the century (Democracy’s Century: A Survey of Global Political Change in the 20th Century, 1999). Since the coming of the new millennia, democracy has continued to flourish with developments across much of the globe. Perhaps most telling has been the success of a series of people’s movements in the former states of the USSR, including the ‘Rose Revolution’ (Georgia, 2003), the ‘Orange Revolution’ (Ukraine, 2004) and the ‘Tulip Revolution’ (Kyrgyzstan, 2005). Similarly, at the time of writing (2008), developments in Burma, Pakistan and Nepal indicate, at the very least, the popularity of democracy and its continuing support amongst various people’s movements opposed to oligarchic or autocratic forms of power. Even the tiny Himalayan nation of Bhutan recently held its first general election (March 2008), ironically enough under the orders of the king himself. Indeed, it is fair to say that recent history has witnessed democracy spread across much of the globe to stand today as the pre-eminent method of human governance.

As democracy spreads out across the globe, it is interesting to note the degree to which it is understood according to the lineage of events, practices and movements outlined above. Clearly, these developments – from as far back as the Greek concept of demokratia and the Roman Republic, but more directly since the establishment of the British Parliament, through the American Declaration of Independence, the French storming of the Bastille and the apparent global spread of democracy since the fall of Communism – have had a profound impact on our understanding of the Western
world today. This extraordinary sequence of events has frequently been invoked throughout the various political and social movements that litter Western history. Indeed, in Benjamin’s aforementioned essay ‘On the Concept of History’, he discusses briefly this connection between Europe’s political past and more contemporary events. He states that “The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome incarnate. It cited ancient Rome exactly the way fashion cites a bygone mode of dress” (Benjamin, 2003 [1940]: 395). More broadly and perhaps more ironically, the Western story of democracy has been invoked in colonies, territories and nations across the globe. Consider for example the intriguing paradox recounted by Jack Goody in which citizens of Burkina Faso (then known as the Upper Volta) protested against French occupation in the 1950s under banners reading Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité (Goody, 2006: 246).

Today, concepts such as human rights, justice, liberty, personal freedoms and minority representation are said to have a long and rich narrative that can be traced backwards through the great moments of Western civilization. Underpinning this understanding of the origins and development of modern Western society is what John Esposito and John Voll have termed, the ‘discourse of democracy’ (Esposito & Voll, 1996: 13-17). Here, the body of knowledge and lineage of events outlined above have come to generate a very specific understanding of the nature of democracy itself where ‘rule by the people’ has come to signify those political moments and traditions of Western Europe and the United States. More to the point, it has also engendered an understanding of Western civilisation as underpinned by an inherent tendency towards egalitarianism, methods of collective governance and democratic reform. In this way, the Western world has asserted itself as the rightful legatee of legitimate forms of democracy and therefore believes in its dissemination and emulation across the globe. It is this combination, the understanding of Western civilization as the product of this genealogy and, at the same time, the notion of this civilizations propensity for and propagation of democracy itself which converge to form what is termed here the discourse of ‘Western democracy’.

This discourse of ‘Western democracy’ - like the discourses uncovered by Foucault that had constituted the clinic, the asylum and the prison for example – has been established within the parameters of the West’s own episteme. It is inherently
Eurocentric in nature reflecting events, institutions, practises, social movements, revolutions and participations from within a relatively narrow historical narrative. The link formed between the history of Western politics and the discourse of democracy is made explicit by John Hobson in a passage from *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* where he argues that

…Eurocentrism typically extrapolates backwards the modern conception of political democracy all the way to Ancient Greece. It then fabricates a permanent picture of Western democracy by tracing this conception forwards to Magna Carta in England (1215), then to England’s Glorious Revolution (1688/9), and then on to the American Constitution (1787/9) and the French Revolution (1789). In this way, Europe and the West is (re)presented as democratic throughout its long rise to power. (J. M. Hobson, 2004: 290).

In a sense, this means that when we talk of democracy we are not only describing something so often seen as exclusive to the West, but also actively defining it against those ‘others’ who have not formed part of this larger narrative. In *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses* Larbi Sadiki conducts a critical theoretical examination of democracy as it pertains to the Arab / Islamic world. Utilising the works of Marx, Foucault, Derrida, Said, Spivak and others, Sadiki argues that “From Hellenic times down to the present, it seems that democracy has mostly been a narrow conception at least in two ways: the philosophers and seminal thinkers who constructed it; and the ‘publics’ they constructed democracy for” (Sadiki, 2004: 6). In terms of the first point, Sadiki goes on to demonstrate that the individuals who have debated and defined democracy over the years have (until very recently) belonged to a very exclusive group, that of Western males, mostly from the elite class in their respective societies. Perhaps because of this elite patriarchal lineage, democracy has also almost always been about inclusion and exclusion. Clearly this might firstly involve women, minorities, slaves, and the working poor who for so much of democracy’s history have been excluded from its practises and narratives from within the very Western culture which is so often assumed to have a history of egalitarianism and human rights. More to the point, the ‘discourse of democracy’ – by being defined as Western – is therefore also defined as not non-Western. As Sadiki later notes,

The story of democratic achievement in the modernist metanarrative is exclusively equated with its inception in parts of the Western world, especially
England, France and the United States. If those societies which are exemplars of democracy are, for instance, distinguished by rationalism, secularism, urbanism and individualism, then those societies which are characterised by the absence of these ‘universal laws’ are condemned to continuous democratic impasse. (Sadiki, 2004: 149)

In this way, the discourse of ‘Western democracy’ has come to ignore the Middle East and the broader non-Western world and tended to disregard its systems of governance, its revolutions and civil movements and, more specifically, its methods and models of ‘rule by the people’. As Said has pointed out, where any attention has been paid to the complexity of Middle Eastern politics it has tended to rely on Orientalist assumptions regarding their tendency to authoritarian or despotic rule, their abhorrence of collective governance and their general inability to democratise (Said, 2003 [1978]). This has led to the assumption that Middle Easterners - even when offered democracy and freedom – either cannot rise above their cruel, brutal ‘nature’ or that they are simply unable to grasp the complexities of this Western concept. Essentially, this reflects the colonialist adage that lies at the heart of Orientalism, “…that it may be impossible to ‘reform the savages’” (Seymour, 2004: 356). This notion depends on what Derrida would term a binary opposition that marks the West as the hallmark of the modern, civilised and democratic world and the East as its antithesis, the backward, barbaric and despotic nether region.
The Discourse of ‘Oriental Despotism’

Interestingly, the antecedents of the discourse of ‘Oriental despotism’ can be traced back as far as that of its binary opposite, ‘Western democracy’. In fact, in some of the earliest examples of classical Greek literature including Homer’s *Iliad* (Homer, 1950 [700 BC]), Aeschylus’s *The Persians* (Aeschylus, 1961 [472 BC]), and Euripedes’ *The Bacchae* (Euripedes, 2000 [400 BC]), the Orient was associated with a kind of mystical backwardness and a tendency towards irrational violence and immoral depravity (Macfie, 2002: 88; Said, 2003 [1978]: 56-57). In Part I of her *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince* entitled ‘The Greek Polis versus the Great King’, Patricia Springborg further illuminates the ideologies embedded within the works of some of the earliest scholars of the Western literary, philosophical and scientific canon (Springborg, 1992). Here, in the “…seemingly innocent, archaically quaint or apparently arbitrary elements” of the writings of individuals such as Polybius, Plato, Hesiod, Diodorus, Isocrates and others, Springborg uncovers tropes and motifs which can be seen “…to shore up racial and elite hegemony quite deliberately” (Springborg, 1992: 1-2).

More specifically, while other key Greek thinkers such as Herodotus and Aristotle are widely recognised for their contribution to the understanding and formulation of *demokratia*, they were simultaneously amongst the first to discuss the concept of despotism, which they often attributed to the Orient. For example, Herodotus’ re-telling of the events of the Greco-Persian Wars not only represents the first serious scholarly attempt at writing history, but also, as Francois Hartog points out in *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, the first comprehensive attempt “…to translate ‘others’ into the terms of the knowledge shared by all Greeks, and which, in order to make credible these ‘others’ whom it is constructing, elaborates a whole rhetoric of ‘otherness’” (Hartog, 1988 [1980]: xxiv). This is perhaps most evident in the contrast drawn between the tyranny, oppression and civic weakness of the despotic Persian empire and the liberty, egalitarianism and civic strength of the Greek model of *demokratia* (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]: 261-265, 419, 549, 561). Another method employed by Herodotus to construct the Persian ‘other’ was to both over-estimate the size of the Persian empire and at the same time...
to point out the inferiority of their weapons and military skills (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]: 590-591). This is perhaps best illustrated in Herodotus’ re-telling of the battle at Thermopylae, where the brave 300 Spartans and a loose collection of other Greek soldiers are reported to have made a brave stand against the encroachment of a total of 5 million Persians (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]: 581-582). The cumulative effect of this construction of the Persian ‘other’ not only underlined Greek superiority and bravery, but also stipulated the need for Greek unity against the fundamental threat posed to the freedom and liberty of Greece by the dark, despotic peoples to the East.

The assumptions that Herodotus made about the inferiority of Oriental politics are well illustrated by his passage covering a debate between seven noble Persians over which governmental system is most suitable to the Persian empire (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]: 261-264). Of the seven nobles, Otanes is said to have argued in favour of democracy, Megabyzus in favour of oligarchy, while Darius, eyeing the throne of the world’s foremost superpower, argues in favour of monarchy. In his powerful address, Darius claims that both democracy and oligarchy lead to violent disputes until a single individual “…stands forth as champion of the commonalty, and puts down the evildoers. Straightway the author of so great a service is admired by all, and…appointed king; so that here too it is plain that monarchy is the best government” (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]: 263). The remaining four Persian nobles then vote in favour of installing a monarch and, through a clever ruse, Darius himself is able to ascend the throne (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]: 264-265).

On the one hand this complex political debate might be read as evidence of the sophistication of Persian noblemen and their awareness of contemporary political systems. On the other hand, however, it appears to contrast the superiority of the Greek system of democracy against the Persian – and by implication, Oriental - tendency towards despotism and autocracy. Here Otanes’ discussion of democracy would have resonated with Herodotus’ largely Greek audiences. However, when Herodotus juxtaposes this against Megabyzus’ discussion of oligarchy and Darius’ postulations on the merits of monarchy, he effectively illustrated to his audiences the backwardness of the Persians via their failure to recognise the superiority of democratic governance. This is evidenced further when the remaining four Persian noblemen vote against democracy and in favor of installing a monarch. Finally, the
stupidity of the Persians and the inept nature of their politics is demonstrated when Darius is able to scam his way on to the throne, a situation which would presumably never occur in democratic Greece.

These themes are reiterated in Xenophon’s seminal text, the *Anabasis* (more commonly referred to as *The Persian Expedition*), in which he recounts the story of 10,000 Greek mercenaries who had been hired in 401 BC by Cyrus the Younger of Persia in a plot to usurp the throne of his brother, Attaxerxes II (Xenophon, 1986 [360 BC]). The 10,000 traveled all the way from Greece to central Mesopotamia, making it as far as Cunaxa, just north of ancient Babylon and in the middle of modern day Iraq. Despite the fact that Cyrus’ army was victorious at Cunaxa, he was killed in battle, thereby ending the struggle for the throne. The 10,000 Greeks were therefore stranded deep in enemy territory and had to fight their way northward, enduring countless battles and betrayals by the Persians, Kurds, Chaldeans, Armenians and various other so-called ‘barbarians’.

As with the work of Herodotus before him, Xenophon contrasts the barbarity, backwardness and tendency towards despotism amongst these ‘barbarians’ against the civility and democratic nature of the Greeks. This clear divide in Xenophon’s work – between ‘Oriental despotism’ and ‘Western democracy’ – is uncritically acknowledged in George Cawkwell’s ‘Introduction’ to a recent edition of the text:

> On every page of the *Anabasis* the contrast between Greek and barbarian is sharply drawn – the barbarian world vast and diverse, feudal and ancient or tribal and savage, the Greek world compact and united by the sea, and, despite variety, essentially one in its approach to life. The Greek was pre-eminently a ‘political animal,’ and the Ten Thousand are all the Greeks in miniature. When they are left leaderless, the crisis is not resolved by authority or seniority. They assemble and debate. Arguments and the art of words prevail. The army is really a polity on the move. Let barbarians fall to the ground in submission to whoever wins the contest for the crown. The Greeks will give their allegiance to the man whose reason, not his blood, proves his fitness to lead. (Cawkwell, 1986 [1972]: 9-10)

At around the same time that Xenophon was transcribing the struggle of the 10,000 through the hostile backwaters of the Orient, Aristotle was compiling some of the earliest known writings on topics as diverse as philosophy, physics, poetry, logic,
biology and ethics. Amongst his writing, Aristotle took particular interest in politics, outlining the key parameteres of the various political systems of his time, including monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy and despotism. As with Herodotus and Xenophon, Aristotle tended to equate the Orient with despotism, arguing that the hotter climates of the East had created peoples who were servile and deficient in spirit which thereby enabled their oppression by forms of total power. Along theses lines, Aristotle claims in *Politics* that,

> There is another sort of monarchy not uncommon among the barbarians, which nearly resembles tyranny. But this is both legal and hereditary. For barbarians, being more servile than Hellenes, and Asiatics than Europeans, do not rebel against a despotic government. Such royalties have the nature of tyrannies because the people are by nature slaves; but there is no danger of their being overthrown, for they are hereditary and legal. (Aristotle, 1943 [350 BC]: 157)

In the years that followed the works of these early Greek writers, their assumptions regarding the backward and barbaric nature of the people of the Orient as well as its tendency towards despotism were reiterated and confirmed across Europe as empires such as that of Alexander the Great (who was a student of Aristotle) and later the Romans, expanded across much of the Near East. Travelling in reverse, the teachings of Christianity eventually spread out from the Levant and up into Europe. While this brought with it something of a renewed interest in the Orient across Europe, it also quite ironically enabled a new way for marking the non-Christian (and non-Jewish) people of the region as the ‘other’ to Europe: they were the descendents of Abraham’s eldest son, Ishmael, who had been cast out by Abraham into the desert, condemned to a life of tribalism and barbarity. In this way, well before the rise and spread of Islam in the middle of the seventh century, terms such as Ishmaelite (or Saracen) were used pejoratively across Europe. These terms signified the backwardness and inferiority of the people of Arabia, rather than indicating an emeny posing a credible threat (Rodinson, 2002 [1980]: 3-5).

This discourse was to evolve somewhat as the religion of Islam expanded and the armies of Arabia were able to launch successful attacks on Christian territories. Having little if any information about the actual tenets of the Islamic faith it was not the religion that concerned Europe so much as the threat of military invasion. Indeed,
Europe was, at first, unable to fully grasp how the simple and barbaric Ishmaelites had been able to wage such sophisticated attacks on the might and virtue of Christendom (Beckett, 2003: 1-13; Daniel, 1979: 107-108). Both the confusion and burgeoning sense of threat experienced in Europe are perhaps most evident in the literature of the Anglo-Saxon period in England where renowned biblical scholars such as the Venerable Bede (673-735) waxed both contemporary politics and theology in his interpretation of the story of Ishmael to claim:

It means that [Ishmael’s] seed is to live in the wilderness – that is to say, the wandering Saracens of uncertain abode, who invade all those living beside the desert, and are resisted by all. But this is how things used to be. Now, however, to such an extent is [Ishmael’s] hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him that they oppress the whole length of Africa under their sway and, moreover, inimical and full of hate towards everybody, they hold most of Asia and a considerable part of Europe. (Bede, as cited in: Beckett, 2003: 18)

A pivotal historical era in the continuation of the binary opposition between Occident and Orient were the Crusades of the late 11th century through to the 13th century, in which Christian Europe attempted to recapture Jerusalem from the Muslim territories. This era was also witness to the first Latin translation of the Qur’an and a more developed understanding of the religion and practices of Islam. Perhaps because this growing body of knowledge was largely sponsored by the Church, it served to focus European energy against the Muslim threat, rather than to foster any sense of tolerance or genuine scholarship. For example, in the lead up to the Crusades, the English historian William of Malmesbury transcribed a speech given by Pope Urban II (Malmesbury, 1895 [1120]: 359-363). Here, the pontiff attempts to invoke the wrath of European Christians over the capture of Jerusalem as well as Islam’s expansion across Asia, northern Africa and even into Spain (some 300 hundred years earlier). In a series of rather powerful rhetorical turns, the Pope relies on a number of Orientalist clichés to build his case for war, arguing that the Turks and Saracens are “…miscreants” and “…the enemies of God” who “…eagerly anticipated” their conquest of Europe and that they were cowardly and underhanded in battle (Malmesbury, 1895 [1120]: 359-361). Interestingly, and in ways not at all dissimilar to Aristotle some 1500 years before him, Pope Urban II asserts that environmental factors are to blame for Asiatic backwardness, where “…every race, born on that
region, being scorched with the intense heat of the sun, abounds more in reflexion, than in blood” (Malmesbury, 1895 [1120]: 361).

It is at this point – at the height of the Crusades – that the Occidental / Oriental binary took on a new dimension. While it is clear that the Orient and Occident have held both opposing and overlapping religious views, up until the Crusades the tension between the two continents had been largely framed in terms of territories, ethnicities and cultures, rather than between religions. While these earlier differences remain embedded within the broader discourse, the Crusades saw the emphasis shift towards the dialectic between Christendom and Islam, a distinction which arguably remains prominent today. Here, Islam came to be seen as the very antithesis of Christendom, rather than an alternate theology it assumed the character of anti-Christian apostasy (Daniel, 1960; Kabbani, 1986: 5; Salvatore, 1996: 458-459). More to the point, the fact that Christendom was able to tip the balance of power in its favour during the Crusades became indicative of the notion of Western superiority and righteousness over a defeated and subjugated Islam. As if to summarise this point, Rana Kabbani notes

Christian Europe had entered a confrontation with the Islamic Orient that was cultural, religious, political and military, one that would decide from then on the very nature of the discourse between East and West. Post-Crusader Europe would never wholly emerge from the antagonism its ‘Holy Wars’ had plunged it into. (Kabbani, 1986: 5)

Indeed, as Said noted, the cultural legacy regarding Western perceptions of the Orient were passed down from the Greco-Persian Wars, through the Crusades and into the colonial period. Here, it is worth noting that the same century of dramatic technological advances that enabled Europe to begin the colonial project, also saw the emergence of the modern printing press in Germany. While it is now commonly known that the early printing press was used to print the Bible (such as the ‘42 Line Bible’ of 1455), it is perhaps less well known that this wonderous new technology was also used to print Volkskalender’s, early lunar clandars that also contained lengthy poems of a political nature (Brévart, 1988). The first example extant is the Turkenkalender: An Urgent Appeal to Christendom Against the Turks (printed in late 1454) which, as its name suggests, urges the leaders of Christian Europe to take up
arms against the Turks after their capture of Constantinople in 1453 (J. Weber, 2006: 387). The pamphlet begins by asking God to help “…us Christians against our enemy, the Turks and pagans…and to avenge the atrocities committed against the Christians of Constantinople” (as cited in: Simon, 1988: 7). From here, the pamphleteer moves on to incite each of the heads of Europe “…to take up arms against the Turkish infidel” and to leave “…no Turk alive in Turkey, Greece, Asia and Europe” (as cited in: Simon, 1988: 7, 10). In this way, the text sharply contrasts the Turks as ‘enemies’, ‘pagans’ and ‘infidels’ who deserve no less than complete extermination, against Europeans who are portrayed as “…noble”, “…privileged” in possession of “…superior and spirited strength” and are therefore required to “…support the battle for our faith and eternal salvation” (as cited in: Simon, 1988: 11-12). These themes are reiterated in a later lunar calendar entitled Call for a Crusade Against the Turks (1478) which “…calls on Christian Europe to launch a campaign against the Turkish infidel, citing for inspiration the crusades of old” (Simon, 1988: 25).

Later, as the Ottoman Empire expanded through Spain, Belgrade and Hungary, the printing press continued in its role as the disseminator of early Orientalist propaganda. Across Germany pamphleteers ran-off scores of polemical texts against the Turks and Islam, creating a whole new genre known as Turkenbuchlein (Bohstedt, 1968). Even the highly esteemed monk and theologian, Martin Luther, whose challenges to the papacy gave birth to modern Protestantism, wrote several treatises against the Turks (Edwards, 2003: 203; R. O. Smith, 2007: 352). At the time, there was much debate in Europe about the correct response of Christianity to the Muslim encroachment and, in the same year that the Turks reached Vienna in 1529, Luther’s tract On War Against the Turk sought to make clear his own personal opinion that the Turks were the “…servants of the Devil”, “…wild and barbarous people” who lead “…an abandoned and carnal life” full of “…wickedness and vice” (M. Luther, 1974 [1529]: 126-130). Here, invoking the kind of rhetoric that is indicative of Orientalism, Luther states:

In the first place, the Turk certainly has no right or command to begin war and to attack lands that are not his. Therefore his war is nothing but an outrage and robbery with which God is punishing the world, as he often does through wicked scoundrels, and sometimes through godly people. The Turk does not fight from necessity or to protect his land in peace, as the right kind of ruler does; but, like a pirate or highwayman, he seeks to rob and ravage other lands.
which do and have done nothing to him. He is God’s rod and the devil’s servant; there is no doubt about that. (M. Luther, 1974 [1529]: 125)

Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the technology of the printing press improved and literacy rates climbed across Europe, bringing with them a burgeoning market for printed books, journals, pamphlets and newspapers. While these early media formats are so often lauded for their role in fostering the bourgeois civil society that was to provide the impetus for the emergence of modern representative democracy, they have rarely been critiqued for their contemporaneous construction of the Oriental ‘other’. Indeed, right throughout this era the early editors, journalists and printers of Europe were busy publishing and distributing a plethora of new genres and formats, from the daily newspaper through to substantial works on philosophy, history and politics, many of which exhibited familiar Orientalist discourses, including that of ‘Oriental despotism’ (Isakhan, 2009b).

One particularly popular example is the early travelogue in which wealthy aristocratic British and French explorers such as Master Thomas Dallam, Sir George Courthope, Sir Jean Chardin and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier recorded their adventures (Chardin, 1720 [1686]; Courthope, 1907 [1616-1685]; Dallam, 1893 [1599-1600]; Tavernier, 1977 [1676]-a, 1977 [1676]-b). In *Sir Jean Chardin’s Travels in Persia* for example, we see the drunken, brutal and arbitrary despotism of the Persian king through the eyes of a rational French merchant and diplomat. The king is seen to command absolute obedience to his every whim, no matter how heinous his request or how inebriated he is at the time of his demands. This is perhaps best illustrated in the relationship between the king and his Prime Minister who admits to the king “…I am your Slave, I will ever do what your Majesty shall command me” (Chardin, 1720 [1686]: 16). Despite such submission, the king repeatedly humiliates the Prime Minister in front of the court by using ill language, by striking him, by throwing wine in his face and “…a thousand Indignities of this Nature” (Chardin, 1720 [1686]: 17) (see also: Chardin, 1720 [1686]: 118-123). What is particularly poignant about this travelogue is, as Alain Grossrichard has noted, that “Everything in this text by Chardin delineates despotic power” (Grossrichard, 1998 [1979]: 55). This despotism was reported back to Europe as indicative of the Persian - and by implication, Eastern
– model of governance, a model of drunken cruelty that would have contrasted sharply with the apparent civility of Europe at the time.

Drawing heavily on Chardin’s accounts of ‘Oriental despotism’ in Persia (Arjomand, 2004a: 25), French philosopher Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu attempted to illustrate that despotic power benefited no one in his *Persian Letters* (Montesquieu, 1923 [1721]). To do this, however, he used Persia as the model despotic empire and speculated that the structures of its society – gender relations and familial law – were also despotic by nature and therefore representative of a broader ‘Oriental despotism’ that pervaded all aspects of Asiatic life (Cahn, 1997: 321). In *The Spirit of the Laws* Montesquieu went on to claim – in a similar vein to both Aristotle and Pope Urban II before him - that climate and geography predisposed certain regions to particular political systems (Montesquieu, 1949 [1748]). In vast, hot lands Montesquieu argued that the “…effeminacy of the people…has almost always rendered them slaves” (Montesquieu, 1949 [1748]: 264). “This,” Montesquieu continues,

…is the grand reason of the weakness of Asia, and of the strength of Europe; of the liberty of Europe, and of the slavery of Asia… Hence it proceeds that liberty in Asia never increases; whilst in Europe it is enlarged or diminished, according to particular circumstances. (Montesquieu, 1949 [1748]: 266)

This line of reasoning leads Montesquieu to the conclusion that “Power in Asia ought, then, to be always despotic,” because, “…it is impossible to find in all the histories of that country [Asia] a single passage which discovers a freedom of the spirit” (Montesquieu, 1949 [1748]: 269).

As both Said and Bhabha have so poignantly discussed, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not only witnessed the series of events and upheavals across Europe and the United States that were to pave the way for modern representative democracy, but this

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13 It should be noted here that while Montesquieu’s work relied heavily on the notion of ‘Oriental despotism’ (which is itself indicative of the assumptions made about Asiatic politics in much of the literature of the time), this aspect of his work received criticism from scholars such as Francois-Marie Voltaire (Voltaire, 1963 [1756], 1994 [1779]) and Francois Quesnay (Quesnay, 1946 [1767]) who held very positive views on India, China and Persia, arguing that they had made some of the greatest contributions to humankind (Grossrichard, 1998 [1979]: 30-34).
era also saw the colonial project extend its reach to subjugate much of the world under Occidental control (Bhabha, 1990b; Said, 2003 [1978]). In addition, this period brought with it the cementation of the familiar tropes and stereotypes regarding the Oriental ‘other’ into a series of received wisdoms that were frequently drawn upon without scrutiny or independent research. This is evident in the works of influential scholars as diverse as English historian and member of Parliament Edward Gibbon, Scottish moral philosopher Adam Smith, and in a series of lectures given during the early nineteenth century by the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Gibbon, 1952 [1776], 1952 [1778]; Hegel, 1952 [1837]; A. Smith, 1997 [1776]).

In Hegel’s work for example, we find the philosopher postulating that history had seen the various civilizations of the world dwindle to leave only Prussia (or Europe) as the centre of the known world and at the pinnacle of this civilizational lineage. In this way, Hegel developed a very Eurocentric approach to world history in which the Asiatic civilizations that had once contributed to the narrative of human history, now lay at its periphery (Bernal, 1991 [1987]: 294-296; Gran, 1996: 2-3). While Hegel is considerably more generous to the kingdoms of the Near East than he is to those of the Far East, this is only because “They are related to the West, while the Far Eastern peoples are perfectly isolated” (Hegel, 1952 [1837]: 235). Indeed, in discussing the Persian empire he postulates that their successes were enabled by the fact that the kingdom was able to quell the natural barbarousness of the people. Overall, he argues that,

It was not given to the Asiatics to unite self-dependence, freedom, and substantial vigour of mind, with culture, i.e., an interest for diverse pursuits and an acquaintance with the conveniences of life. Military valour among them is consistent only with barbarity of manners. It is not the calm courage of order; and when their mind opens to a sympathy with various interests, it immediately passess into effeminacy; allows its energies to sink, and makes men slaves of an enervated sensuality. (Hegel, 1952 [1837]: 242)

Similar sentiments are also evident in James Mill’s six volume *The History of British India* (J. Mill, 1972 [1817]). While Mill, who worked for the English-owned *East India Company* but had never been to India himself, was sometimes critical of both the *Company* and the Crown, his work has been referred to as a classically reductive and hegemonic text indicative of the British colonial era (Inden, 1990; Majeed, 1992).
Throughout the volumes, Mill reiterates the notion of ‘Oriental despotism’ as he imagines it to be in India, claiming that

Among the Hindus, according to the Asiatic model, the government was monarchical, and, with the usual exception of religion and its ministers, absolute. No idea of any system of rule, different from the will of a single person, appears to have entered the minds of them, or their legislators. (J. Mill, 1972 [1817]: 212-213)

To some degree, James Mill passed down this line of thinking to his eldest son, John Stuart Mill (J. S. Mill, 1962 [1861], 1998 [1848]) who was also inspired by the works of Jeremy Bentham (1977 [1822]) and Alexis de Tocqueville (1997 [1835]). Together, these authors contributed much to the modern world’s understanding of the benefits and pitfalls of representative democracy. Amongst their concerns was the potential for such models of collective governance to produce a sense of apathy and submissiveness amongst the populace akin to the alleged Asiatic propensity for ‘Chinese stationariness’ (Clarke, 1997: 72-73; Said, 1995: 36; Springborg, 1992: 19; Turner, 1974a; 1984b: 31; 1994: 27, 97-98).

Similarly, Karl Marx14 (who was heavily influenced by the work of Hegel) also inherited notions of ‘Oriental despotism’ and the Asian propensity for stationariness. As Helene d’Encausse and Stuart Schram point out in their Marxism and Asia, Marx appears to have had two opposing ideas of the Orient (d’Encausse & Schram, 1969 [1965]). On the one hand he was arguably the first to pay any real attention to

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14 As has been noted in Chapter 1, while this thesis is guided by the work of Karl Marx in the sense that he provided a revolutionary approach to the ways in which bourgeoisie culture is able to legitimate and propagate its elite position via the assertion of certain ideologies, this work is also conscious of his position as both an inheritor and producer of Orientalist stereotypes. It was Said who not only recognised and critiqued the presuppositions that Marx relied on in formulating his understanding of the Orient, but also understood that while Marx’s work was clearly problematic along these lines, it was also ironically valuable as a tool for comprehending the same lineage of Orientalism of which Marx was himself a part. In this way, this project parallels Said’s work if only because it can be seen as both a utilisation of key aspects of critical theory (such as Foucault’s work on discourse and the power / knowledge nexus) which developed out of the work of Marx and, at the same time, a substantial critique of the ways in which these methods have served to construct the Middle Eastern / Islamic / Arab ‘other’.
politico-economic developments outside of Europe and he understood that if the revolutionary doctrine of Communism took hold in China that it may well lead to a concurrent revolution across Europe. However, despite these sentiments, Marx tended to view the Orient through a series of stagnations or absences – those of civil society, bourgeoisie culture, private property, propensity for social change and modernisation and further believed that the only route for Asian salvation was for the Orient to undergo ‘Europeanization’ (Turner, 1978; 1994: 5, 140). In this sense Marx provided some justification for European colonisation (Avineri, 1968), particularly in the contemporaneous instance of British India, about which he stated,

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution. (Marx, 1973 [1853]: 493)

Central to Marx’s understanding of the Orient was his formulation of what came to be termed the ‘Asiatic Mode of Production’. Here, Marx furthered the existing understanding of ‘Oriental despotism’ and of ‘Chinese stationariness’ by positing that the existence of such characteristics pre-determined the Orient to an economic model wholly different from the capitalism of Europe. According to Marx, the Asiatic model of economics – and here he included those of China and India as well as Egypt, Arabia and Persia was stifled by the constant dynastic change and the centralised ownership of property and production. In this way, the people were reduced to the slaves of their despotic ruler, forced into menial labour and thereby unable to form civil movements or become upwardly mobile (Turner, 1994: 28, 40-41). According to Marx, the history of the Orient has remained stagnant for centuries as the people were unable to challenge the autocracy of the state or gain access to more collective forms of representation and governance (P. Anderson, 1976; Bailey & Llobera, 1981; Currie, 1984; Draper, 1977: 515-571; Krader, 1975; Lichtheim, 1967; Sahay, 2007; Sawer, 1977).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the lineage of discourses which had defined the Orient as the despotic ‘other’ of Europe continued to resurface in the works of several notable scholars. Indeed, the German Political Economist Maximilian Weber began
his work on the sociology of religion by writing *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (M. Weber, 1992 [1904-1905]). Following Hegel and relying mostly on secondary Orientalist sources, Weber developed a profoundly Eurocentric view of world history, where the Hellenic past and modern Christian Europe converge to construct an image of the West as inherently superior to each of the successive kingdoms, empires and achievements of Asia (M. Weber, 1992 [1904-1905]: 13, 28-30). Central to his analysis was the argument that religion had played a pivotal role in the unique development of Western capitalist society and, simultaneously, in preventing regions such as the Orient from achieving analogous civilizational heights. He claimed that while Protestantism required believers to strive towards salvation, Asiatic religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam encouraged the faithful to accept the world as it is. More specifically, Weber believed that this religious dichotomy between East and West had a profound effect on the realms of politics and law, arguing for example that,

> …all Indian political thought was lacking in a systematic method comparable to that of Aristotle, and, indeed, in the possession of rational concepts. Not all the anticipations in India (School of Mimamsa), nor the extensive codification especially in the Near East, nor all the Indian and other books of law, had the strictly systematic forms of thought, so essential to a rational jurisprudence, of the Roman law and of the Western law under its influence. A structure like the canon law is known only to the West. (M. Weber, 1992 [1904-1905]: 14)

Furthermore, Weber viewed Islam as a religion guided by “…patrimonial instability (or ‘Sultanism’)” (Turner, 1994: 29) which thereby disabled the *Ummah* (the Islamic community) from successfully challenging the political order and instigating social change (J. M. Hobson, 2004: 14-19; Richardson, 2004: 12; Sadiki, 2004: 169; Salvatore, 1996; Turner, 1974b; 1984b: 34; 1994: 39; 1996 [1981]). Here, as Springborg points out, despite the fact that Weber spent much of his life writing about Oriental cultures and religions, he rarely bothered to challenge his erroneous assumptions regarding “…the administrative, scientific and technical superiority of the West over the East” (Springborg, 1992: 9). Perhaps even more problematical is the fact that even though Weber never directly studied Islam, his work went on to have a profound impact on European scholarship of the religion where, at least until very recently, “…the great majority of studies of social movements in Islamic
societies tended (either implicitly or explicitly) to be situated within the Weberian tradition” (Burke, 1988: 20).

Building on the work of another of Weber’s assertions – that of the Orient’s reliance upon ‘hydraulic-bureaucracy’ – as well as Marx’s notion of the ‘Asiatic Mode of Production’ (Draper, 1977: 629-656), Karl Wittfogel15 continued this legacy with his aptly titled Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power (Wittfogel, 1957). Here, Wittfogel also carried forth the relationship between the climactic and geographic elements of a region and their predisposition to certain forms of governance that had been asserted first by Aristotle and later by Pope Urban II and Montesquieu in their attempts to explain away Middle Eastern politics. Essentially, Wittfogel argued that Oriental societies had developed a reliance on large-scale irrigation projects, forming ‘hydraulic societies’ which demanded the centralisation of authority and the subjugation of the peasantry under the auspices of an agro-bureaucratic state. Wittfogel went on to claim that such a “…hydraulic state is not checked by a Beggars’ Democracy. Nor is it checked by any other effective constitutional, societal, or cultural counterweights. Clearly it is despotic” (Wittfogel, 1957: 126). In addition, such hydraulic states were also required to maintain their hegemony over the people via the obliteration of any civil movements or societal groups that may threaten or challenge the existing political order. In this way, according to Wittfogel, the Oriental became acquainted with despotic authority and understood total submission to authoritarian rule (Ayubi, 1995: 42-43; Turner, 1984b: 33-34).


15 Although Karl Wittfogel was a member of the Frankfurt School, he had little if any input into the body of critical theory developed by Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Walter Benjamin as outlined in Chapter 1.
of Islam. Although it has to be stated that such scholars contributed enormously to the body of work on Islam and the Middle East, they have nonetheless been heavily critiqued for their propagation of Orientalist ideologies including their understanding that “Despotism was implicit in the very core of Islam” (Sadowski, 1993: 16). For example, in his *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation*, Grunebaum argues that the potential for egalitarian and collective models of governance in Islam had been steadily decaying since as far back as the ninth century. Along these lines, he asserted that it was doubtful the political model of “…the caliphate as designed by the legists ever had any real existence” and that Islamic law thereby descended to a point where the “…believer was thought under obligation to obey whosoever held sway” (Grunebaum, 1946: 168). By the time of the eleventh century, as Grunebaum goes on to argue, “…the tendency natural to despotism and orthodoxy” were responsible for Islamic civilization having become “Arrested in its growth” where it “…remained an unfulfilled promise” and “…stagnated in self-inflicted sterility” (Grunebaum, 1946: 322). Here, Grunebaum not only uses despotism to dismiss Islamic civilization as ‘arrested’, ‘unfulfilled’, ‘stagnant’ and even ‘sterile’, but as Mohamad Abdalla has recently pointed out, he largely ignored the “…growing body of evidence which confirms the rise, rather than the decline of science in the Muslim world after the eleventh century” (Abdalla, 2007: 67).

Similarly, Bernard Lewis has made a number of sweeping statements about the nature of Middle Eastern politics under the authority of the caliphs, which he saw as an era of “…almost unrelieved autocracy, in which obedience to the sovereign was a religious as well as a political obligation” (B. Lewis, 1964: 48). According to Lewis, this is a rather predictable consequence of the fact that Islamic law itself

…knows no corporate legal persons; Islamic history shows no councils or communes, no synods or parliaments, nor any other kind of elective or representative assembly. It is interesting that the jurists never accepted the principle of majority decision – there was no point, since the need for a procedure of corporate collective decision never arose. (B. Lewis, 1964: 48)

Perhaps more controversially, in his polemical 1990 essay ‘The Roots of Muslim Rage’ Lewis argued that because Christendom was able to eventually overcome the historic threat of Islam, the Islamic territories had since “…been on the defensive” (B.
Lewis, 1990: 49). This created the vacuum in which ‘Muslim Rage’ emerged and it was only “…natural that this rage should be directed primarily against the millennial enemy” of Christian Europe and its colonies (such as the United States) (B. Lewis, 1990: 49). According to Lewis this, along with the Islamic world’s alleged failure to separate church and state and the advancement of the West since the Crusades brought about “…a feeling of humiliation – a growing awareness, among the heirs of an old, proud, and long dominant civilization, of having been overtaken, overborne, and overwhelmed by those whom they regarded as their inferiors” (B. Lewis, 1990: 55). The convergence of this sense of rage and humiliation is seen to have led to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, a movement which “…has given an aim and a form to the otherwise aimless and formless resentment and anger of the Muslim masses” (B. Lewis, 1990: 56). This aim and form is to bring about what Lewis refers to in his concluding section as a ‘Clash of Civilisations’ between Islam and the West, a war waged by these Islamic fundamentalists as a kind of “…irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both” (B. Lewis, 1990: 56).

It was this final section of Lewis’ article which was to provide the impetus for Samuel P. Huntington’s essay and later book in which he expanded the notion of a ‘Clash of Civilisations’ (Huntington, 1993, 1998 [1996]). As early as 1984 Huntington was arguing that “…among Islamic countries, particularly those in the Middle East, the prospects for democratic development seem low” (Huntington, 1984: 216). Three years later, Huntington furthered this notion in his essay ‘The Goals of Development’, by arguing that each region of the globe had its own individual religio-cultural essence that plays a large part in determining receptivity to democratic systems (Huntington, 1987: 24). In his later work, Huntington isolated two such religio-cultural examples, namely Islam and Confucianism, and labelled them “…profoundly anti-democratic” (Huntington, 1991: 300) claiming that they would “…impede the spread of democratic norms in society, deny legitimacy to democratic institutions, and thus greatly complicate if not prevent the emergence and effectiveness of those institutions” (Huntington, 1991: 298). By the time of his work on the ‘Clash of Civilisations’, Huntington was arguing that this fundamental difference between these anti-democratic civilizations and the West posed the most significant challenge to the continuation of US hegemony into the twenty-first century. Here, Huntington reserves
particular vitriol for the world of Islam which he accused of never having successfully grasped the concept of the nation state, preferring the macro-level politics of a succession of pan-Islamic empires such as the Caliphates and the Ottomans (Huntington, 1998 [1996]: 174-179). This had therefore rendered in the Islamic world a crisis of “…consciousness without cohesion”, which is “…a source of weakness to Islam and a source of threat to other civilizations” (Huntington, 1998 [1996]: 177).

Later in the book, Huntington draws out his notion of a looming threat between Islam and the West via a historical account that relies heavily on the work of Bernard Lewis and other Orientalists (Huntington, 1998 [1996]: 210-213). He moves from here to make the startling claim that the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ had in effect already begun, marked by the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 which brought about “…an inter-civilizational quasi war…between Islam and the West” (Huntington, 1998 [1996]: 210-213). For Huntington, this quasi war has potential to extend into a broader and more entrenched battle between the two civilizations. “The underlying problem for the West” Huntington concludes, “…is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power” (Huntington, 1998 [1996]: 217).

Building on earlier work such as that of Grunebaum, Lewis and Huntington, several scholars of the Middle East have continued the long Orientalist tradition of defining the Middle East and Islam according to its absences (Black, 2001; Crone, 1980; Crone & Hinds, 1986; Gellner, 1991; J. A. Hall, 1985; Kamrava, 1998; Kedourie, 1994; Pipes, 1981, 1983). For example, Patricia Crone argued that when the Abbasids first codified the *Shari’ah* (Islamic law) around the middle of the eighth century, they also embedded it with the nuances of the existing tribal laws which best served their interests. This meant that Islamic politics was predisposed towards encouraging the long-held divisions between the various sects and peoples (Crone, 1980). In his work, Daniel Pipes elaborates on the implications of this by claiming that such problems have hindered the modernisation of the Islamic world (Pipes, 1983). Similarly, John Hall contributes that these medieval events have left Islamic society with only a very tenuous understanding of politics and precluded it from developing an active civil society or models of democracy (J. A. Hall, 1985). In his work, Mehran Kamrava takes this argument a step further by stating that “…it is the forces of primordialism, informality and autocracy that have shaped and continue to shape the parameters of
life in Middle Eastern societies” (Kamrava, 1998: 32). It is this fundamental lack of a
democratic history, Kamrava goes on to argue, that has left the Middle East without
the prerequisite social and cultural dynamics to foster various democratic movements,
institutions and classes that make up a thriving civil society and give rise to
democratic governance (Kamrava, 1998: 31-32). This is made even more explicit in
Anthony Black’s recent *History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the
Present* in which he concludes that

…the very idea of a constitution, the rule of law, procedures which precisely
define legitimate tenure of power, presupposes a separation of authority from
the individual. In the Islamic world, authority remained tied to the outstanding
individual and dynasty… This affects political culture and practise today,
making a peaceful transfer of power and the introduction of new blood
through elections very difficult. (Black, 2001: 351)

Returning briefly to the work of Bernard Lewis it is worth noting that, since the
events of September 11 and the subsequent ‘War on Terror’, Lewis has published
several works that have continued to foreground the perceived dialectic between the
example the central premise of his article and later book based around the question
‘What Went Wrong?’ in which the perceived failures of the Orient are measured
against the progressive nature of the Occident (B. Lewis, 2002, 2006). For example,
the article, which appeared only a few months after 9/11, opened with the following
paragraph:

In the course of the twentieth century it became abundantly clear that things
had gone badly wrong in the Middle East - and, indeed, in all the lands of
Islam. Compared with Christendom, its rival for more than a millennium, the
world of Islam had become poor, weak, and ignorant. The primacy and
therefore the dominance of the West was clear for all to see, invading every
aspect of the Muslim's public and even - more painfully – his[her] private life.
(B. Lewis, 2002: 43)

This tendency to reduce ‘all the lands of Islam’ down to a homogenous entity and to
describe them as ‘badly wrong’ and ‘poor, weak, and ignorant’ against the ‘primacy
and therefore the dominance of the West’ is, as has been demonstrated above, a
tendency that is not only evident in the work of recent Orientalists but harks back
through the canon of Western scholarship to its earliest formal roots in classical Greece.

Not surprisingly, the works of Orientalist scholars such as Grunebaum, Lewis and Huntington have received a plethora of criticism from across the political and ideological spectrum (Ajami, 1993; Bottici & Challand, 2006; Buruma & Margalit, 2004; Gerges, 1999; Gupta, 1997; P. Y. Hammond, 1997; Heazle, 2006; Islam, 2005; Kalam, 1997; Mazrui, 1997; Rashid, 1997; Sadowski, 1993; Seib, 2004/2005; Turner, 1984a, 1994). Perhaps most scathing of all have been those criticisms offered by Said who has referred to the work of Grunebaum as filled with “…essentially reductive, negative generalizations” and an “…almost virulent dislike of Islam” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 296) and the work of Lewis16 as the “…perfect exemplification of the academic whose work purports to be liberal objective scholarship but is in reality very close to propaganda against his subject material” (2003 [1978], p. 316). More recently, Said has reserved particular vehemence for Huntington, whom he labels a “…clumsy writer and inelegant thinker” (Said, 2004 [2001]-a: 120), arguing that his ‘Clash of Civilization’ thesis is not only a “…reductive and vulgar notion” (Said, 2004 [2002]: 226) but an example of “…the purest invidious racism…a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed today against Arabs and Muslims… It is the purest drivel” (Said, 2004 [2003]-a: 293).

Despite such staunch opposition, the works of these Orientalists continue to pervade much modern understanding of the Middle East and its reported inability to democratise. For example, Huntington is today considered “…one of the most influential strategic thinkers of the US establishment” (Islam, 2005: 6), having received widespread support and the highest accolades from conservative newspaper columnists, neo-conservative foreign policy pundits and Orientalist academics alike. Similarly, Lewis has had considerable influence over the foreign policy of the United States on issues pertaining to the Middle East for decades. For example, as Iyanatul

Islam has noted, he first called for regime change in Iraq under the Clinton Administration in 1998, he has received praise from figures such as Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney, and his work continues to guide the Bush administration’s understanding of the Muslim world to this day (Islam, 2005: 15).

Today, the discourse of ‘Oriental despotism’, as with that of ‘Western democracy’, continues to be invoked in Western scholarship which attempts to address the spread of democracy to the non-Western world, particularly to the Middle East. So entrenched is the notion that the Middle East and the Islamic world are antithetical to democracy that it is often paraded as fact, but the assumptions and presuppositions upon which it is premised are rarely problematised. While this issue will be explored and critiqued in detail with relation to Iraq throughout this thesis, it is worth noting here that works such as the four volume *Democracy in Developing Countries* included extensive studies of Asian, African and Latin American democracies but precluded much of the Islamic world and certainly all of the Arab states on the premise that they “…generally lack much previous democratic experience, and most appear to have little prospect of transition even to semi-democracy” (Diamond, Linz, & Lipset, 1989: xx). Similarly, as Sreberny-Mohammadi points out, the 1997 World Development Report “…suggests that of all the world regions, the Middle East and North Africa is the most resistant to formal democracy” (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1998: 185). Finally, Robert Pinkney’s *Democracy in the Third World* examines the developments of Latin America, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, but eschews the Middle East because “…most of the discussion of democratic transitions and consolidation in this book would find few echoes in Middle Eastern politics” (Pinkney, 2003: 206). Here, the historical events and the series of narratives that have constructed for us a picture of the Orient as barbarous, violent and despotic in nature have come to hold such a powerful and ubiquitous resonance within the West that even so-called objective reports into the spread of democracy across the non-Western world are able to eschew the region on these grounds. Indeed, from Herodotus to Huntington, a whole list of reasons have been cited by Western scholars who wish to explain away Middle East politics and justify its exclusion from what Derrida would call the ‘emancipatory promise’ of democracy.
**Conclusion**

The discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ create a political distinction between East and West. While the Occident is constructed as forthright, righteous and democratic, the Orient becomes the ‘other’, known only for its backwardness, its moral deficiencies and its tendency towards violence, barbarity and despotism. Paralleling one another, these twin ‘discourses of democracy’ have an ancestry that dates at least as far back as classical Greece, where several scholars not only sketched out the Western propensity for *demokratia*, but clearly delineated it from the Eastern world which was forever condemned under the subjugation of tyrants, autocrats and despots. The lineage of these competing discourses continued into the Anglo-Saxon period in England and on to the Crusades where the divide between East and West became magnified under the lens of religious differences and ongoing battles. As the mutual attacks and incursions continued, Christendom was able to use the new technology of the printing press to run off a host of polemical and pejorative tracts regarding Islam and the Middle East. Arguably such Orientalist tendencies are also evident in some of the more poignant texts of the Reformation and the early travel writing of European diplomats, merchants and adventurers. More recently, as Bhabha and Said have pointed out, when Europe was undergoing the major social upheavals and civil movements that were to lay the foundations of modern, representative democracy, it was also involved in the subjugation and colonisation of a great deal of the non-Western world. As is evidenced in much of the scholarship of this era, the fundamental change that colonialism brought to the global order was underpinned by the continuation of the perceived dualism between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. To say that this Eurocentric lineage has had a profound effect on foreign policy, academic scholarship and media coverage of the Middle East throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first century is something of an understatement. Here, a whole collection of Orientalists have claimed that the Middle East has little tradition of power sharing, tolerance or egalitarian government and that certain cultural and religious factors continue to thwart any attempts to democratise the region.
Indeed, the problems relating to the dualism between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ are manifold. One such problem is the fact that such discourses are so firmly embedded into the canon of Western scholarship. For example, enmeshed into the curricula of the modern Social Sciences and Humanities, are those authors who repeatedly make a distinction between the democratic nature of the West and the despotic tendencies of the East: History students are taught the works of Herodotus, Xenophon, William of Malmsbury and James Mill; Political Scientists read Aristotle, John Stuart Mill and Huntington; Sociology and Philosophy majors sit through long lectures on scholars like Montesquieu, Hegel, Marx and Weber; Theologians scour the works of Bede, Pope Urban II and Luther; students of the Middle East frequently cite the works of Grunebaum and Lewis; while Journalism and Media practitioners are taught about the early days of the printing press in Europe. What is rarely explicitly stated throughout these lectures, courses and readers is the Orientalist nature of these texts, their reliance on presuppositions about the Orient that are long-standing, ubiquitous and provide for us a certain picture of the regions inability to democratise.

Along with the pervasive nature of these Orientalist discourses is the perhaps even more insidious problem that they are factually incorrect. Indeed, scores of books and articles have by now been written which attempt to highlight issues such as the nature of civil society and the public sphere in the Middle East (Abrahamian, 1974, 1975; Arjomand, 1999, 2004a; Gerber, 2002; Gibb & Bowen, 1950; Goitein, 1966; Hoexter, Eisenstadt, & Levtzion, 2002; Hudson, 1991; Kazemi, 1995; Kingston, 2001; Nanes, 2003; Norton, 1995a, 1995b; Sajoo, 2004; Salvatore & LeVine, 2005), the democratic potential found within the traditions, practices and doctrines of Islam (Abdalla & Rane, 2009; Arjomand, 2004b; M. Asad, 1980 [1961]; Choudhury, 1990; Ephrat, 2002; Esposito, 1991 [1984]; Esposito & Piscatori, 1991; Esposito & Voll, 1996; Hassouna, 2001; Hefner, 2005; Nasr, 2005; Pasha, 1993; Rauf, 2004; Sachedina, 2001; Sorush, 2000; Zaman, 2002, 2005) and, more recently, the democratic developments that have occurred across the region in the late twentieth / early twenty-first century (Albrecht & Schlumberger, 2004; Ben-Porat, 2005; Ottaway & Carothers, 2004; Rubin, 2006; Zambelis, 2005). (For a detailed overview of this literature, see: Isakhan, 2006b: 3-6; 2006d: 1-5; 2007a: 97-103.) Despite their challenge to the Western scholarly canon, this body of scholarship can be seen as
largely peripheral to the central driving impetus of Orientalism and its continued influence over the Western world’s understanding of the East.

