Voices of the New Arab Public

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Iraq and the New Arab Public

At the end of August 2003, the controversial al-Jazeera talk show host Faisal al-Qassem introduced the topic for the night's live broadcast of *The Opposite Direction*: do the Iraqi people have the right to demand an apology from the Arabs for their support of Saddam Hussein over the years? With Abd al-Bari Atwan, editor in chief of the Pan-Arabist newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi*, facing off against Entifadh Qanbar, spokesman for the Iraqi National Congress (INC), Qassem framed the show—as he always does—by posing a long series of questions. The first dozen questions offered a strong defense of Arabs against their accusers: "Do Iraqis have the right to demand an apology from the rest of the Arabs? Should the Arabs actually make such an apology, or should the Iraqi people extend their thanks to the Arab regimes who did terrible things to the departed regime? Aren't they the ones who conspired against [Saddam] and allied with the occupiers against him? . . . Do they want an apology from the Arab regimes which enforced the embargo? Why don't we hear the Iraqis demanding an apology from the Americans and British who starved them and blockaded them and enslaved them? . . . Who is the real traitor to the Iraqi people: the one who minimized Saddam's crimes or the one who rode American tanks to occupy Iraq? Aren't those who opposed the invasion of Iraq worthy of praise?"[1]

In the popular stereotype of al-Jazeera, Qassem's questioning would have ended with this defense of the Arabs and attack on their critics.

But it did not. Instead, Qassem pivoted 180 degrees and posed a series of sharp questions to his Arab audience: "But on the other side: why were the Arabs silent politically and in the media for years about the horrors of the Iraqi regime? Aren't all of those who defended Iraq in the past now free to apologize to the Iraqi people after seeing the mass graves? Doesn't the revelation of the mass graves give Arab states some moral responsibility for the crimes of the old regime? Why did Arab rulers and information ministers and editors in chief of newspapers and television stars incline toward Saddam and not toward the people? . . . Why do some use the question of the relations between the Iraqi opposition and the Americans to justify their refusal to condemn the repression faced by the Iraqi people under Saddam? . . . Was there a single Arab government which issued a statement condemning the massacres of the Iraqi people? Isn't it the right of the Iraqi people to ask for an explanation for the Arab silence?"

Qassem's framing of the arguments to come is remarkable in part for not being remarkable. Such open arguments over the most sensitive issues, involving strong representatives of both sides of the dispute, represent the hallmark of al-Jazeera's approach to Arab politics. Where Arab public life had for decades been dominated by the voice of the state, al-Jazeera ushered in a new kind of open, contentious public politics in which a plethora of competing voices clamored for attention. Rather than imposing a single, overwhelming consensus, the new satellite television stations, along with newspapers, Internet sites, and many other sites of public communication, challenged Arabs to argue, to disagree, and to question the status quo. These public arguments, passionate in their invocation of an aggrieved Arab identity, sometimes oppressively conformist and sometimes bitterly divisive, sensationalist but liberating, defined a new kind of Arab public and new kind of Arab politics.

What I call the *new Arab public* is palpably transforming Arab political culture. It has already conclusively shattered the state's monopoly over the flow of information, rendering obsolete the ministries of information and the oppressive state censorship that was smothering public discourse well into the 1990s. The new public rejects the long, dismal traditions of enforced public consensus, insisting on the legitimacy of challenging official policies and proclamations. This has

created an expectation of public disagreement, an expectation vital to any meaningfully pluralist politics. The new public has forced Arab leaders to justify their positions far more than ever before, introducing a genuinely new level of accountability to Arab politics. By focusing relentlessly on the problems facing the Arab status quo—social, cultural, and political—it has generated a sense of urgency for change that had long been lacking. And by placing political developments both positive and negative into a common Arab narrative, treating protests demanding political change in Egypt alongside mass demonstrations against the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and elections in Iraq and unrest in Saudi Arabia, the new Arab public has made it impossible for any Arab state to set itself apart from these demands. While this new Arab public cannot alone substitute for electoral democracy, it is doing something in many ways more important: building the underpinnings of a more liberal, pluralist politics rooted in a vocal, critical public sphere.

