

COMMUNICATIONS AND NEW MEDIA PROGRAMME

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Emerging Press Under Fire: Iraqi Media System in the Post-Saddam Hussein Era

A Talk by Dr Kim Hun Shik
University of Colorado at Boulder

CNM Seminar Room, AS6 #03-33
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS
Tuesday 20th November 2007, 11.30am



After the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in April 2003, the Iraqi media have witnessed a remarkable growth in number of outlets and structural diversity. From the Western journalistic perspective, the US-Anglo invasion is often viewed as a form of “liberation” in terms of press freedom. However, in the four years after the collapse of the Saddam regime, new threats to press freedom and restraints have emerged in various forms of legal, political, religious, and physical dangers.

Based on a survey of 323 Iraqi journalists working in the country and in-depth interviews with 22 Iraqi journalists, this study examined the various legal and regulatory restraints imposed by the new Iraqi government, political pressures from religious groups, and security-related threats such as murders and abductions by terrorists and militant groups. Despite the journalists’ interest in imbibing Western-style journalism techniques and practices, weaknesses in media infrastructure poses another significant challenge to the development of the country’s mass communication system.

Drawing on the classic Four Theories of the Press (1956) and William Hachten’s (2007) classification of global press systems, this study concludes that the structural patterns of media ownership and information control in the current Iraqi media system reveal its advancement toward an authoritarian press system model instead of a free Libertarian press system. The experience of the Iraqi media and journalists parallels that of media and journalists in the former communist bloc of Eastern Europe where most former Marxist-Leninist press systems have transformed into authoritarian press systems in less than two decades.

About the Speaker:

Dr. Kim Hun Shik is an assistant professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA. He holds a PhD and an MA from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism, and a BA in English Literature and Mass Communication from Chung-Ang University, Korea. A former broadcast journalist with Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) in Seoul, Korea, he covered the Iraq War, the Kashmir conflict and the Sri Lankan civil war as a foreign correspondent. His main areas of research include telecommunications, international communication, broadcast journalism, crisis communication and new media technologies. His research has been published in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *International Communication Gazette*, *Mass Communication & Society*, *Asian Journal of Communication* and *Social Indicators Research*.