This is very clearly demonstrated, as will be detailed, examined and scrutinized throughout the remainder of this thesis, by the Western construction of Iraq. From at least as far back as the Gulf War of 1991, the Western mainstream media has treated democracy and the West as mutually exclusive from the despotic and benighted Iraqis. This is perhaps best evidenced by the series of overlapping and intersecting discourses which circulated during the democratic developments that occurred across Iraq throughout 2005. It is these events and their problematic relation to the ‘discourses of democracy’ outlined above that form the central premise of this thesis. The point here is to further examine ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’, to investigate their claims to truth, to come to terms with their omissions and oversights and to illuminate alternate histories and narratives of democracy as they pertain to Iraq.
Chapter 3: Western Media and the Construction of Iraq

Until the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the country at the eastern edge of the Arab world flickered only occasionally on the radar screen of the collective American consciousness. A review of the popular-news and general-interest magazines of the past fifty years is indicative of just how little Iraq interested the American press before the 1991 Gulf War. (Mackey, 2002: 336)

Media Discourse and the Construction of the Middle Eastern ‘Other’

Due to the increasingly pervasive role that the media has played in the socio-cultural landscape of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is little wonder that this era has also seen many scholars investigate the function and practices of the media industry. These have included works emanating from a large number of precursory disciplines including, but not exclusive to, Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science and History, which has in turn led to the development of a variety of approaches and methods used to examine, understand and analyse the mass media (Berger, 2005; Boyd-Barrett, 2002; Burn & Parker, 2003; Corner, 2000; Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999; Ferguson, 2004; Straubhaar & LaRose, 1997; R. D. Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). These varied approaches include quantitative techniques such as Content Analysis (Berelson, 1952; Carney, 1972; Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 1980; McQuail, 1977; R. P. Weber, 1990), paradigms that emphasise the political economy of the mass media such as the ‘Propaganda Model’ (Herman & Chomsky, 1994 [1988]; Herman & McChesney, 1997; McChesney, 1997, 2000, 2008), audience effects research which focuses on the causal influence that the media has over the citizenry (Bryant & Zillman, 1994; Cohen, 1973; Gauntlett, 1973; Klapper, 1960), and more ‘Post-modern’ approaches concentrating on issues of consumption, intertextuality and the hyper-real nature of contemporary media (Baudrillard, 1988, 1991, 2006 [1981]).

While these models provide a number of insights into the role that the media plays in distributing the ideologies which serve to maintain and legitimate the hegemony of the elite, it is the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which most clearly
builds on the body of critical theory underpinning this project. Specifically, CDA can be seen as a systematic approach to the reading of texts while avoiding the condensation of meaning that is implicit within other approaches such as various quantitative methods (Jensen, 2002: 248). It therefore encourages a more complex, unique, holistic and multi-faceted exploration of a given text (R. D. Wimmer & Dominick, 2006: 140). Essentially, this method attempts to apply concepts outlined by critical theorists - such as Gramsci’s notion of hegemony or Althusser’s conception of the ruling ideology – to the messages embedded within media texts. In order to do this, CDA has drawn heavily on Foucault’s notion of discourse and the critical linguistics that developed out of the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (Saussure, 1981 [1916]). Here, language is seen as the primary medium via which human beings interact with and come to understand the socio-cultural space which they inhabit. In this way, language is seen to both reflect and constitute the structures of power that are embedded within a given episteme and therefore all expressions of language – from spoken conversation to written texts – are ideological. As CDA scholar Roger Fowler comments,

Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position: language is not a clear window, but a refracting, structuring medium. If we can acknowledge this as a positive, productive principle, we can go on to show by analysis how it operates in texts. (Fowler, 1991: 10)

Critical Discourse Analysis therefore views language as the primary vehicle for the transmission of ideology and attempts to place it within its broader socio-cultural or socio-political context in order to uncover the relations of power embedded within a given text (spoken or written). Building on the foundational work done from the mid to late 1970s on the ideological nature of language (Coulthard, 1977; Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979; Kress & Hodge, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Van Dijk, 1977), CDA developed through the 1980s and 1990s to become a method of textual analysis in its own right (G. Brown & Yule, 1983; Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard, 1996; Fairclough, 1985, 1989, 1995a; Fowler, 1996; Zizek, 1990). Arguably the most succinct outline of a methodology for CDA is found in Norman Fairclough’s *Discourse and Social Change* where he postulates three central dimensions to the analysis of discourse (Fairclough, 1992). At the micro-linguistic level, CDA should
focus on the text itself, analysing syntactic and linguistic elements such as rhetorical
devices and lexical style with an understanding that “…particular structuring of the
relationships between words and the relationship between the meanings of a word are
forms of hegemony” (Fairclough, 1992: 77). Following on, CDA must acknowledge
the discursive practises of the text, including its political-economic elements such as
its production and distribution as well as an understanding of audience reception and
consumption of the text itself. Finally, CDA should incorporate critical theory via its
understanding of the broader social practices which envelop the text, that series of
power relations and ideologies of which the text is itself a part (Fairclough, 1992: 73-
96, 225-240). In summarising this three-tiered approach, Jacob Torfing writes,

> What is important is that the analysis at all three levels is concerned with
discursive terrains, i.e. socio-political terrains composed of discursively
constructed meanings, rules, norms, procedures, values, knowledge forms, etc.
That is to say, the signifying chains articulated in the text are shaped by the
rules of formation, which are defined by the hegemonic forms of discourse.
(Torfing, 1999: 213)

It is this model of CDA (or at least variations of it) which has proven useful to the
analysis of the critical role that the media plays in disseminating and legitimating the
ideologies of a given episteme and the ways in which the media naturalises the
authority of the elite (A. Bell & Garrett, 1998; Fairclough, 1995b; Fowler, 1991;
Matheson, 2005; O'Keeffe, 2006; Richardson, 2007; Tolson, 1996; Van Dijk, 1988).
In this context, media discourses can be seen to be made up of socially constitutive
language which journalists use to “…reflect the norms and values of the cultural
context in which they work and, thus, draw on the tools provided by the hegemonic
ideology when constructing news frames” (Noakes & Wilkins, 2002: 651). This type
of media analysis therefore reveals the pervading ideology of the context in which it is
produced, the types of discourses that the media operates within and also draws upon,
and is conscious of the media’s role in constructing the representations of marginal
groups within society.

This last point – that of the media’s role in constructing marginal groups – has
become a central tenet of CDA, especially in the pioneering work done by Tuen A.
Van Dijk on the ways in which media discourse is embedded with ideologies of race
Smitherman, & Troutman, 1997). Foremost amongst this work is his exhaustive and methodical analysis of racial discourses in both the British and the Dutch media entitled *Racism and the Press* (Van Dijk, 1991). Here, Van Dijk argues that:

More than any other form of public communication and discourse, the media have the ability to contribute the shared elements that define the ethnic situation and that develop or change the ideological framework used by white people to understand and control ethnic events and relations. They provide specially selected ‘facts’ and preformulate preferred meanings and opinions. (Van Dijk, 1991: 39)

Van Dijk goes on to establish that while the media carry an enormous responsibility when it comes to their coverage of ethnic minorities, they tend to stereotype and demonise these groups via their association with anti-social behaviour such as crime and violence, as well as with broader social issues such as immigration problems. These negative discourses and their role in constructing various subalterns has been investigated by a number of different academics across a broad range of contexts. This has included research into the negative discourses surrounding African Americans in the US media (Goshorn & Gandy, 1995), Native Indians in the Canadian English-language press (Grenier, 1994), the coverage of Indigenous Australians (Bullimore, 1999) and Vietnamese gangs (Teo, 2000) in Sydney’s newspapers, the Slovenian media’s portrayal of the Roma (Erjavec, 2001), Chinese mainlanders in the Hong Kong press (Flowerdew, Li, & Tran, 2002), and representations of the Arab citizens of Israel in the Israeli media (Avraham, 2003; Avraham, Wolfsfeld, & Aburaiya, 2000). What appears to be common amongst this research is the notion that the lack of representation and the homogenization of the ‘other’ negatively influence these minority groups. By investigating the representation of the Sami people of northern Finland in the Finnish press, Pietikainen and Hujanen interpret the relationship between Sami identity and the way that it is played out in Finnish news discourse. Essentially, they argue, “…news representations…contribute to the construction of identities of the people and region in question” (Pietikainen & Hujanen, 2003: 252) (see also: Pietikainen, 2003).

More recently, a number of scholars have attempted to utilise the methodology of CDA to demonstrate the ways in which the media has contributed to the construction of the Middle Eastern / Arab / Islamic ‘other’. This work has its antecedents in the
pioneering efforts of Said – especially his *Covering Islam* (Said, 1981) – as well as that done by Post-colonial scholars such as Spivak and Bhabha. Taken together, this work emphasises the imbalances between the colonial powers and the marginalised subalterns and the ways in which these power relations are legitimated and naturalised via institutions such as the mass media. As just one example, in Michael Humphrey’s discussion of the Lebanese Diaspora in Australia he notes that

The instantaneous media world of images impregnates events involving Muslims, Muslim countries and Islamic culture with stereotypes of Islam… Muslim immigrants find themselves having to defend cultural authenticity as a means to counter the creation of ‘global Islamic culture’ in the media. The media is, in short, experienced as a source of victimisation and racism towards Muslims. (Humphrey, 1998: 164)

This type of analysis of the media’s role in stereotyping, homogenising, victimising and demonising people of Middle Eastern descent or of the Islamic faith more broadly has gained particular prominence since the events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent ‘War on Terror’ (Akbarzadeh & Smith, 2005; Conte, 2001; Coole, 2002; J. Lewis, 2006; J. Lewis & deMasi, 2007; Lynn & Lea, 2003; Manning, 2004a, 2004b, 2006b; McCallum & Blood, 2006; P. Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003; Poole, 2002; Poole & Richardson, 2006; Poynting, Noble, Tabar, & Collins, 2004; Rane & Abdalla, 2008; Richardson, 2004; Saeed, 2007). One very specific example is Peter Manning’s investigation of the reporting of issues related to Islam, Arabs and the Middle East for a two year period including 12 months before and after the 9/11 attacks in two major Sydney newspapers (Manning, 2004b). Although this period included coverage of events as diverse as the Palestinian Intifada, the controversial ‘ethnic’ gang rapes in Sydney, the arrival of asylum seekers in Australia, the events of September 11 and the Australian federal election of 2001, Manning found that there was a “…remarkably consistent view of Arab people and people of Muslim belief” which relies on Orientalist discourses that portray them as “…violent to the point of terrorism” and “…as tricky, ungrateful, undeserving, often disgusting and barely human” (Manning, 2004b: 44-45) (see also: Manning, 2006a, 2006b). In *Bin Laden in the Suburbs: Criminalising the Arab Other* (Poynting et al., 2004) the authors go one step further to argue that these media discourses have served to create a climate of fear and paranoia surrounding issues relating to Arab / Middle Eastern / Islamic ‘others’. Here the people of the Orient have been reduced to the role of ‘folk devil’,
caught up in an ongoing cycle of ‘moral panic’ where “…Middle Eastern can become conflated with Arab, Arab with Muslim, Muslim with rapist, rapist with gang, gang with terrorist, terrorist with ‘boat people’, ‘boat people’ with barbaric, and so on in interminable permutations” (Poynting et al., 2004: 49). Focusing on the British press, John Richardson concludes that

This strategy has increased in usage dramatically following the attacks on America on September 11, 2001. More specifically, broadsheet representations of Islam and Muslims predominately argue that Muslims are ‘homogenous’, ‘separate’, ‘inferior’, ‘the enemy’, (etc.) and can therefore…be regarded as ‘Islamophobic’. Accordingly, British broadsheet newspapers predominantly reframe Muslim cultural difference as cultural deviance and, increasingly it seems, as cultural threat. (Richardson, 2004: 232)

Clearly these Orientalist media discourses which circulate negative stereotypes and construct the Middle Eastern ‘other’ are themselves problematic and worthy of further scrutiny and investigation. Although such work falls outside the realms of the current project, it is worth noting that such images have a compound effect on the media coverage and construction of Iraq. As the following section illustrates, the media representation of Iraq as a backward and barbaric place ruled by ‘Oriental despots’ and inhabited by bloodthirsty fundamentalists has a substantial history itself. Undoubtedly, this discursive lineage has intensified since the events of September 11 and the subsequent invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq. Indeed, it may well be argued that the construction of the Middle Eastern / Arab / Islamic ‘other’ and the negative reporting of Iraq are both part of the same broader Orientalist discourse that continues to engender the myths and stereotypes that propagated Western hegemony. However, in order to develop this argument further, it is necessary to closely examine the Western mainstream media’s role in covering and constructing Iraq.
Covering / Constructing Iraq

It is interesting to note that Iraq first came to the attention of the Western media as an ally of the US during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988. Following the rapid developments of 1979 when Saddam Hussein ascended to power in Iraq and the Islamic Revolution overthrew the Shah in Iran, the long-time border dispute between Iran and Iraq erupted when Saddam led his forces into Iran in September 1980. As the war progressed and the possibility of Iran winning the war increased, Britain and the US backed both sides just enough to ensure that neither party would win (Polk, 2005: 131-133, 140). By doing so, they were able to prevent the spread of both Iran’s revolutionary-fundamentalist Islamic doctrine and the aggressive Socialist Pan-Arabism of Iraq throughout the Middle East. During this war, the Western media focused on Iran’s sharp turn away from modernisation (read: Westernisation), portraying the country as “…militant, dangerous, and anti-American” (Said, 1981: 77). Iraq, on the other hand, was portrayed as a country struggling towards nationhood and secularisation with its leader, Saddam Hussein, a symbol of ‘our’ collective resistance to the spread of fundamentalist Islam and the auspices of that quintessential ‘Oriental despot’, Ayatollah Khomeini (Seymour, 2004).

However, when Saddam acted on another long-standing border dispute by invading Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the Persian Gulf War began and Iraq shifted from US ally to enemy number one. Virtually overnight, the country and leader that had once been an ally against all things wrong with the East had suddenly become them. Orientalist clichés rapidly emerged which detailed Iraq’s threat to the global order. In a speech given by US President George Bush (Snr.) one month after Iraq had invaded Kuwait, he claimed that the Gulf War would bring about the creation of “…a new world order…where the rule of law would supplant the rule of the jungle” (G. H. W. Bush, 1990). As Gearoid O’Tuathail later explained, Bush’s speech was steeped in colonial discourse in which the wild, untamed and barbaric regions of the non-Western world would need to be subjugated under the domination of the civilising forces of the West (O’Tuathail, 1993). In terms of media discourse, Roy Greenslade, a former editor of London’s Daily Mirror has since stated that “I can see now that our coverage in the
Mirror was built on a lot of anti-Iraqi bias, an anti-Moslem bias and an anti-Arab bias” (as cited in: Keeble, 1997: 71).

More to the point, the construction of Saddam Hussein rapidly transformed from friendly ‘ally’ and ‘moderniser’ to ‘Oriental despot’. Invoking the lineage of discourses which have long constructed Eastern figureheads as brutal tyrants from as far back as Herodotus, Saddam was described as an evil madman, likened to Hitler and compared to the megalomaniacal and bloodthirsty kings of the ancient Near East (Keeble, 1997: 65-70; 1998: 66; Kellner, 1995b: 206; Philo & McLaughlin, 1995; Said, 1994 [1993]: 357; 1998; Toth, 1992). He was dubbed ‘The Beast of Baghdad’ as “Countless stories were needlessly repeated throughout the mainstream media of his brutality…[while] Tabloid magazines published sensational stories detailing his alleged sexual crimes and perversions” (Kellner, 1995b: 208). In addition, this stereotypical ‘Oriental despot,’ was said to be in command of one of the largest, most efficient, battle-hardened and bloodthirsty armies in the world. In his Culture and Imperialism, Said briefly discusses the Orientalist sentiment exhibited by the US media and various foreign policy pundits in the lead up to the war itself (Said, 1994 [1993]: 341-395). Amongst his virulent critique he cites an article by Fouad Ajami entitled ‘The Summer of Arab Discontent’ (Ajami, 1990/1991) in which the author not only dismisses Iraq’s contribution to civilization and culture, but reduces the nation’s politics down to that of tyranny and despotism. For example, the first paragraph of the article states that Saddam

…came from a brittle land, a frontier country between Persia and Arabia, with little culture to claim and books and grand ideas. The new contender was a despot, a ruthless and skilled warden who had tamed his domain and turned it into a large prison. (Ajami as cited in: Said, 1994 [1993]: 359)

A lot has also been written about the media reportage of the war itself. With cameras mounted on ‘smart-bombs’, this ‘clean’ war moved from the messy reality of past wars to the clinical precision of ‘surgical strikes’ that seemed to avoid civilian casualties of any kind. This led many to be critical of the media’s role in reporting the war, its technophilia clearly prioritised over the devastating effects of that same technology (Alien, O'Loughlin, Jaspersn, & Sullivan, 1994; Denton, 1993; Kenney, 1994; Rennie, 2004; P. M. Smith, 1991). More recently, Gerald Sussman has pointed
out that American company Hill and Knowlton were operating out of Kuwait, constituting one of the largest funded campaigns to sway the American public in favour of the war via “…manipulated news stories and fabricated tales of Iraqi atrocities” (Sussman, 2005: 103) (see also: Kellner, 1995b: 206-210). Similarly, a number of other studies have demonstrated that the Western media tended to rely on US military and administrative sources, thereby leading to a routine framing of the Gulf War which was generally supportive of President George Bush’s (Snr.) administration and its foreign policy (Barber & Weir, 2002; Kaid et al., 1994; Kanjirathinkal & Hickey, 1992; Lee & Devitt, 1991; Muscati, 2002; Reese & Buckalew, 1995). The clear manipulation of the Gulf War coverage, coupled with the emphasis on its clean, surgical and technological nature prompted others to claim that this was “…a new kind of war, war as performance” (Combs, 1993: 277). In this performative war “…the national security elite can make the military event go according to script, omit bad scenes and discouraging words and bring about a military performance that is both spectacular and satisfying” (Combs, 1993: 277). This kind of analysis was re-iterated by Paul Virilio, who believed that the mass media had allowed the realities of war to be substituted by an information market of propaganda and illusion (Virilio, 2002). Perhaps more provocatively, Jean Baudrillard argued that The Gulf War did not take place (Baudrillard, 1991), claiming that the realities of the war disappeared behind the endless simulacra of the carefully constructed and ‘hyper-real’ nature of this media event.

Almost two years after the Gulf War had ended the United States, Britain and France launched an air attack on Iraqi missile sites in early 1993. This time Iraq was accused of having conducted military raids across the Kuwaiti border, thereby breaching UN Security Council Resolutions set up after the Gulf War. In his book, Media Discourse, distinguished CDA scholar Norman Fairclough analysed the coverage of these events in five British newspapers (Fairclough, 1995b: 94-102). Despite the seriousness of the events, Fairclough found that the British press tended to adopt a parental-authority disciplinary discourse which portrayed “…Saddam as the naughty child punished by his exasperated parents” (Fairclough, 1995b: 95). Tapping into the series of discourses that had been used to describe Saddam during the Gulf War, this coverage also went on to construct him as “…a madman, a menace to peace, a tyrant, a terrorist, a blusterer…and a figure of ridicule…yet at the same time a calculating
"politician" (Fairclough, 1995b: 101). By focusing on the rather paternal desire to punish the crazy ‘Oriental despot’, the British press was able to thereby ignore both the diplomatic relations with the broader Iraqi government and the plight of the Iraqi people. More to the point, as Fairclough concludes, “…such a construction implicitly evokes an imperialist and indeed racist ideology of relations between nations, which contributes to the continuity of imperialist and neo-colonialist relations in practice” (Fairclough, 1995b: 102).

Following this crisis however, Iraq all but disappeared from the international news agenda of the mid 1990s as Iraqis suffered under the dreadful sanctions that the international community imposed upon them (Abdullah, 2006: 71-87; Chomsky, 2006: 56-58; Cordesman & Hashim, 1997; Herring, 2004; Rubin, 2002: 80-96; Simons, 1998). While these sanctions were imposed to counter Saddam’s continued contravention of the terms of the ceasefire brokered at the end of the Gulf War and his belligerent attitude towards the UN Special Commission for Iraq (UNSCOM) (Trevan, 1999), they had the effect of eroding much of the basic infrastructure of the nation and further impoverishing many of its people. Not surprisingly, this gradual attrition of Iraq and the suffering it brought about was all but completely ignored by the mainstream Western media (Said, 2004: 7). In her recent book chapter entitled ‘Orientalism Revisited: The British Media and the Iraq War’ Judith Brown has noted that the media’s failure in this regard demonstrated “…the insidious nature of hegemonic power” and, citing the work of Foucault, she goes on to note that “…a discourse on Iraqi concerns and Iraqi-led solutions to a difficult humanitarian and political situation did not arise” (J. Brown, 2006: 98).

It was not until the late 1990s that Iraq re-surfaced in the Western media as a worthy news item. This time, a stand-off had developed between the US / UK and Iraq over the ability of the UNSCOM to inspect the country for chemical and biological weapons, culminating in the US Desert Fox cruise missile attacks on Baghdad in 1998. Although little scholarly attention has been paid to these events, John Richardson dedicates an entire chapter of his [Mis]Representing Islam (Richardson, 2004: 155-189) to the ways in which Iraq was represented in the British press during this era. Interestingly, although the events and their coverage in the media were on a much smaller scale than either the Gulf War or the current Iraq War, the coverage of
the UNSCOM stand-off tapped in to many familiar Orientalist tropes and discourses regarding Iraq. In the lead up to the attacks, as Richardson discovered, Saddam was portrayed as an evil recalcitrant, an ‘Oriental despot’ who cared little for international law and was a clear threat to international stability due to his alleged stockpile of chemical and biological Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) (Richardson, 2004: 157-171). The suffering of the Iraqi people was invoked only in so far as it helped to justify US and British action, with some journalists claiming that Iraqis wanted them to bomb Iraq so that they could throw off the shackles of Saddam’s authoritarian rule. Collectively, this coverage formed a “…schematic discursive strategy” (Richardson, 2004: 156) which served to justify “…the collective efforts of the US, the UK and the UN against ‘Saddam’, ‘the tyrant’ and ‘Iraqi dictator’” (Richardson, 2004: 162).

Of course, the global media, international relations and, more specifically, the destiny of Iraq were all radically altered by the attacks on the twin spires of the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on 11 September 2001. As is to be expected, the media coverage of the events of that fateful day has attracted much criticism and debate from scholars across a range of disciplines. As Terry Flew points out, the events of September 11 are particularly interesting to media studies because of the terrorists’ “…utilisation of communications technologies such as videos and the internet…that could convey messages to the decentralised global network”17 and because the “…impact of the attacks was conveyed worldwide through global communications media networks, as billions of people watched the repeated images of the planes crashing into the World Trade Centre towers in New York” (Flew, 2005: 17) (see also: O'Shaughnessy, 2004: 193-209). Indeed, most of the research has focused on the latter by investigating the ways in which September 11 was reported and its implications for journalism as well as the disproportional effect it has had on the global media and international affairs (Chomsky, 2001, 2003; Dixon, 2004; Green, 2002; Green & Maras, 2002; Greenberg, 2002; P. Hammond, 2003; J. Lewis, 2002; Shine, 2007; Silberstein, 2002; Venkatraman, 2004; Zelizer & Allan, 2002).

Perhaps most relevant to this study is Douglas Kellner’s analysis of the American mainstream media’s coverage during the days that followed September 11 and the

17 Although, as Michele Zanini has pointed out, this was happening well before 9/11 (Zanini, 1999).
ways in which they invoked Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilization’ model, effectively establishing “…a binary dualism between Islamic terrorism and civilization” circulating “…war fever and retaliatory feelings and discourses that called for and supported a form of military intervention” (Kellner, 2002: 143). Similarly, in an essay written shortly after the September 11 attacks, and in response to the media’s coverage of the events, Said implored us

…to step back from the imaginary thresholds that supposedly separate people from each other into supposedly clashing civilisations and re-examine the labels, reconsider the limited resources available, and decide somehow to share our fates with one another as in fact cultures mostly have done, despite the bellicose cries and creeds. (Said, 2004 [2001]-b: 111)

Even with such calls from scholars like Said, the events of September 11, as Ilija Tomanic-Trivundza has pointed out, provided the “…US administration with paramount evidence that the basic relations between the West and the Orient” is in fact a ‘Clash of Civilizations’ (Tomanic-Trivundza, 2004: 480). This is perhaps best evidenced by US President George W. Bush’s (Jnr.) declaration of a ‘War on Terror’ – a clear interpretative framework that contrasts the righteous forces of the West against the terrorizing hordes of the non-Western world. This war began with the invasion of Afghanistan, the overthrow of the Taliban and the hunt for the new face of terror, the nefarious and enigmatic head of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden. As with the Gulf War, the war in Afghanistan and the broader War on Terror was criticised for its hyper-reality and spectacle (Ryan, 2004: 379) as well as the Bush administration’s ability to manipulate the press and therefore mobilise public opinion (AbuKhalil, 2002; Cottle, 2005, 2006; P. Norris et al., 2003; Schechter, 2003b; Van der Veer & Munshi, 2004). Other research also noted that the Orientalist stereotypes which the United States media had been using for decades in portraying Arabs as uncivilised, religious zealots who were ignorant and violent was utilised in framing the War on Terror. For example, Michael Ryan has pointed out that the mass media portrayed the world as

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18 It should be duly noted here that, to date, this war has been altogether unsuccessful: foreign troops are still in Afghanistan where the Taliban still wields significant power, Al-Qaeda still operates globally and has arguably strengthened in numbers and activities since 2001, and Osama bin Laden remains at large.
...a place of binary signs in which ‘good’ Arabs, Afghans, Muslims, Americans and ‘the allies’, led by the righteous George W. Bush and government leaders from throughout the world, line up against the evil Taliban, al-Qaida and assorted terrorists, led by the demon Osama bin Laden. (Ryan, 2004: 367)

While the broader War on Terror continued in Afghanistan, the US government began building their case to attack Iraq based on the premise that Saddam Hussein was a brutal ‘Oriental despot’ who supported terrorism, was harbouring Weapons of Mass Destruction and that he was likely to use them in the near future. Arguably, this began with President Bush’s State of the Union Address of 29 January 2002 where, in reference to North Korea, Iran and Iraq, he stated that

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic. (G. W. Bush, 2002)

Here Bush invokes a classically Orientalist discourse of Western hegemony over the East. His declaration of an ‘Axis of Evil’ is not only reductive in that it homogenises the myriad of peoples from Marrakech to Pyongyang, but it also effectively passes a moral judgement over them, declaring them ‘evil’. In addition, Bush also sought to expand the War on Terror beyond the borders of Afghanistan and out towards other states with alleged WMD programs and links to terror networks. Throughout 2002, the Bush administration focused much of its attention on swaying the rather sceptical public towards the notion of a pre-emptive war against Iraq. However, as Tomanic-Trivundza has noted, “…the ideological venture against Iraq could not simply continue to build upon abundant pre-existing Orientalist imagery” (Tomanic-Trivundza, 2004: 485). That is to say that at the same time as summoning the traditional Orientalist discourses regarding Iraq, the US Administration also needed to frame its cause in terms of “…the eternal struggle between good and evil” (Tomanic-Trivundza, 2004: 485). Here, they relied on another familiar discourse, that of ‘Oriental despotism’, in which Saddam was once again framed as an evil and brutal tyrant, “…substantiated by abundant visual imagery of Hussein’s self-imposed cult of personality” (Tomanic-Trivundza, 2004: 485). In an essay published in the lead up to
the Iraq War, Said noted that the cumulative effect of these Orientalist discourses meant that Iraq was “…mainly now thought of either as a ‘threat’ to its neighbours, which, in its currently weakened and besieged condition, is rank nonsense, or as a ‘threat’ to the freedom and security of the United States, which is more nonsense” (Said, 2004 [2002]: 216). He went further to argue that this one-eyed view of Iraq enabled “…the dehumanization of the hated ‘other’” by reducing their “…existence to a few insistently repeated simple phrases, images, and concepts. This makes it easier to bomb the enemy without qualm” (Said, 2004 [2002]: 217).

This is clearly evident in President Bush’s 2003 State of the Union Address, which focused much more specifically on Iraq. He narrowed in on the oppression of the Iraqi people by Saddam, the defiance that Iraq had shown to various UN resolutions and initiatives including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and on alleged links between the Iraqi government and terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda (Scheer, Scheer, & Chaudhry, 2003). In this way, President Bush not only set the stage for a war with Iraq, he was able to erroneously link Saddam’s regime with the September 11 attacks and thereby invoke the collective wrath of the American people. This is perhaps most succinctly stated towards the end of his speech, where the President claims that

Before 11 September 2001, many in the world believed that Saddam Hussein could be contained. But chemical agents and lethal viruses and shadowy terrorist networks are not easily contained. Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons, and other plans – this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take just one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known. We will do everything in our power to make sure that day never comes. (G. W. Bush, 2003c)

These sentiments were quickly reiterated by the leaders of the United States’ most adamant supporters across the globe. Most notably, on 3 February 2003 (former) British Prime Minister Tony Blair addressed the House of Commons stating that “Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction and the threats they pose to the world must be confronted” (Blair, 2003). The following day, (former) Australian Prime Minister John Howard parroted in a Ministerial Statement that Iraq’s “…possession of chemical and biological weapons and its pursuit of a nuclear capability poses a real and unacceptable threat to the stability and security of our world” (J. Howard, 2003).
A few days later on 5 February 2003 the then American Secretary of State, Colin Powell, delivered a multi-media presentation complete with satellite imagery, recordings of intercepted telephone conversations and other intelligence data to the United Nations Security Council. As has already been alluded to, the UN had long suspected Saddam of covertly rebuilding its banned weapons programme and even passed Resolution 1441 in 2002 to assert its concerns over Iraq’s weapons capabilities and its subsequent potential threat to international peace and stability (Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams, & Trammell, 2005: 23). Powell sought to harness the UN’s suspicion by asserting that the evidence he presented provided proof that Saddam was developing and harbouring WMD. Following the lead of President Bush, Powell also went on to invoke the wrath of his fellow countrymen over the events of September 11 by first claiming that Saddam had links with Al-Qaeda and by stating that, “Leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option, not in a post-September 11th world” (Powell, 2003).

When it later became clear the Saddam’s alleged arsenal of WMD was not going to be found inside Iraq, Bush and Powell, along with other Coalition leaders such as Blair and Howard, came under fire for deliberately misleading the public. Similarly, the press coverage of the WMD issue has been highly criticised for its failure to fulfil its watchdog role as the Fourth Estate of democracy, preferring to toe the coalition line and accept the rather flimsy evidence presented (Champlin & Knoedler, 2006; Chomsky, 2004; Dadge, 2006; Levine, 2004; Massing, 2004). The New York Times, among others, have since admitted to poor journalistic practise, stating

> We have found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been…editors at several levels who should have been challenging reporters and pressing for more scepticism were perhaps too intent on rushing scoops into the paper. (as cited in: Ravi, 2005: 46)

This kind of malpractice had a profound effect on the debate surrounding the invasion of Iraq. Consider for example the findings of the American Program on International Policy Attitudes, which found that a large portion of the US population believed “…that weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, that Saddam had significant
ties with al-Qaeda, and that world opinion was mostly in support of the war” (as cited in: Dimitrova et al., 2005: 37). Furthermore, as Richardson notes in his analysis of the media coverage of the UNSCOM stand-off detailed earlier, the debate over the WMD issue “…completely removes the very active role which, amongst others’ Britain and the United States played in selling ‘weapons of mass destruction’ and technology necessary for manufacturing such weapons to Iraq and Saddam Hussein” (Richardson, 2004: 174).

However, despite Powell’s erudite, if factually incorrect, presentation and the role that the coalition media played in promoting the WMD issue and the broader decision to invade Iraq (Dadge, 2006), the United States was unable to garner popular support from either the UN or many of their longest standing European allies. This lack of support was also felt at home, where the American people – as well as many around the world – rallied against this pre-emptive war on a sovereign nation (T. Ali, 2003b; C. A. Luther & Miller, 2005). Here in Australia, the anti-war rallies amassed more than one million people across the nation, the largest protests since Vietnam (Hinman, 2004; Hirst & Schutze, 2004: 181). Nevertheless, the United States was able to assemble a ‘Coalition of the Willing’, a loose band of allies against the so called Axis of Evil that was led by the US and made up of smaller numbers of military personnel from a broad range of countries. These included those who wanted to suppress Islamic insurgents within their own nation-states (the Philippines, Russia and Uzbekistan), regional allies who also had the advantage of geographical proximity (Pakistan, Kuwait etc) and those whose governments generally supported US foreign policy and the War on Terror (such as Britain, Spain, Poland and Australia) (Flew, 2005: 17).

On 17 March 2003, Bush addressed the United States and the world, offering Saddam Hussein an ultimatum: he and his sons were to leave Iraq within 48 hours or the coalition would launch its ‘pre-emptive strike’ against Iraq (G. W. Bush, 2003a). Despite the fact that “…by the eve of the war…the global popularity of the U.S. government was at a demonstratable low” (Seymour, 2004: 359), Bush fulfilled his promise, stating on 19 March 2003 that

At this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger. On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected
targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein’s ability to wage war. (G. W. Bush, 2003a)

Not surprisingly, the international media responded immediately, with substantial coverage of Bush’s announcement of the start of the War on 19 March, through to 1 May when onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln and under a banner proclaiming ‘Mission Accomplished’, Bush announced completion of major military combat in Iraq (Dimitrova et al., 2005: 23; Mirzoeff, 2005: 14). A number of media scholars have since offered their criticisms regarding the control that the US exerted over the rest of the world’s media throughout the combat phase of the war and beyond (Aday, Livingston, & Hebert, 2005; Artz & Kamalipour, 2005; Berenger, 2004; Kuypers & Cooper, 2005; D. Miller, 2004; Nikolaev & Hakanen, 2006; O'Shaughnessy, 2004; Rampton, 2003; Rutherford, 2004; Schechter, 2003a; Toledano, 2003; Tumber & Palmer, 2004). The Pentagon made two key strategic media control decisions to limit journalistic exposure to the war. Firstly, they would relay the events of the war to the world’s media from ‘Central Command’, or CentCom, in Doha, Qatar (some 700 miles from Baghdad). Here Brigadier-General Vincent Brooks of the US military became famous for entering the carefully crafted $250,000 hi-tech media centre each day and detailing to the world both the supposed precision attacks that the US had carried out and the minimal civilian casualties that had occurred (Rutherford, 2004: 65). Secondly, the Pentagon also developed the notion of ‘embedding’ journalists with military platoons in order to provide “…a means of identification for the American television viewer with the live images, even when there was very little to see” (Mirzoeff, 2005: 27). This was of course done under strict guidelines where the journalist not only had to undergo mild military training, but were also asked to sign documents ensuring that they would not release information or footage that might compromise the ongoing military operations (Rutherford, 2004: 72). Unfortunately, as was no doubt intended, many of the 600 correspondents who agreed to these conditions presented a relatively narrow view of the war given the blinkered position created by living through the daily violence and hardships experienced by their platoon. Taken together, the control exerted by the US administration over the global

\footnote{It should be noted here that the notion of ‘embedding’ journalists had been used to some effect during earlier conflicts such as the Falklands War of 1982.}
media’s access to the actual events of the Iraq war can be seen to constitute a hegemonic closure of discourse in which the US was able to limit press freedom and prevent the events in Iraq from reaching a global audience.

For those journalists and media organisations who decided that the tight control the United States had over their exposure and reporting of the war was too much, there was a heavy price to pay. It appears that by the time the United States were in Baghdad, the international media had become a legitimate military target. On 8 April 2003, the US military attacked both the Baghdad studio of Al-Jazeera (‘The Peninsula’ – a Qatar based Arab satellite network), killing a cameraman, and the Palestine Hotel\textsuperscript{20}, killing two more cameramen and wounding four journalists (Rutherford, 2004: 77-78). Regarding the attack on the Palestine Hotel, the coalition later claimed that they had simply been responding to enemy fire. In his memoirs, Rageh Omaar\textsuperscript{21} chillingly recounts the attack and is careful to stipulate that

There was no fire from the hotel or anywhere near it. At least five television networks recorded continuous footage in the half-hour before the American tank fired its single round into the hotel, the BBC and Sky News among them. I and at least twenty other reporters were on the lower roof of the Palestine Hotel at least fifteen minutes before the tank fired, and there was no trace, either in our personal recollections or on the audio footage, of the sound of gunfire in or near the hotel. (Omaar, 2004: 186)

The Committee to Protect Journalists and other international press freedom groups then called upon the Pentagon “…to launch an immediate and thorough investigation into these incidents and to make the findings public” (Campagna & Roumani, 2003). When this report was released a year later, the Pentagon claimed that the coalition forces bore “…no fault or negligence” in the attack on the Palestine Hotel ("Pentagon Report finds no fault in Palestine Hotel shelling in Baghdad, CPJ disappointed," 2004). These incidents, along with their official reports seem to have sent a clear message form the coalition forces to the international media: “…do not report

\textsuperscript{20} It was commonly known that a number of international journalists were staying at the Palestine Hotel at the time.

\textsuperscript{21} Rageh Omaar is a BBC correspondent who was staying at the Palestine Hotel at the time of the attacks. It should also be noted here that Omaar’s sympathetic accounts of Iraqi suffering during the war prompted Downing Street to ask for his removal, which the BBC refused (Hattenstone, 2004).
anything that the American military does not want people to see” (Mirzoeff, 2005: 76).

However, even with the tight restraints imposed on the world’s media and the threat of attack, the Iraq War, like the Gulf War, September 11 and the Afghanistan War before it became a media spectacle, with 24-hour live updates and daily reports from the front line. Indeed, more journalists were amongst the combat (if embedded) than ever before and, by harnessing the power of new technologies, they were able to present to us a war in which “…more images were created to less effect than at any other period in human history” (Mirzoeff, 2005: 67). One image that did have some impact was the fall of Baghdad on 9 April 2003. After having seized the airport several days earlier (3 April), the American forces were able to secure the rest of the city with very little resistance, much of the Republican Guard having disbanded during the heavy combat phase of the war (Ravi, 2005: 54). To celebrate the victory and to write the moment of Saddam’s downfall into the annals of history, the US marines and a group of apparently jubilant Iraqis descended on Firdos Square in central Baghdad. Together they worked to climb one of the many statues of Saddam that littered the country, with first the US and then the Iraqi flag being draped over his head (Rampton, 2003: 2). Finally, the statue was torn down and the severed head was dragged through the streets as Iraqis continued to celebrate the fall of Saddam (Ravi, 2005: 54). However, some media scholars have since expressed their doubts about these scenes, which although they appeared to be the spontaneous actions of a people’s liberation, were more likely the carefully choreographed work of the United States’ Psy-Ops Machine, designed to serve the twin purposes of a mass media spectacle and to promote the legitimacy of the war across a sceptical globe (Cottle, 2006: 156; Dimitrova, 2006: 119; Rampton, 2003: 1-7).

Other images were more shocking. Although it has been shown that American TV news screened images of Iraqi casualties, including dead bodies, they tended to eschew such images of coalition troops, preferring to mention them verbally (Dimitrova et al., 2005: 27). However, when Al-Jazeera showed images of dead American troops there was a storm of protest and indignation in the United States (Cottle, 2006: 156; Mirzoeff, 2005: 80). Here, images of the reality of war have been caught up in an ideological game where graphic images of ‘our’ casualties are
censored, but equally graphic images of ‘their’ civilians are permitted. However, while this kind of one-eyed coverage continued in the mainstream media, the Iraq war has also been described as the “…first major military conflict during which Internet news played a major role” (Dimitrova et al., 2005: 22). In a report issued by the Pew Internet and American Life Project it was claimed that “More than three-quarters of online Americans (77%) have used the Internet in connection with the war in Iraq” (Rainie, Fox, & Fallows, 2003: 2). More specifically, 56% of the US population used the internet “…to get news, general information, and commentary on countless Web sites that have war related material and argument” (Rainie et al., 2003: 2). Aside from the official news channels on-line (such as CNN.com etc), many web surfers also tuned to unofficial sites such as web-logs (or ‘blogs’) to discover more personalised stories of the Iraq war. Perhaps foremost among these were the chilling, poignant, comical and tragically humane blogs written under the pseudonym Salam-Pax (Salam-Pax, 2003).

Whether on American television or in global news sources such as the internet, the Western mainstream media coverage of the Iraq War and the subsequent occupation have tended to rely on the pervading ideologies and Orientalist stereotypes that have been used to cover Iraq from as far back as the Gulf War (J. Brown, 2006; Fairclough, 1995b; Keeble, 1997, 1998; Kellner, 1995b; O'Tuathail, 1993; Philo & McLaughlin, 1995; Richardson, 2004; Said, 2001 [1991], 2004 [2002]; Sandikcioglu, 1999; Seymour, 2004; Sidaway, 1998; Tomanic-Trivundza, 2004). In terms of the British press, Richardson has noted that in the coverage of the battle for Basra during the early stages of the war, “…the violence of the Iraqis is referred to directly, spelled out in specific terms…and their after-effects clearly stated” while on the other hand “…any sense that the British troops were also shelling and killing – often innocent Iraqis – is conveniently glossed over” (Richardson, 2007: 48-49). Later in the same book Richardson discusses how such simple binary oppositions between the ‘courageous’ and ‘moral’ actions of our ‘soldiers’ and the ‘underhanded’ and ‘evil’ actions of the ‘Iraqi army,’ ‘insurgents’ or ‘terrorists’ gathered even more vehemence as the war progressed. Indeed, the earlier confusion between the actual ‘Iraqi army’ and ‘terrorists’ became more pronounced and legitimate soldiers defending the sovereignty of their nation-state were reduced to ‘suicidal zealots,’ ‘fanatical security forces,’ ‘volunteer fanatics’ and “…the ultimate Muslim folk devil, the ‘suicide
bomber’” (Richardson, 2007: 210) (see also: J. Brown, 2006: 104). Overall, as Brown has pointed out, the British press painted a typically Orientalist “…picture of Iraqis as primitive, untrustworthy, and only interested in personal gain” (J. Brown, 2006: 105). This kind of reporting also served to assure Western audiences that the war was legitimate and, more problematically, it “…drew on an imagined and vaguely racist legacy of the way ‘the West’ has historically positioned itself as being responsible for ‘civilizing the world’” (Richardson, 2007: 191) (see also: J. Brown, 2006: 100, 107). Here the legacy of Britain’s colonial past in Iraq (see Chapter 5) serves as an underlying Orientalist discourse that resurfaces in both the invasion and occupation of Iraq and the coverage of these events in the media.

This kind of Orientalism also appeared in the Australian press, where journalists such as Andrew Bolt of the Herald Sun claimed, “Its far more likely that Saddam’s humiliation will make many Arabs confront a truth that has long been suppressed – that their abject weakness is born of their own flawed societies” (Bolt as cited in: Manne, 2005: 90). Meanwhile, in Daniela Dimitrova’s study of The Australian newspaper on-line, she uncovered that the photographic imagery of the Iraq War “…may lead to the idea that the American soldiers were powerful and potent while the Iraqis were powerless, defeated and at their mercy” (Dimitrova, 2006: 119). In a similar study of the photo-journalism found in the Slovenian newspaper, Delo, during the war, Tomanic-Trivundza claims that the paper “…used Orientalism as a structured cognitive model that framed the representation of the conflict, thus reducing the complexity and specifics of events into easily recognisable and commonly shared schemata” (Tomanic-Trivundza, 2004: 481).

One such schemata, that of ‘Oriental despotism’, was reiterated repeatedly in the lead up to and throughout the Iraq war. Familiar stories re-emerged as

The image of Saddam Hussein as the incarnation of an evil, dangerous madman and the new Hitler, established by the Western media in 1991…[had] never completely left the vocabulary of the US administration and has frequently been evoked in the media since the end of the Gulf War. (Tomanic-Trivundza, 2004: 485)
This time around, Western media audiences were bombarded with images and articles about the atrocities the Iraqi people had endured under the auspices of this dictator. Bizarre stories emerged not only about his sexual perversions, his blood-lust and his brutal political strategies, but also about the number of surgically-enhanced body-doubles he had scattered across the country, his many wives and lovers, the excessive decadence of his palaces and the endless catacombs and bomb-shelters that would protect him from even the most deadly air raids (R. A. Miller, 2007: 169-171). The crimes of his sons, Uday and Qusay, were dutifully recounted while others focused on Saddam’s alleged tendency to have anyone executed who dared to challenge his authority or question his motives. In this way, the image of Saddam Hussein and his regime fitted well with the age-old discourse of ‘Oriental despotism’. Like the excesses and brutality of the Persian kings and other Asiatic despots found in the work of Herodotus, Xenophon and the later writings of Montesquieu and Chardin for example, Saddam’s despotism was that of arbitrary power exerted over an unwilling and terrified populace. At the same time, this discourse of ‘Oriental despotism’ was juxtaposed against its binary opposite of ‘Western democracy’ where Saddam’s dictatorship was contrasted by the reasonable, diplomatic and civilised discourse which underpinned Western media constructions of Bush, Blair and Howard for example.
‘Oriental Despotism’ and the Democratisation of Iraq in The Australian

With the realisation that the initial motives for entering Iraq – Saddam’s alleged stockpile of WMD and his links to Al-Qaeda – were grievous intelligence errors the Bush administration, with varying degrees of success, were able to spin the war’s raison d’être and redefine the parameters of victory. A central tenet of this approach was to begin speaking about democracy as if it had always been one of the aims of the war itself. For example, in a speech presented before the National Endowment for Democracy in November 2003, President Bush claimed that although bringing democracy to Iraq would be a

…massive and difficult undertaking – it is worth our effort, it is worth our sacrifice, because we know the stakes. The failure of Iraqi democracy would embolden terrorists around the world, increase dangers to the American people, and extinguish the hopes of millions in the region. Iraqi democracy will succeed – and that success will send forth the news, from Damascus to Teheran – that freedom can be the future of every nation. The establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution. (G. W. Bush, 2003b)

While the promotion of democracy across the globe has long served as a central pillar of US foreign policy (Barker, 2008: 109-112; Esposito & Voll, 1996: 19-20), the notion that the US could use its enormous influence and military power to not only pre-emptively attack independent nation-states and overthrow existing regimes, but to also install democratic governments in their place is exclusive to the current administration and has come to be termed the ‘Bush doctrine’ (Jervis, 2003). In addition, the Bush administration also held the overly simplistic view that by installing democracy in Iraq they would enable a ‘domino effect’ across the region where autocratic regimes would have no choice but to convert to robust democracies (Davis, 2004b; Norton, 2005: 100; Stansfield, 2005: 131). Underpinning such ideas is the notion of the ‘Democratic Peace Theory’ which asserts that the global spread of democracy would simultaneously bring about global peace, security and the uptake of free-market economies, thereby ending international instability, terrorism and non-democratic regimes (Elman, 1997; Heazle & Islam, 2006: 2-3; C. Hobson, 2007). In another sense, the ‘Bush doctrine’ can be seen to be reminiscent of the colonial era in that it claims to be a civilising force aimed at liberating the barbaric non-Western
world from their own backward practices. It also taps in to the discourse of ‘Western
democracy’ by asserting that the United States and the broader Western world is the
legitimate legatee of democracy and has the right to democratise – under force of
occupation if necessary – the non-Western world. Interestingly, in the speech
mentioned above, Bush alludes to the historical narrative of ‘Western democracy’ by
stating “The roots of our democracy can be traced to England, and to its Parliament”
(G. W. Bush, 2003b).

Despite such claims, the US-backed Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which
managed Iraq after the fall of Baghdad, was not initially keen on democracy. The
original plan was to instead install an interim Iraqi government that would write the
constitution under American auspices before conducting a general election by the end
of 2005 (Gregory, 2004: 242). This was widely contested across Iraq, particularly
amongst the Shia, where figures as far apart as the quietest Shiite cleric Grand
Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and the younger, more radical Moqtada Al-Sadr were able to
mobilise thousands of Iraqis in protests that called for a general election prior to the
drafting of the Iraqi constitution (Davis, 2005c: 115-117; 2005d: 59; N. Klein, 2007:
365; Polk, 2005: 181-182). This gradually brought about the handover of Iraq’s
sovereignty from the US-led coalition to the Interim Government in June 2004 and
began the nation’s shift from despotism to democracy. As has been detailed in the
Introduction, on 30 January 2005 some 8.5 million Iraqis voted to elect a national
assembly who were charged with the ominous duty of drafting the Iraqi constitution.

After much deliberation and after missing the original deadline of 15 August, the
committee approved a final draft of the Iraqi constitution on 28 August 2005.
Following this, on 15 October, Iraqis again took to the polls, effectively ratifying the
proposed constitution, and a permanent government has since been established
following another national vote attended by 11 million Iraqis on 15 December 2005.

Not surprisingly, this series of events in Iraq captured the attention of the Western
mainstream media and the academy. Indeed, while other democratic developments
across the region warranted some attention, it is arguably Iraq’s democratisation that
has received the greatest amount of scholarly investigation and debate from across the
political and ideological spectrum (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004; Arato, 2003,
2004; Benomar, 2004; Braude, 2003; Byman, 2003a, 2003b; Dawisha, 2004;
Unfortunately, much of this research is pessimistic about Iraq’s democratisation and is accompanied by staunch warnings regarding the failure to build a democratic Iraq, which would “…become a breeding ground for terrorism and might once again attack its neighbours or seek WMD, destabilising the region” (Byman, 2003a: 68) as well as its implications for the fate of democracy in the Arab world and beyond. In addition, many authors retreat into the kind of rhetoric espoused by earlier Orientalist scholars, offering reasons as to why the establishment of democracy will at least be difficult, if not impossible in Iraq. For example, Andreas Wimmer has ominously warned that “…the seeds of democracy may have difficulties to germinate in the sandy soils of Iraq” (A. Wimmer, 2003: 111). Others have claimed that Iraq has “…little tradition of power-sharing” (Byman, 2003a: 57) or “…experience with democracy” (Benomar, 2004: 95). There is said to be no “…society in Iraq to turn into a democracy” and that the people have not “…learned democratic practices” (Byman, 2003a: 59). Additionally, history is said to teach us that Iraq has been a nation of “…uneasy order maintained through rations of oppression and fear” (Benomar, 2004: 95). As if to summarise this point of view, Daniel Byman has recounted an entire list of factors that he believes will inhibit the spread of democracy in Iraq including, among others, “…a lack of cohesive identity to unify Iraq’s different communities…bellicose elites who pursue adventurism abroad and whip up tension at home, a poorly organised political leadership, and a lack of a history of democracy” (Byman, 2003b: 49). Along these lines Adeed Dawisha critiques a whole collection of Middle Eastern scholars, journalists and opinion leaders who assume that Iraq has “…an authoritarian political culture and no history of democratic institutions” (Dawisha, 2005a: 11). He goes on to cite former US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld who – despite being a consistent supporter of President Bush’s desire to democratise Iraq – has conceded that the nation “…has no experience of democracy and representative government” (Rumsfeld as cited in: Dawisha, 2005a: 11). While this is arguably true of the recent history of Iraq – especially under the rule of Saddam Hussein – it is interesting nonetheless that these individuals have chosen to use words like ‘experience,’ ‘identity,’ ‘tradition,’ ‘society’ and ‘history’. Here, they have attempted to invoke the powerful discourses
of the collective history and culture of the Iraqi people (or the perceived lack thereof) in so far as they might reveal reasons why democracy will not take root there.