This new public was highly self-aware of its own role in challenging the status quo, giving it a self-defined sense of mission that sometimes sat uneasily with the standards of objective journalism. And challenge the status quo it did, with a fierce drive toward internal reform and foreign policy changes that led Arab governments and the West alike to regard it with great suspicion. This new public emerged in something of a cocoon, with a sharp contrast between its internally extraordinarily public politics and its general isolation from wider international debates and concerns. Its arguments took place within a common frame of reference, an Arab identity discourse that shaped and inflected all arguments, analysis, and coverage. Together, these three elements produced a distinctive kind of political public sphere, an identity-bounded enclave, internally open but externally opaque.

Whether such a populist, identity-driven, enclave public could be the foundation for reform and liberalization—at a time when neither Arab states nor the most powerful popular movements such as Islamism offer such a foundation—represents one of the most urgent problems facing the Arab world today. The centrality of identity politics to the new Arab public, with its avowed goal of giving voice to an oppressed and long-silenced Arab political society, is rife with paradoxes. It is fueled by a determination to bring publicity to the closed, repressive

Arab political world, shattering every taboo and crossing every red line with abandon. At the same time, its politics of identity could all too easily slide into a tyranny from below, excommunicating those who disagree and demonizing outsiders to enforce internal unity.

The new media has dramatically affected conceptions of Arab and Muslim identity, linking together geographically distant issues and placing them within a common Arab "story." In a 2001 survey, Shibley Telhami found that watching Arab television news made 46 percent of Saudis feel more sympathetic to Arabs in other countries, a sentiment shared by 87 percent in the United Arab Emirates and 75 percent in Kuwait.[2] Even more striking, large majorities in the Arab countries he surveyed ranked the Palestinian issue as the most important political issue to them personally. But these greater feelings of closeness capture only half of the story. At the same time, Telhami found upwards of 40 percent in each population felt that despite feeling *closer* to other Arabs, *differences* among Arabs had grown greater in recent years. Why? I argue that this seemingly paradoxical finding follows from an exceptionally important change in the way this new public conceives of Arab identity.

In the new Arab public, Arab and Islamic identities serve as a reference point, but no single set of policies or orientations necessarily follows from that identity. Arabs take for granted that Palestine and Iraq are Arab issues about which Arabs *should* agree, but they often disagree vehemently about what should be done about them. In contrast to earlier eras of Arabism, such as the "Arab Cold War" of the 1950s and 1960s (Kerr 1971), the public political arguments today throw wide open fundamental questions of what it means to be Arab. Anti-American voices routinely square off against pro-American figures, or against Americans themselves; defenders of Saddam argue with representatives of the Iraqi National Congress; Islamists argue with secularists. Al-Jazeera, in particular, thrives by pitting people who sharply disagree against one another, thereby proving by example that Arabs can disagree and still be authentic Arabs. Al-Jazeera's innovation was to open the phone lines during live broadcasts, to let ordinary Arabs into the arguments for perhaps the first time in their history. By 2005, political talk shows had become an entirely normal and indispensable part of Arab political life, with dozens of such programs broadcast by

a bewildering array of satellite television stations. Virtually any political trend or position could be found by channel-surfing Arab viewers: pro-American "moderates" on the Saudi-owned al-Arabiya, radical anti-American Islamists on the Hezbollah-owned al-Manar, and all points in between. In later chapters, I present some of these exchanges in detail to show the diversity of opinions and the style of political argument that ensued.

The ramifications of a rapidly emerging public sphere for Arab politics are only beginning to be felt. Fueled by technology, by a shared identity, and by enormous frustration with the status quo, this new Arab public has already reshaped the regional and international political terrain. In what direction, however, remains unclear. Arabs can interact, argue, and mobilize in revolutionary ways, defying the attempts of states to maintain their dominance over all aspects of life. At the same time, the new Arab public offers no mechanism for translating its ideas into outcomes. Lacking effective Arab international institutions or domestic democratic politics, and feeling besieged by hostile powers and unchecked global forces, many Arabs find themselves frustrated within their new consciousness. And with that frustration, the public sphere is increasingly consumed with sensationalism and anger, which threaten to undermine its contribution to liberal reforms.