Similarly, the Western media coverage of the series of elections and the referendum that occurred throughout 2005 in Iraq has also been pessimistic, often relying on Orientalist assumptions about the Middle East and, more specifically, on its tendency towards ‘Oriental despotism’. For example, earlier work by the author (Isakhan, 2005a, 2006a, 2006c, 2007b, 2008c) has included a series of Critical Discourse Analyses which compared and contrasted the coverage of these events in several of Australia’s leading daily newspapers (The Australian, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, and The Courier-Mail) with a collection of Middle Eastern English-language papers (The Daily Star of Lebanon, Anadolu Agency and Dunya of Turkey, as well as the eponymous The Kuwait Times and The Jordan Times). Despite the differences and debates within and between these various media outlets, overall this research found that while the mainstream Australian media tended to be reductive and Orientalist in its coverage of Iraq’s democratisation, the English-language Middle Eastern press studied here generally encouraged a more open and varied debate concerning Iraq’s democratisation and its consequences for the broader region.

Building on this earlier research, the following focuses on the coverage of the democratisation of Iraq throughout 2005 in The Australian newspaper. The Australian is an organ of the nation’s largest newspaper conglomerate, News Limited, owned by Rupert Murdoch, and is the only nation-wide broadsheet in the country ("Control of Major Australian Media," 2005). Indeed, it is fair to say that The Australian plays an ‘agenda-setting’ role, informing the Australian populace about global events such as the war and ongoing occupation of Iraq. It is for this reason that The Australian and other News Limited controlled papers have come under close scrutiny in recent years. For example, these papers have been accused of displaying “…an intellectual orthodoxy and an ideological uniformity that is remarkable, overt and long-standing” (McKnight, 2005: 54). Following on, others have argued that this ‘ideological uniformity’ in the Australian Murdoch papers is best illustrated by their coverage of the Iraq War (Dimitrova, 2006; Hirst & Schutze, 2004; Manning, 2004a; McCallum & Blood, 2006; Tuckwell, 2006). Along these lines, Robert Manne states that “On the road to the invasion of Iraq, and through the…bloody chaos since Baghdad’s fall,
almost every Australian newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch has supported each
twist and turn of the American, British and Australian policy line” (Manne, 2005: 75).

Despite the significance of this emerging body of research, little attention has been
paid to the coverage of the Iraqi elections of 2005 in The Australian and its tendency
to rely on Orientalist stereotypes such as that of ‘Oriental despotism’. In order to
address this gap in the literature, the following analyses articles form The Australian
obtained using the keywords ‘Iraq and democracy’ in the ‘search’ function of Factiva
(www.factiva.com). The data set was then refined by eliminating any brief articles
(such as letters, TV reviews etc.) and those which were not directly related to the
events mentioned above (such as those which focused on contemporaneous events
like the ongoing violence in Iraq or the Egyptian elections of 2005). Finally, these
reports were analysed according to the method of CDA in order to determine the
discourses that underpin these texts, the ideological environ in which they are
produced and the ways in which these are disseminated to their respective readership
(for more on the methodology used, see: Isakhan, 2005a, 2006a, 2006c, 2007b,
2008c).

Starting with the coverage of the January election in Iraq, we see that the complexity
of Iraqi politics is reduced down to a binary opposition between the forces of
democracy (the United States and the broader Coalition of the Willing, Western
civilisation in general and the majority of ‘ordinary’ Iraqis) versus the propagators of
terror (Al-Qaeda, Pro-Saddam Sunnis [often seen as the majority of Sunnis] and
various domestic and foreign insurgents). This analogy of the ideological battle
between democracy and terror is invoked repeatedly, with Australia’s former Minister
for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, weighing into the debate by claiming that the
Iraqi election is symbolic of “…a crucible for the struggle between democracy and
freedom and the forces of totalitarianism and terrorism” (Downer, 2005) (see also:
Rothwell, 2005d). Particularly interesting here is that while the myriad of legitimate
political groups in Iraq and their respective ideologies and policies are all but ignored,
figures such as Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi are cited repeatedly.
Here, The Australian has eschewed the complexity of Iraqi politics, preferring the
sensationalism of bin Laden’s claim that those who participate in the election are
infidels and apostates whose deaths should not be prayed over (Costello, 2005;
Shawcross, 2005) as well as Al-Zarqawi’s declaration of “…an all-out war on this evil principle of democracy and those who follow this wrong ideology” (Al-Zarqawi as cited in: Sheridan, 2005) (see also: Costello, 2005; Rothwell, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c).

At the time of the drafting and ratification of the Iraqi constitution *The Australian* focuses much of its coverage on the debates and differences between the Shiite majority and the Kurdish and Sunni minorities. *The Australian* pays particular attention to the difficulties involved in getting the disenfranchised Sunnis to take part ("Iraqis set for deal on national plan," 2005; Philp, 2005b), their threat of civil war (Steele, 2005) and their failed attempt to vote down the constitution at the referendum ("Sunnis fail to derail Iraqi charter," 2005). This is coupled with coverage that critiques Iraq’s National Assembly for missing the initial deadline of August 15, including headlines such as ‘Iraqis fail to agree on new constitution’ (Philp, 2005a) and ‘Floundering Fathers – The Big Picture’ ("Floundering Fathers - The Big Picture," 2005). However, such criticisms are not matched by relevant contextual or background information on any of the three main groups in Iraq, the significance and nature of the issues being debated or about the democratic and egalitarian ways in which many of these deliberations were conducted.

Much of the coverage of Iraq’s democratisation is also reductive, relying on Orientalist clichés regarding the Middle East’s tendency towards despotism as well as simplistic analyses of Iraq’s political history. For example, in one particular op-ed two former US Secretaries of State, Henry Kissinger and George Schultz, argue that democracy is unlikely to take hold in Iraq because it “…is a society riven by centuries of religious and ethnic conflicts with little or no experience with representative institutions” (Kissinger & Shultz, 2005). The notion that Iraq has “…no liberal past to draw from” (Kaplan, 2005) is repeated several times, with the January 2005 elections therefore viewed as an unprecedented moment in Iraqi history (Devine, 2005; Rothwell, 2005e). These sentiments are reiterated later the same year, during the coverage of Iraq’s December 2005 election, where Iraqis are seen as “…not used to democracy…and they have little tradition of tolerance” ("Another Positive Step," 2006) and that “…they feel that violence remains the more pragmatic way to achieve justice and to protect one’s interests” (Clemons, 2005).
Inherent in this kind of coverage is an assumption that modern Iraq (as well as the broader Middle East / Islamic world) has emerged from a long history where barbarism, violence and despotism have always triumphed. There is no pause here for consideration of Iraq’s complex political past or present, just a reductive, simplistic analysis based more likely on the authoritarianism of Saddam than any genuine analysis of Iraqi or Middle Eastern history. Additionally, this selective understanding of Iraqi politics is also used to justify the ongoing occupation of Iraq. During the coverage of the drafting and ratification of the Iraqi constitution, The Australian seizes the opportunity to justify the nation’s involvement in the Coalition of the Willing, by arguing that if we were to withdraw now, the cost would be “… even heavier than the immediate bloodletting it would occasion in Iraq - it would set the cause of democracy and civilised values back everywhere” ("The Iraq Crucible," 2005). Similarly, the coverage of the December election details the dangers of a ‘cut and run’ strategy, including a military coup, leading to the rise of another Saddam style despot (Belkin, 2006) and that without such a strongman, Iraq is doomed to anarchy (Behm, 2005). Alternatively, Iraq would crumble into three separate states (Clemons, 2005) or become a safe-haven for Al-Qaeda similar to Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban ("Reporting for Duty," 2006).

More broadly, the issue of Middle Eastern democracy is raised several times throughout The Australian’s coverage of Iraq’s democratisation. Here, Orientalist scholarship such as that of Huntington is both explicitly and implicitly cited as justification for the inability of the Middle East to adopt models of collective governance. This is made clear during the coverage of Iraq’s January 2005 election where one anonymous journalist informs us that “…the Arab world provides Iraq with no model for a fully functioning inclusive democracy” ("Brave Iraqis inspire lovers of democracy," 2005). More explicitly, an article by Michael Desch entitled ‘Folly in exporting liberty’ directly cites Huntington’s work as evidence of the claim that

…because they lack the requisite institutional and cultural foundations, neither Afghanistan nor Iraq will likely become stable democracies. And weak and unstable democracies usually suffer from serious internal problems and are more likely to go to war than non-democratic regimes. (Desch, 2005)
Later, during the coverage of the drafting and ratification of the Iraqi Constitution, the issue of Middle Eastern democracy is invoked by Australia’s former Foreign Minister, Labor Party leader and Governor-General, Bill Hayden, who paraphrases the central thesis of ‘Oriental despotism’ by calling for the US to “…forget about democracy; not all peoples in the world want democracy or are capable of sustaining that method of governance” (Hayden, 2005). Along these lines, a later article in The Australian makes such references to Huntington’s work explicit by directly quoting a passage from the chapter ‘Islam’s Bloody Borders’ in The Clash of Civilisations (Huntington, 1998 [1996]). In this chapter, Huntington proposes that the majority of civilisational conflicts have occurred along the borders that separate the Muslim from the non-Muslim world. Here, Mark Steyn uses Huntington’s theory to justify wars such as those in Iraq, claiming that “…pushing back the Islamists on their ever-expanding margins will never be enough… Sometimes war is worth it” (Steyn, 2005).

Finally, at the time of Iraq’s December 2005 election, a Professor of Sociology at Melbourne’s La Trobe University, John Carroll, penned an article for The Australian entitled ‘How the West got stronger’ (Carroll, 2005). Here, Carroll claims that since the events of 11 September 2001, Australia has witnessed some profound changes in its society, politics and culture. These changes, according to Carroll, fulfil the predications of Huntington’s argument regarding the coming ‘Clash of Civilisations’. Specifically, he claims that Australia’s moves to strengthen ties to the United States are demonstrative of the fact that

…the world is dividing along civilisational lines; in the short to medium term, Islam versus most of the rest. A Western nation with a modest-sized population on the edge of Asia must maintain close ties with the dominant power in its own civilisation…Britain…and the US. (Carroll, 2005)

The emergence of Huntington’s work into popular discourse has meant that it stands often without critique and allows simple, reductive Orientalist scholarship to be reported as near fact. As renowned Journalism Professor Philip Seib has noted, recent events

…have pushed many in the news media towards a de facto adoption of the Huntington theory, regardless of its many critics. The 9/11 attacks, the resulting Afghanistan War, and the Iraq War begun in 2003 all lend themselves to political and journalistic shorthand: We have a new array of
villains, and they have Islam in common. That must mean that a clash of civilisations is under way. (Seib, 2004/2005: 76)

This uncritical and careless adoption of Orientalist ideologies is clearly problematic and stems from the notion that even when given democracy and freedom, the people of the Middle East are too backward and barbaric to embrace a future free of tyranny and despotism. This ideology is so widely held in the Western world that The Australian’s coverage of the democratic elections and the referendum that occurred across Iraq in 2005 does not manage to move beyond this simplistic and reductive framework. This is not particularly surprising when one considers that in reporting these events The Australian has relied on key opinion pieces from senior US and Australian political figures (such as Henry Kissinger, George Schultz, Bill Hayden and Alexander Downer), well known neo-conservative foreign policy pundits and polemicists (such as Lawrence F. Kaplan, Mark Steyn and Michael C. Desch) and a whole range of journalists, commentators and foreign correspondents, each of which situate their work around the received wisdom of ‘Oriental despotism’.

Here, any examples of collective forms of government, egalitarian societies or democratic political movements within Iraq are all but eschewed in favour of images of Iraqi culture, history and society as benighted and despotic in nature. This is to say nothing of the fact that The Australian has profoundly misunderstood – or at least under-reported – the nuanced and sophisticated political landscape that is post-Saddam Iraq. Indeed, at the time of the elections and referendum of 2005, Iraq was home to a panoply of political, religious and ethno-sectarian factions, each of which was forming policy agendas, engaging in complex political alliances, debating and deliberating over key issues of the state and campaigning vigorously in the nation’s media (see Chapter 6). Instead, The Australian opted to align itself with not only much of the reporting about the Middle East in general, but also with the Western media’s coverage of Iraq from as far back as the Gulf War of the early 1990s. This time around, The Australian focused on sensationalised stories of violence, quotes from nefarious figures such as bin Laden and Al-Zarqawi and pejorative op-eds about why Iraq is incapable of democracy.
This is particularly problematic because *The Australian* plays such a central role in determining the parameters of debate on issues such as Australia’s ongoing commitment to the Coalition of the Willing. Indeed, given Australia’s participation in the Orientalist project of invading, colonising and democratising Iraq, its only nationwide broadsheet has a certain responsibility to the Australian people. It is charged with the duty of not only providing coverage of the diverse and detailed debate on Australia’s involvement in Iraq, but also in moving beyond Orientalist tropes and stereotypes to provide a more accurate picture of Iraq’s long and complex history and its contemporary political landscape. In these tasks, *The Australian* has abjectly failed the Australian people, providing instead a limited discursive field in which Iraq’s democratisation is re-told according to the dominant narrative in which the Western world is the harbinger of democracy and therefore reserves the right to democratisethe despotic Middle Eastern ‘other’.
Conclusion

The military invasion and occupation of Iraq by the US-led Coalition of the Willing not only evokes the colonial period in that it continues the relationship of Western hegemony over a subjugated East, it also brings to the fore the dialectic between the West’s alleged proneness to democratisation and the supposed Oriental tendency to despotism. As has been demonstrated earlier, the discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ have a parallel history that can be traced through many of the key works that constitute the Western scholarly and literary canon. More recently, many contemporary Western journalists can be seen to have inherited this long and poignant tradition of reporting on the non-Western world and, like many Orientalist scholars and writers before them, they have failed to question pervading ideologies. Instead of offering a nuanced, robust and insightful discussion of contemporary global and domestic events pertaining to Islam and the Middle East, the Western mainstream news media have instead invoked a familiar catalogue of assumptions, images and motifs that demarcate the Orient and its peoples as ‘other’. This has resulted in a kind of Orientalist short-hand, where the long-held binary between the inherently superior West and the backward East unfolds across the pages of the press, is condensed into the sound-bytes of radio or is converted into the emotive imagery of the nightly news.

This is perhaps best evidenced by the coverage of Iraq since the Gulf War of 1991. Here, Saddam Hussein had been construed as a mad, megalomaniacal ‘Oriental despot’ in charge of an allegedly vast army made up of battle-hardened killing-machines. These discourses were reiterated during both the air attacks and the UNSCOM stand-off of the 1990s, along with allegations over Saddam’s threat to international stability given his access to WMD. This has intensified dramatically since the events of September 11 and the subsequent ‘War on Terror’. President Bush’s proclamation of an ‘Axis of Evil’ effectively homogenised the many peoples and cultures that make up the broader Oriental and Islamic world, labelling them as morally deficient or ‘evil’. This assertion, coupled with an increasing emphasis on the danger posed by Saddam Hussein via his WMD and his connection with Al-Qaeda served to justify actions such as a pre-emptive strike against a sovereign Iraq based on faulty intelligence data and a subsequent prolonged occupation. Following on, media
coverage of the series of democratic elections and the referendum that occurred in Iraq throughout 2005 has made a clear demarcation between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. Specifically, *The Australian* can be seen to have inherited these twin ‘discourses of democracy’ and its reporting is subsequently premised on the assumption that the Western world has a duty, or perhaps a right, to invade, conquer and democratise the degenerate minions of the non-Western world.

However, uncovering the lineage of the twin ‘discourses of democracy’ and detailing their impact on media coverage of Iraq’s elections is one thing, but asserting an alternative set of discourses and uncovering their genealogy is quite another. Here, the body of critical theory which developed out of the works of Karl Marx and Friedrhc Engels, including its later Post-structuralist and Post-colonial manifestations, demand that we expose and critique the presuppositions which envelop our understanding of the social world, challenge the assumptions on which they are based and investigate marginalised narratives and histories. Take for example the following passage from the last book written by Said before his death in 2004, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, “There was never a misinterpretation that could not be revised, improved, or overturned. There was never a history that could not to some degree be recovered and compassionately understood in all its suffering and accomplishment” (Said, 2004: 22).

In this vein, it is the central premise of this project that Iraq’s history, culture and politics, as they pertain to the ‘discourses of democracy’, have been profoundly misinterpreted, and that this misinterpretation must be ‘revised, improved, or overturned’. In order to do this, the ensuing chapters attempt to undermine the perceived dialectic between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ by ‘recovering and compassionately understanding’ the history of Iraq ‘in all its suffering and accomplishment’. Far from a succession of megalomaniacal kings and autocratic tyrants, this history reveals a complex and nuanced political landscape in which Iraqis have long struggled towards collective forms of government, egalitarianism and democratic reform. Indeed, as Muhsin Al-Musawi has recently argued in his *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict*,
…Iraqi culture has a story to tell…one of counter-history that shows how both tradition and history are made by the Iraqis, and for them, and how each moment in the life of Iraq offers a sign of communal identity that offsets rift. (Al-Musawi, 2006b: xvii)
Chapter 4: The Middle Eastern Origins of Democracy

In comparison with Greek and Hellenistic cultures, Mesopotamian culture at first sight, undeniably, seems alien and strange. The better one has learned to understand it, however, the more it has come to resemble our own culture. Its strange and exotic features conceal within themselves an invisible world of ideas more familiar to us, which resurfaces in new garments but largely identical in content in classical antiquity. (Parpola, 2000: 30)

The Political Significance of the Ancient Middle East

If this project is to be successful in its task of asserting an alternative history of Iraq – one that emphasises rather than ignores its democratic potential – then the analysis must begin well before the time of the ancient Greeks; a time which preceded the binary distinction between Greece and Persia, between the Occident and Orient, between Christianity and Islam, between Europe and her colonies and between ‘Western democrats’ and ‘Oriental despots’. Reaching back into the annals of the ancient past, we find that a number of early city-states began to appear across Mesopotamia22 around 3200 BC. As is now commonly understood, this era witnessed the development of some of humankind’s earliest agricultural and architectural feats, including early farming practices and animal domestication, complex irrigation networks, sophisticated artistic and structural wonders as well as a relatively complex, urbane and cosmopolitan society. Very early on, these complex societies – with their large hydraulic projects and complicated temple and city economies - prompted the development of the world’s first written language (Frankfort, 1968: 49-50; Jacobsen, 1977 [1951]-a: 129; Van de Mieroop, 1997: 36). This involved using a split reed to create the distinctive wedge-shaped marks now known as cuneiform on clay tablets (Greaves, Zaller, Cannistrano, & Murphey, 1997: 18) which evolved from early markings concerning systems of weight and measurement through to a rich body of

22 Interestingly, the term ‘Mesopotamia’, as with the term ‘demokratia’, is a composite word that is thought to have first appeared in the work of Herodotus. The word ‘Meso’ translates to mean ‘middle’ while ‘Potamia’ means ‘river’, thus making ‘the middle of the rivers’ (more commonly translated as ‘between the two rivers’) in reference to the Tigris and Euphrates.
literary texts (Oppenheim, 1967; Pritchard, 1968; Silvestro, 1965). As time passed, a plethora of overlapping and successive empires spread out across and beyond Mesopotamia, each bringing with them their own complex histories and cultures.

This rich and complex history of the ancient Middle East became politically significant even before the birth of the modern nation-state of Iraq in 1921, as various early Pan-Arab and Iraqi nationalist groups utilised its symbology in their rhetoric to encourage unity amongst the ethnically diverse population (Davis, 2005b: 13). This was to continue throughout the British occupation and the rule of the Hashemite monarchy from 1921-1958, an era which also saw the creation of the Iraqi Museum and a vibrant archaeological scene (Bernhardsson, 2005). Later, following the revolution of 1958, Mesopotamian symbology was incorporated into the Iraqi flag and other emblems of the state (Davis, 1994: 97). However, the efforts of these early political movements pale in comparison to the Baath Party who underwent an extensive and sustained cultural campaign in which the successes of the ancient world became a symbol of Iraq’s potential as a united and prosperous state. Probably the most exhaustive study of Baathist manipulation of Mesopotamian symbology and folklore is in the work of Amatzia Baram (Baram, 1983, 1991, 1994). Throughout this work, but especially in his *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Baathist Iraq, 1968-1989*, Baram details the ways in which the Baath were able to re-appropriate and manipulate Iraq’s ancient history in order to both encourage national unity and patriotism as well as to garner submission to the central ruling elite (Baram, 1991). This is perhaps best evidenced by the launch of an extensive cultural campaign under the Baath consisting of Iraqi folklore (such as music, folktales, poetry, dances and arts somehow linked to the early Near East), the funding of extensive archaeological excavations and museums as well as grandiose reconstructions (such as Saddam’s attempt to re-build Babylon in the late 1980s) and the re-enactment of ancient Mesopotamian spring festivals across the nation (Baram, 1983; 1989: 464; 1991, 1994). Baram’s examination not only emphasises the political significance of the ancient Middle East to contemporary Iraqis, but also demonstrates the degree to which the Baath understood the maintenance and legitimation of hegemony via the manipulation of cultural and social artefacts to gain the consent of the people and maintain power.
What is particularly problematic about these contemporary invocations of Mesopotamian history as a political tool is that, aside from its role in fostering some degree of national unity, it has also been used to justify the ruling hegemony of the time via a vague connection to a long line of ‘Oriental despots’. Take for example the grandiose murals and portraits that scattered Iraq in the time of Saddam Hussein in which he was frequently cast alongside infamous Mesopotamian kings such as Nebuchadnezzar in scenes riddled with ancient symbology and motifs (Al-Khalil, 1991). This is perhaps because, up until recently, the political history of the ancient Middle East had long been assumed to reveal a lineage of autocratic tyrants and the grand, menacing armies they gathered together in order to conquer and rule the region by fear, bloodshed and domination (Manglapus, 1987: 19). “In the traditional view of Historians,” as Daniel Bonneterre points out, “…Mesopotamia has stood out among the lost civilisations as a pessimistic world under the dark shadow of violence…[which] emphasised terror and ferocious actions” (Bonneterre, 1995: 11). The result of this misunderstanding, which arguably dates back to ancient Greece, “…is a simplistic book image of the ancient Near East civilisations as naturally despotic and most savagely cruel” (Bonneterre, 1995: 11).

So pervasive is this understanding of the ancient Middle East and its tendency to despotism that even journalists such as CNN’s Sandra Mackey, in a piece covering the career of Saddam Hussein in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, invoked several of the key assumptions about ‘Oriental despotism’ and its ancient origins by claiming that the “…kings of Assyria never accepted the reality that empires, like modern states, survive only through a measure of consent by the governed. Like a series of ancient Saddam Husseins, each failed to lay the basis of a durable state” (Mackey as cited in: Mirzoeff, 2005: 22-23). This perceived connection between ancient Mesopotamian kings and the reign of Saddam Hussein seems here to offer further justification for the notion that Iraq is simply antithetical to democracy. Succinctly outlining this issue, Gareth Stansfield has observed in his recent *Iraq: People, History, Politics* that

For many observers, Iraq is synonymous with dictatorship. Indeed, Iraq’s association with authoritarian and totalitarian methods of governance is so strong that it has been considered, by some commentators, that there exists some inherent trait within Iraqi society predisposing it to be managed by a
‘strong man’ heading an all-pervasive, all-controlling, state. In supporting this line of argument, evidence from Iraq’s history and pre-history is often deployed, with notable examples of authoritarian leaders and seemingly aggressive peoples being used to contextualise modern Iraq as being not unusual when the wider sweep of Iraqi and Mesopotamian history is considered. The strictures placed upon Babylonian society by Hammurabi, the martial expertise of the Assyrians and the cruelty of the Mongols have all been referred to in order to illustrate that manifestations of authoritarianism in Iraq are, in fact, the norm. (Stansfield, 2007: 75)

This understanding of the ancient Middle East as the precursor to more contemporary instances of ‘Oriental despotism’ is clearly problematic in that it serves to further entrench the Orientalist view of a backward and barbaric East. It posits that since the dawn of civilisation, the region has only known brutal tyrants and their regimes of oppression and bloodshed. It then moves on to assert that this has engendered a culture and history across the Middle East that is simply incapable of democracy. As we have seen, this received wisdom about the region is then reiterated throughout the Western scholarly canon and resurfaces in media coverage of Iraq from the Gulf War of 1991 through to the democratic developments of 2005.

However, this overly simplistic, textbook view of the ancient Middle East has come to be challenged in a recent body of literature by a range of scholars (Bernal, 1991, 1991 [1987], 2001, 2006; Goody, 1996, 2006; J. M. Hobson, 2004; Springborg, 1992). Perhaps foremost amongst this work is Martin Bernal’s ground-breaking trilogy, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (Bernal, 1991, 1991 [1987], 2006). The central premise of this work is that the strength of Eurocentrism and anti-Semitism in Europe during the first half of the 19th century led to the development of what Bernal terms the ‘Aryan Model’ of history in which the achievements of ancient Greece came to be seen as distinct and superior from the various Asiatic empires that preceded or paralleled it (such as those of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Phoenicia). This model replaced the much older ‘Ancient Model’ which was not only held by the Greeks themselves, but also acknowledged that the Egyptians and Phoenicians had settled Greece around 1500 BC and that the broader Orient had continued to make a significant contribution to the birth of Western civilization (Bernal, 1991: 1-60; 1991 [1987]: 1-21). Interestingly, Bernal identifies that the origins of this ‘Aryan Model’ of history was evident in the works of many of
the scholars already discussed in relation to their contribution to the discourse of ‘Oriental despotism’. For example, Bernal rightly points out that the young Marx inherited Orientalist notions from Hegel, the two of them believing not only in the uniqueness and superiority of Western civilisation via its earliest beginnings in ancient Greece, but also that the early Asiatic empires which had preceded Greece amounted to little more than the infancy of human development (Bernal, 1991 [1987]: 289, 294-296). To emphasize the implicit racism and Eurocentrism evident in the works of these authors and the broader ‘Aryan Model’, Bernal frequently acknowledges the contribution made by Said who demonstrated that “…Orientalism at a fundamental level and from the beginning has combined interest in Asian societies with a contempt for them and the conviction that ‘Orientals’ were unfit to analyse and arrange their own cultures” (Bernal, 1991 [1987]: 235).

These themes are further explored by Patricia Springborg in her Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince in which she utilises “…the method of reverse discourse” and “…historical criticism” in order to “…deconstruct” (Springborg, 1992: 4-6) the foundational myths that underpin our conception of the dialectic between the politics of the Occident and the Orient. In ways not at all dissimilar to Bernal’s “…brilliantly controversial work” (Springborg, 1992: 5), Springborg is on the one hand highly critical of the presuppositions about the Orient evident in the works of scholars such as Marx and Gramsci (Springborg, 1992: 9-11, 19-20), while on the other hand she utilises the concepts and ideas outlined by later critical theorists such as Foucault to undertake her exhaustive and detailed analysis (Springborg, 1992: 6, 287-288). Indeed, Springborg’s entire study is an exercise in critical theory, a thorough investigation and problematisation of not only the roots of the distinctions between East and West as it occurred in ancient Greece but also the ways in which more modern European scholarship has reinforced and legitimated this distinction.

Similarly, in The East in the West and The Theft of History (Goody, 1996, 2006) Jack Goody has pointed out that the Western scholarly canon has

…attempted to draw lines that not only overemphasized and deepened historically the differences…between the two parts of the Eurasian landmass, but also…those lines often overlooked the common heritage of the major
societies of that region in the great Near Eastern civilisations. (Goody, 1996: 5)

As Goody goes on to point out, this has left us with a crude and overly simplistic model of the social sciences, premised upon “…binary comparisons” (Goody, 1996: 10) between the triumphs of Western civilisation and the pitfalls of the East, as opposed to a model which pays more specific attention to which “…factors enabled the East to advance at one period and in one sphere and the West in others” (Goody, 1996: 238). For his part, Goody attempts to highlight the nuanced contribution of both East and West to rationality, commerce and the politics of the family structure (Goody, 1996) as well as the European appropriation of what he refers to as broader ‘human values’ like humanism, secularization, individualism, equality, freedom, charity and even romantic love (Goody, 2006). Beyond these examples, Goody pays particular attention to the Europeanization of democracy in *The Theft of History*, arguing that

The notion that democracy only emerged as a feature of modern, indeed western, societies is a gross simplification as is the attribution of its origin to the Greek city-states...many early political systems, including very simple ones, embodied consultative procedures designed to determine the will of the people. In a general sense the ‘value’ of democracy, though sometimes held in abeyance, was frequently, if not always, present in earlier societies and specifically emerged in the context of opposition to authoritarian rule. (Goody, 2006: 256)

In his contribution, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*, John Hobson seeks to build upon the pioneering work of his predecessors to examine the ways in which Western civilization not only borrowed extensively from the Orient in its formation but also then appropriated Eastern resources (such as land, labor and markets) throughout the expansionism of the colonial period (J. M. Hobson, 2004). Here, Hobson’s study can be seen as a thorough investigation into the “…binary opposites” that divide the West from the rest, it traces the construction of both “…Eurocentric discourse” and “…British imperial discourse”, concerning itself with their “…deconstruction” (J. M. Hobson, 2004: 6, 8, 11, 224). Indeed, Hobson lays down the methodological framework in which he intends to conduct his analysis by discussing the importance of Said’s work in coming to terms with the origins of Eurocentric / Orientalist ideologies (J. M. Hobson, 2004: 7-11, 108, 222-239, 322).
He notes the entrenched nature of Orientalism within the Western scholarly canon and the ways in which it “…constructs a permanent image of the superior West (the ‘Self’) which is defined negatively against the no less imaginary ‘Other’ – the backward and inferior East” (J. M. Hobson, 2004: 7). More poignantly, Hobson discusses the historical divide between the ‘discourses of democracy’ being examined here, arguing that they have historically constructed for us an image in which “…Europe was the birthplace of democracy and hence the carrier of economic and political progress, while Asia was dismissed as the home of despotism and hence the victim of economic stagnation” (J. M. Hobson, 2004: 224).

However, despite the significance of this emerging body of work and its challenge to the received wisdoms which underpin the common misconception of the ancient Near East as inherently despotic, none23 of these studies have attempted to undermine the binary opposition of the ‘Western democrat’ and the ‘Oriental despot’ via a thorough analysis of the Middle Eastern origins of democracy. In order to address this lacuna, this chapter seeks to examine the results of the archaeological excavations and anthropological work that were carried out across the region throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which have begun to uncover a very different image of the processes of power and authority in the ancient Middle East. This has provided an understanding that the history of modern democracy, which is usually understood to have begun around 500 BC in Greece, can be traced further back to early Mesopotamia. As is illustrated in some detail below, this work has therefore inverted the traditional dialectic between the dual ‘discourses of democracy’ to instead provide evidence that

When the Mesopotamian state first emerged in the early periods, royal power did not play an important role and only many centuries later did it become despotic. Originally kings were merely the first among equals and were obliged by laws or by long social traditions to respect the rights of the various groups of the population. In addition, royal power was restricted by popular

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23 It should be noted here that Patricia Springborg does pay very brief attention to the democratic and egalitarian systems of governance that emerged in the ancient Near East. However, she does not go into detail and neither does she utilise the ancient politics of the region as a significant challenge to the long held distinction between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ (Springborg, 1992: 8).

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assemblies which sometimes had a real and even decisive influence and which made citizens proud of their civil rights. (Dandamayev, 1995: 23)
‘Primitive Democracy’ and the Ancient Middle East

According to renowned Assyriologist Thorkild Jacobsen, the beginning of the crystallisation of Mesopotamian civilization at around the middle of the fourth millennium BC, brought with it “…the controlling framework within which Mesopotamia is to live its life, formulate its deepest questions, evaluate itself and evaluate the universe, for ages to come” (Jacobsen, 1977 [1951]-a: 128). Evidence for such advanced philosophical thought is found in the early myths and legends of ancient Mesopotamia, where – in the ethereal plane of the gods we see the inner functioning of the Ordained Assembly of the Great Gods. This assembly was made up of 50 gods and goddesses24 in total and was the highest authority in the universe. As Min Suc Kee notes, this body served as “…a vital decision-making agency responsible for juridical judgements” (Kee, 2007: 259, n1), where the gods would listen and debate until the pros and cons of each issue were clarified and a virtual consensus emerged (Jacobsen, 1977 [1951]-a: 150). When the council reached a full agreement, the seven senior gods would announce the final verdict and each of the members would voice their approval with a ‘Let it be’ (Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 138). This unified command meant that the will of the assembly had become divine law. While this body largely served as the judicial court of the universe, passing judgement on the wrongdoings of gods and humans alike, the assembly was also vested with the authority to elect and depose the kings of both the divine and earthly realms (Jacobsen, 1976: 86-87; Mullen, 1980). One very specific example can be found in the myth of creation, Enuma Elish (see the Prelude), where the gods form such an assembly in order to elect Lord Marduk as their leader or ‘champion of the gods’ in order that he might defeat their powerful enemy, Tiamet, the primal mother (Frankfort, 1978 [1948]: 234-237; Jacobsen, 1976: 165-191; Roux, 1980: 109).

In much of his work, Jacobsen stated that such myths are a form of allegory whereby ancient humankind projected the world around them onto the realm of the gods (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943], 1970 [1957], 1976, 1977 [1951]-a, 1977 [1951]-b). This notion of myth is reinforced in the introduction to The Intellectual Adventure of

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24 There is in fact some evidence to suggest that both genders played an active role in the deliberations of the gods (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 164; Saggs, 2004: 131; Wolf, 1947: 100).
Ancient Man, entitled ‘Myth and Reality’, where Henri Frankfort and H. A. Frankfort argue that myth “…is nothing less than a carefully chosen cloak for abstract thought. The imagery is inseparable from the thought. It represents the form in which the experience has become conscious” (Frankfort & Frankfort, 1977: 7). In this way, the myths come to reveal more than the political machinations of the council of the great gods; at the very least they indicate just how long the will to democracy has been alive in human society. Beyond this, many have speculated that these myths also reveal the actual systems whereby ancient humankind governed itself. The general consensus is that in order for the people of ancient Mesopotamia to have attributed such complex democratic systems to their gods, they must have experienced analogous assemblies themselves (Easton, 1970: 82-83; Hallo & Simpson, 1971: 39; J. P. Schultz, 1981: 146; Wolf, 1947: 101).

To describe these earthly versions of the divine assemblies, Jacobsen coined the term ‘Primitive Democracy’ (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]). This political mechanism functioned more like a classical, participatory than a modern, representative form of democracy in the sense that it was

…a form of government in which internal sovereignty resides in a large proportion of the governed, namely in all free adult male citizens without distinction of fortune or class. That sovereignty resides in these citizens implies that major decisions – such as the decision to undertake a war - are made with their consent, that these citizens constitute the supreme judicial authority in the state, and also that rulers and magistrates obtain their positions with, and ultimately derive their power from, that same consent. (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 157)

Jacobsen also goes on to justify his use of the word ‘primitive’ to describe this early form of democracy, by stating that “…the various functions of government are as yet little specialized, the power structure is loose, and the machinery for social coordination by means of power is as yet imperfectly developed” (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 157).

From what we know of these early days in Mesopotamian history, Primitive Democracy seems to have functioned much like the aforementioned divine assembly. Although it was called together to make decisions regarding matters as diverse as
irrigation projects, trade missions, land surveying, administrative issues and to judge the serious offences of citizens, it was primarily assembled when the security of the city-state was under threat (Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 138; Saggs, 2004: 131). This formed the nucleus of the city-state’s municipal administration and allowed the collective resources of the community to be pooled in order to reach consensus for concerted action (Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 138; Oppenheim, 1964: 114; J. P. Schultz, 1981: 144). The council further mirrored that of the gods by functioning as a bicameral assembly in that it was divided between “…an upper house of ‘elders’ and a lower house of ‘men’” (Kramer, 1963: 74). Although the elder men or ‘fathers’ seem to have held most of the power (Frankfort, 1978 [1948]: 215), some research suggests that these assemblies also resembled those of the gods in the fact that, “…women as well as men took part in decision-making – sometimes with a dominating role” (Saggs, 2004: 30). During an assembly each of the citizens had the right to express their opinion and discussion would continue until a virtual unanimity was reached and the final decisions were then announced by the elders. Just as the gods elected Marduk their king when under threat from Tiamet, so too did the early city-states of Mesopotamia convene for the specific purpose of electing a king when the security of the city-state was under jeopardy, usually from threat of attack by a neighbour (J. P. Schultz, 1981: 144-145). Although this meant that the new king became the supreme leader of the people and was able to “…promulgate and carry into effect new law” (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 158), the appointment was to be held for a limited term by each incumbent and expired when the pending emergency had been resolved (Frankfort, 1978 [1948]: 215; Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 167; 1970 [1957]: 139; 1977 [1951]-a: 129).

Fortunately, however, the arguably tenuous notion that earthly political processes were projected onto the realm of the gods and became myth is not the only evidence we have to support the view that Primitive Democracy existed in ancient Mesopotamia. Since the late nineteenth and through the twentieth century, there have been numerous archaeological studies in the ancient Mesopotamian region, uncovering a fund of information about the early city-states and later empires. Some of the earliest examples from amongst this body of data concern the extended epic tales which “…reflect a period a century or two later than the myths, probably about 2800-2700 BC” (Saggs, 2004: 131). These epics differ substantially from the earlier
myths in that they centre “…around a human or semi-human hero, [such as] Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh, etc. rather than around a god” (Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 143).

The most famous of these ancient Mesopotamian epics is that of Gilgamesh (Jacobsen, 1976: 193-219; Storm, 2003: 62-99) which dates from around 2800 BC. Uruk, the city of which Gilgamesh is ruler, is under threat from the armies of Kish. Instead of commanding the armies according to his will, Gilgamesh consults the bicameral congress of the city, which are striking in their similarity to those already discussed. First, he consults with the conservative council of the elders who appear to have been made up of the heads of the powerful families within the state, who advise Gilgamesh against fighting the armies of Kish (Evans, 1958a: 11). However, Gilgamesh has the authority to veto their decision and appeal to a second assembly of all arms-bearing men (Braude, 2003: 7; Kramer, 1959: 29-31). This assembly decides to fight and Gilgamesh – despite the advice of the elders – goes into battle for the freedom and liberty of Uruk. In the epic of Gilgamesh, we see, as Jacobsen concludes,

…a state in which the ruler must lay his proposals before the people, first the elders, then the assembly of the townsmen, and obtain their consent, before he can act. In other words, the assembly appears to be the ultimate political authority. (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 163)

Although there can be no doubt that the assemblies held at Uruk during the time of Gilgamesh were less advanced than those held in later Greece or Rome, they do problematise both ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ in so far as they not only reveal a sophisticated political structure, but also a truly “…urban civilisation with a considerable period of settled life behind it” (Evans, 1958a: 11). In fact, as Samuel Noah Kramer points out, the situation that brought about the convening of Uruk’s bicameral assemblies is not dissimilar to the one that ancient Greece faced some 2400 years later (Kramer, 1959: 30-31). Sumer, like Greece, was made up of a number of independent city-states, each of them vying for power and supremacy over the region and its people. In a reversal of the veto power that the assembly of the

25 Although some evidence suggests that the tablets on which the story is written date from a period much later than when the events took place (Kramer, 1959: 3).
arms-bearing men had over the elders in Uruk, the Spartan elders (a council of twenty-eight men, all over sixty years of age) had the power to overrule any ‘crooked decree’ that was passed by the popular assembly (Evans, 1958a: 4). Indeed, further parallels can be drawn between the epic of Gilgamesh and the deliberative practices of the Roman Republic in the prelude to their war against Carthage (around 265 BC). Here, the senate refused to authorise the war and therefore the consuls summoned the Comitia Centuriata, or military assembly, which gave the final approval for war (Easton, 1970: 83 n1).

Over time, however, the deliberative and direct forms of democracy revealed by epics such as Gilgamesh began to fade for several different reasons. Firstly, the city-states of the ancient Near East grew in terms of both population and geographical size. This meant that not only was it difficult for all citizens to physically reach the assembly on a regular basis, but it also became harder for the people to come to consensus (Frankfort, 1978 [1948]: 215; Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 146). With this increase in population came a second factor in the dissolution of democracy across Mesopotamia: a corresponding increase in battles to determine control of key irrigated land and trade routes (Saggs, 2004: 131). Unfortunately, this occasional warfare quickly descended into a bloody and bitter state of cyclical violence (Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 143). This meant that military leadership was urgent and needed to be relatively consistent in order to maintain the necessary strategies and defences (Frankfort, 1978 [1948]: 218; Kramer, 1963: 74; Saggs, 2004: 131-132). In this way, those who were elected to kingship became disinclined to abdicate their position (Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 142; Saggs, 2004: 132; J. P. Schultz, 1981: 145). Not only was the king the supreme commander of the military, the sole creator of new laws and very wealthy as the administrator of the temple, but he was also too often the victim of his own megalomaniacal lust, “…striving to become the one who would unite all of southern Mesopotamia into a single centralized state under a single ruling hand – his own” (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 158). Finally, the kings began to “…seek a more independent and more stable basis for their power than that of popular favour and election in the popular assembly; divine favour and election were stressed instead” (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 158).
Ironically, the kings were therefore able to forego the democratic process here on earth by claiming that they had been elected by the auspicious Council of the Gods. This meant that for the first time, the kings were directly accountable to the gods, not to their fellow citizens, thus allowing the ascension of perhaps the first ‘Oriental despots’ in Mesopotamia. In this way, kingship developed from the temporary role of an everyday citizen, to the more familiar system whereby a particular blood lineage has the blessing of the divine (Kramer, 1963: 74). This model was gradually adopted across Mesopotamia, giving birth to vast empires such as that of the Assyrians, who arguably laid the foundations for first the Persian, and later the Hellenistic and Roman empires (Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 156).

Once again however, democracy – in one guise or another – seems to have survived this early political shift towards despotism. Although there was no doubting that the king held the supreme authority of the state, there are a number of examples whereby the long tradition of assemblies continued throughout Mesopotamia and further abroad. One such example is the extended kingdom of Ebla, the remains of which can be found today in north-western Syria. Excavations in 1976 revealed astonishing details about this kingdom of some 250,000 people, which had flourished in the East around 2500 BC (Bermant & Weitzman, 1979; Matthiae, 1980). The “…15,000 clay tablets or fragments written in Sumerian cuneiform” that were unearthed by archaeologists, exposed a sophisticated political culture involving some 11,000 public servants (Manglapus, 2004). According to their law, the king of Ebla was “…elected for a seven-year term and shared power with a council of elders” (Manglapus, 2004). Then, after serving his first term, the incumbent was entitled to run for a second and, in the event that he was not re-elected to office, the former king was able to retire on a state pension!

Geographically closer to the early developments of Mesopotamia already discussed, the people of Kish (very near to ancient Babylon) held a general election to nominate their king around 2300 BC. This particular king even took the “…throne-name Iphur-kish (‘Kish assembled’) to emphasise the popular basis of his rule” (Saggs, 2004: 132) (see also: Frankfort, 1978 [1948]: 218). At around the same time, the people of Lagash (which is further south, closer to the coastline of lower Mesopotamia) were embroiled in an early struggle against the upsurge of despotic regimes. It seems as if
the power of the throne had seduced the authorities of Lagash to the point of bloodthirsty megalomania and that they were prepared to deny their citizens the basic political, social and economic freedoms that one generally expects from a free state. It is here in Lagash, according to Kramer, that we see a “…bitter struggle for power between the temple and the palace – the ‘church’ and the ‘state’ – with the citizens of Lagash taking the side of the temple” (Kramer, 1963: 79). In Early Dynastic states such as Lagash, the temple community wielded enormous political power and “…showed a strongly democratic character” (Frankfort, 1978 [1948]: 221). Not only were all citizens of the state – irrespective of their status or wealth – expected to contribute their labour to the maintenance and harvest of temple land, but the authorities of the temple fulfilled a vital watchdog function over the government, monitoring instances of corruption and other abuses of power (Frankfort, 1978 [1948]: 221-223). The extent of the temples’ role in balancing the authority of the state is evident by the fact that it both generated and advocated resistance amongst the people of Lagash towards state-imposed terror and despotism. So significant was this movement that it is here we find some of the earliest evidence of collective political action against oppressive systems of power and the first recorded use of the word ‘freedom’ (Kramer, 1963: 79).

In the central Babylonian plain, approximately half-way between Lagash in the south and Kish in the north, the people of Nippur had long been familiar with the practises of Primitive Democracy. It was here, according to Jacobsen, that the various rulers of the city-states of Mesopotamia had met in assemblies similar to those already discussed for the purpose of debating and resolving broader regional issues and conflicts as well as the election of a temporary king to rule over the collective states under the confederacy known as the ‘Kengir League’27 (Jacobsen, 1970 [1957]: 139-140). Here, the leaders of early Mesopotamia demonstrate an extraordinarily advanced political culture where the differences and disputes between the various city-states were either resolved or rendered superfluous via the extensive debate and deliberation of the various kings, emissaries and league officials. While it would seem that the political climate of Nippur might tempt the more ambitious members of the society to overthrow such isonomous models of governance, the city managed to

27 ‘Kengir’ is the Sumerian word for the Mesopotamian region.
preserve its democratic tendencies well into the Ur III period (around 2150-2000 BC). While many of Nippur’s neighbours had since witnessed the rise of a centralised authority under the blood-line of a particular king, Nippur remained “…governed by a heterogenous collective, the assembly of Nippur citizens, the governor (Ensi) of the city, and the highest priests of the Enlil and Ninurta temples” (Leick, 2001: 159).

Similarly, in the far north of Mesopotamian, the citizens of Sippar (some 20 kilometres south of modern Baghdad) managed to retain models of collective governance until surprisingly late periods. For example, from approximately 1890-1590 BC, the city appears to have been governed by a bicameral assembly made up of an upper house of nobility and a lower house of commoners (Oppenheim, 1969: 9-10). Here, the upper house consisted of the more senior, qualified and wealthy members of the society who rotated leadership of the various magisterial and administrative positions on an annual basis. Unfortunately, as the city of Sippar gradually came under the jurisdiction of the central Babylonian government, the elite citizens who made up the upper house were infiltrated by royally appointed officials (Leick, 2001: 176). Here, the emphasis shifted further away from the original impetus of serving the citizens towards the role of a mediating body between the authority of the king and the subjugation of Sippar. However, even in this situation, the upper house retained its judicial role and presided over particular cases that required a higher body to exact justice (Leick, 2001: 176).

More generally, the grand empires of the time – namely, the Babylonian, the Assyrian and the Egyptian – also appear to have had democratic tendencies despite the common misconception that they were the very epitome of ‘Oriental despotism’. The Babylonian kings, for example, would often delegate the judicial duty of settling minor disputes to the “…town mayor and town elders” (Manglapus, 2004). However, the more important and complex cases were brought before the whole town in the form of an assembly which tried both civil and criminal cases and had the power to issue the death sentence, with their final decision being “…ceremonially confirmed by the king” (Manglapus, 2004). As Jacobsen points out, this judicial system is democratic in nature, with the major decisions over right and wrong or life and death vested in the assembly, a forum open to the entire community of citizens (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 159-163).
The population of the Assyrian capital, Ashur, were able to congregate in an assembly which reached agreement under the guidance of the more senior, wealthy and influential members of the community. Knowing all too well the popularity and power of the elders to influence the wider community of citizens, the kings of Assyria were “…always careful not to offend their high administrative officials, whose loyalty to the dynasty they at times had to secure by oaths and agreements” (Oppenheim, 1964: 103). When differences of opinion between the king and the elders did occur, they “…were quite ready to revolt against the king if they did not approve of his policies” (Oppenheim, 1964: 103). In particularly serious matters, the elders would convene an assembly of the free citizens and work with them in writing a letter addressed to the king (Oppenheim, 1964: 12). In this way, the citizens of Ashur were able to fight for exemptions and privileges, “…make legal decisions, sell real estate within the city that had no private owner, and assume corporate responsibility in cases of murder or robbery committed even outside the city, within a specified distance” (Oppenheim, 1964: 12).

In addition, the power of the Assyrian elders can be seen in the fact that the king was not able to directly appoint his own successor, but instead he nominated a potential heir who was then subject to the consent of the council (Driver & Miles, 1935; Oppenheim, 1964: 103). More broadly, the power of the state was also mitigated by a thriving private sector as the merchants of the Assyrian empire grew in wealth and, subsequently, in influence. The great merchant families appear to have convened in a building commonly known as the ‘city house’ where they “…made decisions on commercial policy, fixed the rates of export tax…acted as a diplomatic body…and controlled relations with Anatolian rulers on whose cooperation and protection the caravans and resident merchants relied” (Leick, 2001: 203). From among this body of wealthy merchants, one member was chosen by lot annually to serve as the chairman of the board. This individual was conferred with the highest honours underneath the authority of the king and “…was responsible for public works, for overseeing the judiciary, and took a leading part in the city’s religious and ceremonial rites” (Leick, 2001: 203).
Speaking generally about the democratic developments across Mesopotamia during the time of the Babylonian and Assyrian empires, Yves Schemeil notes that “…historical documents describe assemblies of citizens deliberating for days, each session including new members” (Schemeil, 2000: 104). It appears that due to the size of the community it was often hard to garner consensus and therefore the circle of delegates became wider as deliberations continued, often involving commoners, teenagers and women. At every stage, the assemblies appear to have been lively places, with participants openly pointing out the contradictions and inconsistencies in their opponents’ arguments. When each of the participants had been given a chance to state their case at least once, the proceedings ended before debate became cyclical, emotional or counter-productive. When the time came for the citizens to vote, they did so by either kneeling or walking to the speaker to approve or by sitting to disapprove (Larsen, 1976: 323; Moran, 1992: 401-402, n24). Although “…majority votes were often sought and reached…it was always possible that minority views would raise the problem again if its legal solution was a failure” (Schemeil, 2000: 104). Similar to the Ordained Assembly of the Great Gods, the proceedings of these later assemblies were concluded by the chair sternly pronouncing ‘Let it be’.

As with Babylon and Assyria, the ancient Egyptian empire is often assumed to be the epitome of ‘Oriental despotism’. Instead, ancient Egypt was governed by a pyramid of councils who

…convened on the palace stairs, a place where all opinions expressed by courtiers, civil servants, and members of the king’s inner circle, all of whom met separately at the building’s four corners, could be easily conveyed and explained to the Pharaoh. (Schemeil, 2000: 104)

The individual charged with the rather prestigious but onerous task of liaising between the various councils and the Pharaoh was known as the ‘Vizier’. Originally, this position was occupied by a prince of royal blood (Frankfort, 1968: 84), but was gradually appointed to a nobleman of considerable ability who became the head of every governmental department and therefore the most powerful officer of the state (Frankfort, 1968: 85; Gardiner, 2004: 101). Essentially the role of the Vizier included “…not only a daily report to his sovereign on the state of the nation but also the delivering of judgements in his audience hall, [and] the receiving and issuing of
instructions to the various branches of central government” (Aldred, 1998: 196). This central government included several different departments (Frankfort, 1968: 85), such as the Treasury and the Ministry for Agriculture, while the Vizier himself was supported by “…a legion of scribes, stewards, runners and guards” (Aldred, 1998: 196). Having strict guidelines to follow, a Vizier would call into session a ‘hearing’ or ‘council of the mat’ made up of the leaders of these various departments from across the empire (Van den Boorn, 1988: 47). During this council of the elite, the Vizier would sit with his numerous advisors, curators and scribes by his side. In front of him were scrolls filled with the laws of Egypt (Schemeil, 2000: 113) and beyond them were the forty senior officials, each of whom was to be heard in due course (the higher ranking officials spoke first, followed by those of lesser importance) (Van den Boorn, 1988: 13). Although usually occupied by well educated men, government positions were not limited to those of a particular bloodline, class or colour but were filled by promising young men who had been specifically groomed for the role (Frankfort, 1968: 85, 90). Indeed, the expectations on these men were enormous, with sentences of capital punishment dealt out to any member of the district council found to be practising injustices (Aldred, 1998: 197).

In such assemblies, the Vizier “…presided over important civil cases referred to him from lower courts; he dealt with questions of land tenure and the witnessing of wills; and he considered criminal cases requiring heavy sentences” (Aldred, 1998: 196). However, even this council of the elite could not bring new laws into effect without them being duly debated and deliberated across a variety of separate councils and assemblies before garnering either the approval or denial of the Vizier (Schemeil, 2000: 113). As Schemeil also notes, such systems were moreover employed for the discussion of military campaigns which were “…full of lively debate on strategy, [and]…sometime[s] resulted in the amendment of a royal view, as in Tuthmosis III’s and Ramses II’s expedition to Syria” (Schemeil, 2000: 104). Beyond this, the various separate councils appear to have wielded considerable power over the day-to-day agricultural affairs of their individual regions. Interestingly, an individual citizen could appeal directly to the Vizier regarding decisions made by a council on rural affairs. The Vizier would then consult with the relevant officials and usually suspend the verdict so that it could be reconsidered for a designated period of time before the final decision was put into action (Van den Boorn, 1988: 168). Although this is not
democracy in the pure sense of direct participation in decision making, it certainly provides avenues through which the common Egyptian could ‘participate’ in regional politics (Van den Boorn, 1988: 170-171). In addition, this kind of sophisticated appeal process undermines notions of ‘Oriental despotism’ to instead reveal an egalitarian bureaucracy concerned with the individual rights of citizens and an aversion to corruption.

Apart from these examples where democratic practices formed part of the centralised authority of the major empires of the ancient Near East, one also finds examples from across their colonies. Kanesh, one of the outlying merchant colonies of the Assyrian empire, serves as a near perfect case study. With archaeologists uncovering some 16,000 cuneiform tablets, a picture of Kanesh’s thriving economic and trade systems began to emerge (Leick, 2001: 199). Located today in Turkey’s Cappadocia region, Kanesh flourished from around 2000-1800 BC (Saggs, 2004: 416) with evidence suggesting that a number of Assyrians moved there, purchased land and settled for long periods. Here, Geoffrey Evans finds parallels between the governmental machinations employed in Kanesh, and those used by the people of Uruk during the time of Gilgamesh – some 800-1000 years earlier (Evans, 1958a). Although he rightly points out that there were a number of significant changes, he does go on to state that “…the assemblies of Kanesh remain of the first importance historically. They possess features similar to the earlier ones, and we possess a little more information about the manner in which they operated” (Evans, 1958a: 4).

It appears that because these remote and generally wealthy citizens of the Assyrian empire preferred their governance to be closer to home, they were able to retain significant autonomy until surprisingly late periods. The more successful and influential among them formed the council of the elders and there can be no doubt that oligarchic and expedient tendencies emerged within the group. Although they remained the subjects of the king and therefore subscribed to his law, the elders presided over many domestic issues, including both political and judicial decision making (Evans, 1958a: 3; Manglapus, 2004). In these assemblies, there appear to have been rather advanced forms of voting whereby the congregation would divide into three groups and each group would deliberate and vote independently before reconvening in a plenary where the final votes were counted (Larsen, 1976: 319-323;
Schemeil, 2000: 104). However, when the elders failed to agree, matters were brought before the full assembly of all adult males (Evans, 1958a: 9, 11), which was “… called into session by a clerk at the bidding of a majority of [the elders]” (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]: 159). There is also evidence to suggest that once this assembly had convened, the citizenry of Kanesh also voted, although perhaps in a far less sophisticated manner. What is certain is that beyond the deliberations of the assembly was a civic culture and a complex bureaucracy that extended out into the social world of the ancient Middle East where citizens further discussed and debated social issues, often forming loose political alliances (Larsen, 1976: 161-170) (see also the contributions in: Gibson & Biggs, 1987). Although Evans is initially reluctant to cite these practices as democratic (Evans, 1958a), in an addendum published later the same year he concedes that the various political procedures practised in Kanesh “…strongly suggest a liberal and democratic spirit among this small group of local dignitaries. In such an atmosphere, democratic procedures within the group might easily arise” (Evans, 1958b: 114-115).

En route between Ashur and Kanesh, caravans of traders, individual travellers and the messengers of the Assyrian empire passed through Mari (Saggs, 2004: 218). A much smaller empire that came to prosperity after the turn of the second millennium BC, Mari dominated that part of the western Euphrates that now falls just inside Syria’s modern border with Iraq (the city of Mari is now known as Tell Hariri) (Saggs, 2004: 63-64). The ancient city of Mari was excavated by French archaeologists from 1933 onwards uncovering, amongst other things, “…an archive of over twenty thousand cuneiform tablets, mainly administrative and economic documents and letters” (Saggs, 2004: 64). It is these clay tablets that Daniel Fleming has claimed provide the “…ideal resource for the study of many aspects of ancient political life” (Fleming, 2004: 19). In Mari, as in Kanesh, there seem to have been few who would openly and directly challenge the authority of the king. However, Mari kingship was not despotic, but instead “…actual power seems to be a matter of constant negotiation, as he [the king] engages a panoply of traditional leaderships, each with its own constituencies and assumed prerogatives” (Fleming, 2004: xv). Through the immense resource uncovered at Mari, it is possible to trace the communicative patterns between and across a broad spectrum of sites of power, many full of both opinion and advice as well as appeals for consensus (Fleming, 2004: 166, 228). In this way, collective forms
of governance appear to have held some influence over the state and, reminiscent of both the myth of Enuma Elish and the epic of Gilgamesh, “...they appear most prominently in decisions of war and peace” (Fleming, 2004: 223).

The reason for Mari’s dispersed power structure was due to the fact that it was a rather loose collective of various nomadic, tribal and village peoples. This resulted in a number of chiefs, officials, elders, assemblies and governors who vied for power and influence under the authority of the king (Saggs, 2004: 191). Fleming studied in detail the small Mari towns of Tuttal, Imar and Urgish, concluding that collective forms of governance were most prominent in such small communities and that it is likely to have been this way since the third millennium BC (Fleming, 2004: 223, 234). Although collective decision making appears to have occurred mostly in smaller groups of the elite, there were occasions where “…both the pastoralists of the steppe and the residents of towns…gather[ed], not only to receive word from an outside king but even to speak for the group” (Fleming, 2004: 234). Ultimately, these antediluvian governmental systems evolved from simple tribal gatherings to incorporate decision-making aspects and wield influence over the higher authority of the king (Fleming, 2004: 207). It is therefore conceivable that a king wanting to genuinely unite this heterogeneous region would encourage such collective decision making and accept the inherent challenges of a kingdom consisting of various systems and sites of power.

Fleming, like Evans (see above discussion of Kanesh), is reluctant to use the nomenclature of democracy to describe the political machinations of the Mari. Instead, he prefers the anthropological terminology of ‘corporate polity’ (Fleming, 2004: 174-180, 222-228) as opposed to Primitive Democracy which has been used by and since Jacobsen (Jacobsen, 1970 [1943]). Essentially, Fleming’s reluctance stems from his concern that the term ‘democracy’ may serve as a “…barrier to understanding the diverse Near Eastern tradition of group-oriented decision making that may somehow stand behind the remarkable development of Athens” (Fleming, 2004: 16). Beyond his concern over the loose application of the term ‘democracy’, Fleming also herein reveals that the Athenian polis is not without precedent. While it is commonly assumed that ‘Western democracy’ arose triumphantly out of a dark history of despotic rule, cases such as the Mari and other Mesopotamian examples
suggest a cross-section of egalitarian and collective traditions spread over the wider region that cannot have avoided impacting upon later developments.

Another example of the complex matrix that is early Middle Eastern politics can be found among the Hittites. These Anatolian peoples formed their state and later empire out of Hattusas and ruled from approximately 1600-1200 BC. This burgeoning and lively city was just north of the former merchant colony of the Assyrian empire, Kanesh (Gurney, 2004 [1952]: 15). The Hittite empire, much like the many examples discussed above, developed a number of sophisticated diplomatic and bureaucratic bodies as is evidenced by the uncovering of an abundance of treaties, diplomatic texts, indictments, edicts and letters (Beckman, 1999 [1995]). Here, power rested across a complex web of parochial townships and villages, each with their own loose systems of collective governance, usually under the guidance of a council of elders who would “…normally deal with local administration and in particular with the settlement of disputes” (Gurney, 2004 [1952]: 70).

As the Hittites gradually moved from these loose satellites of governance towards a central authority under the king, the earlier systems of power would have had little choice but to streamline and offer their submission to the new ruler. This does not mean that the elders forfeited their power in any way, but rather that the position of king did not equate to absolute control. In fact, O. R. Gurney proposes that the Hittite monarchy was originally elective, citing one of the earliest recorded events in the history of Hattusas which tells of the elders dissatisfaction with King Labernas and their nomination of a rival king to replace him (Gurney, 2004 [1952]: 61). The struggle between the elders and the king seems to have resurfaced many times, particularly when a king passed away and his heir had been appointed without the legal approval of the elders, therefore rendering the appointment invalid28.

Beyond the power of the elders, a more general assembly seems to have convened irregularly throughout Hittite history. Perhaps because this council was made up of the higher echelons of the state’s bureaucracy, it appears to have wielded enormous

28 It should be duly noted here that Gary Beckman disagrees with this conclusion, arguing that the Hittite elders did not have the right to elect or negate the power of their king (Beckman, 1982: 442).
power as a judicial body (Beckman, 1982: 442). Much like the Babylonian assemblies before them, these gatherings at Hattusas dealt with the more complex cases and had the power to convict even the most influential citizens (including the king) and condemn the guilty to death (Gurney, 2004 [1952]: 66-67). As is to be expected however, the kings gradually set about establishing hereditary succession as the principal way of garnering authority against this backdrop of consensus and collective action (Gurney, 2004 [1952]: 61-62). Although the nobility remained and the general assemblies of the bureaucracy still convened to preside over important cases (Beckman, 1982: 441; Gurney, 2004 [1952]: 67), the authority of the king was not subject to the election or approval of the elders, eventually leading to a succession of despotic dynasties in Hattusas.

Examples of Primitive Democracy can also be found amongst the ancient Israelites. Here, as E. Theodore Mullen Jnr. has illustrated, there is a clear lineage between the ancient Mesopotamian postulations regarding the Assembly of the Gods and those found in early Canaanite and Hebrew literature (Mullen, 1980). Thus, in methods paralleling earlier Sumerian developments, the book of ‘Exodus’ reveals that Israelite leaders such as Moses were nominated via a mandate direct from God which was confirmed by the assembly of elders (J. P. Schultz, 1981: 146-148). Later, as C. Umhau Wolf demonstrates, various councils and bodies of elders are evident throughout several of the key books of the Old Testament29, an era which witnessed the emergence of the Judges’ authority (around 1400-1020 BC), the eventual ascendency of the Hebrew monarchy under the leadership of Saul, David and Solomon (1020-931 BC) and, later, the division of the kingdom into two separate enclaves: Israel in the north and Judah in the south (from 931-722 BC) (Wolf, 1947). In introducing his study, Wolf notes that

In the Old Testament certain terms and relationships appear which suggest that democracy, in the broadest definition of the term…was prevalent in the earliest times and that vestiges of democratic procedures may be discerned in both political and religious concepts throughout the later periods of Israelite history. (Wolf, 1947: 98)

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29 Including ‘Joshua,’ ‘Judges,’ ‘Samuel I’ and ‘II,’ and ‘Kings I’ and ‘II’.
As with many of the earlier examples, the entire free male population of the community constituted the people’s assembly where each individual had the right to speak openly about the issues at hand (J. P. Schultz, 1981: 146). These councils appear to have been convened for both religious and political purposes and assembled at the city gate or at the door of the tabernacle (Wolf, 1947: 100-101, 108). As is to be expected, the more elderly, experienced or gifted rhetoricians amongst them tended to be widely respected and thereby dominated much of the proceedings (J. P. Schultz, 1981: 146). When the deliberations came to a close, a proclamation was made that reiterated the key decisions and announced the people’s consent (Wolf, 1947: 102). Later, during the times of the monarchy, such assemblies continued to wield “…at least strong advisory powers, if not full veto power, over the king” (Wolf, 1947: 104). Indeed, the potential for despotism was kept in check by the people’s assembly, and the actions of the king required the approval of a complex bureaucratic hierarchy of temple officials, prophets, priests, courtiers and, in some cases, the entire body of citizens (Wolf, 1947: 104, 108). In fact, the ascension to the throne itself required neither blood lineage nor divine right, but the consent of the majority who “…had the power to reject any candidate for the kingship, even the heir apparent” (Wolf, 1947: 105).

On the north-western border of ancient Israel resided the citizens of Phoenicia. These peoples had been residing in the Levant since as far back as the third millennium BC and throughout their long history they fell under the governance of the Assyrians and Babylonians. However, it wasn’t until 1100 BC that they emerged as a significant cultural and political force (Gore, 2004: 34-36). From the ninth to the sixth centuries BC, the Phoenicians went on to become vigorous sailors and traders, establishing colonies across much of the Mediterranean, including Cyprus, Italy, North Africa and as far west as Spain. In this way, the Phoenicians came to act as cultural middlemen, disseminating

…ideas, myths, and knowledge from the powerful Assyrian and Babylonian worlds in what is now Syria and Iraq to their contacts in the Aegean. Those ideas helped spark a cultural revival in Greece, one which led to the Greeks’ golden Age and hence the birth of Western civilisation. (Gore, 2004: 36-37)
One such idea – that has since become regarded as quintessentially Western – is that of democratic governance. Throughout the few early Phoenician documents that remain we see references to an assembly of elders with which the king consults regarding the important matters of the state (Goedicke, 1975; Moran, 1992). Later, in a treaty between the kings of Assyria and Phoenicia dated to the seventh-century BC, this council appears to govern alongside the monarch (Markoe, 2005: 101). It is precisely because these councils were made up of the wealthy merchants who had gained their fortune, and subsequent status, from their extensive trade networks that stretched from Mesopotamia to Western Europe, that they garnered such municipal power and authority (Markoe, 2005: 105). However, power was not simply vested in the king and the wealthy. As with the developments discussed in detail above, the ancient Phoenician texts also recount the existence of a ‘people’s assembly’ found on the mainland and constituted of the entire free male citizenry (Markoe, 2005: 101).

Later, in the outlying colonies established by the Phoenicians across North Africa and the Mediterranean, we find even more sophisticated democratic practices. Essentially, these settlements were governed by two chief magistrates, or ‘Suffetes’, who supervised both the senate and the people’s assembly (Markoe, 2005: 103). Here, the senate was made up of thirty-plus key members who readied and collated details of foreign policy matters, such as declarations of war or proposals to resolve external conflict, before presenting them to the elected body of 100 officials (Markoe, 2005: 103-104). Even in these remote settlements, the power of the senate was mitigated by the people’s assembly which not only elected its members, but also withheld the right to deliberate and debate over the decisions reached by this higher body. In Black Athena Writes Back, Bernal not only illustrates that these sophisticated models of Phoenician democracy were influenced by the long traditions of collective governance found throughout the ancient Middle East, but that they also had a specific impact on the rise of the Athenian polis (Bernal, 2001: 345-370). In this way, the narrative of ‘Western democracy’ and its supposed origins in ancient Greece can, at the very least, be problematised by the fact that the Phoenicians – an Oriental people – were responsible for perhaps the earliest forms of collective and egalitarian governance in the Occident.
Returning briefly to ancient Iraq, M. A. Dandamayev has illustrated that the assemblies of ancient times continued throughout much of the first millennium BC. Despite the fact that this era witnessed a number of violent and prolonged battles including the various wars between the Assyrian and Babylonian empires as well as the Persian and Macedonian conquests, the local assemblies maintained jurisdiction over local disputes and crimes (Dandamayev, 1995: 23, 25). Here Dandamayev lists various examples of civil, legal, administrative, private and temple-related cases presided over by the popular assemblies (Dandamayev, 1995: 25-26). As with earlier examples, these assemblies were made up of the free male population of the city who were both permanent residents and property owners, with the more esteemed citizens such as high-ranking officials, temple representatives and wealthy merchants playing a more dominant role (Dandamayev, 1995: 25-26, 28). Dandamayev also documents the last known reference to the ancient Mesopotamian tradition of Primitive Democracy. Here, in the city of Cutha (just north of Kish and Babylon), the temple assembly convened as late as 187 BC, effectively marking the known conclusion of almost 3,000 years of collective governance across the ancient Middle East. In concluding his paper on this particular era of Mesopotamian politics, Dandamayev states,

On the whole, the Babylonian popular assemblies were stable bodies which outlived the empires of the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, and Macedonian kings. The final disappearance of the popular assemblies, perhaps at the beginning of the Christian era, marked both the loss of civil rights by the inhabitants of Babylonian cities and the end of ancient Mesopotamian tradition. (Dandamayev, 1995: 29)
Conclusion

Democracy can therefore be seen to have a lineage tracing back as far as civilisation itself. Its ancestry lies in the ancient myths recounted by the early Mesopotamians as the region developed its first sophisticated human settlement and governance. Not surprisingly, the democratic system employed in myths such as Enuma Elish and epics such as Gilgamesh came to serve as something of a blueprint for the early city-states that developed across the region. Eventually, these city-states gave way to the emergence of grand empires and, despite the common misconception that these empires were the epitome of ‘Oriental despotism’, democratic practice can be found at the very heart of their governance, forming an influential power structure behind the authority of the king. Similar models of democratic governance are evident in the outlying colonies of these empires and are found further abroad in the smaller, independent states of the region. These developments cannot have helped but influence the models of governance that arose across Greece and culminated in the birth of the discourse of ‘Western democracy’ around 500 BC. Indeed, Primitive Democracy not only pre-empted Greek developments but outlasted the much lauded Athenian polis, with Mesopotamian councils continuing to convene until at least as late as 187 BC.

However, the notion that Primitive Democracy existed in ancient Mesopotamia is not only useful in terms of understanding the era’s contribution to modern thought and as a precursor to the development of the Greek polis, it is also particularly poignant when viewed in relation to the broader project being conducted here. In the interest of scrutinizing the presuppositions which underpin the series of discourses that have for so long informed Western understandings of the Orient’s incompatibility with democracy, Primitive Democracy serves to foreground an alternative history of the region. Far from the Orientalist tropes and stereotypes that have embedded themselves into the Western scholarly canon, this alternative history reveals a lively and egalitarian culture, collective models of governance and democratic movements that existed across Iraq and the broader region at various junctures. While it would be unwise here to over-determine the extent of these political developments or their influence, they nonetheless indicate just how long the will towards democracy has been alive in Iraq. Furthermore, the existence of Primitive Democracy across the
ancient Middle East not only undermines ‘Oriental despotism’, it also problematises the discourse of ‘Western democracy’ given that it both pre-dates this discourse and offers alternative understandings of the origins of democracy and Western civilisation itself.
Chapter 5: Discourses of Democracy in Colonial and Post-colonial Iraq

...the artificially-imposed discourses and institutions of constitutional monarchy, elitist ideology, and especially Saddam’s brand of Baathism have historically fought so hard to take root in the Iraqi cultural sensibilities that they provoked a heterogenous counter-culture of resistance. (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 8)

Re-thinking Colonial and Post-colonial Iraq

This chapter begins by making a substantial historical leap from ancient Mesopotamia on to the arrival of the printing press in Iraq in 1869 and the impact that this invention had during the Colonial and Post-colonial eras of Iraq’s history. This is certainly not because the intervening years saw Iraq and the broader Middle East shift away from the collective, egalitarian and democratic practises developed and sustained in the ancient world. In fact, as has already been briefly mentioned, an entire body of research has emerged that effectively demonstrates the democratic tendencies of the intervening era, particularly with the spread of Islam from the time of the Prophet himself through the reign of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates and on to later dynasties such as those of the Seljuks, the Safavids and the Ottomans (for a detailed overview of this literature, see: Isakhan, 2006b: 3-6; 2006d: 1-5; 2007a: 97-103). Indeed, this era of history and the democratic tendencies found throughout has been so thoroughly examined in recent years, that it would be difficult for authors who have not developed an expertise in Islamic history to offer any contribution to the field.

However, there are two significant eras in the more recent history of Iraq that have been somewhat overlooked in terms of their democratic movements and practices. The first period, Colonial Iraq (1921-1958), includes the invasion and occupation of Iraq by the British and the hegemony of the Hashemite monarchy which they installed. The following period, Post-colonial Iraq (1958-2003), began with the Iraqi Revolution of 1958 and includes the reign of various military and political factions.
which eventually resulted in the toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Much like the ancient Near East, there is a tendency to reduce the complexity of Iraqi politics during both of these critical eras in Iraqi history down to a simplified, Orientalist picture which emphasises the backward and barbaric ‘nature’ of the people and their tendency towards despotism and violence.

It is therefore not at all surprising that a cursory analysis of colonial-era literature written about Iraq reveals the kinds of tropes and stereotypes indicative of Orientalism. For example, renowned British Orientalist, David Samuel Margoliouth (Margoliouth, 1905, 1910, 1914, 1930) connected Iraq’s ancient past with its subjugation under British control, arguing in 1919 that

Iraq is used to foreign rule since ancient times, for it was ruled by the Mongols, the Turks and the Iranians, as it cannot rule itself. Thus, the Iraqis should choose the British to rule them, or to be under their mandatory rule and protection. (Margoliouth as cited in: Al-Musawi, 2006b: 62)

As Said has pointed out, the works of Orientalist scholars such as Margoliouth had a constitutive effect on the ways in which European imperialism was conducted. Here, British colonial administrators, advisors and citizens across the empire “…were the beneficiaries of the academic study of the Orient” whose job it was “…not to scant academic Orientalism, nor to subvert it, but rather to make it effective” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 224).

One such example can be found in the writing of British explorer Freya Stark who spent much of her life wandering the Middle East and compiling important records for those back home. For example in one of her many letters, this one to Sir Henry Lawrence and dated 6 March 1930, Stark offers her opinions on Iraqi democracy by arguing that, “The whole show here is run by a few rather disgusting local politicians: they don’t represent anything except themselves” (Stark, 1951: 127). “Everyone agrees” she continues in the following paragraph, “…that Iraq is not fit to govern itself… I think the Iraqis themselves agree in this: the difference is that they don’t care so frightfully much about being well governed” (Stark, 1951: 128). This view of Iraqi politics as disgusting and self-serving and of Iraq as unable to govern itself and apathetic to good governance, is an example of the kind of pejorative rhetoric that has
long been used by Occidentals to explain away Middle Eastern politics. In a classically Orientalist way, Stark moves forward from here to separate out British interests from Iraqi politics, stating that

I don’t know why one should bother so much about how Iraq is governed. The matter of importance to us is to safeguard our own affairs. It is only because we assume that the two are bound together that we give so much weight to the local politics. It seems to me that the one only vital problem is to find out how things we are interested in can be made safe independently of native politics. If this was solved, all the rest would follow – including as much Arab freedom as their geography allows: for I imagine no one would wish to stay here for the mere pleasure of doing good to people who don’t want it. (Stark, 1951: 129)

However, this kind of Orientalist vision of Iraqi politics is not isolated to the annals of colonial history, it is also evident in more recent scholarship which has sought to examine the Colonial era in Iraq. To cite one example, Elie Kedourie has dismissed the politics of the entire Colonial period of Iraqi history as constituted by “…a wretched political architecture and constitutional jerry-building of the flimsiest and most dangerous kind” (Kedourie, 1970: 239). This is reinforced in his later Democracy and Arab Political Culture which details several democratic experiments that were conducted under the auspices of the British and French across the Middle East throughout the first half of the twentieth century (namely Iraq 1921-1938, Egypt 1923-1952, Lebanon 1926-1975 and Syria 1928-1949). The central reason these attempts at introducing constitutional rule to the Middle East failed, according to Kedourie, is that they were undermined by the fact that the people of the region have historically been accustomed to “…autocracy and passive obedience” (Kedourie, 1994: 103).

With the emergence of Post-colonial Iraq these reductive tendencies continued in Western constructions of the nation and its polity. As we have seen, this became increasingly magnified by times of conflict between the West and Iraq, particularly during the 1991 Gulf War and in the lead up to the current Iraq War where the Western mainstream media continued to portray Saddam as the quintessential ‘Oriental despot’ ruling by fear and domination over a politically weak but militarily vicious people. This has also had a profound impact upon the Western media’s coverage of the democratic developments that occurred across Iraq in 2005 where
newspapers such as *The Australian* relied on pervading ideologies about the Orient and its inability to democratise.

Despite this overwhelmingly negative picture of Iraqi politics throughout both the Colonial and Post-colonial epochs, some recent studies have attempted to challenge these received wisdoms by asserting counter-histories and counter-narratives. For example, in his *magnum opus*, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, Hanna Batatu effectively argues that authoritarianism in its pure form was first brought to Iraq (and the broader Middle East) via the incursion of European colonial powers (Batatu, 1982 [1978]). He goes on to claim that the British and the French were the first to have had both the technological capability and experience to obliterate the existing social order and create in its place the economic and cultural conditions necessary for colonialism to flourish under the hegemony of installed monarchies and regimes. Along these same lines, Gareth Stansfield has recently stated that “The rise of authoritarianism in Iraq can be traced to the tensions caused by the legacies of British colonial involvement in the formation of civilian governments that were more often than not perceived to be corrupt and inefficient” (Stansfield, 2007: 81).

In terms of the public sphere of the Colonial period, Adeed Dawisha makes a compelling case regarding the role of the various political movements and the free press in promoting varied debate and discourse as well as calls for genuine democratic reform (Dawisha, 2005a; 2005c: 724-725; Dawisha & Dawisha, 2003: 36). Specifically, in his ‘Democratic Attitudes and Practices in Iraq, 1921-1958,’ Dawisha problematise the notion of Iraq’s alleged anti-democratic tendencies via a close examination of the democratic tendencies in Iraq as exhibited by the role that the press played throughout the Colonial era (Dawisha, 2005a). On a related note, Peter Wien has recently studied the role of the Iraqi press in fostering nation-wide discussion and debate on global and domestic political concerns during the years 1932-1941 (Wien, 2006). As is to be expected, opinions varied on the merits and drawbacks of emerging popular European political systems such as totalitarianism, fascism, authoritarian regimes, socialism, national socialism and contemporaneous Middle Eastern developments such as those in Turkey and Iran (Wien, 2006: 2-4). While Wien chooses to leave aside the discussion of democracy in the Iraqi press of
this particular era (as unveiled by Dawisha), he nonetheless draws upon the works of both Habermas and Foucault in his discussion of the ways in which such public discourse enabled the type of rational-critical debate necessary for a lively and effective public sphere.

As has already been discussed, Amatzia Baram’s *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Baathist Iraq, 1968-1989* provides a unique insight into the political climate of the Post-colonial era by focusing on the Baathist tendency to manipulate Iraq’s rich history in order to legitimate and maintain their hegemony over the people (Baram, 1991) (see also: Baram, 1983; Baram, 1994). This is made even more explicit in the work of Ofra Bengio, particularly her *Saddam’s Word: Political Discourse in Iraq* in which she analyses an impressive array of primary Iraqi sources such as Saddam Hussein’s own speeches and writings, Iraqi newspapers, Baathist publications and Iraqi government documents (Bengio, 1998). Here, Bengio demonstrates the ways in which the Baath were able to control and manipulate the political discourse of Iraq in order to situate the Iraqi people into a position of forced acquiescence to the total and entrenched hegemony of the paltry few who constituted the elite.

However, it is in the work of Muhsin Al-Musawi and Eric Davis that one finds the most robust examination of the manipulation of political ideology throughout both the Colonial and Post-colonial periods in Iraq (Al-Musawi, 1991, 2003, 2006a, 2006b; Davis, 1992, 1994, 2005a, 2005b, 2005d; Davis & Gavrielides, 1991c). For example, throughout Al-Musawi’s *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict*, the reader finds a detailed examination of the cultural formations and intellectual life of Iraq from the British Mandate through to the fall of Saddam with particular emphasis on the literary and intellectual discourses which circulated during this tumultuous era of Iraqi politics (Al-Musawi, 2006b). To uncover such a complex matrix of over-lapping and competing discourses, Al-Musawi utilises the works of Marx, Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, Foucault, Derrida, Said and others in his methodological approach of “…new historicism, coupled with discourse analysis” (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 6). In addition, Al-Musawi pays particularly close attention to the emergence of a Post-colonial discourse in Iraq which brought to the fore questions of national identity beyond colonial rule as writers openly called for Iraq’s liberation and discussed the
formation of a cohesive and democratic Iraqi nation-state (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 112-142).

Perhaps an even more comprehensive analysis of the counter-history of Iraq’s Colonial and Post-colonial epochs can be found in the work of Eric Davis. Specifically, in some of his earlier work, Davis analyses the process of state-building in Iraq as well as the politicisation of various Iraqi institutions such as the museum (Davis, 1992, 1994; Davis & Gavrielides, 1991c). Throughout these investigations, Davis not only shares Said’s concerns about “…the Orientalist perspective of Iraq as a ‘backward,’ ‘uncivilized,’ and parochial society” (Davis, 1994: 95) (see also: Davis, 1991: 4; Davis, 1992: 70-71) but also paraphrases Foucault’s postulation that “…power must be understood as an ever-changing set of relationships between dominator and dominated” (Davis, 1994: 90) (see also: Davis, 1991: 31; Davis & Gavrielides, 1991b: 121). Beyond this, Davis is especially interested in “…the principles of Gramscian political economy, particularly the notion of hegemony” (Davis, 1992: 77), arguing that “The ability of the ruling class to reproduce itself over time is, in turn, directly related to its ability to achieve hegemony” (Davis, 1992: 77) (see also: Davis, 1991: 25; Davis & Gavrielides, 1991a: xvi; 1991b: 131-132). This is drawn out much more substantially in Davis’ seminal text, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*, where he proceeds with an exhaustive study of the ways in which the long and complex history of Iraq had been re-appropriated by successive regimes from the Hashemite monarchy to Saddam Hussein in order to form a common Iraqi political identity and shore up support for the incumbent elite (Davis, 2005b) (see also: Davis, 2005a, 2005d). However, despite such efforts, each respective regime was unable to achieve “…hegemony in the Gramscian sense of the term” due to the fact that they did not provide the necessary moral and ideological reform to garner consent, a fact which saw their legitimacy “…questioned, if not rejected, by large sections of the Iraqi populace” (Davis, 2005b: 21).

Despite the strength and importance of this recent body of work and its assertion of a more complex and nuanced assessment of Iraq’s political culture throughout the twentieth century, it does not seek to utilise this assessment as a direct affront to notions of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. In order to address this, the
following examines the complexities of Iraq’s political / media landscape and the role that this played in asserting varied and complex ‘discourses of democracy.’ It documents the debates that circulated in the Iraqi press at the time of the British occupation and Hashemite monarchy and details their role in fostering vitriolic critique of the incumbent regime, in mobilising the public to protest and in serving as the people’s watchdog over the elite. Following on, this chapter examines the mostly tight restraints exerted over Iraq’s media throughout the Post-colonial era and discovers that despite this oppression, both the official and clandestine Iraqi media were at times able to challenge the hegemony of the state and advocate a more inclusive and democratic order. It is precisely the egalitarian and democratic tendencies found throughout the media / political nexus of Colonial and Post-colonial Iraq that provide for us a new vision of Iraqi history that is directly at odds with traditional views of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’.
Colonial Iraq and the Iraqi Media

The history of the press in Iraq is thought to go as far back as 1816 when a local news bulletin, *The Journal of Iraq*, appeared in both Arabic and Turkish. This paper is said to have mostly praised the local Ottoman governor (the paper’s publisher), and was distributed to his army officials and other dignitaries. Although there are no surviving copies of *The Journal of Iraq*, if the reports are true it would have been the first time that news was reported in Arabic anywhere in the world (Ayalon, 1995: 13; Braude, 2003: 142). What is certain is that when the progressive Ottoman Vali (‘Governor’), Midhat Pasha, took the post of Baghdad in 1869, he brought with him the latest technology in the form of the printing press and a zeal for modernisation, both of which he had acquired during his previous post in Paris. Amongst his many achievements was the founding of the weekly newspaper, *Al-Zawra* (‘The Curved City’, a popular sobriquet for Baghdad), a four-paged Arabic-Turkish paper that preferred to extol the virtues of the Sultan and the efficiency of the government rather than report ‘real’ news (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 13; Ayalon, 1995: 25; Braude, 2003: 142-143). In the 1880s the governors of both Mosul and Basra followed Midhat’s example, launching similar pro-Ottoman papers which have been noted for their primitive news collecting methods and their poor Arabic translations (Ayalon, 1995: 25-26).

However, it was not until the loose coalition of Ottoman political figures and reformers (colloquially known as the ‘Young Turks’) were able to successfully challenge the empire, that Iraq and the broader Middle East witnessed a number of dramatic reforms including a sharp spike in the amount of publications available to the citizen (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 13-14; B. Lewis, 1994: 52; Shmuelevitz, 2004: 28; Tripp, 2000: 20-24; Zubaida, 2002: 209). These included the publication of not only newspapers in support of the ruling party in Istanbul, but also papers with varying other political views, including opposition papers, anti-Young Turk papers and Zionist organs (see Table 1). Indeed, by the time of Iraq’s first parliamentary election in 1908, there were “…no less than 44 new Arabic papers…in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Iraq, as well as in Istanbul” (Ayalon, 1995: 65). Many of these newspapers and magazines of the Young Turk period were filled with long editorials.
praising the new era of tolerance and press freedom (Ayalon, 1995: 65-66; Shmuelevitz, 2004: 30). Even renowned Orientalist Bernard Lewis has conceded that the newspapers of this era combined “…a large measure of freedom with a high level of scholarship, contain[ing] what are probably the best-informed and best-argued discussions that have yet occurred between conservatives and modernists and between the different groups within each camp” (B. Lewis, 1994: 111).

The reforms implemented by the Young Turks and the elections of 1908 brought with them a strong augmentation of Iraq’s culture of public debate and criticism as is best evidenced by the atmosphere surrounding Iraq’s 1912 election, where “Iraqis witnessed for the first time [the phenomenon] of party competition among the candidates” (Al-Wardi as cited in: Dawisha, 2005a: 12). During this period, those too poor to afford newspapers would line up at street-side news vendors to rent a paper or share with others, and heated debates played out in the nation’s smoke-filled coffeehouses. In total, this period led to the founding of 355 newspapers and journals across the Ottoman Empire, with approximately 70 independent newspapers in Iraq, including those published in Arabic, Arabic and Turkish, and Arabic and French (Ayalon, 1995: 65; Braude, 2003: 143-144; Davis, 2005b: 38). However, perhaps the most significant development of this era was the founding of the first modern Arab political party, The Covenant (Al-Ahd) by several Iraqis in Istanbul in 1912, a party which was to go on to play a major role in twentieth century Iraqi politics (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 14; Davis, 2005b: 33, 38).

While it is important not to overstate the role that these early newspapers played in developing a public sphere in the Ottoman-controlled regions which later became the nation of Iraq, they nonetheless indicate just how far back discourse and debate were stimulated by the press in this region. Far from ‘Oriental despotism’, the Iraq based press of this era can be seen to have played

...a major role in shifting the attitudes of the literate segments of the population away from unquestioningly accepting absolutism as a political and religious duty. As this emerging reform-minded group grew and began to engage the traditionalists in debates, newspapers were instrumental in recording and publicizing the arguments against absolutism. (Dawisha, 2005a: 21)
However, the demise of the Ottoman Empire at the conclusion of the First World War brought with it the emergence of the modern nation-states of the Middle East under the control of European powers such as Britain and France. Moving into much of what are now Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Israel, these colonial powers carved up the region into two zones of influence under the clandestine Sykes-Picot agreement (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 14; Diamond, 2005b: 31; Keeble, 1997: 86; Preston, 2003: 164-172). Craving the rich oil reserves of the Gulf region to fuel its expanding military machine (Kent, 1976; Stivers, 1982), the British occupied Basra from the start of the war and the entire nation of Iraq by the end of 1918 (Stansfield, 2007: 34; Tripp, 2000: 31). Thus began the Colonial era of Iraq’s history which saw the British play both an overt and covert role in Iraqi politics until the Revolution of 1958. Here, the British invaded Iraq “…not only with army and armour” as Al-Musawi puts it, but with “…an Orientalist legacy that spoke for and of the colonized” (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 58). In Iraq, this ‘Orientalist legacy’ had the effect of dividing up the Mesopotamian region…between cities supposedly ‘corrupted’ by the ‘despotism’ of the Ottoman Empire and a countryside which was believed to be the preserve of the ‘true Iraqi’ who was, none the less, backward, even prelapsarian, and irrational. This simple-minded and offensive dualism ensured that indigenous voices would not be listened to and indigenous agency denied. Not surprisingly such an occupation (and ‘tutelage’) sparked a smouldering resistance. (Gregory, 2004: 148)

Perhaps the first example of such resistance came from a subsidiary of the earlier Istanbul-based political party Al-Ahd, known as Al-Ahd Al-Iraqi (‘The Iraqi Covenant’), which effectively stood as the first political group to call for Iraqi independence from the British at the very earliest days of its hegemony in 1918 (Stansfield, 2007: 41). It was this group that was to provide several of the key figures of twentieth century Iraqi politics, some staunch opponents to the British and their installed monarchy, and others, such as the future Prime Minister Nuri Al-Said, who went on to wield significant power (Tripp, 2000: 36).

Early calls for Iraqi independence, such as those issued by Al-Ahd Al-Iraqi, grew substantially when the British were awarded a mandate over Iraq in 1920 by the League of Nations (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 14). This development, which
pre-empted the establishment of ongoing British hegemony over the yet to be formed state of Iraq, produced the political climate in which the Great Iraqi Revolution took place in 1920 (Tripp, 2000: 40-45). Having been preceded by a brief Kurdish rebellion staged in 1919 (Stansfield, 2007: 39-40), the following year saw the tribesman, religious leaders and secular nationalists of the central Euphrates region band together in an armed nationalist-inspired insurgency against the British occupation (Polk, 2005: 77; Preston, 2003: 230-232; Zubaida, 2002: 207). The presence of a common enemy meant that groups such as the Shites and the Sunnis came together for the first time in centuries, holding joint religio-political meetings which culminated “…in patriotic oratory and poetic thundering against the English” (Batatu, 1982 [1978]: 23). Indeed, the role of poets, intellectuals and religious figures from across the many ethnic and spiritual divides in Iraq was central to mobilising the people to action (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 49-51, 95-99; Davis, 2003: 1; 2005a: 231; 2005d: 59; Gregory, 2004: 148; Wien, 2006: 11). This collective action promulgated a new sense of nationalism inside Iraq and fostered a “…rudimentary thrust for democratic rule” (Davis, 2005b: 46). Although the uprising was ultimately defeated by the British, the Iraqis were able to secure a number of the religiously significant southern cities for short periods of time. The political vacuum created from first the withdrawal of Ottoman authority and then the defeat of the British, resulted in the establishment of several civil and administrative organisations that functioned like local councils. Most notably, in the Shia holy city of Najaf, the leaders agreed on the creation of a complex legislative and executive council, the members of which were determined by votes placed in ballot boxes at the entrance to the many open markets that scattered the city (Dawisha, 2005a: 13).

Although these enclaves of autonomous democratic governance were relatively short-lived and were certainly quashed by the British, they are not the only indicators of a fledgling civil society in Iraq at this time. Indeed, this same period also witnessed a dramatic upsurge in budding journalists with strong ties to various, particularly nationalist, political parties (Davis, 2005d: 56). These wordsmiths were generally keen to re-ignite the days of the Young Turks and produced a number of both relatively objective and highly partisan papers which “…played an important role in covering events and developments, while inciting people to organise their efforts against British forces” (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 97) (see Table 2). Here, independent
Newspapers such as _Al-Istiqlal_ (‘Independence’ of Najaf) and _Al-Furat_ (‘The Euphrates’) published a series of editorials that were not only scathing in their critique of the British occupation; they are demonstrative of the ‘discourses of democracy’ circulating throughout Iraq at the time. Indeed, _Al-Istiqlal_ appeared for the express purpose of responding to “…the occupiers’ deception, to disquiet them, to reveal their barbaric misdeeds” (_Al-Istiqlal_ as cited in: Braude, 2003: 144).

Similarly, _Al-Furat_ played a critical role in advocating grass-roots political movements in Iraq, arguing that the Iraqi Revolution on 1920 was “…similar to the Irish and Egyptian Revolutions in every detail…provoked by protest, inflamed by despotism and spread by the loss of liberty” (_Al-Furat_ as cited in: Al-Musawi, 1991: 206-207). The paper also carried stern warnings for the British, asking them to “Take it easy” because

The nation which you were against, and where you unleashed the sword, causing so much bloodshed and casualties among its people, in utter hatred and arbitrary rule, regardless of its rights and justice, this nation is to take you to task in the court of history. (_Al-Furat_ as cited in: Al-Musawi, 2006b: 97)

Building on such rhetoric, another op-ed from the same paper seeks to explain the growing resistance movement in Iraq as a product of the occupation and its control over political dissent. The author writes,

The nation got impatient as a result of the oppression practised by the occupation authority, especially in these days when Iraq’s complaints are everywhere in line with the principle of ‘self-determination and total independence.’ The Iraqis realise that legal requests and peaceful demonstrations are useless, as they restore no right. It is especially so because just complaints reach no political circle abroad, as the British are in total control of all media and means of communication. (_Al-Furat_ as cited in: Al-Musawi, 2006b: 98)

Without too much concern for the opinions and attitudes expressed in these organs, Winston Churchill set about hastily designing the nation-states of the modern Middle East at the Cairo Conference of 1921, attended by regional experts such as T. E. Lawrence, Sir Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell (F. Bell, 1930 [1927]; Preston, 2003: 233-235; Tripp, 2000: 37-39). Indeed, it was their advice which saw the British unite the three previously autonomous regions, or _vilayets_, of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul and
install Faisal I to the position of the first modern king of Iraq (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 14; Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 59-60, 71; Davis, 2005d: 57; Gregory, 2004: 149; Preston, 2003: 175; Zubaida, 2002: 211). Faisal was the son of Sharif Hussayn, the Sharif of Mecca, who had declared himself the Caliph of all Muslims and had orchestrated the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during WWI. Initially, Faisal was installed as the king of Syria in 1920 but when the French exiled him, the British gave him a second chance, this time as the ruler of the fledgling Iraq (Davis, 1994: 94; Polk, 2005: 80-81; Tripp, 2000: 45-52; Wien, 2006: 8). It was this sequence of events which saw a man who had never before set foot in the lands of Iraq, ascend the throne in a ceremony unbeknownst to the vast majority of his subjects while the military band played the eerily symbolic ‘God Save the Queen’ in the absence of an Iraqi national anthem (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 15).

After already having appointed Faisal, the British staged the first of modern Iraq’s falsified experiments with democracy, a national referendum which garnered an impossible 96% endorsement of his rule (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 14-15; Stansfield, 2007: 44). The local authorities of the various provinces were infuriated and clerics who had so adamantly called on Faisal to implement a parliament and a national constitution, now delivered fatwas (‘Religious edicts’) banning their loyal followers from participating in the elections for the Constituent Assembly until such a time as the monarch yielded to the people’s call for democratisation, civil liberties and freedom of the press (Dawisha, 2005a: 13). Heeding these calls, Faisal did go on to establish a number of quasi-democratic reforms including nation-building exercises such as the development of a highly patriotic national school curriculum, a new Constitution, an Electoral Law and a Parliament consisting of both a Majlis al-Nuwab (‘Chamber of Deputies’) and a Majlis al-A’yan (‘Senate’) in 1924 which lasted until the Revolution of 1958 (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 16-18; Batatu, 1982 [1978]: 25; Bengio, 2003: 19; Dawisha, 2005a: 18). While these developments certainly had the semblance of genuine democratic reform, the king maintained a number of powers including the ability to veto the parliament and issue independent decrees while the British ruled “…largely behind the scenes through a system of political ‘advisors’ appointed to the major departments of government to ensure that British interests were adequately represented within the system” (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 14) (see also: Bengio, 2003: 16-19; Davis, 1994: 93; Lukitz, 1995: 13-21). Indeed, these
steps towards democratisation were little more than a façade designed to entrench the hegemony of the Sunni ruling elite and the British. Neither party was particularly interested in truly representative democracy as it would cede power to the majority Shia population and undermine British interests (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 64; L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 21).

This brought with it a wide dissatisfaction with the ruling elite of Iraq and ultimately led to the emergence of several opposition parties during these early days of political struggle in the nation (Dawisha, 2005a: 14). These opposition parties quickly set up their own daily newspapers which were instrumental in mobilising more than ten thousand people as they demonstrated in front of the King’s palace on the one-year anniversary of his ascension to the throne, demanding a representational government and an end to British interference in domestic issues (see Table 2). Seeing the power these two opposition parties had amassed in such a short period, the British High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, seized the opportunity to outlaw the parties, close down their publications and expel their leadership (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 50; Dawisha, 2005a: 14, 21).

Despite these rulings from above, the mid to late 1920s saw the re-emergence of several political parties in Iraq, including both those of the government and of the opposition (Ayalon, 1995: 93-94; Dawisha, 2005a: 18). What the opposition groups and their newspapers had in common were their calls for “…immediate independence for Iraq, the evacuation of British troops, and the development of a democratic and participatory Iraqi state” (Davis, 2005b: 49) (see also: Davis, 2005a: 232; Wien, 2006: 53). Despite this unity – or perhaps because of it – the British continued to interfere in Iraq’s domestic politics and were “…singularly hostile to democratic practices if these were perceived to be impeding British interests” (Dawisha, 2005a: 18). As a case in point, Dawisha discusses their meddling in the Iraqi parliamentary deliberations over signing the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, where the High Commissioner “…stormed into the Royal palace with an ultimatum that the treaty be passed forthwith or the Assembly would be dissolved” (Dawisha, 2005a: 19) (see also: Bengio, 2003: 16-19).

Such overt interference and manipulation of the democratic processes and practices of Iraq raise a number of interesting questions about the despotic potential of the West.
Indeed, while the British installed governments, falsified referendums and quashed
democratic movements and reforms, the Iraqi people continued their struggle towards
a more egalitarian and inclusive political order. For example, Iraq witnessed an
unprecedented diversity in the nations print sector, with the establishment of 105
newspapers between 1920 and 1929, many of which advocated quite radical political
perspectives (Davis, 2005b: 49). Even in their short life-span, these highly partisan
papers were able to invigorate the Iraqi public sphere, enabling Habermasian rational-
critical debate in both the parliament and the streets of the nation. They served as a
diligent watchdog of democracy, carefully detailing instances of corruption and
nepotism. Collectively, this era brought with it the very seeds of democratisation,
“…a spirit of dialogue, a willingness to listen to an opposing view, and an ability to
compromise if the situation deemed it” (Dawisha, 2005a: 20). As a case in point,
Davis points out that it is prudent to acknowledge the collaboration and cooperation
between the different ethnic and religious groups in producing the organs of this
period, including examples such as Al-Misbah (‘The Lamp’) where a Shia writer and
a Jewish editor worked together to produce a publication of some repute (Davis,
2005b: 49) (see Table 2).

With the signing of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty in 1930 and the expiry of Britain’s mandate
over Iraq in 1932, Iraq became the first of the mandated regions to emerge as an
Understandably, many Iraqis thus assumed that the United Kingdom would
henceforth play a decreased role inside Iraq but, sadly, the British continued to
interfere in Iraq’s domestic politics for many years to come. In addition, the
democratic and egalitarian steps taken during the 1920s were eased somewhat during
the 1930s as Iraq moved through a rather tumultuous decade of politics. This arguably
began in 1933 with the senseless slaughter of hundreds of northern Iraqi Assyrians
(Husry, 1974a, 1974b; Joseph, 1975; Silverfarb, 1986: 33-46), the unexpected death
of King Faisal I and the ascension of his young and relatively inexperienced son,
Ghazi Ibn Faisal (crowned King Ghazi I of Iraq) later the same year (Gran, 1996: 63;
Mackey, 2002: 137). This was followed in 1936 by the first military coup d’etat in the
modern Arab world, in which General Bakr Sidqi overthrew the civilian government
and replaced it with military rule (Lukitz, 1995: 81-90; Mackey, 2002: 159-162;
Wien, 2006: 10). Then, in 1939, Ghazi I died in a mysterious car accident which many
believed to be the work of the British (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 18; Polk, 2005: 94). In addition, the 1930s also saw the Sunni elite seize the opportunity provided by the ‘independence’ of 1932 to exert itself over the public discourse of Iraq and suppress dissent. This is perhaps most evident in the media sector where a series of new Press Laws brought sharp limitations such as the censoring of “…criticism of the government or the administration” and the suspension of “…press organs for long and even unlimited periods” (Wien, 2006: 54).