Where political talk shows have transformed the nature of Arab public opinion, the impact of the news coverage has similarly revolutionized political behavior. News coverage has inspired contentious politics on the so-called Arab street, from the fierce demonstrations sparked by al-Jazeera's coverage of the American-British bombing of Iraq in December 1998, to the intense waves of sustained popular protests over the bloody fighting between Palestinians and Israel in 2000 and 2002, to the demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq in 2003, to the wave of protests demanding political reform that swept from Lebanon through Egypt into the Gulf in the first months of 2005.

The new information environment has palpably affected American strategy in the region as well. In Operation Desert Storm (1991), the American-led coalition was largely able to control the information war, shaping the media coverage and carefully managing perceptions of civilian casualties and the course of events (MacArthur

1992; Tayler 1992). In 2003 the Americans proved unable to control the flow of information, images, or reporting from Iraq. Al-Jazeera, al-Arabiya, and other Arab satellite stations reporting live from Iraq conveyed a picture of the war dramatically different from that emanating from the coalition, one that emphasized civilian suffering and American setbacks rather than a bloodless and popular liberation. As the occupation turned uglier, the Arab media's coverage of the violence gripping Iraq infuriated the Americans, who wanted to maintain information dominance but seemed powerless to achieve it. Al-Jazeera's reporting from the besieged city of Falluja in April 2004 contradicted the coalition's narrative so graphically and dramatically that it determined the outcome of that battle. The new Arab media arguably represented the single greatest strategic difference between 1991 and 2003.

Given the magnitude of its challenge on every political front, it should be no surprise that the new Arab media has become as intensely controversial within the Arab world as it has in the United States. Many Americans view al-Jazeera and the new Arab media as a fundamentally hostile force generating anti-Americanism and complicating foreign policy objectives in Iraq, Israel, the war on terror, and more. Inside the Arab world, al-Jazeera has generated equally intense criticism, as well as impassioned defense. For its supporters, al-Jazeera represents the best hope for challenging the repressive Arab status quo and for defending Arab interests. For its critics, al-Jazeera represents a tremendously damaging cultural phenomenon, one which threatens to drag the struggling Arab world down into the abyss.

As it has risen in influence, then, the Arab media has become a topic as divisive as Iraq itself. The political war over the media raging in the Arab world resembles American battles over media bias from the left and the right in its intensity and its venom. For example, the journalist Fadhil Fudha laments that al-Jazeera betrayed its vast potential by transforming itself from an objective news station into a self-proclaimed carrier of an ideological message.[3] Abd al-Monam Said, director of *al-Ahram*'s Center for Strategic Studies, blames al-Jazeera for the failures of Arab interests; according to Said, al-Jazeera's propensities for crowd-pleasing radicalism make it too easy for Israelis and Americans to portray Arabs as radical.[4] The American-based Egyp-

tian columnist Mamoun Fandy denounces the Arab media for suc-
cumbing to sensationalism and a "political pornography" of violence,
extremism, chaos, and beheadings.[5] Mohammed Ma'wadh of Kuwait
University complains that the new media "incline to the superficial
and the sensational and they lack focused and scientific dialogue. . . .
They are dominated by accusations and settling of scores."[6] A cartoon
in *al-Sharq al-Awsat* portrays "the satellites" spooning garbage into the
heads of Arab viewers.[7] *Al-Hayat* journalist Hazem al-Amin argues
that al-Jazeera is dominated by the spirit of a dogmatically Islamic Yu-
suf al-Qaradawi and the legacy of former director Mohammed Jassem
al-Ali, who allegedly was on the Iraqi payroll, with the "embarrassing
comedies" of Faisal al-Qassem and Ahmed Mansour drowning out
more serious voices.[8]