However, this is not to say that media and political freedom was completely nullified throughout the 1930s. Instead, as Davis points out, various political parties and newspapers were established across Iraq throughout this era, effectively harnessing the emerging public sphere of the time (Davis, 2005b: 72-75; Tripp, 2000: 71, 85-86; Wien, 2006: 54) (see Table 2). This included the founding of the Union of Iraqi Artisans’ Organisations (Ittihad Al-Sana‘ia’ Al-‘Iraqiya) which played an instrumental role in mobilising the citizenry towards the General Strike of 1931 in order to protest the British proposal of a tax on urban commerce (Davis, 2005b: 72). In addition to the highly partisan organs of Iraq’s many political factions, other newspapers of this era attempted to uphold the journalistic standards of objectivity, whether it be through the political satire of Habezbooz (a term from Iraqi folklore) (Daragahi, 2003: 50; Wien, 2006: 55) or the more traditional hard news of Al-Zaman (‘The Times’). So, while the Iraqi media sector of this era was beset by all manner of tight restrictions and limitations, they nonetheless provided “…a lively debate on nationalist issues…[and] debates also related to cultural questions beyond the daily affairs” (Wien, 2006: 53).

Although the Second World War did see actual, if limited, fighting in Iraq, this war did not have anywhere near the impact on the Arab Middle East as the First. When the fighting began, the government of Iraq placed the newspapers and magazines of the nation under tight censorship laws in an attempt to curtail anti-British sentiment (Dawisha, 2005a: 22). This coupled with the severe economic conditions throughout the war, had implications for Iraqi civil society and the free press, with many of the smaller papers across the region folding accordingly. Politically, the death of King Ghazi I in 1939 had left Iraq with his three-year-old son, King Faisal II, as the official head of state. Being too young to rule, Faisal II’s power defaulted to his uncle, the
immensely unpopular and fiercely pro-British regent, Prince ‘Abd Al-Ilah (Mackey, 2002: 143-144). However, the regent’s power was mitigated by the anti-British and Pan-Arab views of Iraq’s four leading colonels, led by Salah Al-Din Al-Sabbagh and otherwise known as the ‘Golden Square’ (Davis, 2005b: 65, 68). In 1941 the tension between the monarchy and the army came to a head, with the latter effectively staging a military coup that saw the young king, the regent and Prime Minister Nuri Al-Said flee into exile (Tripp, 2000: 103-107). Not surprisingly, the British were not particularly fond of the Pan-Arab anti-British ideology of the colonels. Despite being already embroiled in the broader events of World War II, the British staged the Anglo-Iraq War which saw them quickly defeat the Iraqi army (Silverfarb, 1986: 131-141; 1994: 1-7; Wien, 2006: 1). The four colonels were subsequently tried and executed and the triumvirate of the boy king, the regent and the Prime Minister were reinstalled in Baghdad, their power propped up by the might of the British but their legitimacy and popularity now permanently undermined in the eyes of most Iraqis (Batatu, 1982 [1978]: 345).

Perhaps because of this lack of popularity, the regent used the cessation of WWII to announce a return to the political life of the 1920s, lifting the restrictions on the freedom of the press (Dawisha, 2005a: 15). This brought with it an immediate spike in both the number and variety of political parties in Iraq, from pro-government, pro-British parties, to centrist, right- and left-leaning parties, Pan-Arab, Nationalist, and even two Marxist parties as well as a blossoming of labour unions, cultural movements and artistic / literary associations (Davis, 2005b: 82-83; Dawisha, 2005a: 15-16; Silverfarb, 1994: 81-92; Tripp, 2000: 114-116). Once again, many of these parties spawned their own publications (see Table 3). It appears that, on the whole, the newspapers of this era were relatively free to express diverse opinions (Dawisha, 2005c: 724-725). Speaking generally of the media industry across the Arab Middle East at the conclusion of WWII, one commentator has compared it to the press sector at the time of the American Revolution in so far as it was dominated by “…the numerous, tiny enterprise, highly partisan, political party press” (McFadden, 1953). More specifically, Charles Tripp has argued that the Iraqi press of this era was politically significant in that it gave “…voice to trenchant criticism of political and economic conditions and…[outlined] ideas for the future of Iraq which were radical in their implications” (Tripp, 2000: 116).
Indeed, this optimism is somewhat justified given the role that the press was to play in mobilising the people of Iraq to protest against the proposed revision to the Anglo-Iraqi treaty in 1948. When word reached the Iraqi opposition that such amendments would bring Iraq further into line with British interests and extend their hegemony over the nation, they were virulent in their dissent, using their newspapers to encourage massive demonstrations on the streets of Baghdad (Silverfarb, 1994: 141-155; Tripp, 2000: 120-122). Sadly this series of relatively peaceful demonstrations (dubbed the *Wathba*, ‘Great Leap’ or ‘Outburst’) caused a panic amongst Iraq’s political elite who ordered the military to use any means necessary to quell the uprising (Gran, 1996: 67). Apart from arresting, torturing and imprisoning many of the demonstrators, the military also opened fire on the crowds several times (Mackey, 2002: 148-149). This crack-down also had ramifications for the Iraqi political and media sphere, with the ruling elite taking the rather drastic step of banning a “…number of these papers, and to increase the censorship on what they were able to write” (Dawisha, 2005a: 22). Much of the blame for the demonstrations fell on the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), the pro-British government perpetually suspicious of their political ideology and its popularity among the people (Stansfield, 2007: 91). Not surprisingly, the demonstrations had given the government the justification for targeting the group, authorizing the arrest of the ICP’s leaders who were later tried and publicly hanged (Polk, 2005: 98).

However, this series of events did little to quell the many Iraqi opposition and political movements. In fact, the execution of several of the ICP’s most senior members seemed to spur on the movement, with the creation of several newspapers in southern Iraq throughout the early 1950s. Around this time, the ICP also began publishing newspapers that catered to the interests of the expanding number of students and women who held party membership (Davis, 2005b: 96-97) (see Table 3). As Davis goes on to suggest, “…the distribution of these newspapers undoubtedly contributed to the party’s success in mobilizing protest against the state” (Davis, 2005b: 97) including the various student demonstrations, rural challenges to landowner authority and industrial strikes of this era. Indeed, the ICP was able to garner support from across Iraq’s complex array of ethno-sectarian and religious divides, including smaller minorities such as Christains and Jews, via its argument.
that, “…while Iraq was an Arab society, real democracy could only be achieved by recognizing its ethnic, linguistic and confessional diversity” (Davis, 1992: 80)

This mounting political pressure, combined with the ongoing lack of public support for the Iraqi administration created a situation in which the monarchy had little choice but to allow Iraq’s opposition parties to take part in the 1954 election. Here, a well-known member of Iraq’s oppositional political scene by the name of Kamil Al-Chadirji30 had the brilliant idea of banding together Iraq’s divergent opposition groups to form the National Electoral Front (Al-Jabha Al-Intikhabiya Al-Wataniya, or NEF).

In an unprecedented display of solidarity, the various political factions of Iraq heeded the advice of Chadirji, and the NEF soon included a ‘Supreme Committee’ consisting of members from the National Democratic Party (Hizb Al-Watani Al-Dimuqrati, or NDP), the Independence Party (Hizb Al-Istiqlal), the emerging Baath Party and the ICP (who appeared under the pseudonym, the Peace Partisans). Serving underneath this Supreme Committee was a second strata made up of a wide base of members from Iraqi opposition groups, including various smaller parties and independents. The success of this model was instantly recognisable since, despite constant police interference, the message was rapidly disseminated to the broader Iraqi population who came out onto the streets to voice their approval in the various “…campaign rallies, making the elections not only the freest but also the most spirited in modern Iraqi history” (Davis, 2005b: 102). This success was also felt at the polls where, following a relatively short campaign period, the NEF was able to garner an unprecedented, if paltry, 10 of the 135 seats. The central government was understandably unnerved by such a show of solidarity amongst Iraq’s political opposition groups and, more to the point, by the show of support they received across the nation. Indeed, the elections had not only secured the NEF seats in Baghdad and Mosul (Iraq’s two largest cities at the time), it also removed Nuri Al-Said’s parliamentary control (Davis, 2003: 2; 2005a: 232; 2005b: 99-103; Tripp, 2000: 136-137). Not surprisingly, the new parliament met once before being dissolved. The opposition parties and their newspapers were promptly suppressed and, with the subsequent elections going uncontested, the hegemony of the ruling elite was restored.

30 A former member of the National Party and the Ahali Group, Al-Chadirji later founded the NDP and served as the editor of the party’s newspaper, Al-Ahali, later renamed Sawt Al-Ahali.
(Warriner, 1962 [1957]: 125). Despite this however, Al-Musawi describes the political climate of the early 1950s in Iraq as running

…opposite to an oppressive but restless political climate, as the educated classes were effectively involved in disseminating a culture of democracy and resistance: democracy for the Iraqis, against martial laws and censorship, and resistance to British virtual control of the many cabinets that spanned the period in question. (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 115)

Indeed, Al-Musawi’s comment might be taken as indicative of the political climate of the entire Colonial period in Iraq which reveals an Iraqi population not at all despotic in nature and in no way incapable of understanding and striving towards a more robust and inclusive democratic order. On the contrary, even before the invasion and occupation of Iraq by the British, the time of the Young Turks and the 1908 and 1912 Iraqi elections reveal a complex public sphere where the culture industries of Iraq played host to a variety of debates and opinions. The arrival of the British galvanised much of Iraq against the colonial power as is evidenced at the time of the Great Iraqi Revolution and in opposition to the installation of the Hashemite monarchy where strong nationalist sentiment emerged, often underpinned by calls for a democratic and independent Iraqi state. The ensuing decades carried forward this legacy with events such as the Wathba and the contestation of the 1954 election by the NEF demonstrative of an alternative Iraqi history, a history in which the nation’s political / media nexus played a pivotal role in mobilising the Iraqi people, encouraging democratic participation, stimulating wide debate, coordinating dissent and serving as the watchdog of the nations elite.

In addition to this, the Colonial era of Iraq demands that we scrutinize the discourse of ‘Western democracy’. Here, Britain, one of the world’s strongest advocates of democracy and the home of the Magna Carta, the modern parliament, the first daily newspaper and the Fourth Estate, can be seen to have all but abandoned the ideals such institutions and documents are said to represent in their occupation of Iraq. Indeed, the British not only brought with them the Orientalist legacy common throughout the colonial period in their creation and occupation of Iraq, but can be seen to have installed the nation-state’s first ‘Oriental despot’ in the form of a foreign monarch. In addition, they sought to quash democratic movements wherever they
found them, including outlawing opposition parties, closing and censoring newspapers and expelling or executing various political dissidents. Behind the scenes, the UK continued to protect its own interests and ensure its ongoing hegemony over Iraq by interfering in the nation’s parliament and demanding agreement to various suspect treaties. It also propped up the Hashemite monarchy and the small circle of favoured cronies that ran the country, even overthrowing several challenges to the existing order from Iraqi movements such as that of the Golden Square and the NEF.

In this way, to paraphrase the work of Marx and Engels, the British and the Hashemites were the ruling material force of the Colonial era in Iraq and, therefore at the same time, the ruling intellectual force. They were capable of manipulating the means of mental production and thereby determined the ‘discourses of democracy’ circulating throughout Iraq at the time of their rule. This is, of course, typical of the colonial era as Said and others have pointed out and is driven by traditional Orientalist notions of the benighted and barbarous ‘nature’ of the savages. It is also underpinned by the discourse of ‘Oriental despotism’ which determined that Iraq was unable to govern itself and generally incapable of sophisticated political structures such as democracy. As Bhabha would point out, the Colonial period of Iraq reveals the altogether contrapuntal discourses of Western civilization: a force for democracy and human rights on its own soil, a force for despotism and oppression abroad.
As far back as 1951 the fledgling Arab Baath Socialist Party (*Hizb Al-Baath Al-Arabi Al-Ishtiraki*; *Baath* translates to mean ‘Awakening’, ‘Renaissance’ or ‘Renewal’ and the party will henceforth be termed the Baath or ABSP) had been gathering momentum in the Iraqi armed forces. Although it originally developed in Damascus around 1940 and emigrated to Iraq in 1949, the Baathist ideology developed a loyal following in Iraq under the leadership of Faud Al-Rikabi, a young Iraqi engineer from Nasiriyya (Baram, 1991: 9-13). The early message of the Baath in Iraq was relatively similar to Post-colonial movements elsewhere: Iraq and the broader Arab region would never reach its potential place in the modern world if it continued to suffer the inequities and suppression of foreign occupation and hegemony (Polk, 2005: 109-110). Disseminated via various Baathist organs, this message understandably appealed to many Iraqis (particularly members of the military and the intelligentsia) who were yet to experience total independence as a nation-state from the British occupation and its instalment of the Hashemite monarchy (Davis, 2005b: 96) (see Table 4). By 1952 a number of Baathist-leaning cells within the military had emerged, constituting the ‘Free Officers’ movement and these were later inspired and somewhat radicalised by the major steps taken by Gamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt towards his vision of the ‘United Arab Republic’ (Baram, 1991: 11; Stansfield, 2007: 92).

Among the more influential converts to the early doctrine of the Baath were two of Iraq’s most senior military officers, Brigadier General Abdul Karim Qasim and Colonel Abdus-Salam Arif (Tripp, 2000: 144). Together, the forces loyal to these two men and their respective ideologies had gathered enough momentum to storm Baghdad on 14 July 1958, immediately seizing control of key government buildings including the national radio station and the royal palace (Goode, 1975: 105; Tripp, 2000: 146; 2007: 31). While Arif used the radio to announce, “Citizens of Baghdad, the Monarchy is dead! The Republic is here!” (Arif as cited in: Mackey, 2002: 157), his soldiers fulfilled his promise by murdering all but one member of the royal family. The bodies of the prince regent ‘Abd Al-Ilah and the young King Faisal II were promptly sequestered by the angry civilian mob that had followed the military into the palace and they were dragged through the streets of Baghdad. The next day the body
of the newly-deposed Prime Minister, Nuri Al-Said, was added to the melee after he was discovered trying to flee Iraq dressed as a woman (Davis, 2005b: 109; Mackey, 2002: 154-155).

This moment marked a fundamental turn in Iraqi politics. It saw the nation proceed from the colonialism of the British and the hegemony of their installed Hashemite monarchy towards the emergence of various Post-colonial political discourses which seemed to carry with them the promise of a new Iraq. Clearly however, there were a number of competing visions of what this new Iraq should look like. Representing the fundamental schism which had long split secular Iraqi political movements, there were two main camps: the more left-wing Qasim had garnered the support of much of the military and the members of the ICP under the loose ideology of Iraqi nationalism, while Arif adhered to more of a Pan-Arab approach, attracting the orthodox members of the emerging Baathist movement (Lukitz, 1995: 136-142; Mackey, 2002: 181-185; Stansfield, 2007: 93). Given Qasim’s superior rank and broader initial support, he was the natural heir to the events of the coup d’etat and he quickly established a series of lofty goals for his incumbency, including his desire to

…increase and distribute the national wealth…to found a new society and a new democracy, to use this strong, democratic, Arabist Iraq as an instrument to free and elevate other Arabs and Afro-Asians and to assist the destruction of ‘imperialism,’ by which he largely meant British influence in the underdeveloped countries. (Curtis, 2004: 82)

While such goals were sadly never fully realised, Qasim’s leadership did foster the development of a nascent civil society made up of a myriad of political parties, professional associations, labour movements and intellectual groups “…in which political and civil discourse became commonplace” (Davis, 2005b: 16). In addition, the coffeehouses, which had long been associated with various political and artistic movements, continued their role as “…an important venue for innovative cultural and political discourse” (Davis, 2005b: 16). In terms of official developments, Qasim also took unprecedented steps to counter Iraqi sectarianism and sexism, including the involvement of Shias, Kurds, other ethnic and religious minorities and women at various levels of government (Davis, 2005a: 233; 2005b: 116, 118-119; Gran, 1996: 68; Stansfield, 2003: 67-69).
This diverse political climate also translated into the Iraqi media sector where the heavily partisan newspapers of Iraq generally enjoyed considerable autonomy and popularity. Although Qasim enacted various press restrictions in 1961, these were lightly enforced and several papers simply re-opened under a new masthead following their forced closure (Davis, 2005b: 16, 118, 143). Indeed, the early 1960s saw an upsurge in newspaper production across Iraq, with over 20 in Baghdad alone, approximately one-third of which had pro-Communist tendencies (Batatu, 1982 [1978]: 35; Davis, 2005b: 97; Rugh, 2004: 46-47) (see Table 3). Beyond the traditional format of the newspaper, Iraq also witnessed the novel visual pleasures of the television. Although television had been introduced to Iraq in 1956 (the same year as Sweden and Australia), the Hashemite monarchy had not fully grasped its persuasive political power probably because most broadcasts reached little further than the upper echelons of the state (Davis, 2005b: 125). However, with the arrival of television sets in a number of coffeehouses following the 1958 Revolution, the illiterate and poor Iraqi majority gained a new insight into the machinations of politics, both domestic and international (Davis, 2005b: 126). While Qasim initially used this new medium to broadcast the trials of corrupt members of the former regime, the television later became a format to continue the work of countering sectarianism and to encourage national unity (Davis, 2005d: 65; Tripp, 2007: 45). Overall, the television was

…a medium upon which the revolutionary regime relied heavily in its attempts to mobilise support. An obvious consequence of this new strategy was the increased significance of visual imagery in the process of ideological socialisation. Through the broadcast of parades, Qasim’s speeches, and other state-sponsored events, television also served the symbolic function of a substitute for the lack of participatory political institutions. (Davis, 2005b: 125)

Despite such attempts to garner wide public support, Qasim was ultimately undermined by his inability to form effective alliances with his own power base in the ICP and the NDP, as well as his failure to realise the importance of Pan-Arab ideology to many Iraqi citizens (Davis, 1998: 252-254; 2005b: 15, 116; Goode, 1975: 106). This created something of a power vacuum in which the disgruntled members of the ABSP were continuing to gather significant momentum with their vision of a
strong Iraq, the potential leader of a new Pan-Arab alliance. Seizing every opportunity, the ABSP repeatedly tried to assassinate Qasim with the first such attempt, occurring in 1959, involving a young and relatively unknown Baathist by the name of Saddam Hussein (Davis, 1998: 253; Mackey, 2002: 188; Stansfield, 2007: 93; Tripp, 2000: 158). Eventually, the ABSP was able to once again establish loyal cells in the Iraqi army and, on 8 February 1963, the Baathists and other Pan-Arabists seized Baghdad. General Qasim was executed the following day and the image of his body, lying prostrate in a pool of his own blood, was beamed out across Iraq on state television (Davis, 2005b: 137; Polk, 2005: 115; Stansfield, 2007: 93). It appears that the Baathists too had learned the political power of the television and it was therefore Qasim’s final appearance on Iraqi TV which was to be his most memorable.

The first ABSP government of Iraq was thus formed in 1963 under the leadership of Prime Minister Hasan Al-Bakr with Qasim’s partner in the 1958 coup, Colonel Arif, installed as President (Polk, 2005: 115; Stansfield, 2007: 93-94). In events that served as something of a preamble to the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein, the Baath Party promptly set about utilising their newfound powers to imprison, torture and execute what was left of Iraq’s nascent opposition movements, especially their long-time foes in the ICP (Davis, 1992: 81; 2005b: 137; Stansfield, 2007: 93-94; Tripp, 2000: 171). However, the power of the ABSP was short-lived as, by the end of the same year, Arif had arrested many of the senior members of the Baath and announced that the military would henceforth be administering the affairs of the state (Goode, 1975: 107). Indeed, this approach was to continue after Arif was killed in a helicopter accident in 1966 whereupon his brother, Abdur-Rahman Arif, succeeded him (Batatu, 1982 [1978]: 1027-1072; Polk, 2005: 116; Tripp, 2000: 185). In terms of democratic developments, “…the Arif regime made clear from the outset that democracy was not a serious option” (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 39). To ensure that they retained power, the Arif brothers also enacted a series of restrictive press laws which “…decreed that publications critical of the regime were to be censored and that their publishers would have their licenses revoked” (Bengio, 1998: 8) (see also: Rugh, 2004: 50).

Unfortunately, the political climate fostered under the consecutive regimes of the Arif brothers did little to encourage the establishment of moderate and legitimate political movements and arguably paved the way for the violent military coup d’etat in which
the ABSP finally ascended to authority in 1968 (Daragahi, 2003: 46; Seymour, 2004: 355). This time Hasan Al-Bakr (now installed as President) made sure that once the military had served its purpose in overthrowing Arif, it would be purged of any potential threats to the new regime (Stansfield, 2007: 94-95). Indeed, a brief struggle for power between the two allies in the coup, the military and the Baath, broke out with each of these bodies controlling one of the two major newspapers in Iraq at that time, *Al-Thawra* (*The Revolution*) and *Al-Jumhuriyya* (*The Republic*), respectively (Bengio, 2004: 110). This struggle for power was promptly decided in favour of the Baath, and served as another valuable lesson for the party regarding the power of the press.

They acted quickly. One of the Baath party’s first acts was to jail, charge and then execute Aziz Abdel Barakat who was both the head of the Journalist’s Union and the publisher of *Al-Manar* (*The Lighthouse*), one of the most professionally run and widely distributed dailies in Iraq at the time (Daragahi, 2003: 46, 50). Following this, in 1969 the Baath Party established a publications law which effectively made the media the fourth branch of the newly established government (Bengio, 1998: 8; Braude, 2003: 146). This saw the Iraqi media industry quickly transform into one that was “…more controlled, monolithic, mobilised and almost completely stripped of any critical approach” (Bengio, 2004: 110). This meant that by 1975 Iraq had only five daily newspapers, each of which was heavily influenced, if not completely controlled by the state (Rugh, 1979: 32) (see Table 4).

The media also served as a powerful forum in which the Baath party could manufacture and disseminate their own particular ‘discourse of democracy’. Indeed, from the very beginning of their ascendancy, the Baath sought to construct themselves as a force for democratic change in Iraq, their 1968 constitution claiming the nation was now a “…popular democratic state” (as cited in: Bengio, 1998: 57). As Bengio goes on to note, the Baath party asserted that their form of popular democracy was “…something broader, deeper, more stable, and healthier than Western democracy” (Bengio, 1998: 58). This is particularly evident in the state press, where newspapers such as *Al-Thawra* dutifully ran opinion editorials that reinforced the Baathist vision of democracy, claiming that “…the assumption that democracy means freedom of speech seems ridiculous to Iraqis” (*Al-Thawra* as cited in: Bengio, 1998: 61). The
same piece goes on to claim that the interpretation of democracy to mean “…the freedom of forming parties” was a “…bourgeois assumption” and that “The socialist revolution and the rule of the one socialist party [the Baath] have made nonsense of this unbalanced assumption” (Al-Thawra as cited in: Bengio, 1998: 61). In addition, the Baath also used the media to regularly wage attacks on Western liberal democracies but at the same time provided little in the way of rational critique or viable political alternatives (Bengio, 1998: 61). Similarly, the Baath utilised the press to differentiate themselves from their predecessors, employing the rhetoric of ‘Oriental despotism’ to explain away the dictatorships of Qasim and the Arif brothers and contrasting them against an image of the Baath as the peoples champion against oppression (Bengio, 1998: 64).

Concurrently, the little known Saddam Hussein was fast developing a reputation as a ruthless politician and cunning strategist that belied his quiet and aloof nature and his humble rural background. Having played a relatively small but quite strategic role in the ascension of the ABSP to power in 1968, Saddam now dutifully laboured behind the scenes, brilliantly transforming the Baath from a nominal party to a nation-wide phenomenon (Tripp, 2000:195-199). It is now well known that Saddam’s rise to power “…was marked by terror, coercion and purges of Baath party members” (Seymour, 2004: 355), that he went on to commit grievous crimes against his own citizens, especially the many religious and ethnic minorities of Iraq (Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 111-118; Makiya, 1993) and that he was one of the cruellerst and most tyrannical despots of modern times. What is perhaps less well known is that Saddam was also a powerful and charismatic politician, a master of a rhetoric that appealed directly to the ‘everyday’ Iraqi and an expert at image management (Al-Khalil, 1991; Bengio, 1998; Dawisha, 1999: 555-556; Mansfield, 1982). To best utilise these talents, Saddam Hussein set about a rigorous politico-discursive campaign that played out across the humble pages of the nation’s press. He began at the very earliest days of the regime by creating an aura of radical political change; he allowed several communist works to be translated into Arabic and appear in the nation’s press, he wrote his own neo-Marxist op-eds and he courted left-leaning intellectuals and activists, inviting them to play an active role in the new revolutionary Iraq (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 76). By shoring up his revolutionary credentials amongst the left and the broader Iraqi community, Saddam was gradually able to shift debate towards the
centralisation of power. With his popularity growing among many Iraqis, Saddam gradually felt secure enough to begin purging those who posed any particular threat to his vision, whether they were ideological opponents such as the ICP, ethnic separatists such as the Kurds, or fellow Baath party members with conflicting ideas or leadership potential (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 81).

In this way, Saddam had garnered his own loyal following and, when he pressured Bakr to stand-down in 1979, Bakr had little choice but to abdicate the Presidency to his young protégé (Polk, 2005: 118-119). With his goal finally realised, Saddam quickly set about modelling the nation’s media after other twentieth century totalitarian examples, such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (Bengio, 2004: 110). Although the nation retained its 5 daily newspapers under Saddam’s rule, he was quick to quash any lingering notions of freedom of the press by making sure that the entire media industry was folded under the authority of the government and that every working journalist was an active member of the ABSP (Hurrat & Leidig, 1994: 107; Tabor, 2002). This meant that each of Iraq’s papers soon became state-run propaganda instruments, dutifully reciting official policy and praising governmental action (Dawisha, 2004: 14). Saddam ensured that this occurred through rigorous and clandestine monitoring of the media as well as more banal and overt practices such as insisting that his photograph be featured daily on the front page and that each of his speeches was printed verbatim in the press (Bengio, 1998: 10-11, 78; Braude, 2003: 139-140).

In addition, Saddam was also keen to engineer a new image of himself as an enlightened and liberal-minded leader, one familiar with sophisticated political models such as democracy. Indeed, Saddam set up quasi-democratic institutions such as a Parliament that served as little more than a rubber-stamp to the decisions made by the ruling elite (Baram, 1989: 462; Bengio, 1998: 66). Such moves enabled him to further manipulate the national ‘discourses of democracy’ with the state media subsequently cataloguing Saddam’s claim that “Our party has implemented democracy…drawing on noble and eternal sources and origins compatible with the conscience of the people” (Al-Iraq as cited in: Bengio, 1998: 62). As Saddam became increasingly powerful and dictatorial even in the early days of his presidency, he was able to mirror earlier Baathist attempts to manufacture and manipulate a particular
image of democracy that both suited his own agenda and garnered support for his rule. Drawing on Barthes’ aforementioned essay, ‘Political Modes of Writing’, Bengio has argued that for the Baath, and especially Saddam Hussein, words became “…a smoke screen between the facts they purport to refer to and the impression they seek to create” (Bengio, 1998: 10).

During the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 Saddam allowed Iraq’s first Post-colonial parliamentary elections in 1980 and 1984. Despite the fact that these elections were unlikely to yield any genuine opposition to Baathist rule or a more robust role for the Parliament in Iraqi politics, the competition between candidates was fierce as winning a seat brought with it significant power, prestige and career prospects (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 69; Baram, 1989: 462). While these elections did see significant numbers of both Shia and Kurdish representatives achieve seats in the nation’s Parliament, the elections themselves appear to have been expressly designed by Saddam in order to confirm his commitment to democratisation and to garner consent for his war with Iran (Baram, 1989: 461-462). This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that all candidates had to be active ABSP members, were screened by the party prior to the approval of their running for office and were heavily scrutinized in the nation’s press throughout their campaign (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 69; Baram, 1989: 448).

In the contradictory terms typical of Saddam’s tenure, he appears to have had no issue with holding quasi-elections and discussing democracy at the same time as limiting press freedom in Iraq. For example, in 1986 he passed a handful of press laws which prohibited Iraqi journalists from writing articles on 12 specific subjects, including any criticism of the President and his policies, making such criticisms punishable by death ("Committee to Protect Journalists: Middle East and North Africa: Iraq," 2001; Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 120; Daragahi, 2003: 46). Here, Saddam made concerted efforts to point out the crucial role that the media played during times of war. Indeed, he appears to have seen the media as an essential part of Iraq’s military machine, dubbing them the ‘Information Corps’ (Bengio, 2004: 110). Despite this typically totalitarian approach to the media, articles did begin to appear throughout the 1980s in papers such as Al-Iraq and the newly launched Al-Qadissiya (the name of an
historic battle in 637 AD in which the Arabs defeated the Persians) which used subtle imagery to question the Baathist regime and its policies (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 85).

Immediately after the war, however, Saddam was faced with thousands of men returning from the frontline to an Iraq that had few employment opportunities awaiting them. Many of these citizens – particularly the already disenfranchised Shia and Kurds – began to revolt against Saddam’s authority and called for democratic reforms (Keeble, 1997: 12). Surprisingly, Saddam endorsed this movement, co-ordinating further parliamentary elections in 1989, seemingly because he believed that some form of public debate over democracy would enable his citizens to voice their grievances without subverting his authority. Not taking any chances however, Saddam implemented even tighter restrictions over these elections than their predecessors, requiring “…all candidates to have contributed to the war against Iran and to believe that it had resounded to the glory of Iraq” (Bengio, 1998: 68). These elections enabled Saddam to once again manipulate the ‘discourses of democracy’, labelling himself ‘the engineer of democracy’ or ‘the shepherd of democracy’ and making public statements such as “All democracy to the people, all liberty to the people, all rights to the people” (Al-Thawra as cited in: Bengio, 1998: 62). This had a parallel impact on the journalistic profession where the more daring media pundits took Saddam at his word and began to call for democratic reform and to once again subtly challenge and criticise various aspects of public life under Saddam (Bengio, 2004: 117-118). Included amongst this were various articles that postulated on the merits of democratic governance and freedom of speech, that criticised the Iraqi media sphere for not having maintained its journalistic integrity and that called for free and fair elections and a more robust democratic order (Bengio, 1998: 39-40, 62-64).

Due to the economic cost (not to mention the military and civilian cost) incurred by the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam urgently needed funds. On 2 August 1990 he decided to invade Iraq’s oil-rich neighbour, Kuwait, which had long been viewed as little more than an outpost of Basra, unfairly cut off from Iraq by first the Ottomans and then the British due to its important strategic value as an East-West trading port (Rahman, 1997). During the ensuing Gulf War, the meagre efforts and lip-service that Saddam paid to democratisation in the 1980s were promptly sidelined. As is to be expected, the Iraqi press rallied behind their President, beating the drums of war. Even the one
year anniversary of the Gulf War provided Al-Qadissiya with an opportunity to attack the United States, accusing them of having acted according to President Bush’s (Snr) ‘law of the jungle’. The article went on to critique the US for having misunderstood Iraq’s rich history, complex culture and unique politics, arguing that “We have Saddam Hussein and they have their democracy” (Al-Qadissiya as cited in: Bengio, 1998: 69).

Once again however, the Iraqi people and their will towards genuine democratic reform could not be suppressed and Saddam came under increasing domestic pressure immediately after the war (Bengio, 2004: 117). This led Saddam to conduct mock general elections in 1992 with the hope of placating a public that had now endured 23 years of Baathist rule and two wars. Not surprisingly, this democratic experiment “…was as brief as it was unconvincing” (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 102) as Saddam was unanimously ‘re-elected’ as Iraq’s ‘President for Life’. One of Saddam’s first acts was to have his eldest son, Udday Hussein promoted to the position of the Head of the Journalists’ Union31, leaving him responsible for the censorship and management of most of the nation’s media (Bengio, 1998: 8; 2004: 111; Daragahi, 2003: 47). Specifically, there were six official daily newspapers which all came under the jurisdiction of the newly appointed Uday as well as several official weekly papers, radio stations and television channels (see Table 4). The result of having his son in such a prestigious position was that Saddam could continue to manipulate the media at will. Indeed, if the rewards were high for those whose journalism adhered tightly to Baathist doctrine and the leadership of Saddam32, the punishment for those who did not was severe. In 1999 Udday went as far as personally sacking 1000 writers for not praising the President with the required enthusiasm (Bengio, 2004: 111). In

31 In 2000, the Journalists’ Union awarded Udday Hussein the rather suspect honour of ‘Journalist of the Century’ (Tabor, 2002).

32 Many Iraqi journalists who toed the official party line were able to ascend the political ladder. Perhaps the most successful example of this is an upwardly mobile Chaldean Christian by the name of Tariq Aziz, who began his political career as the editor-in-chief of Al-Jumhuriyya and then Al-Thawra, later receiving the post of Iraq’s Foreign Minister during the 1991 Gulf War and then Deputy Prime Minister until Saddam’s overthrow in 2003. (For more on the career of Tariq Aziz and examples of other journalists who climbed the Ba’athist ladder, see: Baram, 1989: 453, 479-480; Bengio, 1998: 8; Braude, 2003: 146-147; Rugh, 2004: 8.)
total, over 500 journalists, writers and intellectuals went missing or were executed during the rule of the ABSP according to one French human rights organisation, the International Alliance for Justice (as cited in: Daragahi, 2003: 46). Even those journalists who attempted to bring humour to the autocracy of Saddam faced heavy penalties with one writer arrested and then tortured for having written that Saddam cared about every last detail in Iraq, even the toilets (Whitaker, 2003).

With such extreme punishment handed out to journalists who were even remotely critical of the central authority in Baghdad, it is little wonder that Bengio describes the Iraqi media of this era as “…an omnipotent propaganda machine” which “…played the role of the Baath regime’s watchdog, thus contributing significantly to its survival and longevity” (Bengio, 2004: 109-110). However, the Iraqi state’s abolition of freedom of the press did not completely destroy the journalistic movement in Iraq. Many of those who desired to criticise Saddam and the Baath Party left the country and joined the growing ranks of the expatriate opposition press, while those who stayed were free to channel their talents and creativity into the means of conveying the official news to the populace (Braude, 2003: 146). Others pushed the envelope even further. Journalists at Nab Al-Shabab (’The Youth’), the weekly Udday-controlled newspaper of the Youth Union, got away with candidly criticizing Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and promoting opposition figures such as Ahmad Chalabi before Saddam cracked down and the newspaper’s staff were pushed out (Daragahi, 2003: 47-48). Davis also points out that, despite the control and manipulation that the Baath maintained over Iraq’s media sector and the broader culture industries, most Iraqis remained cynically aware of the “…subtexts of state cultural production” often rejecting them outright whilst maintaining a veneer of Baathist loyalty (Davis, 2005b: 23).

Even as recently as 2002, Saddam continued in his manipulation of democracy to meet his own ends. This time, he staged another sham Iraqi election, winning by 100% of the vote (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 7; Rugh, 2004: 34). Here, New York Times journalist John F. Burns reported on a number of “…small but remarkable” protests that broke out across Baghdad. He claimed that the protests were “…the most visible sign of a new and potentially seismic trend: a willingness among ordinary people to speak up” (Burns, 2002). Despite this, the official state media
welcomed the result: *Al-Thawra* claimed it as a sure sign of Iraqi unity behind the authority of their leader; Iraqi Satellite TV viewed it as a reply to US and Zionist hostility; *Iraq Daily* claimed it a better example of democracy than the bungled 2001 US election which brought President Bush to power; while one journalist at *Babil* opined that “…this pure and mature democratic practice in a besieged country, which is exposed to aggression every day, is the best proof of the ability, vitality and courage of this people” (Babil as cited in: "Iraqi media hails referendum result," 2002).

Politically, Saddam’s leadership effectively eroded much of Iraq’s long established civil society. The ranks of the nation’s numerous opposition movements began to thin as strict punishments were handed out to those affiliated with political parties other than the ABSP, including execution (Al-Musawi, 2006b: 79; Mansfield, 1982: 67; Stansfield, 2007: 97-98). Despite this however, various ethnic and religious political factions began to garner considerable momentum during the years of ABSP hegemony. Indeed, while Saddam’s regime can be seen to have been both brutal and despotic, there were many clandestine political movements at the time. Just like the Colonial era of British occupation and Hashemite hegemony, Saddam’s reign also brought a virulent culture of dissent and opposition. Here, the domestic politics of Iraq is convoluted by the vast number of religious and ethnic divides that do not neatly dissect the nation into a series of mutually exclusive groups. There are, as is now commonly known, three large ethno-religious groups in Iraq, the Shia Arabs, the Kurds and the Sunni Arabs as well as a number of smaller “…racial and religious minorities… [including] Turkomans, Persians, Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Jews, Yazidihs, Sabeans, and others” (Batatu, 1982 [1978]: 13). Within each of these broad categories are more intricate differences, with each sector capable of being further broken down by religious sects, varying ethnicities and cultural groups as well as political sub-categories.

For example, both religiously and ethnically, the Iraqi Kurds are not the homogenous entity that is so often assumed of them. It is often forgotten that the Kurds are largely Sunnis, but that there are also many Kurdish Christians, Kurdish Shiites (or Faili Kurds) and other ethno-religious minorities who have traditionally lived in their midst such as the Assyrians and the Yazidihs (Stansfield, 2003: 26-59). This diversity, coupled with the strong drive for independence amongst the Kurdish people, meant
that the Kurds were politically active in Iraq from as early as 1946 when famed guerrilla leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani established the first Iraqi political party based purely on ethnicity, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) (Stansfield, 2003: 66-67). However, it was not until 1970 that the Kurds were able to gain semi-autonomy from the Baathist government (McDowell, 2000 [1996]: 327-337). When the KDP was defeated by the Iraqi army in 1975, the left-leaning urban members of the party finally formed their own political organisation, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) with Jalal Talabani\textsuperscript{33} as their leader (McDowell, 2000 [1996]: 343; Stansfield, 2003: 79-86; Tripp, 2000: 212-213). However, the KDP quickly re-grouped under the leadership of Barzani’s son, Massoud Barzani\textsuperscript{34} and the rivalry between the two factions re-ignited (Stansfield, 2007: 67-68). During the Iran-Iraq War, the Kurds were caught in the cross-fire with Iran supplying sporadic military assistance and, by 1987, they again controlled much of northern Iraq. Not surprisingly, the Baath feared the re-emergence of an autonomous Kurdish region and they therefore attempted to wipe out Kurdistan in the brutal \textit{Al-Anfal} (‘The Spoils of War’) campaign (McDowell, 2000 [1996]: 357-363). This campaign, recently made famous via the trial and execution of Saddam Hussein, saw some 100,000 noncombatant Kurds killed, with the most infamous example being Saddam’s authorisation of the use of chemical weapons as a tool of genocide, effectively killing some 5,000 Kurdish civilians and maiming a further 7,000 in Halabja in 1988 (Chomsky, 2007 [2002]: 9; 2007 [2003]: 14; McDowell, 2000 [1996]: 358; Polk, 2005: 134-135; Rose & Baravi, 1998; Stansfield, 2003: 90).

Despite such egregious acts, the resolve of the Kurds remained strong and when Iraq was defeated in Kuwait in 1991, the Kurds waged a \textit{Rapareen} (‘Uprising’ in Kurdish) against the central government that brought with it both the tragedy of many Kurdish deaths and the benefit of limited autonomy within the Iraqi state (Stansfield, 2007: 131-135; Tripp, 2000: 253-259).

This newfound autonomy brought with it several elections, an independent parliament and local governance (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 155-183; Baram, 1998: 53; Davis, 2003: 3; Stansfield, 2007: 69). Indeed, from the end of the Gulf War in 1991 to

\textsuperscript{33} Jalal Talabani remains the leader of the PUK today and also serves as the State President of Iraq.

\textsuperscript{34} Today, Massoud Barzani is both the President of the Kurdish Regional Government and he remains the leader of the KDP.
the Iraq War of 2003, Iraqi Kurdistan not only gained autonomy from the central ABSP government, but also developed a considerably active public sphere. For example, the region was home to a gamut of non-official political parties, many of which controlled their own highly partisan newspapers, magazines, local TV channels and radio stations (RadioNetherland, 2003a) (see Table 5). These media outlets, ranging from the sophisticated efforts of the KDP and PUK through to the less remarkable ventures of smaller parties, were not only highly critical of Saddam and his Baghdad-based government, but also often asserted an alternative vision of Iraq that advocated Kurdish inclusion in a broader democratic state. In addition, Iraqi Kurdistan also saw the emergence of its first independent newspaper, *Hawlati* (‘Citizen’), which was widely esteemed for its objectivity and for its unreserved criticism of various Kurdish authority figures ("The New Iraqi Press," 2003; Osman, 2002). Iraqi Kurds also enjoyed unfettered access to satellite TV, while internet access was readily available at the regions three university campuses and the many internet cafés that dotted the cities. Collectively, the Kurdish public sphere from 1991 onwards was relatively free to debate Kurdish issues, to promote Kurdish history and culture and to foster various civil society movements across the region (Davis, 2005a: 235-236; Osman, 2002; Stansfield, 2003).

Despite the fact they have always been the majority in modern Iraq, the Shia have long been marginalised by the central Sunni-led government and therefore produced a number of active opposition movements. One such example is the enormous popularity of *Hizb Al-Da’wah Islamiyya*35 (‘The Islamic Calling’, or more commonly referred to as *Da’wah*, the ‘Calling’) founded in Najaf by Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr Al-Sadr sometime between the late 1950s-early 1960s and designed to combat the growing power of secular movements in Iraq such as the ICP and the ABSP (Davis, 2008: 14; Polk, 2005-114; Stansfield, 2007: 61; Tripp, 2000: 160). In fact the Da’wah party was to go on to have a substantial impact on the domestic politics of Iraq throughout the second half of the twentieth century, repeatedly challenging the central government, including several assassination attempts on Saddam Hussein and other senior ABSP members. Not surprisingly, Saddam banned

35 The Da’wah party is currently led by former Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim Al-Jaafari and its Secretary-General, Nuri Al-Maliki, is also the current Prime Minister of Iraq.
the organisation and, in 1980, he ordered the arrest, torture and execution of the movement’s founder, Grand Ayatollah Al-Sadr, for having supported the Shia-led Islamic Revolution in Iran (L. Anderson & Stansfield, 2004: 124-127). With their leadership uncertain, their membership outlawed and the onset of the Iran-Iraq War, many senior members of Da’wah fled to Tehran to form the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) in 1982 under the leadership of senior Iraqi cleric, Ayatollah Mohammad Bakir Al-Hakim36 (Baram, 1998: 52). From the safety of Iran, SCIRI was able to set up a number of radio stations that beamed into Iraq, each of which spoke directly to the nation’s Shia population, advocating the overthrow of the secular Baathist regime (see Table 6). To achieve this goal, SCIRI’s radio stations not only utilised the loaded rhetoric of Islamic terms such as Jihad (‘Holy War’) and the installation of Sharia law (‘Divine law’) but also rightly noted that a more democratic order in Iraq would provide considerable power to the majority Shia population.

As with the Kurds in the north, the southern Shia population also waged a considerable Intifada (‘Uprising’ in Arabic) at the conclusion of the Gulf War, beginning with a series of anti-Baathist demonstrations that saw several party members killed in Basra (Bengio, 1992: 7-8). Eventually, both the Da’wah and SCIRI parties joined the fractured melee and made the error of attempting to galvanise the resistance behind their vision of a Shia-led Islamic theocracy. This meant that the Shia uprising lost much of its initial impetus and when Saddam turned his forces against the rebels they were soon vanquished (Stansfield, 2007: 131-135; Tripp, 2000: 253-259). Nonetheless, both the SCIRI and Da’wah parties continued to wield significant, if unofficial, power across the Shia south. During the 1990s, the Da’wah movement continued under the authority of Bakr Al-Sadr’s brother-in-law, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sadiq Al-Sadr, a charismatic and militant leader who was assassinated in 1999, most likely under the direct orders of the central Baathist government (Stansfield, 2007: 61-62). The leadership of Da’wah then passed on to the young and

36 The SCIRI changed its name to the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC) in 2007 and is currently led by Sayyid Abd Al-Aziz Al-Hakim after his brother and former leader, Ayatollah Al-Hakim, was assassinated in Najaf in 2003 (Davis, 2008: 14; Karouny, 2007). Due to the fact that this study mostly concerns the period prior to the name change of SCIRI to SIIC, the party will be referred to as SCIRI throughout.
relatively unqualified fourth son of Sadiq, Moqtada Al-Sadr\textsuperscript{37} while the pre-eminent Shia title of Grand Ayatollah defaulted to a humble but increasingly powerful cleric by the name of Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani\textsuperscript{38}.

However, opposition to Saddam’s leadership was not limited to those premised on Kurdish ethnicity or Shia religiosity. For example, many of the dissident ex-Baathists and members of the armed forces began to form various oppositional political parties of their own. The first such example was the US and UK backed \textit{Al-Wifaq Al-Watani Al-Iraqi} (‘The Iraqi National Accord’ or INA), founded by Dr Iyad Allawi\textsuperscript{39} at the close of the Gulf War in 1991 (Polk, 2005: 163, 194; Stansfield, 2007: 136-138). Almost immediately the INA set up several popular radio stations that were beamed across Iraq, each of which advocated the overthrow of Saddam and the establishment of a democratic Iraqi state (see Table 7). The strength of these media outlets coupled with the various terrorist activities conducted by the INA during this period meant that by 1994 Allawi was planning a \textit{coup d’etat} which garnered enthusiasm and support from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Stansfield, 2007: 145). However, Saddam’s own secret services were able to infiltrate the ranks of the dissenters and, in 1996, Saddam all but crushed the INA by executing many of its senior members and

\textsuperscript{37} Moqtada Al-Sadr has no formal religious training, his renown as a theologian being inherited from his father rather than from his own education or expertise (Davis, 2008: 13). In addition, Al-Sadr holds no official political position within the Iraqi government. Despite these limitations, he continues to have enormous influence over Iraqi politics due to his legion of loyal followers, his political faction the Sadr Trend (or Sadrist Movement), the military strength of his Mahdi army (‘Guided One’) and the collection of media outlets his organisation controls. He has been vitriolic in his critique of the American invasion and occupation of Iraq and continues to call for their withdrawal.

\textsuperscript{38} Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani comes from a long line of well-respected Shia theologians. He has gradually ascended the ranks of the clergy to become the pre-eminent Shia cleric in Iraq today. Despite his practise of a quietist version of the Shia faith, he continues to have an enormous impact over post-Saddam Iraq, including his issuing of several fatwa’s calling for his clergymen to get involved in local politics and his edict encouraging the Shia – including women – to vote.

\textsuperscript{39} Dr Allawi is a Shi’a whose vicious reputation saw him climb the ladder to become a high-ranking Baathist intelligence officer before splitting with the party in 1970. Allawi survived the Baathist attack on the INA in 1996, fleeing Iraq only to return in 2003 as a member of the US-installed Iraqi Interim Governing Council and later serving as Interim Prime Minister from June 2004 until April 2005 when the Iraqi National Assembly elected his replacement, the Da’wah leader, Ibrahim Al-Jaafari.

Another US funded opposition movement that played a significant role in Iraqi politics of the late Post-colonial period was the Iraqi National Congress (INC), founded in 1992. Headed by Dr Ahmed Abdel Hadi Chalabi40, the INC was designed specifically by the CIA in the interest of creating cohesion and a collective purpose amongst Iraq’s feuding opposition groups (Stansfield, 2007: 137). Due to the fact that the Clinton administration had such high expectations of Chalabi and his ability to amalgamate Iraq’s opposition, garner popular support and pose a serious threat to the hegemony of Saddam, they invested heavily in promoting Chalabi across Iraq. This included USD6 million for the creation of a small media empire which included, among other things, a popular television station (see Table 7). Issuing blatant anti-Saddam, pro-democracy propaganda, the INC sought to erode Saddam’s support from within the Iraqi military, to promote Chalabi as an alternative head of state, to work in the favour of US regional interests and to mobilise dissent against the incumbent regime. Although the INC and its media were largely unable to succeed in these monumental tasks, they were able to wage a series of successful attacks against Iraqi forces in 1995 alongside Talabani’s PUK forces, but this rebellion, like that of the INA, was quickly crushed by Saddam (Baram, 1998: 55-56; Stansfield, 2007: 145, 148).

In concluding this section on Post-colonial Iraq it is important to note that despite the withdrawal of the British and the usurpation of the Hashemite monarchy, Iraq did not emerge as a genuine democracy with typically democratic institutions such as

40 Born to a prominent Shia family of Baghdad, Chalabi left Iraq with his family and studied mathematics in the United States. In the lead up to the 2003 War, he supplied suspect information to the Bush administration regarding Iraq’s alleged stockpile of WMD (J. Klein, 2005: 25). At one point, Chalabi was the favourite of the Pentagon and it was assumed that he had popular support within Iraq and would easily ascend the political hierarchy to lead the nation. However, after having served as Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister throughout much of 2005, Chalabi failed to win a single seat following the December 2005 election. Today he is under investigation by several United States departments for embezzling funds, he remains wanted by the Jordanian authorities on allegations of bank fraud and he is suspected of having revealed US military codes to Iran (Abdullah, 2006: 108; Polk, 2005: 194).
legitimate opposition parties, a functioning parliament and a free press. Indeed, while many of Iraq’s Post-colonial regimes promised such institutions, these were generally empty promises designed to gain political advantage rather than broaden participation. Similarly, the media industry of Iraq, which tended to be used for authoritarian purposes, served more as the duty bound propaganda machine of each respective regime than the watchdog of a functioning democracy. Indeed, there can be no defending the hegemony of Qasim, Arif, Bakr or Saddam, each of whom in their own way brought Iraq closer to models of governance aligned with notions of ‘Oriental despotism’. Of course, this obfuscates to some degree the actual developments that did occur during this era, including Qasim’s attempts to ameliorate the differences between the myriad of religious and ethnic factions in Iraq as well as his moves towards empowering Iraqi women.

However, any ground made by Qasim towards democracy was promptly reneged by first the Arif brothers and then the Baath, particularly under the leadership of Saddam Hussein. Indeed, of all Iraq’s Post-colonial regimes, the Baath was the most adept at manipulating the national ‘discourses of democracy’ to their advantage. They cleverly navigated between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ by arguing that their growing autocracy was in fact a superior democratic form, one that was better suited to the Iraqi people than Western versions and eschewed the despotism of earlier Iraqi regimes. This subtle politico-discursive strategy not only ensured the Baath received broader initial consent to its hegemony than previous governments, it also enabled them to suppress various democratic institutions by arguing that they were Western and therefore not compatible with Iraqi political culture (Davis, 2005a: 240).

However, by further manipulating the ‘discourses of democracy’ while at the same time taking increasingly oppressive measures against his people, Saddam effectively created the environ in which a wide range of subversive and clandestine political movements emerged. This is perhaps best illustrated by the popularity of both Kurdish and Shia led political movements and their media outlets. These two are particularly striking not only because they represent approximately 80% of Iraq’s population (the Shia make up approximately 60%, while the Kurds are roughly 20%), but that they both adamantly opposed the “…Arab nationalist narrative emanating from Baathist Iraq, and both increasingly mobilised to promote their own visions of Iraqi
nationalism in clear competition with the Sunni-Arab dominated vision held by the Baath” (Stansfield, 2007: 97). Beyond the efforts of the Kurds and the Shia there were the moderate successes of secular, US-backed opposition movements such as the INA and INC. At the very least this complex web of oppositional politics and their respective media outlets indicates that while the Baath maintained a rigid political hegemony enforced via extensive acts of violence and persecution, there existed beneath this a vast and substantial political network associated with those disenfranchised by the central government. Whether premised on ethnicity, religiosity or political dissent, the oppositional movements in Iraq during the time of the Baath constituted a lively, if clandestine, public sphere that is evidenced not only via their varied media outlets, their political resistance and their alternative visions of a democratic Iraqi state, but also by the highly critical role that many of the aforementioned figures (such as Talabani, Barzani, Sistani, Sadr, Allawi and Chalabi) have played in the political landscape of post-Saddam Iraq (see Chapter 6).

This more complex picture of Post-colonial Iraq is particularly interesting when juxtaposed against the image of Iraqi politics that emerged in the Western mainstream media from the Gulf War until the beginning of the current war in 2003. While on the one hand, the Western media at times rightly emphasised the despotism of Saddam, the problem here is the extension of this discourse to the broader Iraqi population and the implication that they were simply incapable of democracy. Instead, as the Post-colonial era reveals, the will of the Iraqi people towards a more representative and egalitarian political structure remained strong despite the increasingly oppressive and totalitarian nature of the state. To paraphrase Foucault, in Post-colonial Iraq, especially under the rule of the Baath, a complex matrix of intersecting discourses arose in opposition to the centralised power structures and constructed knowledges of the dominant episteme.
Conclusion

A rudimentary analysis of Iraqi political history throughout the Colonial and Post-colonial periods might well view each of these eras as the very epitome of ‘Oriental despotism’. On the surface the succession of installed kings, military strong-men and Baathist tyrants resonates with the age-old discourse that the Middle East is not only a backward and barbaric wasteland, but also a region unable to democratise. However, a more sophisticated reading of the political history of Iraq during these two eras reveals the complexity of the situation as is perhaps best viewed via the web of covert opposition parties and their media outlets. Indeed, the Colonial and Post-colonial periods of Iraqi history also enable a more detailed assessment of the long-held binary between the discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. Firstly, the Colonial period problematises this traditional distinction by revealing the despotic potential of the British Empire and its nominated monarchy, a typically Orientalist image where the colonial forces maintain hegemony over their oppressed subalterns. Beneath the surface however, we find an Iraqi population engaged in a smouldering resistance and a thriving debate over the future of the fledgling nation. Here, Iraq’s many newspapers were central to propagating this discussion, providing a voice to the myriad of political, religious and ethnic factions that opposed the occupation and its installed monarchy, calling for a democratic Iraq. Post-colonial Iraq, on the other hand, reveals both Iraq’s liberation from foreign interference and, at the same time, the continued oppression of the Iraqi people via the succession of increasingly autocratic Sunni despots who ruled out of Baghdad. Again however, beneath the hegemony of figures such as Bakr or Saddam and their manipulation of the ‘discourses of democracy’ to justify their autocracy, we find a complex Iraqi public sphere where varying ethno-religious and political faction have long asserted alternative visions of Iraq via counter-hegemonic discourses.

What is particularly interesting here is that the clandestine Iraqi media, from as far back as the late Ottoman period through to the subversive media that existed under the rule of Saddam, has consistently served to bolster the Iraqi public sphere. It has provided a forum for diverse debate, discourse and deliberation, it has routinely played a watchdog role in criticising the incumbent government and served to
mobilise the Iraqi people against oppression and injustice. While this is not
democracy in the pure sense of the people’s direct involvement in the affairs of the
state, it indicates the degree to which the will towards democratic governance and
egalitarian politics is present within Iraqi culture, history and society. It is worth
remembering here the long and bloody struggle towards democracy in many Western
nations and the role that the free press played in fostering this struggle, particularly in
Britain, France and the United States. Similarly, the Colonial and Post-colonial
periods and the complexity of political parties and media outlets that one finds at
work here, provide insight into the democratic potential of Iraq. It constructs for us an
alternative history in which the Iraqi people have proven themselves to be remarkably
sophisticated in their dissent, intolerant of tyranny and oppression, and desirous of a
robust democratic order.
Chapter 6: Discourses of Democracy in Re-Colonial Iraq

The images we possess of the current political situation in Iraq are somewhat distorted. To be sure, kidnapping, political violence and sabotage of oil facilities are ongoing and present a serious threat to political stability... However, there is another reality that has been largely being ignored by the Western media. Very little mention has been made of the myriad examples of Iraqis who, since the fall of Saddam and the Baath, have been actively involved in civic life - such as establishing municipal councils, publishing newspapers and journals, and forming artistic organizations - and who are committed to working for democratic change. (Davis, 2005a: 241)

The Re-colonisation of Iraq

Since the invasion and occupation of Iraq by the Coalition of the Willing in 2003, the political situation in Iraq has so often been reported in conjunction with the violence and atrocities which continue to ravage the nation that the politics and violence have become difficult to disentangle from one another. While it is worth noting that much of the violence is inherently political in nature, violence is by no means the only form of political expression in Iraq. One might argue that the coverage of violence has largely obfuscated the positive political developments there and stories of egalitarian political movements or of the successes amongst Iraq’s public sphere are lost amid the Western media’s reliance on a seemingly endless reel of bloodshed, chaos and political failures. As the central aim of the project being undertaken here is to problematise and scrutinise such Orientalist discourses via a close examination of Iraq’s history, it is necessary to re-examine and re-interpret the developments of post-Saddam Iraq.

Of specific interest here is the fact that, as we have seen, a number of academics and journalists have relied on the age-old binary between the discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ in their discussion of the elections and referendum that occurred across Iraq in 2005. Aside from emphasising the ongoing violence and the disagreements between Iraq’s various ethno-religious groups, much
of this coverage argued that Iraq simply lacked the social and political prerequisites necessary to build towards democratic forms of governance. This is perhaps best evidenced by the coverage of the events of 2005 in *The Australian* which did not manage to move beyond the reductive and simplistic framework of ‘Oriental despotism’ to offer a more varied and nuanced assessment of the political history of Iraq or the positive developments of the time (Isakhan, 2005a, 2006a, 2006c, 2007b, 2008c). However, to say that this kind of Orientalist coverage was limited to *The Australian* would seriously underestimate the pervasiveness of this discourse in the broader Western mainstream media. To cite just one example, *USA Today* published an editorial by former US army officer, Ralph Peters, in which he both brings to the fore classically Orientalist rhetoric about the incompatibility of the Middle East and democracy while at the same time all but absolving the United States of any wrongdoing. He writes:

Yet, for all our errors, we did give the Iraqis a unique chance to build a rule-of-law democracy. They preferred to indulge in old hatreds, confessional violence, ethnic bigotry and a culture of corruption. It appears that the cynics were right: Arab societies can't support democracy as we know it… Iraq was the Arab world's last chance to board the train to modernity, to give the region a future, not just a bitter past. The violence staining Baghdad's streets with gore isn't only a symptom of the Iraqi government's incompetence, but of the comprehensive inability of the Arab world to progress in any sphere of organized human endeavour. We are witnessing the collapse of a civilization. (Peters, 2006)

Clearly, such Orientalist coverage of Iraq and its purported inability to democratise rely on assumptions not only about the benighted nature of the Orient, but also about the Occident and its tendency to democracy. Here, democracy is construed as something altogether Western, a gift from the pinnacle of human civilisation to the savages. That the Iraqis are unable to democratise is not the fault of the invading and occupying forces of the West, nor of the political system they tried to install, but is indicative of the backward and barbaric nature of the people.

This line of thinking not only invokes the colonial period in Iraq and elsewhere but, as several scholars have recently noted, the Orientalist discourses surrounding the invasion and occupation of Iraq raise a number of very interesting questions for the field of Post-colonial studies (Bartolovich, 2006; Desai & Nair, 2005a; Gopal &
Lazarus, 2006; Gregory, 2004; Lazarus, 2006; Loomba, Kaul, Bunzl, Burton, & Esty, 2005a; Spencer, 2006). This work was cleverly pre-empted by the controversial British-Pakistani scholar, Tariq Ali, shortly after the beginning of the war in both his essay and book centred around what he refers to as the ‘Re-colonisation’ of Iraq (T. Ali, 2003a, 2003b). In these works Ali argues that the invasion and occupation of Iraq not only represent the re-colonisation of this particular sovereign nation-state by Western powers, but also mark a return to the broader colonial project “…that was disrupted by the twentieth century and is now back on course” (T. Ali, 2003a: 185).

Along similar lines, Derek Gregory utilises a critical theoretical perspective that draws on the works of Benjamin, Althusser, Foucault and Said to discuss what he calls *The Colonial Present* in the context of Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq (Gregory, 2004). He argues that the events of September 11 have been “…used by Washington, London, and Tel Aviv to advance a grisly colonial present (and future)” (Gregory, 2004: 13) where the ‘War on Terror’ marks a violent return to “…the colonial past, with its split geographies of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ ‘civilisation’ and ‘barbarism,’ ‘Good’ and ‘Evil’” (Gregory, 2004: 11). In terms of the discipline of Post-colonial studies, Gregory calls for an active understanding of the colonial nature of contemporary events (Gregory, 2004: xiv-xv), a thorough investigation into the notion of Post-colonialism and its “…precocious prefix” (Gregory, 2004: 6) and, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the constitutive value of Post-colonial studies which “…reveals the continuing impositions and exactions of colonialism in order to subvert them: to examine them, to disavow them, and dispel them” (Gregory, 2004: 9).

These sentiments are reiterated in the introductory essays of several recent edited collections on Post-colonial studies (Desai & Nair, 2005a; Gopal & Lazarus, 2006; Loomba et al., 2005a). For example, Priyamvada Gopal and Neil Lazarus have recently outlined the tensions, challenges and urgency required in the field of Post-colonial studies given contemporary global events such as the ongoing occupation of Iraq (Gopal & Lazarus, 2006). Take for example their recent editorial which opens by claiming that

The impetus driving this special issue of [well respected Cultural Studies journal] *new formations* is our conviction that the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq represent a watershed for postcolonial studies. Actually, our
premise should be stated in bolder terms than this. We believe that the invasion and occupation of Iraq present a challenge to postcolonial studies of such magnitude and importance that practitioners in the field are not free to rise to it. Where postcolonial studies is concerned, the invasion of Iraq must have as its consequence a fundamental change in the framing assumptions, organising principles and intellectual habits of the field. (Gopal & Lazarus, 2006: 7)

Later in this same issue, Robert Spencer elucidates his concerns by arguing that the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq not only brings to the fore each of the above issues and challenges but also illustrates the fact that the imperialist / colonialist project has been reinvigorated by an “…expanding American hegemony, extending corporate power and hijacking international institutions of governance” (Spencer, 2006: 52). Here, the author takes to task the field of Post-colonial studies itself, arguing that despite all of the valuable work that it has contributed, it has overall made too little effort “…to offer social and political alternatives that might serve to lead us away from a still operative imperialism” (Spencer, 2006: 61). For Spencer, as with many of his colleagues, the war in Iraq offers a unique opportunity for Post-colonial studies to not only re-assert its critique of systems of hegemony and subjugation, but also to offer alternative, counter-hegemonic narratives that unhinge the discourses which underpin their normative claims and perceived legitimacy.

However, despite the strength of this body of scholarship and the weight of the issues and concerns that it raises, it falls short of actively addressing these concerns via a more thorough examination of the developments of post-Saddam Iraq. Therefore, in order to address both the ongoing hegemony over Iraq by the ‘Re-colonial’ forces and to document the alternative ‘discourses of democracy’ emanating from within Iraq, this chapter builds on the preceding chapter and extends its examination of the critical role that the media has played in Iraq since 2003. It begins by providing a brief overview of the post-Saddam media landscape which has seen Iraq shift from having only a handful of state-run propaganda outlets, to a diverse media environment made up of an impressive number of Iraqi-owned and controlled newspapers, television channels and radio stations which are being fervently produced and avidly consumed across the nation. In addition, this chapter outlines the various problems and controversies that continue to plague the Iraqi media sector, focusing specifically on the extensive interference of both foreign and domestic political bodies. Not
surprisingly, the United States has been the most active, using both overt and clandestine propaganda methods as well as forced closure to exert its hegemony over the Iraqi media sector. Despite the seriousness of these issues, this chapter goes on to argue that there are several reasons to be optimistic about the media of post-Saddam Iraq and the role that it can play in this nascent democracy. For example, the Iraqi media played a decisively positive role during the series of elections and the referendum that occurred throughout Iraq in 2005, where the myriad Iraqi voices not only encouraged the people to vote but combined to provide a rich array of debate and information on key policies, politicians and parties in the lead up to the elections. It is this distinction between US attempts at media hegemony on the one hand, and the Iraqi people’s will towards democracy on that other, which provide a particular challenge to the traditional dialectic between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’.
The Re-colonial Iraqi Media: A Brief Overview

With the fall of Baghdad on 9 April 2003, Iraq’s media environment was changed forever. Almost overnight it transformed from Saddam’s tightly controlled propaganda machine to one of the freest media environments on earth (Zanger, 2005: 106). By the end of the month, the Iraqi Ministry of Information had been abolished and its 7,000 employees suddenly found themselves without regular income (Zanger, 2005: 107). These former state media pundits carried with them their years of experience communicating – albeit under tight controls – with the Iraqi people. In addition, Iraq also witnessed an influx of expatriates, refugees and newcomers, who brought an invaluable and divergent knowledge base gained from living in liberal democracies where they had no doubt witnessed first hand the function of the Fourth Estate. The evidence of their fervent labour and newfound freedom was soon to be seen on the streets of Baghdad where, by the end of May 2003, approximately 100 news publications and a handful of new broadcast outlets were available, while others were launched concurrently in Basra, Kirkuk and Mosul (Daragahi, 2003: 46). These numbers increased substantially throughout the year. By the middle of 2003, Iraq was home to more than 20 radio stations, between 15 and 17 Iraqi-owned television stations, and approximately 200 Iraqi-owned and run newspapers across the entire country, with smaller regional towns such as Najaf boasting more than 30 newspapers in a city of only 300,000 people (Finer, 2005; Gerth, 2005; The press in Iraq,” 2005; RadioNetherland, 2003h; Whitaker, 2003; Zanger, 2005: 107). Indeed, Iraqis were so keen for undoctored news that entire sections of Baghdad’s sidewalk, for example, were taken up by street vendors who laid the myriad publications out across the pavement, many of which were sold out by early afternoon (Dawisha, 2005c: 735; A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media, 2003: 7; Oppel Jnr, 2003). Similarly, the citizens of Iraq flocked to local retailers who had managed to import scores of Satellite dishes and despite costing around USD200 (more than the average annual salary of Iraq at the time), Iraqis were keen to tune in to more than 300 regional satellite channels and the growing number of indigenous TV stations (Cochrane, 2006; A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media, 2003: 7; Oppel Jnr, 2003; Price, 2003).
Given that the United States had long supported clandestine opposition media in Iraq, not to mention its extensive Psychological Operations (‘PsyOps’) campaign throughout the 1990s (Myers, 1999; Sussman, 2005), it is of little surprise that they, along with the United Kingdom, made a substantial effort to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of Iraq and the broader Middle East in the lead up to and during the war (Rutherford, 2004; Taylor, 2003; Van Ham, 2003), including the launch of a number of Iraq-aimed radio stations (see Table 8). The day after the fall of Baghdad, the coalition forces began broadcasting their own television station, *Nahwa Al-Hurrieh* (‘Towards Freedom’), from onboard a purpose built Command Solo plane, launched by personal messages from both US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair (Feuilherade, 2003a; RadioNetherland, 2003c; Rutherford, 2004: 60; ‘Towards Freedom TV’: A Channel Targeting the Iraqis, launched by Messages from Blair and Bush," 2003). With the arrival of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) on 21 April, came the resurrection of Saddam’s Ministry of Information which was renamed the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) (Rugh, 2004: 116) and was directly responsible for a plethora of new Iraqi media outlets (see Table 9). Most of these media outlets were then handed over to the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) with its ascension to power on 28 June 2004. Although such media are currently somewhat co-opted by the incumbent Shia and Kurdish political groups, the removal of direct US control saw them gain in both credibility and popularity among many Iraqis to the point where the state-run media now represent some of the most widely consumed and well respected media in the country (Al-Deen, 2005; Al-Marashi, 2007: 106; Cochrane, 2006; Finer, 2005; Metcalf, 2006; RadioNetherland, 2005).

However, most of Iraq’s television stations, radio stations and newspapers were not started by the CPA or the Iraqi Government but by the seemingly countless political parties, religious factions and / or ethnic groups of post-Saddam Iraq, each of which is jostling for support and legitimacy in the nation’s struggle from despotism to democracy (Cochrane, 2006; Ghazi, 2006; The press in Iraq," 2007). Given the long and complex political history of each of these groups, it is not at all surprising that the freeing up of the Iraqi media sector following the coalition invasion witnessed the arrival of a highly partisan media, geared towards the stated policies and agendas of Iraq’s divergent ethno-religious and political scene (Harmston, 2003). As Ibrahim Al-Marashi points out, the Iraqi media sector has witnessed the rise of various ethno-
sectarian “…media empires” which have evolved into “…quite a pervasive element in Iraq’s Fourth Estate” (Al-Marashi, 2007: 104).

Perhaps foremost among these groups are the Kurdish people of northern Iraq who, despite achieving some level of autonomy following the Gulf War of 1991, have risen to unprecedented levels of political power since the end of the Baathist regime in 2003 (A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media, 2003: 10). This has seen a credible expansion of the media controlled by Iraqi Kurdistan’s two main political factions, the KDP and the PUK (see Tables 10 and 11). In addition to this, various other Kurdish political parties control their own media outlets, including those run by the Communist party of Iraqi Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Toilers Party, and the Action Party for the Independence of Kurdistan among others (see Table 12). Finally, the Kurdish media landscape also includes a variety of well regarded ‘independent’ organs which have played an active role in reporting on the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of post-Saddam Iraq, including those which deal exclusively with women’s issues (see Table 13).

Similarly, the myriad Shia political groups have achieved an exceptional level of political authority in post-Saddam Iraq thanks to the loyalty of their followers. The two largest Shia parties, Da’wah and SCIRI, have rapidly ascended the post-Saddam political hierarchy to become amongst the more powerful groups in Iraq today, controlling several media outlets which promote their respective ideology and agenda (see Tables 14 and 15). The son-in-law of Da’wah’s founder, Moqtada Al-Sadr, has also garnered considerable political power in post-Saddam Iraq in part because of the collection of media outlets his organisation controls (see Table 16). Likewise, smaller media empires are controlled by the loyal followers of the formal head of the Shia religious faith, the powerful Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, members of Iraqi Hizbullah, the Supreme Council for the Liberation of Iraq (SCLI), the Islamic Action Organisation and the renowned Shia cleric Ayatollah Hadi Al Moderassi (see Table 17). In addition the predominately Shiite south of Iraq is also home to several ‘independent’ regional television and radio stations and a handful of newspapers, the political persuasion of which remain unclear (see Table 18).
The Sunni Arab population of Iraq entered both the political and media landscape of the Re-colonial era at a relatively late stage. Although the Sunnis did develop some oppositional movements during the Baath regime, such as the Iraqi Islamic Party, these had generally been of a much smaller magnitude than those of the disenfranchised Kurdish and Shiite populations. However, post-Saddam Iraq is home to several Sunni political parties including the aforementioned Iraqi Islamic Party as well as the Unified National Movement, the General Dialogue Conference and the Association of Muslim Scholars, all of which amalgamated to form the *Al-Tawafuq* Front (‘The Accordance Front’) in 2005 in order to contest the December elections (Al-Marashi, 2007: 111). Individually, each of the separate Sunni parties controls its own media outlets however, it is those controlled by their coalition, the Al-Tawafuq Front, which have arguably proved the most effective if somewhat controversial (see Table 19).

Caught in the political and sectarian cross-fire of post-Saddam Iraq, smaller ethno-religious minorities, such as the Turkomans, the Assyrians and the Faili Kurds (Shiite Kurds) are often forgotten alongside the three larger ethno-sectarian groups of Iraq. Sadly, their position in post-Saddam Iraq is difficult to say the least. While they have achieved some political success via their inclusion in various allegiances and coalitions with the larger groups, on the ground they have been the victims of much harassment and violence (Isakhan, 2005b, 2005c). Despite these problems, they have managed to produce several effective media outlets (see Table 20).

Beyond the political parties and media outlets of these ethno-religious groupings, are those which do not officially hold such allegiances and claim to be both secular and inclusive. Among the more influential of these is the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), which was once responsible for some of the most dynamic and widely read publications in Iraq. Today, the ICP controls a handful of media outlets, as does the Workers Communist Party of Iraq. In addition to these communist parties both the Iraqi National Accord (INA) and Iraqi National Congress (INC), had the experience and the funding to freely publish and distribute their organs in the new Iraq (see Table 21). Beyond these parties are those that explicitly support singular political or religious ideologies. These include various Islamic political groups, several nationalistic parties, a number of Iraqi parties that claim to be liberal-democratic, and
other political parties such as the Arab Socialists, the Royal Constitutional Movement, and the Pan-Arab Movement. In the initial media frenzy of post-Saddam Iraq, a number of these smaller political parties produced relatively insignificant newspapers which either folded along with their respective party or were left by the wayside as the party amalgamated into one of the more prominent factions.

Thankfully, these publications have been joined by those which claim to be free of any specific political, religious or sectarian allegiance and desire to report the news in a professional and objective manner. While objectivity and independence are difficult issues even for the best regarded Western media outlets, there is an impressive array of Iraqi media, from terrestrial TV stations to blogs, which at the very least attempt to uphold the kind of standards epitomised by a free press, even if occasional and subtle biases can be detected (see Table 22). In addition, Iraq has also seen the production of publications sponsored by various journalist collectives and publishing houses, several sports bulletins, arts and culture magazines, a few industry related organs, several children’s and student magazines, comedic publications containing sharp political satire and still others which resemble the tawdry British tabloids, detailing local and international gossip and entertainment news as well as featuring pictures of scantily clad women ("Iraqi Media," 2004; The New Iraqi Press," 2003).

As is to be expected, there are enormous variations in quality and life-span across this complex media sphere, ranging from the highly sophisticated and professional outlets to the short-lived hackneyed efforts of clearly biased individuals pandering to a sympathetic few. It is therefore increasingly difficult to keep track of such a dynamic media landscape and the details found in this chapter (and the respective tables) therefore represent the key media outlets rather than an exhaustive study. Given such difficulties the following draws upon various academic journal articles, policy papers, websites and newspaper reports concerning the media of post-Saddam Iraq. In addition, this chapter relies heavily on Iraqi media archives that were collated and translated into English by the BBC’s One Day in Iraq project, RadioNetherland’s Iraq Media Dossier and especially that of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq’s (UNAMI) Iraqi Media Monitoring. While it is important to acknowledge here that such sources cannot represent the entire spectrum of Iraqi media since 2003, they nonetheless provide a valuable resource given the various issues, risks and costs
associated with studying the post-Saddam Iraqi media. Also, despite the prevalence and importance of Iraqi produced websites they have been omitted here due to a variety of limitations including available translations, sporadic publication schedules, dubious quality and accuracy and the highly subjective nature of many sites\textsuperscript{41}. In addition, it is also worth noting that there are many radio stations, websites, television channels and newspapers that are produced outside Iraq’s borders but are designed specifically for an Iraqi audience. Foremost among these are some of Iraq’s better television stations, funded and run by Iraqi expatriates now living in other countries across the Arab region (Al-Marashi, 2007: 118-122; RadioNetherland, 2005). Despite the fact that these stations, along with regional channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya (‘The Arab’), are hugely popular in Iraq, the interest of this study is the indigenous media of Iraq, particularly those that have emerged or strengthened since the fall of Saddam in 2003.

\textsuperscript{41} However, some web addresses have been included in the relevant tables where available.
**Mediated Hegemony: Interference in the Iraqi media**

As is to be expected, there are several problems that have accompanied such a divergent, ad-hoc and highly volatile media landscape. There have, however, only been a handful of scholarly studies which have attempted to document and analyze these problems and to discuss the enormous impact they are having on Iraq’s fledgling public sphere (Abedin, 2006; Al-Deen, 2005; Al-Marashi, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Barker, 2008; Cochrane, 2006; Isakhan, 2006e, 2007c, 2008b, 2008d, 2008e, 2009a). Perhaps most disconcerting is the fact that, as of 2006, a series of policy papers and newspaper reports began to argue that Iraq’s complex and highly partisan media landscape may actually serve to enhance the ethno-sectarian lines which divide Iraqi society (Abedin, 2006; Al-Marashi, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Ghazi, 2006; Kimmage & Ridolfo, 2007; Metcalf, 2006; Roug, 2006). Foremost among these is a series of papers by Ibrahim Al-Marashi in which he warns that such media diversity may well be “…providing the psychological groundwork for bitter divisiveness and conflict” (Al-Marashi, 2007: 99), the kind which preceded the media inspired genocide found in Rwanda of the 1990s (Al-Marashi, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). This is evidenced, according to Al-Marashi, in the content aired by the controversial satellite channel, *Al-Zawra* (‘The Curved [City]’ – Baghdad, sharing the same name as the Ottoman paper of the late nineteenth century, the state-controlled Baathist organ of the twentieth century and the post-2003 organ of the Iraqi Journalist Union). This station has regularly urged Iraqis to join the fight against the occupation and shows footage of successful insurgent attacks against US and Iraqi forces (Al-Marashi, 2007: 113-117), leading Al-Marashi to dub the station a “…platform for insurgents” (Al-Marashi, 2007: 113). It is the case of *Al-Zawra* that Al-Marashi believes “…represents a worse case scenario for the Iraqi media” and that it is entirely “…plausible that a channel owned by other political, ethno-sectarian factions, or even an independent channel, could undergo a similar transformation” (Al-Marashi, 2007: 117).

The issue of the Iraqi media’s role in ethno-sectarian conflict aside, employment as a journalist is still an extremely dangerous profession in Iraq as US occupation, foreign insurgents and sectarian strife continue to ravage the country. Indeed, in 2005 the
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) listed Iraq as the most dangerous country in the world for journalists (as cited in: Hama-Saeed, 2007). In 2006, the Iraqi Journalists Association (IJA), the Arab Press Freedom Watch (APFW) and the Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontieres ("Reporters Without Borders" or RWB) called on the newly appointed government in Baghdad to take greater security measures in the protection of journalists ("Iraq: Local journalists call for increased protection," 2006; Slaughter in Iraq," 2006; Three Years of Slaughter in Iraq," 2006; Usher, 2006). These calls were not heeded until 2008 when the Maliki government set up a “…special police unit tasked with investigating murders of journalists. It also set up a hotline for journalists in danger. It sometimes even provides armed protection to journalists who request it” ("Iraq Six Years Later - Assessment," 2009). This has seen a significant reduction in the death toll of Iraqi journalists with 2008 seeing the lowest casualties of any year since the invasion ("Attacks on the Press in 2008: Iraq," 2009). Despite these improvements, in 2008/2009 the CPJ still considers Iraq the most dangerous nation for the press while the 2008 Annual Report of RWB designates Iraq as having a ‘Very Serious Situation’ in terms of press freedom with an overall ranking of 158 out of 173 on their World Press Freedom Index, as well as dubbing the Iraqi war “…the deadliest war of all times for the press” ("Iraq Six Years Later - Assessment," 2009) (see also: "Attacks on the Press in 2008: Iraq," 2009; Getting Away With Murder 2009," 2009; Reporters Without Borders: 2008 Annual Report," 2008; World Press Freedom Index 2008 - The Rankings," 2008). These issues have also recently been discussed at the Arab Media Forum in Dubai in 2008 in a panel entitled ‘Media on the Edge’ ("Media on the Edge," 2008). However, as with the overall death toll of the current Iraq War, the number of Iraqi journalists who have been killed since 2003 increases every day and therefore reliable and up-to-date figures are difficult to assert42.

While such concerns are clearly legitimate and the greatest of care needs to be taken to make sure that Iraq does not descend into further sectarian violence and that the

42 For a recent and chilling account of civilian casualties in Iraq since 2003 and the efforts taken to control and censor their publicity, see Richard Hil and Paul Wilson’s Dead Bodies Don’t Count: Civilian Casualties and the Forgotten Costs of the Iraq Conflict (Hil & Wilson, 2007).
nations journalists are free to report the news, the following focuses on the hegemony exerted over the Iraqi media by various foreign and domestic political bodies. Each of these has its own vested interest in the evolving politics of Iraq, largely due to the country’s vast reservoirs of oil but also because of its geographical location and the myriad of religious and ethnic sects that are vying for power. This has meant that some of Iraq’s recent media developments have been overtly or covertly supported, controlled and manipulated by these various political powers and thereby serve as their mouthpiece in the complexity that is post-Saddam Iraq.

One such example is Iran, which has long played a role in supporting Iraq’s Shiite opposition movements, particularly the SCIRI. Although it is not immediately clear what role Iran is playing in supporting the SCIRI and their various partisan media outlets, it can be assumed that at the very least the SCIRI media remains sympathetic to the Iranian government. What is known for sure is that there remain several Iran-based media outlets that are specifically designed for the Iraqi audience and are easily received across the border. These include over 30 Iranian-backed radio stations and several satellite TV stations with at least some content in Arabic and designed for an Iraqi audience (Al-Deen, 2005; Al-Marashi, 2007: 139; Broadcasting in Iraq," 2003; Grace, 2003; RadioNetherland, 2005; Voice of the Mujahedin,"). Foremost amongst the latter is the popular 24-hour TV station Al-Alam (‘The World’) which began broadcasting before the onset of the war in February 2003 and features a number of Iraqi news anchors and journalists. This, along with the fact that it is currently available across the Middle East, in Europe and can be received in Iraq without a satellite dish, saw the station rapidly achieve some of the nation’s highest ratings especially in the Shia south (Al-Qazwini, 2004; Cochrane, 2006; Feuilherade, 2004; Harmston, 2003; RadioNetherland, 2005). Its popularity, its slick production values and its clear distaste for the US-led occupation of Iraq has seen the station dubbed Tehran’s Al-Jazeera (RadioNetherland, 2003h).

More discreetly, the Saudi Arabian government has invested many oil-dollars in the various pan-Arab organs. For example, Saudi money has long supported the London-based pan-Arab daily, Asharq Al-Awsat (‘The Middle East’) and helped to set up the paper’s Baghdad edition after the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s regime ("The press in Iraq," 2005). In addition, a handful of Iraq’s ‘independent’ media has also received at
least some funding from Saudi financiers. For example *Al-Diyar* (‘The Homeland’), a terrestrial TV station launched in 2004, is currently run by Faisal Al-Yasiri, the former head of Iraqi Radio and Television under the Baathist regime, who has received financial support from the Saudi-owned pan-Arab pay-TV provider Arab Radio and Television Network (ART) (Al-Marashi, 2007: 118; RadioNetherland, 2005). In addition Saad Bazzaz’s \(^4\) multi-million dollar media franchise (comprising of the enormously popular and professional *Azzaman* [‘The Times’] newspaper and *Al-Sharqiya* [‘The Eastern One’] TV station) is allegedly being bank-rolled by the Saudi government. Indeed, in 2005 Bazzaz was accused of “…running a sophisticated covert propaganda operation funded by the Saudi Arabian intelligence” ("Iraqi Independent Media Mogul Accused of Running Saudi-funded covert Propaganda Operation," 2005) (see also: Barker, 2008: 121-122; Pallister, 2005). In addition, Bazzaz has also been accused of running a pro-Sunni media organisation which actively discriminates against Shiites as well as using his enormous influence and wealth to bolster his own political ambitions (Al-Marashi, 2007: 118-119; Cochrane, 2006; Daragahi, 2003: 48; Metcalf, 2006; *A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media*, 2003: 8). However, despite this direct funding and allegations of clandestine operations, *Al-Diyar*, *Azzaman* and *Al-Sharqiya* are widely considered some of Iraq’s more professional media outlets and it therefore remains unclear to what extent the Saudi involvement in Iraq’s post-2003 media landscape has gone beyond financial assistance to include editorial interference or political partisanship.

\(^4\) During the Baathist regime, Saad Bazzaz held a succession of senior positions including the editorship of Al-Jumhuriyya, the manager of the Iraqi National News Agency and in the Ministry of Information (Zengerle, 2002). However, his disagreements with Saddam over quality control and his objection to the invasion of Kuwait, led Bazzaz to defect to the United Kingdom in 1992. From London in 1997 Bazzaz began Iraq’s only independent pan-Arab daily, Azzaman, which quickly grew to include international editions issued from Bahrain and North Africa. With the fall of Saddam in 2003, Bazzaz started to distribute 75,000 issues from Baghdad and Basra where Azzaman was an instant hit as the only full-colour 24-page daily which reported global, regional and local stories with a mildly Arab-nationalist tendency (Daragahi, 2003: 48). Not stopping here, Bazzaz – nick-named the Rupert Murdoch of Iraq - has since ventured into television, developing Al-Shariqiya into one of Iraq’s most watched TV channels, hosting comedy and reality TV programs (Ciezadlo, 2004).
However, the efforts of the Iranians and the Saudis pale in comparison to those of the United States. In fact, during the battle phase of the war, US troops commandeered several ‘independent’ Iraqi TV stations, including Mosul TV and Najaf TV. In the case of the former, Major General David H. Petraeus\(^4\) considered putting an army officer and a translator inside the station in order to censor what he perceived to be the broadcasting of content which might inflame ethno-sectarian passions (Pincus, 2003; RadioNetherland, 2003d). Following the fall of Baghdad, the US forces re-launched Mosul TV and, by July of 2003, the CPA was actively attempting to fold the station under the control of the IMN ("Broadcasting in Iraq," 2003; RadioNetherland, 2005; Sennitt, 2003). Similarly, Najaf TV, a Shia channel airing Islamic lectures, was initially ordered to surrender itself to the control of US forces (\textit{A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media}, 2003: 9). Bravely, the stations manager, Ali Khasif Al-Ghitta, refused claiming, “We are an independent station. The CPA can’t tell us what to say. They want us to tell everyone how good the governor they have appointed is when he is a crook and a Baathist” (Al-Ghitta as cited in: Kafala, 2003).

With the cessation of the combat phase of the war and the arrival of the CPA, the US was able to promptly exert its authority over the fledgling Iraqi media. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the issuing of ‘Order Number 14: Prohibited Media Activity’ by the head of the CPA, Lewis Paul Bremer III in June 2003. Sadly, this document was not designed to provide a framework for a lively public sphere, but rather to render illegal any organ which “…incites violence…incites civil disorder…incites violence against Coalition Forces or CPA personnel…advocates alterations to Iraq’s borders” or “…advocates the return of the Iraqi Baath Party” (Bremer, 2003: 1-2). The penalties for breaking such prohibitions were severe, including detainment, arrest and prosecution with the sentence of up to one year in prison, while in ‘emergencies’ the Coalition Forces were permitted to “…take direct action to prevent or defeat the threat” (Bremer, 2003: 2). Perhaps one of the first signs of the willingness of the emerging press sector in Iraq to criticise the elite was to be found in the media’s

\(^4\) At the time, Petraeus was in charge of various public works operations in Mosul. From 26 January 2007 until 15 September 2008, the promoted General Petraeus held the most senior position in Iraq as the commander of the US-led Multi-National Force Iraq (MNF-I).
reaction to Bremer’s ‘Order Number 14.’ For example, Ashtar Ali Yasseri, the editor of the successfully re-launched Iraqi political satire magazine *Habezbooz* (a term from Iraqi folklore, last published in 1932), reacted by stating, “How can they say we have a democracy? That’s not democracy. It sounds like the same old thing” (Yasseri as cited in: Hama-Saeed, 2007).

Despite such criticisms, the threats made by the CPA’s ‘Order Number 14’ were by no means empty. There was an immediate crackdown on the CPA’s own IMN which was ordered to cease all man-on-the-street interviews as they had proven, rather unsurprisingly, to be far too critical of the occupational forces. The IMN was further ordered to stop airing religious material such as readings from the Koran and to instead screen programs detailing the recently issued Occupying Authority Law (Gourevitch, 2003: 34-35). The following month, the Shia independent newspaper *Al-Mustaqilla* (‘The Independent’) was forcibly shut down by the CPA and the managing editor, Dhari Al-Duleimi, was arrested. The paper was accused of having run headlines such as “Death to all spies and those who cooperate with the US; killing them is a religious duty” (*Al-Mustaqilla* as cited in: Gourevitch, 2003: 36) and for thereby inciting violence (Price, 2003). However, Al-Duleimi has defended his paper by claiming that it had simply quoted a particular religious clergyman and reflected a common sentiment in occupied Iraq. Contemplating the closure of *Al-Mustaqilla*, Al-Duleimi later stated “If this is American or world democracy we reject it. Democracy means dialogue and exchange of views. Not attacking it in this way” (Al-Duleimi as cited in: Brahimi, 2003).

Then, in March 2004, Bremer signed ‘Order Number 65: Iraqi Communications and Media Commission’ (Bremer, 2004; Hama-Saeed, 2007; Piper, 2004) which was apparently designed to “…develop, strengthen and maintain [the] professional working practices that support the media’s role as a public watchdog” (Bremer, 2004: 3). The Order also outlined a number of lofty but admirable goals for the post-Saddam Iraqi media including its role in the development of a “…functioning civil society by providing quality public education, current affairs and entertainment programming” along with the expectations that it would “…encourage pluralism and diverse political debate and must empower rather than restrain independent and impartial commentary” (Bremer, 2004: 2). To achieve this, the Communications and Media
Commission (CMC) was endowed with an annual budget of USD6 million and given the authority to regulate the Iraqi communications industry, including Iraq’s growing number of television and radio stations as well as the internet and the telecommunications sector (Al-Deen, 2005; Al-Marashi, 2007: 131; Al-Qazwini, 2004; Feuilherade, 2004; Piper, 2004).

Despite the official rhetoric of ‘Order Number 65’ and the idealistic promises it made to the Iraqi people, the CPA continued in its policy of silencing dissent and exerting their hegemony over the ‘discourses of democracy’ in Iraq. For example, just over a week after the signing of ‘Order Number 65’, the CPA closed two organs produced by Moqtada Al-Sadr’s Sadr Trend, Al-Hawza45 (the name of a particular Shia seminary in Najaf where a number of leading clerics teach) and the quarterly journal Al-Mada (‘The View’ not to be confused with the independent Iraqi newspaper of the same name). Both of these publications appear to have represented Al-Sadr’s political and theological ideology, advocating an Islamic republic for Iraq and featuring vitriolic critiques of Israel and the American-led occupation (Rosen, 2004). Specifically, Al-Hawza was targeted for featuring articles with headlines such as ‘America Hates Islam and Muslims’ and its closure prompted thousands of protestors to gather at the paper’s office in central Baghdad (Al-Sheikh, 2004; Gettleman, 2004; Rosen, 2004). Despite being relatively peaceful at the time, the protestors chanted slogans such as “No, no, America!” and “Where is democracy now?”, also vowing to avenge Al-Hawza’s closure (Al-Sheikh, 2004; Gettleman, 2004). In a twist of irony, it was the forced closure of Al-Hawza, rather than anything printed across its humble pages, which ultimately garnered Al-Sadr renewed reverence amongst his already loyal followers and arguably incited his Mahdi Army to violence (Al-Marashi, 2007: 132; Rosen, 2004). In addition, the closure of Shia newspapers such as Al-Mustaqilla and Al-Hawza also lost the CPA the prestige associated with their promise of a free press in Re-colonial Iraq. Indeed, Iraqi journalists such as Kamal Abdul Karim of Azzaman (Gettleman, 2004) and Basim al-Sheikh of the ‘independent’ Al-Dustour (‘The Constitution’) were quick to react to the CPA’s actions, with the latter opining that

45 It should be noted here that Al-Hawza appears to have re-opened since 2004, currently published under the defiant moniker Al-Hawza Al-Natiqa (“The Active Hawza”) (Al-Marashi, 2007: 139).
…we must conclude that there is someone lurking to see what is written in the newspapers. We thought that the censor had gone forever. But it seems he is still here, suspiciously inspecting every newspaper - despite all the new freedoms we supposedly now enjoy… Regardless of the reasons behind the closure of Al-Hawza, we are absolutely against the closure of newspapers no matter what justifications are given, especially considering that we lack laws governing mass communications. If this continues, chaos will lead to confusion. (Al-Sheikh, 2004)

Other US involvement in Iraq’s fledgling media environment has been more sinister and clandestine. It has recently come to light that the US Psy-Ops in Iraq was also responsible for covertly planting more than 1000 news articles in 12 to 15 of Iraq’s newspapers at a cost of between USD40 and USD2000 per item (Gerth, 2005). Mostly, these stories were written by US soldiers who were part of the PsyOps program and then translated into Arabic by their Iraqi staff (Hama-Saeed, 2007). These Iraqis then posed as wealthy freelancers, offering the shoestring Iraqi press money in exchange for publication (Mazzetti & Daragahi, 2005; U.S. war propaganda carries on," 2006). It was never disclosed to the papers that these articles, which were typically written from an Iraqi perspective and purposefully designed to cater to specific ethnic or religious groups (such as Shiites or Kurds) and to address key issues (including terrorism or democracy), were actually the cleverly disguised propaganda of the occupying forces. Although generally pro-American papers such as the INC’s Al-Mutamar (‘The Congress’) did not seem too concerned about their publication of these articles others, such as the editors of the independent and well respected Al-Dustour and Al-Mada (‘The View’ not to be confused with the Al-Sadr backed journal of the same name) have claimed that they had no idea the stories were written by US operatives and have understandably expressed their outrage (Mazzetti & Daragahi, 2005). More to the point, an editorial in Azzaman deemed such actions a blatant attempt “…to humiliate the independent national press” of Iraq (Azzaman as cited in: Gerth, 2005).

The irony here barely needs to be stated. At a time when Iraq is struggling to build a stable and robust democratic order following years of repression under the Baathist regime, there are a whole collection of foreign forces working to undermine one of the pillars of Iraq’s emerging democracy, its free press. While the efforts of the Iranians and the Saudis are clearly problematic and in need of further scrutiny, it is the US
administration’s contradictory rhetoric and action which invites the greatest amount of criticism. On the one hand, the Bush administration has been adamant that the proliferation of democracy around the globe, and particularly across the Middle East, is central to its broader geo-political agenda (G. W. Bush, 2005; Rice, 2008). Yet, at the same time, they have actively undermined one of the hallmarks of Iraq’s emergent democracy, its free and independent press. They have attempted to gain complete hegemony over the Iraqi public sphere via the development of state media services such as the IMN that openly serve their purposes, the forced closure of a handful of Shia papers, and by undermining the professionalism of some of Iraq’s better respected ‘independent’ papers by covertly planting pro-US stories.

Unfortunately, the interference in Iraq’s media sector is not limited to those governments which exist outside its borders. With the appointment of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) in July 2003 by the CPA, the new interim body soon demonstrated its rather draconian approach to media freedom by repeatedly suspending two of the region’s most popular pan-Arab satellite channels, Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera for allegedly inciting violence (Feuilherade, 2003b; Fisk, 2003; Iraq: Closure of Al-Arabiya News Channel," 2003; Iraqi leaders ban Arab TV network," 2003; RadioNetherland, 2003j). Similarly, when the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) replaced the IGC in June 2004, the newly appointed Prime Minister Iyad Allawi oversaw the creation of the Higher Media Commission (HMC) (Al-Qazwini, 2004; Price, 2004). This body appears to have been even more repressive than the CPA-backed CMC, allegedly threatening to “…license newspapers, impose requirements for publication that few existing news organizations can meet and punish unsubstantiated criticism of the government” (Price, 2004). Indeed, Allawi seized the opportunity to make his own approach to media freedom explicit by stating, “…we will not allow some people to hide behind the slogan of freedom of the press and media” (Allawi as cited in: Polk, 2005: 195). This was by no means an empty threat, as the IIG also suspended both Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera under similar allegations of inciting violence (Al-Marashi, 2007: 131; Cochrane, 2006; Hama-Saeed, 2007; IFJ Accuses Iraq of "Unacceptable and Illogical Censorship" Over Ban on Al-Jazeera," 2004; Iraq Shuts Al-Jazeera Baghdad Office for a Month," 2004). Then in November 2004, the HMC went as far as to warn the Iraqi media industry to cover the unfolding events of the US military’s operation to recapture Fallujah, Operation Al-Fajr
(‘Phantom Fury’), in ways that reflected the official government stance or face unspecified consequences (RadioNetherland, 2005). This was followed in 2005 by the sentencing to prison of two Iraqi journalists from southern Baghdad after they dared to be critical of their provincial government and local police force (Finer, 2005).

With the ascension of the Iraqi National Assembly following the January 2005 elections, came their drafting and ratification of the Iraqi Constitution. This constitution, finalised in August 2005 and ratified by the people of Iraq in October of that same year, guarantees “Freedom of press, printing, advertisement, media and publication” but only so long as it does not “…violate public order and morality” ("The Iraqi Constitution," 2005). The problem here, as Kathleen Ridolfo has pointed out, is that this rather vague rhetoric leaves the Iraqi media vulnerable to the government’s interpretation of such violations (Ridolfo, 2006). Indeed, the Iraqi media industry has continued to suffer since the constitutions promulgation, with 2006 witnessing several incidents such as the bashing and harassment of journalists working for the US-funded television network, Al-Hurra Iraq (‘The Free One’), by the Iraqi police, while countless others have been threatened, beaten, arrested, detained and even charged with defamation by Iraqi security and police forces ("APFW Calls for the Release of Iraqi Journalist," 2006; APFW Denounces the Aggression on Al-Hurra Reported by Iraqi Police," 2006; Enders, 2006; Finer, 2005; Hama-Saeed, 2007; Ridolfo, 2006; Von Zielbauer, 2006). More recently, the Iraqi Parliament has urged Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki to close down Saad Bazzaz’s independent media empire, including both the Azzaman newspaper and the Al-Sharqiya TV station, under allegations that they were too critical of a recent draft law that proposed turning Iraq into a federal state ("Parliament asks government to close Azzaman," 2006). The Iraqi government has also ordered the closure of the controversial satellite TV channel Al-Zawra for its airing of footage of successful insurgent attacks against coalition and Iraqi forces (Al-Marashi, 2007: 113-117).

Sadly, the KRG in the north of Iraq have also enacted similar restrictions upon its once relatively free press. In fact, almost immediately after the fall of Saddam in 2003, several journalists were either threatened or arrested, including three who were incarcerated by the KDP for having questioned the party’s finances (Hama-Saeed, 2007). In 2005 the Kurdish authorities successfully sued Kurdistan’s most widely read
and well respected independent newspaper, *Hawlati* (‘Citizen’), effectively imprisoning both a former and the current editor of the paper for 6 months after they criticised a Kurdish official for not paying his phone bill (Hama-Saeed, 2007; Von Zielbauer, 2006). In late 2005 a Kurdish-Austrian was initially sentenced to 30 years in prison after he had posted several articles on the internet which accused the powerful head of the KDP and current President of the KRG, Massoud Barzani, of abusing his position ("APFW Alert: APFW Condemns the Verdict Against Kamal Sayed Qader," 2006; Hama-Saeed, 2007). However, with mounting diplomatic pressure from the Austrian government and other international bodies, the sentence was eventually ‘watered down’ to a year and a half ("APFW Alert: APFW Condemns the Verdict Against Kamal Sayed Qader," 2006).

Unfortunately, the freedom accorded to the Kurdish press has continued to deteriorate, with 2006 witnessing the harassment, detention and beating of dozens of journalists across Iraqi Kurdistan. For example in both March and August 2006 a series of relatively peaceful demonstrations broke out in protest against the regional government and the lack of basic public services. In both cases, the journalists covering the events became the target of the Kurdish security forces, with the August protests resulting in the arrest of 28 journalists and the confiscation of their cameras and other equipment (Hama-Saeed, 2007; Ridolfo, 2006). In addition, 2006 also saw the Kurdish authorities escalate their attacks against *Hawlati*, including the detention of several more of the paper’s staff, one of which had been investigating a warehouse fire that witnesses claim was deliberately lit by a Kurdish official desperate to destroy any evidence of his black market operations (Axe, 2006). As recently as September 2007 both the KDP and the PUK have demonstrated their distaste for an independent media by agreeing to withdraw any further interaction with those media outlets which have proven themselves too critical of their leadership. Taking this a step further, the PUK has begun to reprimand and even sack a number of their senior officials who were found to have made unfavourable remarks about the party and its leadership in their media appearances (Mahwi & Abdullah, 2007).

In this way, since the fall of Saddam in 2003, both the Iraqi government and the KRG have frequently sought to limit media freedom in Iraq and to silence the kind of reportage that one would generally hope to find in a free and democratic state. In
ways not at all dissimilar to the Hashemite monarchy of the Colonial period and the various oppressive regimes of the Post-colonial period, the Iraqi government and the KRG have directly targeted the culture industries of Iraq in their attempt to build legitimacy and silence dissent. Here, they have suspended some media outlets and closed, or threatened to close, a handful of others, they have seen scores of journalists harassed, beaten, detained and tried for having been too critical of the government, and they have gone as far as warning the Iraqi media sector to cover the military operations of the occupying forces in a way that is consistent with the views of the regime. Despite the official rhetoric of the many political factions that make up the Iraqi government and the KRG and their vitriolic critiques of Saddam’s tight control of the press sector during his incumbency, their meddling in the Iraqi media indicates that they have not adequately moved beyond the framework of media hegemony that has plagued the press sector of Iraq since its inception.