Even sympathetic Arab observers wonder whether the introduction
of "Crossfire"- and "Hardball"-type talk shows could really be called
a positive contribution to a political culture. Rami Khouri, a liberal
Jordanian journalist, dismisses the new public sphere as "more of the
same vapid talk." Abdullah al-Ashal, an Egyptian writer, points out that
the political effects of the new public can hardly be taken for granted.[9]
Despite all of the real problems of the Arab order, and despite the real
need for democracy in the region, more democracy would not lead
Arabs to be more accepting of American and Israeli policies. Quite
the opposite, he argues—it is the craven and weak leaders of the Arab
world that give in to these demands, whereas a strong Arab public
would resist. It is not lost on the new Arab public sphere that many
Arab states enforced the sanctions on Iraq even as public opinion de-
nounced them, and quietly cooperated with the American war against
Iraq even as public opinion loudly opposed it. Indeed, some of the
most vocal critiques expressed in the new Arab public sphere empha-
size the hypocrisy of Arab regimes, exemplified by their failure to act
on the policy preferences that they claim to share with their publics.
It is quite striking that opinion surveys have consistently found that
those Arabs with access to satellite television consistently have more
positive attitudes toward democracy—but not toward American for-
eign policy (Tessler 2003).

This book presents these debates and controversies in all aspects,
both from a Western perspective and from an internal Arab view,

offering substantial evidence for assessing claims on both sides. It relies primarily on what Arabs themselves have actually said rather than on what others have said about them.[10] First, I have compiled a database of transcripts of 976 episodes of the five most important al-Jazeera talk shows broadcast between January 1999 and June 2004.[11] Second, I have compiled a secondary database of al-Jazeera programs dealing specifically with Iraq; while there is some overlap with the first data set, this one includes a number of more specialized programs, including several new programs broadcast directly from Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Third, I draw on thousands of opinion essays published in Arabic newspapers between 1992 and 2004. Fourth, I have interviewed a large number of people involved in both the Iraqi issue and the Arab media, including American, European, and Arab officials as well as a wide range of Arab journalists and political activists. Finally, I draw on additional published and unpublished public opinion surveys. All translations, except where otherwise noted, are my own.

Certain points become clear on even a cursory reading of these sources. It is manifestly untrue that the Arab media is dominated by a single perspective. On a typical day, the Saudi newspaper *al-Sharq al-Awsat* publishes translated op-eds by Thomas Friedman and Jim Hoagland alongside essays by Egyptian Islamist Fahmi Huwaydi, the pro-American Egyptian commentator Mamoun Fandy, and the more anti-American Syrian secularist Bathina Shabaan. Next to it on most newsstands is the popular Arabist daily *al-Quds al-Arabi*, which highlights voices critical of Arab governments and the United States, and heavily covers the violence and traumas of Palestine and Iraq. Al-Jazeera, as I document in the chapters to come, offers an extraordinarily wide range of viewpoints, while its live call-in programs offer an unprecedented glimpse into the concerns and passions of ordinary Arabs. Al-Jazeera's satellite television rivals offer a variety of alternative viewpoints, as do domestic television stations and other local media. American news agencies provide significant percentages of the copy used by many Arab newspapers and television stations. Where only a decade ago the typical Arabic-speaking media consumer would have struggled mightily to find serious differences of political opinion, by 2003 she would be relentlessly bombarded with political arguments across the satellite television dial.

Long before the American invasion of Iraq, al-Jazeera programs railed against the repressive, corrupt, stagnant Arab order, shattering what Kanan Makiya described despairingly as "a politics of silence" stifling Arab intellectual and political life (1995: 25). In 1999 alone almost a dozen al-Jazeera talk shows criticized the absence of democracy in the Arab world. In a January 2005 online al-Jazeera poll, almost 90 percent of some 30,000 respondents expressed their doubts that Arab governments really wanted reform. Indeed, virtually every issue that American critics claim is ignored by the Arab media has in fact been covered in these programs. Does the Arab public ignore Iraq's mass graves? Not in the May 31, 2004, episode of *al-Jazeera Platform* hosted by Jumana al-Namour entitled "The Mass Graves." Does the Arab public not question the legitimacy of suicide bombing? How then to explain the furious arguments on the May 15, 2002, episode of *No Limits* on "the future of martyrdom operations," or the June 29, 2002, *Open Dialogue* on "the martyrdom phenomenon," or the August 20, 2002, *The Opposite Direction* treatment of "martyrdom operations"? The first, and most visible, response to the revelations of sexual torture of Iraqis by Americans in the Abu Ghraib prison was Faisal al-Qassem's provocative program discussing conditions in Arab prisons.