However, the Iraqi government and the KRG are not the only forces to have interfered in Iraq’s media sector, with various foreign powers having also attempted to manipulate the ‘discourses of democracy’ in Iraq. In this way, the Re-colonial period is also strikingly similar to the Colonial period in that it has witnessed both the invasion and occupation of the nation by a powerful Western force, and also because it has seen this foreign power manipulate the print sector in an attempt to bolster and legitimate its hegemony. Like the British before them, the United States has brought with it a particular set of Orientalist notions that demarcate between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. This long-held and deep-seated division not only serves to justify the invasion and occupation in broader Western discourse, but to excuse the manipulation of the Iraqi press. Here, rather than seeing the debates and criticisms that emerge in the myriad organs that make up Iraq’s media landscape as indicative of a thriving public sphere, they are viewed instead as representative of the malevolent ‘nature’ of the Iraqi people and are promptly shut down. Similarly, instead of trusting the Iraqi people to discuss the merits and drawbacks of democratic governance and foreign occupation, the United States thought it better to covertly manufacture and plant their own ‘discourses of democracy’ within the Iraqi press. In a sense, this also reveals to us the problematic nature of the discourse of ‘Western democracy’ where the United States have exhibited the sharp contradiction between the democracy they wish to pursue at home and the democracy they wish to pursue.
abroad. Indeed, while America so often prides itself on the strength of its democracy and the freedom of its press, its actions in Iraq, just in terms of press freedom alone, would be considered a major contravention of the First Amendment if they were to have been conducted on American soil.
Reporting the Democratisation of Iraq in the Iraqi Media

Despite the extensive interference by the various domestic and foreign political forces in Iraq’s post-Saddam media sector, there are several reasons to be optimistic about the contemporary public sphere of Iraq. Perhaps the first such reason is the fact that thirty-five years of Baathist rule and its tight restrictions on the media has left in its wake an Iraqi population that has developed an “...abysmal distrust of official news” (Bengio, 2004: 109) and is skilled in navigating carefully crafted propaganda (H. Ali & Marzook, 2005; Bengio, 1998: 63; Braude, 2003: 141-142; King, 2003; Oppel Jnr, 2003). This can be seen in the fact that most Iraqis have exercised their right to eschew the United States backed media in favour of the local, independent press and the pan-Arab satellite channels. As Nicholas Mirzoeff notes, in the early days of the occupation the people of Iraq “…steadfastly refused to watch Iraqi Media Network, the US official television station, seeing it as simply more propaganda” (Mirzoeff, 2005: 76) (see also: Feuilherade, 2004; King, 2003). Beyond this, even former PsyOps operatives have noted that their program was largely ineffective due to the fact that Iraqis knew the content was American (Gerth, 2005; U.S. war propaganda carries on," 2006). Even the uncovering of the US strategy of planting pro-US news items in the independent Iraqi press was “…met mostly with shrugs in Baghdad, where readers tend to be sceptical about the media” (Gerth, 2005).

Beyond the fact that Iraqi audiences are generally critical of the media and able to navigate politically inspired propaganda, it is also worth noting that the Iraqi people themselves have demonstrated a keen interest in civil society movements and democratic practices (Davis, 2004a: 1, 3; 2007a: 3). For example, almost immediately after the fall of Baghdad in April 2003, Iraq witnessed a whole series of spontaneous elections not at all dissimilar to those that followed the end of WWI. In northern Kurdish cities such as Mosul, in majority Sunni towns like Samarra, in prominent Shia cities such as Hilla and Najaf and in the capital of Baghdad, religious leaders, tribal elders and secular professionals called together town hall meetings where representatives were elected and plans were hatched for local reconstruction projects, security operations and the return of basic infrastructure (Booth, 2003; Booth & Chandrasekaran, 2003; Dawisha, 2005c: 733-734; Gordon & Trainor, 2006: 490; N.
Such moves were initially supported by the occupying forces and there are records of US troops having played a facilitating role in the process, while even Bremer had initially planned to convene a national assembly in which representatives from all sectors of Iraq’s complex society would elect an interim council (N. Klein, 2007: 362).

However, much like the Colonial period under British occupation, the US was quick to quell such indigenous drives towards democratisation and to exert its own hegemony over Iraq. Fearing that the people of Iraq would elect certain ‘undesirables’ such as military strongmen or political Islamists, Bremer decided that he would instead appoint the members of the IGC and, by the end of June, he had further ordered that all local and regional elections were to be stopped immediately (Booth & Chandrasekaran, 2003; N. Klein, 2007: 363). This effectively meant that any decisions made by local councils were rendered superfluous and that mayors and governors who had been elected by their own constituents were replaced by hand-picked former Baathists (Booth, 2003; Booth & Chandrasekaran, 2003).

Not surprisingly, such moves met with staunch opposition across Iraq. In the Shia holy city of Najaf, for example, hundreds of peaceful protestors took to the streets, demanding that the installed mayor be removed and replaced by a representative elected via free and fair elections. Several protestors carried placards reading “Cancelled elections are evidence of bad intentions” and “O America, where are promises of freedom, elections and democracy?” (as cited in: Booth & Chandrasekaran, 2003). Much larger demonstrations were conducted in Baghdad and Basra where thousands banded together to chant the words “Yes, yes, elections. No, no selections” (as cited in: N. Klein, 2007: 365). In Samarra, a biology teacher and tribal leader by the name of Bahith Sattar had his candidacy for mayor revoked by Bremer’s executive decision. At the time he commented that,

…by allowing us to establish our own governments, many of the problems today would be solved. If you ask most Iraqis today if they have a government, they will tell you, no, what we have is an occupation, and that is a dangerous thing for the people to think. (Sattar as cited in: Booth & Chandrasekaran, 2003)
On the one hand, the US efforts to shut down these indigenous and spontaneous moves towards democracy across Iraq are further indicators of the degree to which the occupying forces wanted complete hegemony over Re-colonial Iraq. On the other hand, these early elections and the subsequent demonstrations reveal the strength of the Iraqi peoples will towards democracy and, that when given the opportunity to make this will a reality, they are more than capable of inclusive and representative forms of governance. This once again opens up and inverts the dualism between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ to reveal instead an oppressive Western power ruling over an Oriental populace that is far from despotic by nature. Indeed, this challenge to the ‘discourses of democracy’ is also particularly evident in the role that the Iraqi media has played, and continues to play, in fostering a renewed public sphere in post-Saddam Iraq.

The first such example began in 2004 with the launch of what has been widely asserted as “…Iraq’s first independent talk radio station”, Radio Dijla (‘Tigris’) (Feuilherade, 2004; RadioNetherland, 2005; Talk radio comes to Baghdad," 2004). The station was founded by Dr Ahmad Al-Rikabi46 who chose as the cornerstone of his new station a live chat-show in which Iraqi citizens of all persuasions could phone-in and air their frustrations and aspirations uncensored (Feuilherade, 2004; RadioNetherland, 2005; Talk radio comes to Baghdad," 2004). With the slogan ‘Our opinion does not count, but what always counts is your opinion’, the station was an instant success, receiving up to 18,000 calls per day (RadioNetherland, 2005; Talk radio comes to Baghdad," 2004). Since, its inception, Radio Dijla has hosted talk-show programs on topics as diverse as the attacks on Iraqi oil pipelines, various family problems and the right age for young people to marry. More to the point, the station has aired several uncensored attacks and criticisms of the nascent Iraqi government, making it required listening not just for Iraqi citizens of all backgrounds and beliefs, but also for the various political factions and their authorities (Feuilherade, 2004; RadioNetherland, 2005; Talk radio comes to Baghdad," 2004). Furthermore, as Al-Rikabi has put it, Radio Dijla also reveals “…the desperate need

46 Dr Rikabi previously ran the US-funded Radio Free Iraq and, in 2003, he was installed as the head of the CPA’s IMN. He later resigned to start Radio Dijla.
of ordinary Iraqis to share and communicate their pains and joys” (Al-Rikabi as cited in: "Talk radio comes to Baghdad," 2004).

This type of programming has also proven popular on many of the TV networks that have sprung up across Iraq since the fall of the Baathist regime in 2003. For example, the independent Al-Diyar, the KDP-backed Kurdistan TV, the SCIRI-owned Al-Furat and the Sunni-controlled Baghdad all host programs which invite the Iraqi populace to discuss their day-to-day problems live and uncensored (Al-Marashi, 2007: 110, 112-113, 120). These examples aside, it is the state-run Al-Iraqiya and the privately owned Al-Sharqiya which are not only two of the more popular stations in Iraq, but also the most innovative when it comes to Iraqi programming that enables a more robust public sphere. For example, when compared to the media of other Arab nations, the type of programming available on Al-Iraqiya and Al-Sharqiya arguably puts them at the forefront of democratic media trends across the region. Their comedy programs, for example, have broken a number of long-held taboos, with attacks being launched against figures such as drunken sheikhs, corrupt or dim-witted police officers and incompetent government officials ("Murdered Iraqi TV comedian buried," 2006; Sanders, 2005; Usher, 2005c). These stations also host more serious programs such as Al-Iraqiya’s ‘Al-Iraqiya With You’ where the hosts produce short documentaries on problems such as poverty and unemployment, and Al-Sharqiya’s ‘Why are you Afraid, Lady?’, perhaps the only program in post-Saddam Iraq to address the challenges faced by women (Mahmoud, 2005; Usher, 2005c). In terms of the watchdog role played by these TV stations, Al-Iraqiya airs reality TV style programs such as ‘The People’s Concerns’ and ‘You and the Official’, both of which deal with the issue of government corruption, a topic which has long evaded the TV screens of the Arab world. Some of Al-Iraqiya’s and Al-Sharqiya’s content pushes the envelope even further, with certain programs making the media in most Western democracies look tame by comparison. Consider Al-Iraqiya’s ‘The Iraqi Podium’ and ‘Open Encounter’ and Al-Sharqiya’s ‘Diary of a City’ where the everyday citizens of Iraq are invited to express their grievances live and uncensored to the nation and to engage in direct discussions on issues as diverse as political affairs, military operations and infrastructure projects with the country’s leading political figures, civil society leaders and academics (Al-Marashi, 2007: 108; Mahmoud, 2005; Usher, 2005c).
This type of radio and television programming has enabled the kind of rational-critical debate that Habermas argued was critical to democratic deliberation. This has occurred across many different genres, from traditionally political formats such as documentaries and talk-back radio programs to the scathing political satire of sketch comedy and the stark veracity of reality TV shows. Interestingly, the production and adaptation of these popular formats to suit an Iraqi audience has enabled the Iraqi media and its viewers to tackle “…issues of social injustice, government corruption and, on occasion, life under Hussein” (Sanders, 2005) in ways that they certainly would not have been able to under the former regime. While it would be unwise to over-state the impact that such new media formats and genres are having in terms of fostering a public sphere in an emergent democracy, they certainly provide reason for considering further the role that the media has played, and continues to play, across the Arab world (Kraidy, 2005; Lynch, 2006). Indeed, it is not only clear that these formats serve an entertainment value, but they serve as something of a release valve, enabling the citizens to air their grievances on a call-in radio show, or laugh out loud at the incompetence of various state officials. More to the point, such programs provide alternative formats for public participation where any Iraqi with a television, a radio or a phone-line can engage with state politics and play a role in debating the key issues of the time.

Beyond these examples however, the Iraqi media has provided a considerably more serious voice in documenting and debating the series of elections and the referendum that occurred across Iraq in 2005. In fact, this role began as far back as February 2004, when the Iraqi media begun to offer its views on the IGC’s deliberations over a temporary constitution. In a plethora of opinion pieces and news articles across Iraq’s divergent press, the nation’s journalists were generally critical of US involvement, particularly Bremer’s attempt to avoid any reference to Islamic law in the wording of the constitution itself. Others implored the IGC to avoid the temptation to skew the wording of the constitution in favour of their own interests, or those of their respective ethno-political group. For example one writer at Azzaman opined,

All those who have gathered around the conference table to discuss the draft interim constitution...would do well to rule out any possibility of coming up with anything tailored so as to be in full harmony with their own views. They
are duty-bound to put aside the unworthy ploy of threatening to rouse the public into civil war in a bid to have their own ideas incorporated in the constitution. Any such practice would run counter to the reality of the political, ethnic, religious and sectarian diversity that is characteristic of Iraq. (Azzaman as cited in: "Iraq concerns dominate media," 2004)

Following on from this, campaigning for the January 2005 election began on 15 December 2004 and almost immediately it had “…permeated every part of the Iraqi media, providing at least the show of a nascent democracy in action” (Usher, 2005b). Throughout the campaign period Iraqi radio stations, newspapers, television channels and websites played a critical role in not only promoting certain political parties and their stated ideologies and agenda, but also in simply encouraging Iraqis to defy the insurgent and terrorist threats and take part in the election (Dawisha, 2005b: 38). For example, throughout the electoral campaign the German government funded a daily half hour broadcast that covered various aspects of the election. They selected 25 young Iraqi journalists (all under the age of 30) and provided training for them in neighbouring Jordan. These young journalists then returned to Iraq to seek out stories relating to the election which were broadcast on Iraqi stations such as Radio Dijla, and the KDP’s Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as being made available for download on the internet (RadioNetherland, 2005). Over the course of the campaign these short broadcasts included information vital to the functioning of free and fair elections including profiles of politicians, political parties and the various coalitions that emerged in post-Saddam Iraq as well as comment by foreign election observers and the cultural aspects of the campaign itself (Usher, 2004). In addition to these half hour broadcasts Radio Dijla also ran its regular programming which encouraged Iraqis to phone-in and offer their opinion on the elections as well as quiz shows that posed questions such as: “Which is better, a preset democratic model or one that is in harmony with Iraq’s culture?” (Radio Dijla as cited in: Usher, 2005b).

As is to be expected, Iraq’s leading television stations, Al-Iraqiya, Al-Sharqiya and Al-Diyar, led the domestic television market, screening campaign advertisements ranging from the techno-savvy efforts of groups such as Allawi’s Iraqi List and the coalition of Shia groups known as the United Iraqi Alliance, through to the hackneyed efforts of the smaller parties (Usher, 2005b). In addition, all three of these channels worked in the public interest by disseminating information regarding the curfews,
restrictions and security measures that had been placed across the nation in the lead up to the election (UNAMI, 2005l, 2005n, 2005p, 2005q, 2005r). More specifically, Al-Iraqiya undertook an extensive campaign to counter the threats made against those who participated in the election by Iraq’s varied terrorist and insurgent groups, which included airing statements by Iraq’s religious leaders urging Iraqis to vote (Misterek, 2005; UNAMI, 2005j). Providing the kind of access to the political elite rarely seen in even the most highly esteemed Western media, Al-Iraqiya also broadcast a weekly phone-in program hosted by the incumbent Iraqi Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, who patiently answered unscreened calls from Iraqis keen to discuss various issues with their leader and air their frustrations (Usher, 2005b).

As the election drew closer, Iraq’s print media played an increasingly important role in raising and discussing several key issues related to the forthcoming election. For example, in the lead up to the election, the ‘independent’ Al-Dustour published a collection of in-depth articles including those critical of the incumbent Iraqi government, those which provided details of some of Iraq’s various smaller political factions, those which countered rumours about the election, those which discussed the thorny issue of religion and politics and those which called for peace and unity (UNAMI, 2005d, 2005e, 2005g, 2005p, 2005q). On the issue of whether or not the elections should be postponed, virtually the entire range of views and opinions were expressed in papers as diverse as ‘independent’ organs like Azzaman, the INC’s Al-Mutamar, Iraqi Hezbollah’s Al-Bayyah (‘The Evidence’) and the Da’wah party’s Al-Da’wah and Al-Bayan (‘The Dispatch’ or ‘The Manifesto’) (UNAMI, 2005d, 2005e, 2005k, 2005l). Meanwhile, Kurdish papers such as the ‘independent’ Hawlati, the PUK’s Kurdistani Nuwe (‘New Kurdistan’) and the KDP’s Xebat (‘Struggle’), ran a collection of stories both before and after the election that detailed the various Kurdish concerns and developments, such as the issue of federation, Kurdish regional elections, unity among the many different people of Kurdistan and the future status of Kirkuk (UNAMI, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005e, 2005j, 2005p, 2005q, 2005s).

The Iraqi press also fostered a lively and diverse discussion on the merits and tenets of democracy. For example, various Shia backed organs, such as Daw’ah’s Al-Bayan and SCIRI’s Al-Adala (‘The Justice’) published several articles that were somewhat unrestrained in their optimism. Throughout these pieces, the Shia papers are adamant
that all of the Iraqi people are entitled to vote and that they must “...not miss this
great opportunity” (Al-Bayan as cited in: UNAMI, 2005c) to “...pave the way for the
rise of the rule of law, in which democracy, freedom, security, and sovereignty will
prevail” (Al-Adala as cited in: UNAMI, 2005q). As if to capture this enthusiasm and
summarise these sentiments, an editorial which appeared just days before the election
in Al-Bayan stated:

The countdown has begun for a great, historic day in the life of our people. On
this day, the people will master their own destiny and future when they will
select their representatives to the constitutional assembly that will draft the
permanent constitution and choose an elected government expressing their will
and working to achieve their hopes and aspirations. The responsibility for
making this election a success does not rest only with the government or the
electoral commission that will supervise and ensure a fair vote. Rather, it
depends, above all, on our people through their broad participation, with all
their sects, ethnic groups, political forces and social categories. We believe the
high turnout will be the most telling response to the terrorists and killers who
seek to confiscate Iraqi people’s will. With it, they will tell those terrorist they
are much more stronger than their criminal means. (Al-Bayan as cited in:
UNAMI, 2005t)

Similar sentiments can be found across the pages of the INC’s Al-Mutamar, where
writers such as Shaykh Ali Abd-Al-Husayn Kammunah implored the citizens of Iraq
to take part in the “...great democratic process for which we have waited long and
offered dear sacrifices” (Kammunah as cited in: UNAMI, 2005g), while Nabil Al-
Qassab argued that the election would foster Iraqi unity and “...guarantee the rights of
alls sects, ethnic groups, and nationalities” (Al-Qassab as cited in: UNAMI, 2005t).
Indeed, Al-Mutamar seems to have been such a strong advocate of the elections that it
appeared to view them as something of a ‘silver bullet’, capable of rectifying each of
Iraq’s complex problems. Consider for example the words of Salman Al-Shammari
who wrote that

...not only are the Iraqi elections a positive step on the path leading to
shortening the occupation's life and solving the political problem in Iraq and a
positive and good initiative to boost and deepen the principles of democracy,
plurality, and rule of law in the country, but they are also the key and main
way to get rid of the security and economic crises that Iraq suffers from. (Al-
Shammari as cited in: UNAMI, 2005q)
The independent press of Iraq seemed to largely follow suite. For example, much of the coverage in *Al-Dustour* emphasised the need for national unity, with Ibrahim Zaydan opining that “In order to build a pluralist, democratic Iraq, as we hope, we have to open the doors for participation to everybody because Iraq is home to all Iraqis, rather than to a particular sect, ethnic group, tribe or religion” (Zaydan as cited in: UNAMI, 2005g). This was echoed to some degree by Basim Al-Shaykh who claimed that Iraq needed to seek “…God’s help and rise up as one [wo]man with their hands united to place the voting card deciding their destiny in the ballot box holding their aspirations for tomorrow” (Al-Shaykh as cited in: UNAMI, 2005l). However, *Al-Dustour*’s coverage also came with a stern warning to those who would manipulate the Iraqi elections or the broader body politic to their own devices. “Let it be known from now on” begins another piece by Al-Shaykh,

…the average Iraqi will tolerate no mandate other than that dictated by his own conscience. Advocates of fake heavenly agendas had better steer away from Iraq and Iraqis, for we have had enough at the hands of opportunists touting bright religious and nationalist slogans. Let them seek their fortune elsewhere, for we have made a solemn vow to root out anyone stalking our beloved Iraq, regardless of their race or colour and no matter how dazzlingly bright their banners may be. (Al-Shaykh as cited in: UNAMI, 2005e)

However, it is not particularly surprising that the various independent papers, as well as those controlled by the Shia and Kurdish parties or the INC and INA were relatively optimistic about the January elections given that they each had much to gain politically after having endured the oppressive years of Saddam’s dictatorship. Less optimistic were the Sunni organs which represented the increasingly disenfranchised minority who had ruled Iraq since its inception in the 1920s. For example, a little over a week before the election, the Sunni organ of the Association of Muslim Scholars, *Al-Basa’ir* (‘The Insight’), expressed its varied concerns regarding the forthcoming election. One such article rightly points out that Iraq of the time was divided between two main camps: those who supported the election (the majority of Shiites and Kurds and a small number of Sunnis) and those who held varying concerns (the majority of Sunnis and various other Iraqis). Among the concerns of this latter group are, according to the article, those pertaining to the “…insufficient legal and technical preparations, lack of security, the occupation forces’ total domination of security, and most important of all, they aim at legitimizing the occupation of Iraq” (*Al-Basa’ir* as
cited in: UNAMI, 2005r). The issue of Iraq’s continuing occupation is raised in several articles in the same issue of Al-Basa’ir. For example, prominent Iraqi writer Karim Latif Al-Dulaymi penned an article in which he referred to the Iraqi elections as “…a poisonous honey” which has been “…given by the US to Iraq in order to legitimize the occupation of the country” (Al-Dulaymi as cited in: UNAMI, 2005r).

In terms of the watch-dog function of the media, the well-respected Kurdish newspaper Hawlati took the unrivalled step of publishing the list of candidates on the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan in the lead up to the election itself. What makes Hawlati’s move significant is not only that no other media had published such a list due to security concerns, but also the paper revealed that about a dozen Kurdish candidates were former Baathists (Glantz, 2005). This brought with it a storm of controversy as members of the Baath were not only excluded by law from playing a part in contemporary Kurdish politics, but also because the deposed party had been responsible for various atrocities inflicted on the Kurds such as the Al-Anfal campaign of the 1980s. Other newspapers waited until after the election to raise their concerns. For example, in mid-February 2005 Iraq’s Azzaman published an unofficial list of the candidates elected to the Iraqi National Assembly while several other newspapers, including the Da’wah party’s Al-Bayan, SCIRI’s Al-Adala and the INC’s Al-Mutamar continued to publish their concerns about the make-up of the post-election assembly (UNAMI, 2005o). However, Iraq’s highbrow independent paper Al-Mada controversially accused the Iraqi Council of Commissioners of having pre-defined the number of seats and percentages for political entities which would go on to form the National Assembly following the election (UNAMI, 2005o).

Despite such serious concerns, immediately following the January election much of Iraq’s diverse media landscape expressed a virtually unified praise for the conduct of the elections and their significance for the future of the nation. Indeed, the jubilance of many Iraqi journalists splashed across the pages of newspapers as diverse as Da’wah’s Al-Bayan, Iraqi Hezbollah’s Al-Bayyah, the INA’s Baghdad, the INC’s Al-Mutamar as well as independent organs such as Al-Mada and Azzaman (UNAMI, 2005b, 2005f, 2005h, 2005i, 2005u). As just one example, Al-Bayan printed the following comment on the election,
It was a historic day in the life of our people. On this day, Iraqis taught the peoples of the region a great lesson in democracy. The first winner and victor in these elections is, beyond any doubt, the Iraqi people. This, in itself, is quite enough for all those who contributed to writing this national epic to feel proud. It is, indeed, a remarkable feat added to Iraqi civilization records. (Al-Bayan as cited in: UNAMI, 2005b)

However, it did not take long before the Iraqi press began lobbying the newly elected Iraqi government regarding various concerns and issues which it saw as central to the success of the new Iraq. Foremost among these concerns, according to the ICP’s Tariq Al-Sha’b (‘The Way of the People’), the INC’s Al-Mutamar and Da’wah’s Al-Bayan, was the need for a comprehensive national dialogue (UNAMI, 2005h, 2005u). What Iraq needed now, according to Rida Al-Zahir of Tariq Al-Sha’b, was “…national accord among the political forces that believe in democracy to build the country” (Al-Zahir as cited in: UNAMI, 2005u). This would not only “...see an end to the US occupation” as Riyadh Abu Mulhim put it in an article published by Al-Mutamar, but enable “…the constitutional institutions required to guarantee that Iraqis will get the sort of government they yearn for, free of sectarian bias and representative of the nation’s cultural makeup” (Mulhim as cited in: UNAMI, 2005h). Another major concern of papers such as Al-Mutamar, Al-Dustour, Azzaman and the ‘independent’ Al-Mashriq (‘The Arab East’) was that of the culture of corruption that had been pervasive throughout government institutions under the Baathist regime (UNAMI, 2005f, 2005m, 2005u). On this issue Al-Dustour’s Basim Al-Shaykh implored the new administration to “…purge government departments and security offices of the lingering corrupt practices inherited from the past” (Al-Shaykh as cited in: UNAMI, 2005f).

This close monitoring of the state politics of Iraq by the nation’s media sphere was to continue at the time of the country-wide referendum which effectively ratified the Iraqi Constitution in October 2005. Not only did the Iraqi media, across its rich array of formats and persuasions, play a critical role in disseminating the draft constitution in the lead up to the referendum, television stations such as Al-Sharqiya hosted a phone-in program to discuss the finer details of the document ("One Day in Iraq: Media and Comment," 2005). In addition, one of Iraq’s more influential Islamist
papers, the SCIRI-backed *Al-Adala*, featured one editorial which argued that the ratification of the constitution was itself indicative of the fact that

…”Iraqis have defeated their enemies: terrorists, dark forces and those who dream of a return of the unfair equation. What has been achieved for Iraq would not have seen the light of day had it not been for the sacrifices by Iraqis and their friends. The time of coercion and pressure has gone for good, and the time of freedom and democracy has come. Democracy and freedom have been created in Iraq by all the honourable men in the world who have stood by Iraq in its ordeal, offering all that is dear to them. (Al-Adala as cited in: "Press sees hope after Iraq vote," 2005)

In December 2005, as Iraqis prepared to nominate a permanent government, Iraq’s media landscape once again buzzed with the excitement of the looming election. Newspapers across Iraq were awash with political advertising and long articles explained the complexity of Iraq’s various political coalitions as well as providing details of polling stations and on how to vote. The streets of the nation came alive with colourful billboards and posters pronouncing the intentions and policies of various groups, from secular parties to religious fundamentalists. On the airwaves, Iraqis could tune in to any number of radio programmes discussing the finer details of Iraq’s political landscape and encouraging citizens to phone-in with their comments or questions. Even mobile phones were vulnerable as political text messages pinged their way into the pockets of many Iraqis (Usher, 2005a). Once again however, it was the television stations of the nation which best represented the rich array of political factions and competing parties, many even taking the unprecedented move to offer free political advertising. This brought with it a series of non-partisan and well-produced, if rather emotive, short films which encouraged Iraqis to participate in the election. Less emotive were the government-funded advertisements which also gave details of how to vote as well as the location of polling booths (Usher, 2005a). In addition, the free air-time meant that many of Iraq’s smaller minorities and political factions were able to broadcast their own amateur advertisements, although they did complain that they were not given equal air-time and were simply unable to compete with the larger parties and coalitions (Usher, 2005a). Despite such complaints, the fact that every legitimate political party in Iraq had access to free air-time on the nation’s state-run television channel indicates the degree to which the Iraqi media served as a locus where the general public had ready access to a diverse range of political
opinion, policy and debate (Dawisha & Diamond, 2006: 97). This is a fundamental shift from the media landscape of Baathist Iraq and a crucial step in the development of the media’s role in providing the kind of information necessary for free and fair elections and, therefore, in underpinning the nations move from despotism to democracy.

This free advertising aside, most of Iraq’s TV stations took a decidedly biased stance in the lead up to the elections. For example, both Al-Sharqiya and Al-Iraqiya, which had previously been lauded for their professional and objective reporting, were unwavering in their support of the incumbent government of Iyad Allawi and his ministers, repeatedly airing hisarty black-and-white commercials (Al-Marashi, 2007: 109; Usher, 2005a). The Shia-backed Al-Furat on the other hand, revealed its deeply partisan nature by refusing to offer free air time or screen paid advertisements from political parties other than the United Iraqi Alliance (which was a reincarnation of the January 2005 Unified Iraqi Coalition) (Al-Marashi, 2007: 109; Usher, 2005a).

Fortunately, the Sunni parties also managed to have a voice in the December elections via their newly established Baghdad satellite channel. Having suffered the consequences of boycotting the January election, many of the various Sunni political movements formed the Al-Tawafuq Front in 2005 and quickly set about establishing the channel. In a bid to counter the clearly partisan nature of their rival stations, Baghdad only featured advertisements for the Al-Tawafuq Front in the lead up to the December election (Al-Marashi, 2007: 111).

Taken in isolation from each other, much of the media of the Re-colonial period can therefore be seen to have clearly partisan tendencies that preclude them from the kind of balanced and politically neutral reporting that the media is supposed to provide in a democracy. However, a discerning Iraqi media consumer was provided with the full gamut of political coverage. Indeed, the Iraqi citizen who was prepared to switch between the various partisan newspapers, radio stations or television channels arguably received a relatively well-rounded picture of the elections. They were not only encouraged to vote or to phone-in and discuss the various issues at stake; they were also treated to a rich tapestry of debate, discourse and deliberation that occurred across a myriad of media outlets. It seems highly unlikely that any single Iraqi citizen, no matter how loyal towards his or her own ethno-political or religious faction, had no
exposure to the multitude of other voices and concerns expressed throughout the
campaigns. Iraq is not a neatly divided society where specific groups live in complete
isolation from one another and even if it were, every Iraqi would have had the
opportunity to read a pro-Kurdish or pro-Sunni newspaper, tune in to a minority radio
station, or watch a pro-government, independent or pro-Shia TV station.

What this reveals is that despite the efforts made by the Iraqi government, the KRG
and the occupying forces to control the ‘discourses of democracy’ in post-Saddam
Iraq, the Iraqi people - the marginalised subalterns as Spivak would term them - have
had access to a remarkably rich and diverse media sector. As with the earlier historical
eras of Colonial and Post-colonial Iraq, the media hegemony attempted in the Re-
colonial period has been offset by, and even prompted, a series of complex debates
about the future of the nation from across the myriad political parties and their media.
This is particularly evident in the decidedly positive role that the Iraqi media played
during the elections and referendum held across the nation in 2005. Indeed, Iraq’s
media / political sphere of this time is also interesting because of its sharp contrast to
the coverage of these same events in Western mainstream media outlets, such as The
Australian. Here, The Australian can be seen to have relied heavily on the discourse
of ‘Oriental despotism’ throughout its reportage, repeatedly arguing that Iraq and the
broader Middle East was incapable of democratic forms of governance. Throughout
its pejorative and reductive op-eds and in its news articles which repeatedly
emphasised violence and disagreement, The Australian also failed to develop a more
complex and nuanced assessment of the democratisation of Iraq. Contemporaneously,
the Iraqi media - with all its inherent biases and political allegiances - was providing
its audience with all of the details and information that was so abjectly lacking in The
Australian. This stark difference between the Iraqi media and The Australian also
raises questions as to the accuracy of the distinction made between ‘Western
democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. In the West, the strength and freedoms of the
press have long been extolled as a signifier of the robust nature of ‘Western
democracy’. The Fourth Estate is then held up against non-Western nations as both an
indicator of the superiority of the West and as a measure of the despotic and primitive
nature of ‘other’ societies. However, when the Iraqi press succeeds where Australian
media fails, we are left to question not only the strength of the Fourth Estate at home,
but also forced to confront the notion that the media sector of non-Western nations is
capable, given the right circumstances, of grappling with the thorny issues of foreign occupation, ethno-sectarian divides and democratisation.
Conclusion

It can be argued that despite the fact the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the US-led Coalition of the Willing was an erroneous, egregious and illegitimate act, it did see the toppling and later execution of one of the twentieth century’s most brutal tyrants, Saddam Hussein. This afforded an unrivalled upsurge in media freedoms across the nation, resulting in a shift from a handful of tightly controlled propaganda organs to around 200 Iraqi-owned news publications by the end of 2003, not to mention the concurrent expansion of Iraq’s radio and television stations. Once again, Iraq’s complex matrix of political, religious and ethnic allegiances unfolded across the pages of the nation’s press. Many of these newly formed media outlets were understandably biased to particular segments of Iraq’s population, toeing certain agendas and proliferating particular ideologies. Others maintained a high level of objectivity and journalistic integrity, revelling in their newfound freedom to practise their profession and their chance to connect with a population thirsty for undoctored news.

However, the emergence of the free press in Iraq and its contemporaneous impact on the nation’s burgeoning public sphere is also of broader interest here in that it serves to further problematise the ‘discourses of democracy’ that have for so long guided the West’s view of itself as democratic and ‘others’ as despotic. Indeed, the Re-colonial era of Iraqi history serves to further illuminate the problems inherent in these discourses and to undermine the assumptions and inferences on which they are based. Firstly, the invasion and occupation of Iraq is reminiscent of the Colonial period not only because the nation has been folded under the auspices of a foreign power, but also that this foreign power has gone to great lengths to ensure its hegemony over Iraq. To build and maintain this hegemonic position, the United States has proven itself all too familiar with Althusser’s notion that power cannot be maintained via the Repressive State Apparatuses alone, but must be bolstered via the Ideological State Apparatuses which create a complex matrix of ideology to legitimate and reinforce the existence of the ruling or dominant group. Here, Iraq’s press sector has been manipulated to the benefit of the occupying forces and their desire to silence dissent and control the parameters of debate. In this way, the official rhetoric of the United States as a harbinger of democracy and the freedom of the press is completely
undermined by their efforts to suppress democratic movements and interfere in the
culture industries of post-Saddam Iraq.

In addition, the Re-colonial period also raises a number of questions about the
discourse of ‘Oriental despotism’. On the one hand, many of the discourses which
circulate regarding post-Saddam Iraq in the foreign policy, academic study and the
mainstream media of the West continues to rely on age-old assumptions about the
Orient and its inability to understand the machinations of advanced forms of
governance such as democracy. What is particularly interesting here is that the very
existence of Iraq’s lively and divergent media / political landscape is itself a counter-
argument to this notion. Far from antithetical to democracy, the Iraqi citizenry have
revealed themselves to be all too familiar with the practices, institutions and the types
of rational-critical debate which underpin good governance. Firstly, there were the
spontaneous elections that emerged across Iraq immediately after the toppling of
Saddam then, in 2005, millions of Iraqi citizens lined the streets of the nation for their
chance to take part in the first truly democratic national elections held in Iraq for
many decades. In addition, the many partisan and non-partisan organs that littered
Iraq in the lead up to these elections fulfilled their duty of informing the populace as
to the central issues facing the nation and the stance taken by the numerous political
parties emerging across Iraq. This resurgence of the Iraqi citizenry playing an active
role in their governance as well as their engagement with a free press is crucial to the
development of an informed and active public sphere. While it would be unwise to
over-determine the degree to which this Iraqi public sphere is capable of carrying the
nation towards a more democratic and inclusive future, the Re-colonial period at the
very least includes its own alternative history of Iraq, an alternative history that is
written each day by the many Iraqis who are deeply concerned with the future of their
country.
Conclusion

[Wo]Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language. (Marx, 1963 [1869]: 15)

Salvaging Democracy from Discourse

As the curtains part on the 2007 high-grossing action blockbuster 300 (Snyder, Johnstad, & Gordon, 2007), we are immediately greeted with a sense of foreboding. The story’s narrator, Dilios (David Wenham), recounts for us the intense military training that Spartan men had to endure from childhood in order to protect the people from their dark enemies, enemies who wish to destroy the city-state and remove its virtues from the annals of history. This destruction has never been more imminent, it seems, than with the recent encroachment of Persian forces into Greece and the beginning of the Greco-Persian Wars of 480-479 BC. “A beast approaches” continues Dilios,

…patient and confident, savouring the meal to come. But this beast is made of men and horses, swords and spears. An army of slaves vast beyond imagining, ready to devour Greece, ready to snuff out the world’s one hope for reason and justice. A beast approaches. (Snyder et al., 2007)

To combat this beast the Spartan king, Leonidas (Gerard Butler), assembles a small battalion of 300 of his finest warriors who are joined by several other soldiers from the various city-states of Greece. Together these men head towards Thermopylae where Leonidas believes that the narrow gorge and steep sea cliffs will make the vast numbers of the Persian army “…count for nothing” (Snyder et al., 2007). It is here
that the Greeks, and especially the 300 Spartans, confront the Persians, enduring wave after wave of attack until their ultimate defeat which, in turn, inspires the armies of Greece to repel the Persians the following year.

At the time of its release *300* sparked a wave of controversy as a plethora of blogs, film reviews, news reports and short academic papers sought to point out the films historical inaccuracies (Ahreeman, 2007; Cartledge, 2007; Farrokh, 2007; Lytle, 2007; Vergano, 2007), its one-dimensional characters and overly simplistic plot ("Greek critics lash Hollywood ancient epic '300'," 2007) as well as its homoerotic and homophobic undertones (Burgess, 2007; Peneaud & Palmer, 2007). Others went even further, claiming that it was a piece of US-backed propaganda designed to yield support for the ongoing war in Iraq and a potential future war with Iran ("300: A Film Without Politics?," 2007; Anti-Rec: 300," 2007; Burgess, 2007). Indeed, the film was greeted with outrage and indignation across Iran where even President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accused the film of being part of the elaborate US psychological warfare program against his country ("Iran condemns Hollywood war epic ", 2007; Jaafar, 2007; Moaveni, 2007). Overall however, much of the criticism of the film focused on the racist and pejorative nature of the text which relied heavily on portraying a negative stereotype of Iran / Persia and the broader non-Western world (Ahreeman, 2007; Farrokh, 2007; Greek critics lash Hollywood ancient epic '300'," 2007; Scott, 2007; K. Smith, 2007; Stevens, 2007).

Indeed, it would be easy enough to demonstrate that this film represents the very epitome of what Edward Said was referring to in his work on *Orientalism* (Said, 2003 [1978]). Throughout the film, the Persians are constructed as the ‘other’ of Greece, their army is made up of ghouls, freaks, ogres, unworldly beasts and immortals, dressed mostly from head-to-toe in black and repeatedly described in terms such as “…beasts from the blackness”, “…hunters of men’s souls” and “…motherless dogs” (Snyder et al., 2007). The Spartans, on the other hand, are the model of Anglo-Saxon hyper-masculinity, dressed in red capes and leather jockstraps, they possess “…superior fighting skills” and “…march for honour’s sake, for duty’s sake, for glory’s sake” (Snyder et al., 2007). This is not at all inconsistent with the findings of a number of other studies which have sought to investigate the portrayal of Islam and the Middle East in Hollywood blockbusters (Bernstein &

However, what is perhaps even more interesting here is that within this Orientalist framework, 300 also makes clear the distinction between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. Consider for example the actions of King Leonidas versus those of the Persian king, Xerxes (Roger Santoro). Leonidas is not only constructed as strong, virtuous and brave, he can also be seen to have great respect for the rule of law, the individual freedoms and the democratic mechanisms of ancient Sparta, virtues which he is prepared to sacrifice his life in order to protect. Indeed, despite his insubordinate and recalcitrant nature, Leonidas consults with the religious clergy of Sparta, the Ephors, and heeds the advice of the Oracle. Similarly, he respects the jurisdiction of the Spartan council and is careful not to offend them or to contravene Spartan law. Here, the power of King Leonidas is tempered by the machinations of the state and despite his obvious desire to summon the entire army of Sparta, he instead leads his personal bodyguard, a small battalion of 300 ‘free’ men, to their certain death. Xerxes on the other hand wishes to control all that he sees, demanding absolute submission and complete obedience to his every whim. He considers himself a ‘god-king’, he indulges his every fantasy and he is in command of a vast army of ‘slaves’. There is no consultation with religious or political bodies and there is no personal freedom or legal system with which to contend, there is only the arbitrary despotism of his megalomania.

47 It should be noted here that Shaheen’s study focuses on the construction of Arab peoples in Hollywood films, while 300 is about Persians. Arabs and Persians are, of course, distinct ethnically, culturally and linguistically. However, the fact that there are remarkably similar portrayals of Arabs and Persians in Western motion pictures indicates the homogenising force of Orientalism where the complex differences of the Orient are reduced down to negative portrayals and stereotypes (Said, 1981: 80-83; Shaheen, 2001: 29).
Indeed, this juxtaposition between Leonidas and Xerxes, as well as the civilizations and political systems they represent, is particularly evident when they meet at the end of the first day of fighting at Thermopylae. Here Xerxes, sitting atop a massive and overly ornate throne carried by his dutiful slaves, demands Leonidas’ submission and threatens him with complete annihilation. This fails to intimidate Leonidas and the Persian king then attempts a bribe, offering to make him “…warlord of all Greece” (Snyder et al., 2007). However, when Leonidas refuses to be seduced by such an offer, an enraged Xerxes promises to “…erase even the memory of Sparta from the histories…the world will never know you existed at all” (Snyder et al., 2007). To this Leonidas retorts “The world will know that free men stood against a tyrant. That few stood against many” (Snyder et al., 2007).

This kind of juxtaposition continues throughout the film where the plot moves us several times back and forward between the sophisticated politics of Sparta and the depraved and imperious Persian Empire. This is particularly true of the latter half of the movie where we are taken into the court of King Xerxes. Here, musicians play exotic instruments as semi-naked and disfigured women writhe and dance and seduce. Ram-headed men look on as bejewelled freaks appear to smoke opium and engage in acts of moral decadence and sexual depravity. The camera pans through this seamy interior as we follow the deformed Spartan outcast, Ephialtes (Andrew Tiernan), and watch as he betrays King Leonidas. His reward, according to Xerxes, will be “Everything you could ever desire. Every happiness you can imagine. Every pleasure your fellow Greeks and your false gods have denied you. I will grant you…Embrace me as your king and as your god” (Snyder et al., 2007).

The Persian court is then sharply contrasted against the image of the Spartan council, where wise bearded men in white robes are seen deliberating and debating over the key issues of the state. It is here that Leonidas’ wife, Queen Gorgo (Lena Headey), gives an impassioned and skilled oration, imploring the council to send the entire Spartan army to Thermopylae. “Send the army for the preservation of liberty” argues the Queen, “Send it for justice. Send it for law and order. Send it for reason. But most importantly, send our army for hope” (Snyder et al., 2007). Sadly however, Gorgo’s address comes too late as the 300 Spartans are finally overcome by the might of the nefarious trespassers. Fortunately, before he dies, Leonidas sends Dilios...
back to Sparta and asks him to spread the story of the brave 300 so that Greece may unite and ward off the Persians. Dilios succeeds in his mission and, as the movie comes to a close, he is seen walking amongst the vast Greek army, rallying them to battle with the words

…from free Greek to free Greek, the word was spread that bold Leonidas and his 300, so far from home, lay down their lives, not just for Sparta, but for all Greece and the promise this country holds. Now, here on this rugged patch of earth called Plataea, Xerxes hordes face obliteration! Just there, the barbarians huddle, sheer terror gripping tight their hearts with icy fingers… This day we rescue a world from mysticism and tyranny, and usher in a future brighter than anything we can imagine. Give thanks, men, to Leonidas and the brave 300! To victory! (Snyder et al., 2007)

Indeed, the story of the 300 Spartans and their final stand against all odds at Thermopylae has been an ongoing motif in popular Western culture. The 2007 film was based on the earlier graphic novel of the same name by Frank Miller (F. Miller, 1998), itself inspired by the 1962 film *The 300 Spartans* (St.George, Callegari, DelGrosso, d'Eramo, & Liberatore, 1962) which Miller claims to have fallen in love with as a six year old boy (Accomando, 2007). More broadly, the story of the 300 Spartans has been recounted by a whole collection of novelists, film-makers and artists from Jacques-Louis David’s *Portrait of Leonidas* of 1814 (David, 1814) to Steven Pressfield’s novel *Gates of Fire* (Pressfield, 1998) and from video-games such as *300: March to Glory* ("300: March to Glory," 2007) to a ridiculous send-up of the 2007 film called *Meet the Spartans* (Friedberg & Seltzer, 2008). In turn, each of these texts have taken their original inspiration from arguably the best account of the Greco-Persian Wars, Herodotus’ *Histories* (Herodotus, 1996 [460 BC]). What is particularly problematic about this is not only that Herodotus, as we have seen, used typically Orientalist language to explain away the non-Western world, he was also amongst the first to argue that the West was inherently democratic while the East was prone to despotism and tyranny. This indicates to us not only the longevity of the distinction between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ but also their status as a received wisdom, invoked and repeated by the culture industries of more recent times.
However, Herodotus and the story of the 300 Spartans are not the only example extant of the purported divide between the ‘discourses of democracy’. In answering the first Research Question of this project, Chapter 2 has demonstrated the pervasive nature of these twin discourses and traced their lineage right through the canon of Western scholarship. It has demonstrated the Eurocentric nature of the historical narrative that accompanies and underscores democracy itself. From the very earliest days of collective forms of governance in ancient Greece through to the spread of modern parliaments and representative institutions across much of the globe today, democracy has been constructed as inherently Western. It is widely seen as a form of governance forged and designed by the great nations of the rational and free West, a form of governance whose events, practices and movements have an exclusively Occidental heritage. Paradoxically, this discourse of ‘Western democracy’ has long marginalised and obfuscated the rights, histories and democratic traditions of ‘others’. Perhaps foremost amongst these ‘others’ are the peoples of the Orient, who have so often been constructed as simply incapable of democratic governance.

Indeed, paralleling the narrative of ‘Western democracy’, there has been a concurrent discourse which has emphasised the supposed Asiatic predisposition to backwardness, savage cruelty and despotic forms of power. Here, we find a clear binary opposition between the forces of ‘Western democracy’ and the benighted nature of ‘Oriental despotism’, a dualism which can be traced from Herodotus’ *Histories* to recent Hollywood blockbusters.

Given the pervasive and deep-seated nature of this dualism, it is perhaps not at all surprising that it has been frequently invoked throughout the Western mainstream media’s coverage of the modern nation-state of Iraq. Indeed, in addressing the second Research Question, Chapter 3 has illustrated that these ‘discourses of democracy’ have been repeatedly utilised in media coverage of Iraq from the Gulf War of the early 1990s through to the series of elections and the referendum that occurred across the nation in 2005. Overall, this analysis reveals that Iraq has been represented as a primitive nation, ruled by ‘Oriental despots’ and inhabited by violent, gun-toting fundamentalists. These discourses are not only problematic in that they continue to emphasise a negative Orientalist picture of Iraq and the broader Middle East, but also because they continue to legitimate Western hegemony over the region. However, the major contribution here is to discuss the political aspects of
such Orientalism and to relate it back to the framework provided for us by the discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. This is perhaps best demonstrated in the CDA of The Australian’s coverage of the Iraqi elections and referendum of 2005 where even such advanced and relatively successful democratic events were reduced down to an overly simplistic and inherently racist lexicon. Drawing heavily on the twin ‘discourses of democracy’ outlined here, The Australian recounts Iraq’s democratisation according to the dominant epistemological framework in which democracy itself is seen as the exclusive product of the Occident while the Orient is condemned to despotism, despite the best efforts of the West to civilize and democratise the ‘lesser breeds’. This has very specific implications for The Australian and the broader Western mainstream media who must avoid falling back on pervading discourses regarding the Middle East as antithetical to democracy. Indeed, the question remains as to whether or not the media can move beyond this Orientalist framework to offer a more genuine analysis of Iraq’s democratisation and Australia’s continuing role in the Coalition of the Willing.

What is particularly poignant about this coverage of Iraq and its invocation of long held stereotypes regarding the nature of Western and Middle Eastern politics is that the body of critical theory developed in Chapter 1 demands that we scrutinize this dualism, to investigate further its claims to truth and the assumptions on which it is based. Here, the critical theory which developed out of the works of Marx and Engels, including its later Post-structuralist and Post-colonial manifestations, has developed a method with which to critique the relations of power which constitute the lineage of discourses that provide a given era with its dominant episteme. At their core, such theories demand that we expose and critique the presuppositions which envelop our understandings of the social world and challenge the assumptions on which they are based. This requires that we move beyond the simplistic textbook analysis of Iraq’s political history as one of despotism and violence to instead uncover a more nuanced and complex picture, an alternative vision of Iraq that emphasises those instances of egalitarianism, collective governance and democratic reform. Indeed, perhaps the foremost contribution of this study has been to carefully problematise the dialectic between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ via a thorough analysis of 4 key phases of Iraq’s political history.
The first such epoch examined here is that of ancient Iraq and its practise of Primitive Democracy. In answering the first part of the third Research Question, Chapter 4 seeks to undermine the notion that ancient Mesopotamia was strictly the reserve of megalomaniacal and autocratic systems of power. Instead, from the early myths and epics recounted by the Sumerians to the first city-states of the region and from the grand empires of the Babylonians, Assyrians and Egyptians to later colonies and smaller kingdoms, we find remarkably sophisticated and inclusive forms of governance. Far from ‘Oriental despotism’, the ancient history of Iraq reveals the complex political landscape of the antediluvian world where, at particular times and locations, the broader polity was encouraged to engage with and partake in the machinations of the state. This is particularly significant because this is the first known study to examine the origins of Middle Eastern democracy and discuss them in relation to contemporary political events such as the democratisation of Iraq. It is also the first to argue that Primitive Democracy carries with it questions about the origins of ‘Western democracy’ and to point out the flaws inherent in the notion that the Orient has always been prone to despotism.

Moving forward, the next historical era under examination here is the Colonial period of Iraq, which began with the arrival of the British at the close of the First World War and ended with the Revolution of 1958. While much has been written about the Colonial period of Iraq that demonstrates the Orientalist nature of the British Empire, the contribution made to the field here has been to re-examine this era in terms of its relation to ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. In order to address the second part of the third Research Question, Chapter 5 inverts the traditional dualism between the ‘discourses of democracy’. It highlights the contradictory nature of the British Empire which both advocated democratic practices at home whilst undermining and suppressing them abroad. With their installation of a foreign monarch, their continued interference in Iraq’s domestic politics and their attempts to control the nation’s media sector, the British occupation reveals itself to be not only typically Orientalist but perhaps even implicitly despotic. Conversely, and despite the oppressive measures taken by the British and the Hashemites, the Colonial period also reveals an Iraqi populace deeply concerned and adamantly striving towards a more inclusive and robust democratic order. As an
indicator of Iraq’s public sphere of this time, the nation’s multifarious media / politics nexus played a crucial role in advocating and supporting a series of counter-hegemonic discourses, many of which directly challenged the political legitimacy of the elite and asserted alternative visions of a democratic and inclusive Iraq.

Chapter 5 also went on to address the third part of the third Research Question by more closely examining the Post-colonial era of Iraq’s history (1958-2003) in relation to the ‘discourses of democracy’ being studied here. As with the Colonial period, many studies have sought to examine Post-colonial Iraq, with particular emphasis having been placed on the manipulation of state ideology by the Baath, and particularly Saddam Hussein, to legitimate their incumbency. The contribution here however, is to move beyond the emphasis on the despotism and autocracy of the succession of regimes which governed Post-colonial Iraq, to instead discuss the ways in which these regimes were able to manipulate the discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’ to their own ends. Here, the Post-colonial era, particularly under the rule of Saddam, saw the media transform into a propaganda machine that not only dutifully praised the centralised authority of the state, but propagated a particular vision of Iraqi democracy as superior to both ‘Western democracy’ and the despotism of earlier regimes. The gap between such rhetoric and action in Post-colonial Iraq ultimately paved the way for a number of sophisticated opposition movements and their media outlets which represented the interests of various disenfranchised religious, ethnic and secular factions within the state. Each of these highly subversive political movements had their own particular ideology and political ambition. What they shared in common however, was their opposition to the hegemony of the Baath and their will towards a more egalitarian and collective political order. Indeed the aggregate effect of their efforts indicates that Post-colonial Iraq was home to a lively, if clandestine and often partisan, public sphere.

The final key phase of Iraq’s political history under investigation here is that of Re-colonial Iraq. This era began with the erroneous and illegitimate invasion and occupation of Iraq by the US-led Coalition of the Willing in 2003 and is studied here up until the democratic elections and referendum of 2005. Chapter 6 therefore addresses the final part of the third Research Question by closely reviewing the developments of Re-colonial Iraq and contrasting them against the discourses of
‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. In this way, the research conducted here supplements earlier studies that have noted that this period of Iraqi history is characterised by a return to the Colonial era of Western hegemony over a subjugated Orient and that it therefore raises a number of questions for the field of Post-colonial studies. Indeed, this chapter is the only known study to have moved beyond the preceding scholarship via its analysis of the ‘discourses of democracy’ in post-Saddam Iraq. Firstly, it has detailed both the foreign and domestic bodies who have attempted to control, manipulate and interfere in Iraq’s diverse media sector. Among these, the margin between the official position of the US on promoting and supporting democracy in Iraq and, at the same time, its extensive interference in the political and media landscape of the Re-colonial era raises a number of questions about the despotic tendencies of the West. More to the point, this study of Re-colonial Iraq is the first such investigation into the overwhelmingly positive role that the Iraqi media played in reporting the elections and referendum of 2005. Unlike the reportage found in *The Australian* and other Western media outlets, the Iraqi media went beyond the reductive framework of violence, disagreement and political turmoil to reveal a more nuanced and rich image of Iraqi politics.

However, despite the significance of this study and its contributions, there are also several limitations that must be acknowledged. While some of these have been briefly mentioned in the Introduction or throughout the project, it is worth expanding on them here and recommending areas of further research and future investigation. One such limitation is the difficulty in discussing the US-led occupation of Iraq and the nation’s ongoing democratisation with any sense of finality. While some reports that the political situation in Iraq is deteriorating and that the country is on the brink of collapse seem exaggerated and overly simplistic at times, Iraq does remain one of the most violent places on earth and the politics there is fragile at best. It is therefore recommended here that the unfolding political situation in Iraq needs to be closely monitored in order to continue to foster the emergence of an Iraqi public sphere and to aid its shift towards a robust democratic order. Much of the onus therefore falls on the occupying forces that must suspend their continued manipulation of and interference in Iraq’s media / politics sector and allow the Iraqi people the democratic privilege of diverse discourse and debate.
The fragility of Iraq’s political and security situation also alludes to the principal reason that this study has relied so heavily on secondary sources rather than on primary research. This is further compounded by the author’s lack of language skills as well as the time and resources necessary to collate and translate original Iraqi material. To overcome such limitations, the researcher has made every effort to cite reputable sources regarding the political history of Iraq and its current situation and to cross-reference such citations where possible. Given that the security situation in Iraq improves in the coming years and given that increased funding and adequate resources are made available for such projects, future studies of Iraq’s political / media nexus would avoid this limitation via their synthesis and analysis of primary Iraqi sources. It is certainly recommended here that such studies are conducted in the future with the view to a more detailed understanding of Iraq’s complex political and media landscape and the central role it can play in bolstering support for democratic reform.

A further limitation, which has been briefly noted at the start of Chapter 5, is that this study contains a substantial historical leap. It moves quite abruptly from the last known instance of Primitive Democracy in 187 BC through to the end of the Ottoman Empire, a gap of more than two thousand years. What is particularly significant about the intervening era in terms of the Middle East is the rise of Islam and its political and cultural influence across much of the known world. The foremost reason for the exclusion of this era is that the democratic potential of the religion of Islam, its history and its empires has become the object of much recent study, so much so that it would be difficult for a scholar not versed in Islamic history and doctrine to contribute substantially to the field. Despite this however, it is recommended here that there is still work to be done on the question of Islam and democracy. Specifically, future research may wish to investigate the classical Islamic period of Iraqi history in relation to the discourses of ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. Certainly, Islam and Islamic history remain very important religious and cultural signifiers for the majority of Iraqi people and a more thorough analysis of the ‘discourses of democracy’ in relation to this heritage is vital if a truly comprehensive and alternative history of Iraq is to be written.
There is one final limitation that is worth mentioning here, namely that this study puts forth no actual plan for democracy in Iraq but is instead about the ideological lens through which Iraq’s political history has long been viewed. The point here is not whether or not Iraq will become a democracy or how such a goal might be achieved, but that Iraq does have a complex political history of egalitarianism, collective forms of governance and democratic reform that is rarely acknowledged. Indeed, Iraq may never become a truly robust democracy. It is possible that whatever exists of Iraq’s complex political sphere today may erode and any dreams of a democratic and egalitarian Iraq may well be shattered. While this series of possibilities has to be understood and dealt with in a realistic manner, the point here is that it does not have to be this way. There is nothing in Iraqi history, culture or society that is absolutely antithetical to democratic forms of governance, no implicit reason why Iraq should become a failed state under the auspices of a despotic government. Indeed, quite apart from the pervading assumptions about Iraqi political history and that of the broader Middle East, a more thorough analysis of Iraq’s past reveals a sophisticated and diverse political landscape that has long fought against tyranny and oppression, that has asserted alternative visions of a more inclusive political order and is demonstrative of the Iraqi people’s will toward democratisation.

In a sense then, while this study does not contain any step-by-step guide to building democracy in Iraq, it is suggested that further ideological analyses of Iraq’s political history, such as that conducted here, may go some way towards bolstering and legitimating democratic movements within Iraq today. Indeed, this has been one of the central arguments of a number of recent studies on Iraq’s political history which have cogently argued that the nation’s democratic past could become a powerful political and discursive tool, used to engender wider support and participation in contemporary political developments (Al-Musawi, 2006b; Davis, 2005a, 2005b, 2005d, 2005e, 2007b; Dawisha, 2005a, 2005c; Isakhan, 2008a). Amongst these, Davis has been the most adamant that while “…historical memory will not provide a panacea for Iraq’s political problems” the nation’s democratic past “…can help to inspire Iraqis to regain a sense of civic pride and trust in their ability to forge ahead with democratisation” and to “…deprive those who seek to return Iraq to an authoritarian past” (Davis, 2005a: 244).
However, if such a project is to be successful in Iraq and further abroad, we need to move beyond the age-old and deep-seated framework provided for us by the dualism between ‘Western democracy’ and ‘Oriental despotism’. To some extent this means re-examining and re-writing the history of democracy itself. It means expanding the very Eurocentric narrative that underpins democracy to be more inclusive of those democratic practices, movements and histories that fall outside this limited rubric. This does not mean that we should discard important moments such as the rise of the polis in ancient Athens or the French Revolution or dismiss important works such as those of Aristotle, Montesquieu or Weber, but that rather we should incorporate these into a much broader narrative. In the case of Iraq, this broader narrative would necessarily include pre-Athenian democratic developments such as those of ancient Mesopotamia, it would also incorporate Islamic elements as well as the various political movements that have played such an important role in Iraq throughout the Colonial, Post-colonial and Re-colonial periods.

However, as the quote from Marx which opened this Chapter reveals, overcoming the ideologies inherited from the past is no easy feat. As has been demonstrated, the ‘discourses of democracy’ studied here are so deeply enmeshed into the Western scholarly and literary canon that they surface in everything from major works on history, philosophy and politics through to recent art, literature and major motion pictures, achieving a weight and a common sense value via repetition. Democracy, however, is worth salvaging from the series of overlapping and interconnected discourses which have constructed it for us. It contains, as Derrida has pointed out, an ‘emancipatory promise’ that we must strive towards. Hidden beneath the layers of Eurocentric history and racialist ideology, ‘rule by the people’ carries with it a quintessentially human notion that is at once both pragmatic and utopian, something that must be fought for and defended daily and is also always yet ‘to come’. In this way, there is much left to ‘be done’ in the humanities and social sciences in relation to the question of democracy and the promise that it holds. With regard to Iraq, the fact that the next round of national elections are scheduled for 2009 provides the ideal opportunity for us to move one step closer to this utopian promise. For any advancement in Iraq’s long and multifarious move towards collective governance is not only a step in the direction of a more egalitarian and inclusive Iraq, but another
affront to the ‘discourses of democracy’ that have for so long clouded our ability to see beyond their simple dualism to the broader story of humankind’s collective struggle towards democratisation.
Appendices
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<th>Controlling Body</th>
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<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad’s Ottoman governor</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>The Journal of Iraq</em></td>
<td>1816</td>
<td>- Local Baghdad-based news bulletin</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Arabic and Turkish language</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Mostly praised the local Ottoman governor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Distributed to Ottoman army officials and other dignitaries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- There are no surviving copies, but if the reports are true it would have been the first Arabic newspaper anywhere(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midhat Pasha (Baghdad’s Ottoman governor)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Zawra</em> (‘The Curved [City]’, a popular soubriquet for Baghdad)</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>- Four-paged Arabic-Turkish paper</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Preferred to extol the virtues of the Sultan and the efficiency of the government that to report ‘real’ news(^2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mosul’s Ottoman governor</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Mawsil</em> (‘Mosul’)</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>- See above(^3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basra’s Ottoman governor</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Basra</em> (‘Basra’)</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>- See above(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Kamil (Opposition figure)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Bayn Al-Nahrayn</em> (‘Between the Two Rivers’)</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>- Opposition paper based in Baghdad(^5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Young Turk movement</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Volkan</em> (‘Volcano’)</td>
<td>1900-1910</td>
<td>- Anti-Young Turk paper based in Istanbul and available in Iraq(^6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish community of Istanbul</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Hamevasser</em> (‘Herald’)</td>
<td>1910-1911</td>
<td>- Weekly newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Supported the Zionist movement of Istanbul and available in Iraq(^7)</td>
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## Table 2: Key Iraqi media of the 1920s-1930s

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<tr>
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| ‘Independent’                                         | Newspaper| *Al-Istiqlal* (‘Independence’ of Najaf) | 1920         | – Openly criticised the British occupation  
- Played an important role in organising efforts against British forces during the Great Iraqi Revolt of 1920¹ |
| ‘Independent’                                         | Newspaper| *Al-Furat* (‘Euphrates’)       | 1920         | – See above²                                                                                                                                           |
| Nationalist Party (*Al-Hizb Al-Watani*)               | Newspaper| *Al-Istiqlal* (‘Independence’ of Baghdad) | 1920         | – See above³                                                                                                                                           |
| ‘Independent’                                         | Newspaper| *Al-Nashi’ah* (‘The Emergent’), renamed *Al-Nashi’ah Al-Jadidah* (‘The Newly Emergent’) | 1921 1922    | – An independent writer, Ibrahim Salih Shukr, was considered unique in his dissent and in his tendency to shock and unsettle the Iraqi literary and cultural scene⁴ |
| The Iraqi National Party (*Al-Hizb Al-Watani Al-Iraqi*)| Newspaper| *Mufid* (‘The one who gives benefit’) | 1922         | – Instrumental in mobilising more than ten thousand people as they demonstrated in front of the King’s palace on the one year anniversary of his ascension to the throne  
- Banned by the British High Commissioner in Iraq, Sir Percy Cox, in 1922⁵ |
| The Iraqi Renaissance Party (*Hizb Al-Nahda Al-Iraqiya*)| Newspaper| *Al-Rafidayn* (‘Mesopotamia’)  | 1922         | – See above⁶                                                                                                                                           |
| Iraqi Marxists (who were to later form the Iraqi Communist Party) | Newspaper| *Al-Sahifa* (‘The Page’)       | 1924         | – Arguably Iraq’s most radical organ  
- Called for independence, evacuation of the British and the development of a democratic Iraqi state  
- Perhaps the only paper of the time to concern itself with broader socio-political issues such as women’s rights⁷ |
| The People’s Party (*Hizb Al-Sha’b*)                  | Newspaper| *Hizb Al-Sha’b* (‘The People’s Party’) | 1925         | – Called for independence, evacuation of the British and the development of a democratic Iraqi state⁸                                                                 |
| The Progressive Party (*Hizb Al-Taqaddum, TPP*)       | Newspaper| *Al-Alam Al-Arabi* (‘The Arabic World’) | 1920s        | – Partisan organ in support of Prime Minister ‘Abd Al-Muhsin Al-Sa’dun  
- During WWII it appears to have received funding from the German government publishing; amongst other things, Arabic translations of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* in instalments⁹ |
<p>| TPP                                                   | Newspaper| <em>Al-Liwa</em> (‘The Standard’)     | 1920s        | – Partisan organ in support of Prime Minister Al-Sa’dun¹⁰                                                                                  |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TPP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Taqaddum</em> (‘The Progressive’)</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>– See above11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Misbah</em> (‘The Lamp’)</td>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>– A Shia writer and Jewish editor worked together to create this publication of some repute12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Nationalist Fraternal Party (*Hizb Al-Ikha’ Al-Watani*) | Newspaper  | *Al-Bilad* (‘The Country’)                | 1929         | – Run by Christians in Baghdad and highly esteemed for its quality  
– Called for independence, evacuation of the British and the development of a democratic Iraqi state  
– To avoid censorship, the paper changed its name six times during the 1930s  
– In the 1940s, the paper regularly reported on civil unrest such as the student protests of 194113 |
| The Commitment Party (*Hizb Al-Ahd*) | Newspaper  | *Sada Al-Ahd* (‘The Echo of Independence’) | 1930         | – Partisan organ in support of Prime Minister Nuri Al-Said who was Iraq’s most frequent PM and arguably the most powerful person in Iraq behind the throne14 |
| Nationalist Party (*Al-Hizb Al-Watani*) | Newspaper  | *Sada Al-Istiqlal* (‘The Echo of Independence’) | 1930         | – Partisan organ for the Nationalist Party15                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Ahali Group (*Jam iyyat Al-Ahali, ‘The People’s Group’) | Newspaper  | *Al-Ahali* (‘The People’)                 | 1932         | – Afforded the Ahali Group considerable influence across Iraq16                                                                                                                                                        |
| Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) | Newspaper  | *Kifah Al-Sha’b* (‘The People’s Struggle’) | 1935         | – Partisan organ of the ICP17                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| ICP             | Newspaper  | *Al-Inqilab* (‘The Revolt’)               | 1930s        | – See above18                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Iraqi Christians | Newspaper  | *Al-Zaman* (‘The Times’)                  | 1937         | – Arguably Iraq’s most successful, professional and well-respected paper of this era19                                                                                                                                 |
| ‘Independent’   | Newspaper  | *Habezbooz* (a term from Iraqi folklore)  | 1930s        | – A Baghdad-based paper that satirized the British occupation amongst other things20                                                                                                                                 |

Table 3: Key Iraqi media of the 1940s-1960s

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| National Democratic Party (Hizb Al-Watani Al-Dimuqrati) | Newspaper     | Sawt Al-Ahali (‘The Voice of the People’), later re-named Sada Al-Ahali (‘Echo of the People’) | 1940s        | – A reincarnation of Al-Ahali (see Table 2) after it had been banned from publishing under its original name  
– Left-leaning nationalist with a considerable following  
– Launched a number of virulent attacks against the Iraqi government |
| Independence Party (Hizb Al-Istiqlal)        | Newspaper     | Liwa Al-Istiqlal (‘The Independent Standard’) | 1940s        | – Right-leaning Pan-Arab with a considerable following  
– Launched a number of virulent attacks against the Iraqi government |
| Iraqi Communist Party (ICP)                 | Newspaper     | Kifah Al-Sha'b (‘The People’s Struggle’) | Continued from 1930s | – Reflected ICP and Iraqi nationalist views |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Al-Qa'ida (‘The Base’)              | 1940s-1950s  | – See above |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Ra'yat Al-Shaghila (‘The Worker’s Flag’) | 1940s-1950s  | – See above |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Ittihad Al-Sha'b (‘The People’s Union’) | 1940s-1950s  | – See above |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Sawt Al-Kifah (‘The Voice of Struggle’) | 1951         | – See above |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Ittihad Al-'Ummal (‘The Worker’s Union’), re-launched as Wahdat Al-'Ummal (‘The Worker’s Unity’) | 1952-1962    | – See above |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Nidal Al-Fallah (‘The Peasant’s Struggle’) | 1952         | – See above |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Sawt Al-Furat (‘The Voice of the Euphrates’), re-appears | 1954-1963    | – See above |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Kifah Al-Talaba (‘The Student’s Struggle’) | 1950s        | – Designed to cater for the student members of the ICP |
| ICP                                          | Newspaper     | Huquq Al-Ma'r'a (‘Women’s Rights’)   | 1950s        | – Designed to cater for the female members of the ICP |
| Iraqi Government                             | Newspaper     | The Baghdad Observer                | 1967         | – English-language paper designed to serve the growing expatriate community |
| ‘Independent’                                | Newspaper     | Al-Manar (‘The Lighthouse’)         |              | – Very professional and widely distributed |

1-6(Davis, 2005b: 96; Dawisha, 2005a: 16, 22-23; 2005c: 725); 7-12(Davis, 2005b: 96-97); 13(Hurrat & Leidig, 1994: 98-99); 14(Daragahi, 2003: 46).
Table 4: Key Baathist media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab Baath Socialist Party (ABSP)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Hurriya</em> (‘The Freedom’)</td>
<td>1940s-1950s</td>
<td>− Partisan organ of the ABSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Pan-Arabist tendencies¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Afkar</em> (‘The Idea’)</td>
<td>1940s-1950s</td>
<td>− See above²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-‘Amal</em> (‘The Labor’)</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>− See above³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Thawra</em> (‘The Revolution’)</td>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>− Initially controlled by the Iraqi military then handed over to the Baath after 1968, becoming the official Baath paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Circulation of around 150,000 in the early 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− An international edition was published in London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Came under the jurisdiction of Udday Hussein in 1992⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Jumhuriyya</em> (‘The Republic’)</td>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>− Had a circulation of around 150,000 in the early 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Came under the jurisdiction of Udday Hussein in 1992⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>The Baghdad Observer</em></td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>− Came into the possession of the Baath after 1968 (see Table 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Circulation between 5,000 and 20,000 in the 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Came under the jurisdiction of Udday Hussein in 1992⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Tariq Al-Sha’b</em> (‘The Path of the People’)</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>− Partisan organ of the ABSP⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Qadissiya</em> (The name of a historic battle in 637 AD in which the Arabs defeated the Persians)</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>− A military paper started during the Iran-Iraq War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Circulation of around 130,000 in the 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Came under the jurisdiction of Udday Hussein in 1992⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Babil</em> (‘Babel’)</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>− Udday Hussein’s own personal paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Circulation of around 40,000 in the 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Occasionally featured opinion editorials critical of ‘incompetent’ government officials⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Iraq</em> (‘The Iraq’)</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>− Official state-run Kurdish paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Circulation of around 27,000 in the early 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− Came under the jurisdiction of Udday Hussein in 1992¹⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Sawt Al-Talabah</em> (‘The Voice of Students’)</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>− Weekly paper, tailoring to the interests of Iraq’s student population¹¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling Body</td>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Approx. Date</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Rufidayn</em> (‘Mesopotamia’)</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Weekly paper&lt;br&gt;– Not to be confused with the 1920s paper of the same name (see Table 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Zawra</em> (‘Baghdad’)</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Weekly paper of the Iraqi Journalists Union&lt;br&gt;– Launched Iraq’s first news website in 1999&lt;br&gt;– Not to be confused with the Ottoman era paper of the same name (see Table 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Nabd Al-Shabab</em> (‘The Pulse of the Youth’)</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Weekly organ of the Iraqi Youth Union&lt;br&gt;– Got away with some criticisms of the government before Saddam cracked down and the newspaper staff were pushed out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Mother of All Battles Radio</em></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>– Launched during the Gulf War and designed to boost the morale of the Iraqi troops and to encourage other Arabs to join the fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Radio Iraq (or Republic of Iraq Radio)</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Domestic and foreign services&lt;br&gt;– Broadcast in Arabic, Kurdish, Syriac and Turkoman as well as a multitude of languages from German to Swahili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Radio Iraq International</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Broadcast in Arabic, English, German and French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Voice of Youth Radio</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Partisan channel of the ABSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Holy Koran Radio</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Religious channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Voice of the Masses</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Aimed at Iraq and the broader Arab region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Republic of Iraq Television</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Partisan channel of the ABSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Iraqi State Channel</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Broadcast across the Middle East and into Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSP</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Qanat Al-Shabab</em> (‘The Youth Channel’)</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>– Youth television station</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Key Kurdish media under Saddam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Brayati ('Fraternity')</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Partisan organ of the KDP¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Partisan station of the KDP²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Kurdistan TV</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Partisan channel of the KDP³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Al-Ittihad ('The United')</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Partisan organ of the PUK⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of the People of Kurdistan</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Partisan station of the PUK⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Kurdsat</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Partisan channel of the PUK⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Hawlati ('Citizen')</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Arguably the first independent Kurdish paper to criticise Kurdish authority figures⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Kurdistan Toilers Party</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Voice of Kurdistan Toilers</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Partisan organ of the Iraqi Kurdistan Toilers Party⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Partisan station of the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party⁹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Kay Shia media under Saddam

<table>
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<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Voice of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq</em></td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>– Broadcast from Mashad and Sirjan, just inside the Iranian border&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Voice of Rebellious Iraq</em></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>– Broadcast from Iran&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Radio of Jihad</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Broadcast from Iran&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1-3</sup>(RadioNetherland, 2003c).
Table 7: Key INA and INC media under Saddam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi National Accord (INA)</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Voice of the Armed Forces</em> (also known as <em>Iraqi Army Radio</em>)</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>- Operate by military defectors&lt;br&gt;- Originally funded by the US¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INA</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Al-Mustaqbal</em> (&quot;The Future&quot;)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>- Clandestine radio station which was broadcast in Amman from 1995 and from specially designed US Command Solo plane in 1998²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INA</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Twin Rivers Radio</em> (or <em>Radio of the Land of the Two Rivers</em>)</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>- Probably based in Kuwait or underground in Iraq³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi National Congress (INC)</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Hurriya</em> (&quot;Freedom&quot;)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>- Features news, sports and entertainment&lt;br&gt;- Originally funded by the US&lt;br&gt;- US withdrew funding in 2002, only to spend another US$4 million to re-launch the station at the start of the Iraq War in 2003⁴</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Key US and UK controlled media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Government / Military</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Information Radio</td>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>-- Broadcast from purpose built US Command Solo plane¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Radio Tikrit (Tikrit is Saddam Hussein’s home town), re-launched Radio Sumer</td>
<td>February 2003 April 2003</td>
<td>-- Urged Iraqi troops to surrender or defect to the coalition forces²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Sawt Al-Tahrir Al-Iraq (‘The Voice of Iraqi Liberation’)</td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>-- See above³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Radio Sawa (‘Together’)</td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>-- Mix of Arabic and Western pop music -- Designed to appeal to young people⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of Liberation</td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>-- Kurdish-language⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Government / Military</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Radio Nahrain (‘Two Rivers’)</td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>-- Lively 24-hour station based in Basra -- Started by UK, handed over to the US⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Al-Hurra Iraq (‘The Free’ Iraq)</td>
<td>April 2004</td>
<td>-- Unpopular and ineffective Iraqi version of US controlled regional satellite station, Al-Hurriya (see Table 7)⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Nahwa Al-Hurrieh (‘Towards Freedom’)</td>
<td>April 2003</td>
<td>-- Began broadcasting the day after coalition forces seized Baghdad from purpose built US Command Solo plane  -- Launched by messages from Bush and Blair, later airing messages from Iraqi opposition leaders -- Messages on civilian safety, Iraqi troop surrender⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Al-Mirbad Radio (A historical suq of medieval Islamic Basra)</td>
<td>August 2005</td>
<td>-- Based in Basra -- Launched by the BBC with funding from the UK Government and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi -- Southern Iraqi / Shia focus, employing 150 local staff -- Also includes the website: <a href="http://www.almirbad.com%E2%81%B9">www.almirbad.com⁹</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Al-Mirbad TV (See above)</td>
<td>August 2005</td>
<td>-- See above¹⁰</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Key CPA / IMN controlled media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) / Iraqi Media Network (IMN) / Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) | Television | IMN TV             | April 2003 Early 2004 Mid 2004 | – In November 2003 200 Iraqis protested at the stations HQ in Baghdad, claiming the channel had shown ‘immodest images’ and didn’t respect the holy month of Ramadan  
– Initially broadcast Egyptian soap operas, sports and Arabic music videos  
– Iraqis criticised it for poor domestic news and viewed it as US propaganda but gradually gained in popularity achieving some of the highest ratings in Iraq  
– Now available in 26 major Iraqi cities  
– Currently somewhat co-opted by dominant Shia and Kurdish political groups¹ |
| CPA / IMN        | Television   | Kirkuk TV          | April 2003   | – Previously ‘independent’, commandeered by the CPA during the war² |
| CPA / IMN        | Television   | Mosul TV           | May 2003     | – See above³ |
| CPA / IMN / IIG  | Newspaper    | Al-Sabah (‘The Morning’) | May 2003 Mid 2004 | – Initially contained unremarkable news, mostly official announcements and uncritical of CPA and US  
– Editor-in-Chief Ismael Zayer resigned in May 2004 after accusing the CPA of editorial interference  
– Gradual increase in quality of news and popularity with a circulation of around 50,000  
– Very popular website: www.alsabah.com⁴ |
| CPA / IMN        | Newspaper    | Al-Sumer (‘The Sumer’) | May 2003     | – Published in Kuwait, distributed in Iraq  
– High-brow paper, attracting leading Arab authors and intellectuals but containing little domestic Iraqi news⁵ |
| CPA / IMN        | Radio        | Republic of Iraq Radio | 2003         | – Baghdad based⁶ |
| CPA / IMN        | Radio        | Voice of Free Iraq  | 2003         | – Baghdad based⁷ |

### Table 10: Key KDP controlled media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Brayati (‘Fraternity’)</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Continues to publish in post-Saddam Iraq (see Table 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Xebat (‘Struggle’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Kurdish-language newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.birateti-xebat.net/Xebat.html">www.birateti-xebat.net/Xebat.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Al-Taakhi (‘The Brotherhood’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Baghdad based Arabic translation of Xebat (See above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One of Iraq’s widest circulations, between 30-50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.birateti-xebat.net/Taakhi.html">www.birateti-xebat.net/Taakhi.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Govari Gulan (‘Spring Magazine’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Monthly magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.gulan-media.com/#">http://www.gulan-media.com/#</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Continues to air in post-Saddam Iraq (see Table 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Based in Sulmaniyah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Gulan Radio (‘Spring’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Based in Erbil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Harim Radio (‘Regional’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Official radio station of Kurdistan Regional Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appears to strongly support KDP and shares facilities with Voice of Kurdistan Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Kurdistan TV</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Continues to air in post-Saddam Iraq (see Table 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Includes both a terrestrial and satellite channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can be received across much of Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Broadcasts in both Arabic and Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clearly partisan towards the KDP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Key PUK controlled media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Ittihad</em> (‘The United’)</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Continues to publish in post-Saddam Iraq (see Table 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Based in Baghdad, Arabic language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One of Iraq’s widest circulations, between 30-50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.pukmedia.net/limk/itihad.htm">www.pukmedia.net/limk/itihad.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Kurdistani Nuwe</em> (‘New Kurdistan’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Kurdish language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continues to air in post-Saddam Iraq (see Table 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Voice of the People of Kurdistan</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>See above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Al-Hurriyah</em> (‘The Freedom’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Broadcasts in both Arabic and Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Kursat</em></td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Satellite channel with nation-wide coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The most popular of PUK’s television stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In 2003 it had the best equipment and facilities in Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has hosted lively interviews and debates on Kurdish issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recently noted for unwavering support of Iraqi president and PUK leader, Jalal Talabani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Broadcasts in both Arabic and Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continues to air in post-Saddam Iraq (see Table 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Al-Hurriyah</em> (‘The Freedom’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Terrestrial station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Broadcasts in both Arabic and Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>PUK TV</em></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Broadcasts in Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen and Syriac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Launched with the stated goal of enhancing the brotherly relations among ethnic groups in the city of Kirkuk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Other Kurdish media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party of Iraqi Kurdistan (CPIK)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Regay (‘The Road’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Website: <a href="www.iraqcp.org/regay/indexx.htm">www.iraqcp.org/regay/indexx.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPIK</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Azadi (‘Freedom’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Partisan channel of the CPIK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPIK</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>ATB TV</td>
<td>June 2004</td>
<td>– See above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan Toilers Party</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of Kurdistan Toilers</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>– See above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Party for the Independence of Kurdistan</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Nishtiman (‘Country’ or ‘Fatherland’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Split from the ICP in the 1990s – Allies of the KDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish Democratic Solutions Party</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Sada Al-Hal (‘Echo of the Solution’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Partisan organ of the Kurdish Democratic Solutions Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan Democratic Youth Union</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Peshkawtin (‘Progress’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Partisan channel of the Kurdish Democratic Youth Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish People’s Democratic Movement</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Ashti (‘Peace’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Partisan channel of the Kurdistan People’s Democratic Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Group of Iraqi Kurdistan (IGIK)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Komal (‘The Organisation’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Partisan organ of the IGIK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGIK</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Dangi Komal (‘The Voice of the Organisation’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Broadcasts in Kurdish, Arabic and Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGIK</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of Islam</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Possibly broadcast from Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Unity Movement (IUM)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Khabat (‘Struggle’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Partisan organ of the IUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IUM</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Yekgirtu (‘Eachother’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Promotes Kurdish autonomy within the Iraqi state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party</td>
<td>Before 2003</td>
<td>– Allies of the PUK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 13: Key ‘Independent’ Kurdish media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ‘Independent’                   | Newspaper  | *Hawlati* (‘Citizen’)       | 2000         | - Continues to publish in post-Saddam Iraq (see Table 5)  
- Reputation as a quality Kurdish paper free of political allegiance  
- Arguably the first independent Kurdish paper to criticise Kurdish authority figures  
- Website: [www.hawlati.com](http://www.hawlati.com)  

| Ahmad Shawkat                   | Newspaper  | *Bilattijah* (‘Without Direction’ or ‘Without Bias’) | August-October 2003 | - Shawkat had been a journalist under the former regime and had been imprisoned and tortured  
- During the war he worked as a translator for UK journalist Michael Goldfarb  
- He started his own weekly independent cultural, social and political newspaper with some seed funding from the CPA  
- His damning editorials of Islamists and former Baathists led to his assassination  

| Independent Women’s Centre      | Newspaper  | *Rewan* (‘Smooth and clear’) | 1992         | - Kurdish and Arabic Language  
- Published out of Sulamaniyah  
- Has long reported on women’s issues in Kurdistan, with special focus on the issues of honor killings and genital mutilation  
- Website: [www.rewan.org](http://www.rewan.org)  

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Table 14: Key Da’wah controlled media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Da’wah</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Jihad</em> (‘The Holy War’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Weekly newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="www.daawaparty.com/aljihad80/index.htm">www.daawaparty.com/aljihad80/index.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da’wah</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Bayan</em> (‘The Dispatch’ or ‘The Manifesto’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Originally a weekly, now a daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da’wah</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Da’wah</em> (‘The Calling’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Weekly newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Considered one of the most influential Islamist papers in Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da’wah</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Al-Masar</em> (‘The Path’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Partisan station of the Da’wah party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da’wah</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Al-Masar</em> (See above)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>See above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Key SCIRI controlled media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Al-Nahrayn (‘The Two Rivers’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Partisan organ of SCIRI¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Al-Wahdah (‘The Unity’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– See above²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Al-Adala (‘The Justice’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Considered one of the most influential Islamist papers in Iraq³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Nidaa Arrafidain (‘The Two Rivers’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Also available in English at: <a href="http://www.nidaa-arrafidain.com%E2%81%B4">www.nidaa-arrafidain.com⁴</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Al-Ghadir (‘The Small Spring’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Partisan channel of SCIRI¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Voice of the Mujahedin (‘The Fighters’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Iranian backed and broadcast from Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Has been accused of attempting to incite violence⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Al-Furat (‘The Euphrates’)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>– Based in Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Much religious programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Staunchly pro-Shia and pro-Iraqi government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Most popular and effective of SCIRI media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Website: <a href="http://www.alforattv.com%E2%81%B5">www.alforattv.com⁵</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Al-Nahrayn (‘The Two Rivers’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Based in Kut⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Al-Ghadir (‘The Small Spring’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Based in Najaf⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIRI</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Resistance TV</td>
<td>April 2003</td>
<td>– Iranian backed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Hastily designed to combat the US backed Towards Freedom TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Launched by SCIRI leader Ayatollah Hakim¹⁰</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Key Al-Sadr controlled media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moqtada Al-Sadr / Sadr</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Ishraqat Al-Sadr</em> (‘The Dawn of Al-Sadr’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Daily newspaper¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Al-Sadr                | Newspaper| *Al-Mada* (‘The View’)                    | 2003         | – Quarterly journal that specifically represents Al-Sadr’s political and theological views  
|                        |          |                                           |              | – Closed by the CPA in 2004²                                                              |
| Al-Sadr                | Newspaper| Al-Hawza (The name of a particular Shia seminary), re-launched as *Al-Hawza Al-Natiqa* (‘The Active Hawza’) | 2003 – 2004 | – Weekly newspaper that specifically represents Al-Sadr’s political and theological views  
|                        |          |                                           |              | – Closed by the CPA in 2004 and then re-opened³                                           |
| Al-Sadr                | Newspaper| Sadr (Clearly named after Sadr himself)    | 2003         | – One of the most influential Islamist papers                                               
|                        |          |                                           |              | – Has a strong anti-occupation agenda                                                       
|                        |          |                                           |              | – Calls for an Islamic republic in Iraq⁴                                                   |
| Al-Sadr                | Radio    | *Al-Salam* (The Peace’)                   | 2003         | – Partisan channel for Al-Sadr⁵                                                            |
| Al-Sadr                | Television| *Al-Salam* (See above)                    | 2003         | – See above⁶                                                                              |

Table 17: Other Shia controlled media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporters of Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Nur</em> (‘The Light’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Weekly newspaper run by supporters of Al-Sistani¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Action Organisation</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Amal Al-Islami</em> (‘Islamic Action’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Partisan organ of Islamic Action Organisation²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Hizbullah</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Bayyah</em> (‘The Evidence’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Partisan organ of Iraqi Hizbullah³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Council for the Liberation of Iraq</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Sada Al-Ummah</em> (‘Echo of the Nation’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Partisan organ of Supreme Council for the Liberation of Iraq⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporters of Ayatollah Hadi Al-Moderassi</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Ahl Al-Bayt</em> (‘The House of the Prophet Muhammad’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Partisan organ supporting Moderassi⁵</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹²("The New Iraqi Press," 2003); ³(Al-Marashi, 2007: 139); ⁴(Terrill, 2004); ⁵(Cochrane, 2006; Metcalf, 2006).
Table 18: Key ‘Independent’ Shia media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Mustaqilla</em> (‘The Independent’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Shut down by the CPA in July 2003&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Shahid Al-Mustaqil</em> (‘The Independent Martyr’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Politically independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Temporarily seized publication in 2006 in protest of arrest warrants for editor issued by Iraqi government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Website: [<a href="http://www.alshahid-almustakil.com/">http://www.alshahid-almustakil.com/</a>]&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Fahya</em> (‘The Vast’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Owned and operated by a local businessman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Considered secular and non-partisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Television and Radio</td>
<td><em>Najaf TV and Radio</em></td>
<td>April 2003</td>
<td>– Includes a lot of religious material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Uses equipment looted from a former state TV channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Claims to be politically neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Television and Radio</td>
<td><em>Kut Radio TV and Radio</em></td>
<td>June 2003</td>
<td>– Initially run out of two purpose built trucks ‘acquired’ from the former regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Television and Radio</td>
<td><em>Basra TV and Radio</em></td>
<td>May 2003</td>
<td>– Temporarily ran out of a local football stadium&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Biladi TV</em> (‘My Land’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Based in Baghdad, running some programs in support of the United Iraqi Alliance&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Biladi Radio</em> (See above)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Based in Baghdad, a religious station consisting entirely of Koranic recitations and the call to prayer&lt;sup&gt;8&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Karbala TV</em></td>
<td>April 2003</td>
<td>– Regional television station of the predominately Shia south of Iraq&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Hillah TV</em></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>– Uses a transmitter ‘seized’ from the former regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Local news bulletins as well as pirated national and international news with very little religious content&lt;sup&gt;10&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Independent’</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Al-Anwar</em> (‘The Lights’)</td>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>– Has carried the slogan ‘<em>Al-Anwar: Truth has only one colour</em>’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup>(Gourevitch, 2003: 36; Price, 2003); <sup>2</sup>("APFW Expresses Solidarity with Iraqi Editor in Chief," 2006; Iraq: Al Shahid Al Mustaqil Stops publishing in Response to Governmental Practices," 2006); <sup>3</sup>("A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media, 2003: 10); <sup>4</sup>(Kafala, 2003; A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media, 2003: 9); <sup>5</sup>(Kafala, 2003); <sup>6</sup>(King, 2003); <sup>7</sup>(Cochrane, 2006); <sup>8</sup>(RadioNetherland, 2005); <sup>9</sup>("Broadcasting in Iraq," 2003; RadioNetherland, 2005); <sup>10</sup>(A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media, 2003: 9); <sup>11</sup>(RadioNetherland, 2005).
Table 19: Key Sunni media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| United national Movement         | Newspaper  | *Al-Sa’ah* (‘The Hour’) | 2003         | – Published twice a week  
|                                  |            |                    |              | – Arguably the most well known and widely read of Iraq’s Sunni newspapers  
|                                  |            |                    |              | – Edited by Uday Hussein’s former personal assistant1                           |
| Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)        | Newspaper  | *Dar Al-Salam* (‘The House of Peace’) | 2005         | – Published daily2  
|                                  | Radio      | *Dar Al-Salam* (See above) | 2005         | – Partisan channel of the IIP1                                                   |
| General Dialogue Conference     | Newspaper  | *Al-Itisam* (‘The Guardian’) | 2005         | – Published daily4                                                               |
| Association of Muslim Scholars   | Newspaper  | *Al-Basa’ir* (‘The Insight’) | 2005         | – Partisan organ of the Association of Muslim Scholars5                                |
| Al-Tawafuq Front                | Television | *Baghdad*          | 2005         | – Satellite channel  
|                                  |            |                    |              | – One of Iraq’s more controversial channels, having advocated resistance to coalition forces and been nick-named ‘Baathist TV’ by its Shia critics6 |

## Table 20: Other minority media in post-Saddam Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkoman</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Turkomanelli (‘The Turkoman’ or ‘The Turkoman Nation’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Daily newspaper in Turkish¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkoman</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Turkomanelli Radio (See above)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Broadcasts from Kirkuk, Tal Afar and Mosul²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkoman</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Turkomanelli TV (See above)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Broadcasts in Turkoman, Arabic, Kurdish and Assyrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkoman</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Turkoman Brotherhood Radio</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Broadcasts from Erbil⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Bahra Al-Diya (‘The Light’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Covers Assyrian interests in post-Saddam Iraq⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Kaldu-Ashur (literally ‘Chaldean-Assyrian’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>A supplement initially published inside the Kurdistan Communist Party’s newspaper, Regay (see Table 12)⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Ashur Radio (‘Assyrian’), alternatively known as Assyrian Radio or the Voice of the Democratic Assyrian Movement</td>
<td>April 2000</td>
<td>Based in Northern Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Ashur TV (See above)</td>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>Broadcasts from Sulaymaniyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Bet-Nahrain Radio (‘Between the Two Rivers’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Based in Northern Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Shrara (‘The Flame’), alternatively known as Voice of the Assyrian Nation</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>See above⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faili Kurds</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Al-Awdah (‘The Return’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Fortnightly publication in Kurdish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Other political party media in post-Saddam Iraq

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<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Communist Party (ICP)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Tariq Al-Sha‘ab</em> (‘The Way of the People’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Weekly Arabic bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.iraqcp.org/">http://www.iraqcp.org/</a>; English Website: <a href="http://www.iraqcp.org/framsel/index.htm">http://www.iraqcp.org/framsel/index.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICP</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Voice of the Iraqi People</em></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Kurdish and Arabic language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Probably broadcast from the northern Iraqi facilities of the <em>Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan</em> (Table 10) and the <em>Voice of the Communist Party of Iraqi Kurdistan</em> (Table 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers Communist Party of Iraq (WCPI)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Ash-Shuyu‘iya Al-Umaliya</em> (‘The Voice of Iraqi Workers’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Weekly publication in Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.wpiraq.net">www.wpiraq.net</a>; English Website: <a href="http://www.wpiraq.net/english">www.wpiraq.net/english</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCPI</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Bopeshawa</em> (‘Forward’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.wpiraq.net">www.wpiraq.net</a>; English Website: <a href="http://www.wpiraq.net/english">www.wpiraq.net/english</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Radio Bopeshawa</em> (See above)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Broadcasts from Erbil, Kirkuk and Mosul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic and Kurdish language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi National Accord (INA)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Baghdad</em>, relocated from London to Baghdad</td>
<td>April 2003</td>
<td>Weekly Arabic paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.wifaq.com/baghdad_arabic.html">www.wifaq.com/baghdad_arabic.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INA</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Al-Mustaqbal</em> (‘The Future’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Broadcast into Iraq using a CIA transmitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td><em>Twin Rivers Radio</em></td>
<td>February 2002</td>
<td>During the battle phase of the war it encouraged Iraqi soldiers to surrender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Al-Salam</em> (‘The Peace’)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Broadcast from Baghdad, its stated purpose is to spread love and harmony amongst the Iraqi people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi National Congress (INC)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Mutamar</em> (‘The Congress’)</td>
<td>2004 / 2005</td>
<td>Daily Arabic paper, received seed funding from the CPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has published several unsigned articles possibly by US Psy-Ops operatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Jamahir</em> (‘The Masses’)</td>
<td>2004 / 2005</td>
<td>Partisan organ of the INC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Al-Mazwisil</em> (‘Mosul’)</td>
<td>2004 / 2005</td>
<td>See above</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saad Bazzaz</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Azzaman</em> (‘The Times’), relocated from London to Baghdad</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Published from London in 1997, with international editions issued from Bahrain and north Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Only full-colour 24-page daily in Iraq, reporting global, regional and local news</td>
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<td>One of Iraq’s most widely read and credible newspapers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution of 75,000 across most of Iraq</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Independent’ with some concerns regarding Saudi funding as well as pro-Sunni and pro-US biases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>International edition Website: <a href="http://www.azzaman.com">www.azzaman.com</a>; Iraqi Website: <a href="http://www.azzaman.com/indexq.asp?code=azq01">www.azzaman.com/indexq.asp?code=azq01</a>; English Website: <a href="http://www.azzaman.com/english">www.azzaman.com/english</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saad Bazzaz</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td><em>Al-Sharqiya</em> (‘The Eastern One’)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Arguably Iraq’s most watched terrestrial TV station with mostly Iraqi produced content and no religious programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Independent’ with some concerns (See above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Operates under the slogan, <em>‘Al-Sharqiya: the truth Television’</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.alsharqiyatv.com">www.alsharqiyatv.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Hassel (UK) and</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Baghdad Bulletin</em></td>
<td>June-September 2003</td>
<td>Non-partisan English-language paper, featured articles from both CPA and Iraqis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Enders (US)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employed and trained many young Iraqis but folded due to weak domestic advertising market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.baghdadbulletin.com">www.baghdadbulletin.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taha Arif Muhammad</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td><em>Al-Manar</em> (‘The Lighthouse’)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>In 1968 <em>Al-Manar</em> was shut down and its publisher Aziz Abdel Barakat was executed (see Table 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Muhammad (age 70) is one of Barakat’s former pupils and re-opened the paper at the end of the regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Crew of forty journalists with bureaus across Iraq and a circulation of approx 15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Ashtar Ali Yasseri                       | Newspaper    | *Habezbooz* (a term from Iraqi folklore) | 2003         | – In the 1920s and 1930s *Habezbooz* had satirized the British occupation (see Table 2), ceasing in 1932  
– Re-opened by Yasseri to satirize post-Saddam Iraq and the US occupation⁵ |
| Al-Mada Media, Culture and Arts Corporation | Newspaper    | *Al-Mada* (‘The View’)          | August 2003  | – Iraq’s highbrow leftist paper, publishing both investigative reports and Arabic poetry  
– Officially independent but some concerns have been raised that it is owned by Chalabi (INC)  
– Website: [www.almadapaper.com](http://www.almadapaper.com)  
– Not to be confused with the Sadr published quarterly journal of the same name (see Table 16)⁶ |
| Ismael Zayer                             | Newspaper    | *Al-Sabah Al-Jadid* (‘The New Morning’) | 2004         | – The former editor of the CPA’s *Al-Sabah*, Zayer left to start his own paper complaining of editorial interference (see Table 9)  
– Has endured several violent attacks  
– Arabic website: [www.newsabah.com](http://www.newsabah.com); English website: [www.newsabah.com/look/english](http://www.newsabah.com/look/english)⁷ |
| ‘Independent’                            | Newspaper    | *Al-Ahali* (‘The People’)        | 2003         | – Arabic weekly, described as Iraq’s first ‘liberal’ paper  
– Possibly aligned with the Iraq Institute for Democracy which may have received funding from the United States  
– Website: [www.alahali-iraq.com](http://www.alahali-iraq.com)⁸ |
– Armed men robbed the office the day before first edition, which was nonetheless released written by hand  
– Had an August 2003 advertising revenue of USD9,000 and a mid-2005 circulation of 5,000  
– Website: [www.iraq-today.com](http://www.iraq-today.com)⁹ |
| ‘Independent’                            | Newspaper    | *Al-Ahrar* (‘The Liberals’)      | 2003         | – Described as an independent paper for all Arabs  
– Published by a thirty-six year old candy entrepreneur¹⁰ |
| ‘Independent’                            | Newspaper    | *Fajr Baghdad* (‘Dawn of Baghdad’) | 2003         | – Promotes itself as Iraq’s first independent and democratic newspaper¹¹ |
Table 22: Kay ‘Independent’ media in post-Saddam Iraq (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Body</th>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ‘Independent’                     | Newspaper    | *Al-Dustour* (‘The Constitution’)    | 2003         | − Independent political daily  
− Have been critical of the US occupation and of their covert operation to plant stories in the Iraqi press\(^\text{12}\) |
| ‘Independent’                     | Newspaper    | *Al-Mashriq* (‘The Arab East’)       | 2004         | − Claims to be independent and fiercely anti-occupation  
− Has also taken a strong anti-corruption line\(^\text{13}\) |
| Iraqi Journalists Union           | Newspaper    | *Al-Zawra* (‘The Curved [City]’ – Baghdad) | 2003         | − Issued weekly, in Arabic  
− Not to be confused with Ottoman paper of the late nineteenth century (Table 1) or the state-controlled Baathist organ of the twentieth century (Table 4)\(^\text{14}\) |
| Independent Iraqi News Agency     | Newspaper    | *Iraq Press*                          | 2003         | − English and Arabic paper billed as ‘independent’ with a relatively liberal slant  
− Covers economic, political, cultural and social affairs  
− Website: [www.iraqpress.org]\(^\text{15}\) |
| Independent Media Centre          | Newspaper    | *Al-Mouajaha* (‘The Iraqi Witness’)  | 2003         | − English and Arabic, online  
− Most articles are written by Iraqis inside the country  
− Website: [www.almouajaha.com]\(^\text{16}\) |
| ‘Independent’                     | Radio        | *Voice of Iraq*                       | July 2003    | − Boasted that it was the first independent radio station in Iraqi history with asims to be objective and professional  
− Website: [www.vointaq.com]\(^\text{17}\) |
| Dr Ahmad Al-Rikabi                | Radio        | *Radio Dijla* (‘Tigris’)             | 2004         | − Rikabi previously ran the US-funded *Voice of Free Iraq* (see Table 9)  
− In 2003 Rikabi was installed as the head of the CPA’s IMN, later leaving to found *Dijla* in 2004.  
− Dubbed Iraq’s first independent talk radio station  
− Incredibly popular due to live phone-in program where Iraqis are free to air their frustrations and aspirations uncensored  
− Website: [www.radiodijla.com]\(^\text{18}\) |
<table>
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<th>Controlling Body</th>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Date</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Faisal Al-Yaseri       | Television| *Al-Diyar* (‘The Homeland’) | February 2004 | - Yasiri is the former head of Baath controlled Iraqi Radio and Television, started *Al-Diyar* in 2004 claiming it was independent and non-partisan but did receive some funding from Saudi-owned company  
- Described as an Arab channel with an Iraqi flavour[^19] |
| Mish’an Al-Juburi      | Television| *Al-Zawra* (‘The Curved [City]’ - Baghdad) | 2003         | - Al-Juburi is a former prominent member of the Baath party who appears to be working independently of any official political party and in favour of the insurgency  
- Has been dubbed a platform for insurgents  
- Urges Iraqis to fight the ‘occupation’  
- Shows footage of successful insurgent attacks against coalition and Iraqi forces  
- Not to be confused with the Ottoman paper of the late nineteenth century (Table 1), the state-controlled Baathist organ of the twentieth century (Table 4) or the post-2003 organ of the Iraqi Journalist Union (above)[^20] |

[^2]: (Al-Qazwini, 2004; Barker, 2008: 121-122; Ciezadlo, 2004; Feuilherade, 2004; One Day in Iraq: Media and Comment," 2005; RadioNetherland, 2005; Usher, 2005c);  
[^3]: (Enders, 2003, 2005; Thomsen, 2004);  
[^4]: (Daragahi, 2003: 46, 50);  
[^5]: (Daragahi, 2003: 50; Price, 2003);  
[^6]: (Mazzetti & Daragahi, 2003; The press in Iraq," 2007);  
[^7]: ("The press in Iraq," 2005; The press in Iraq," 2007);  
[^9]: (Al-Deen, 2005; Finer, 2005);  
[^10]: (Harmston, 2003; The New Iraqi Press," 2003);  
[^12]: (Al-Sheikh, 2004; Mazzetti & Daragahi, 2005; The New Iraqi Press," 2003);  
[^13]: ("The press in Iraq," 2005; UNAMI, 2005u);  
[^14]: (Metcalf, 2006; The New Iraqi Press," 2003);  
[^15]: (Al-Deen, 2005; Iraqi Media," 2004; Iraqi Media: Online Newspapers," 2003);  
[^16]: ("Iraqi Media," 2004);  
[^17]: (RadioNetherland, 2005);  
[^18]: (Feuilherade, 2004; RadioNetherland, 2005; Talk radio comes to Baghdad," 2004);  
[^19]: (Al-Marashi, 2007: 118; RadioNetherland, 2005);  
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