In this new Arab public, Iraqi opposition figures argue with their critics on live television, Islamists and feminists square off over women's rights, a call-in vote resoundingly declares the current Arab state system to be worse than colonialism, Kurds openly challenge al-Jazeera on its own broadcasts over its alleged silence about Saddam's mass graves. Kanan Makiya's "wall of silence" has been broken, but by Arab satellites rather than by American guns.

Iraq and Public Arab Arguments

While several outstanding recent works have offered general overviews of al-Jazeera (Miles 2005) or Arab public opinion (Telhami 2005), this book takes a slightly different approach, using a single, vital issue in Arab politics to document the political significance of this new Arab public. Given the centrality of the question of Palestine, or

the urgent concerns surrounding terrorism and radical Islamism, it is worth asking why I have chosen Iraq as my focus. In part, simply because the Palestinian dimension has been widely studied. But more important, reducing Arab politics to attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict presents a highly misleading picture of a relatively unchanging Arab public opinion. The issue of Palestine was, without question, the area of the widest consensus in the new Arab public sphere. Support for the Palestinians against Israel was rarely, if ever, contested (although there were moments of frustration, as in Faisal al-Qassem's January 2002 program asking "is the Intifada a waste of time?"). Palestine served as a unifying focal point, one which diverse political groups could use as a common front, rather than as a point of meaningful debates. The political implications of the new Arab public are more clearly demonstrated through its engagement with Iraq, an issue on which no such clear Arab consensus exists and on which Arabs have openly argued and disagreed with each other over the right course of action.

Iraq stands out as a window into both the power and the limitations of the new Arab media. Unlike Palestine (a unifying issue about which virtually all Arabs agree) or domestic political issues (which generally interest only local audiences) Iraq in the 1990s generated both a clear sense of commitment to a collectively shared "Arab" issue and intense disagreements. Arguments about the Iraqi sanctions allowed Arabs to rebuild the sense of sharing a community of fate, as Iraqi suffering under the sanctions became a potent symbol of the suffering of all Arabs. As the influential Sudanese Islamist Abd al-Wahhab al-Affendi evocatively described it, Iraq posed "a crisis of the Arab soul [about which] silence is not an option." This crisis proved deeply divisive and generated tremendous passions. But even if divided over the nature of the problem in Iraq and the appropriate response, most Arabs agreed that it was a matter about which a collective Arab position *should* exist. Arabs defined themselves as Arabs by the act of participating in the debate, an *expressive* approach to political action whose importance cannot be reduced to strategic outcomes.

Iraq has been far more central to the new "street politics" of the last few years than is often recognized. While many observers date the "resurgence of the Arab street" to the outbreak of the "al-Aqsa Intifada"

in September 2000, and others consider the 2005 protests for reform across the Arab world as something wholly novel, both share roots in the Iraqi question. As documented in chapters 3 and 4, showdowns over Iraq frequently galvanized Arab protests in the 1990s, while the growing Arab movement against the sanctions on Iraq helped build many of the techniques and networks that later agitated for political reforms. The Egyptian analyst Mohammed Sid-Ahmed attributes the nature of the Arab response to the "al-Aqsa Intifada" as beginning with the shift in Arab public perceptions of American policy toward Iraq, rather than the other way around.[12]

Iraq became central to Arab identity as a result of the intense public arguments in the new Arab media, which were characterized by visceral disagreement rather than by consensus. Just as the Palestinian issue became a part of personal identity for many Arabs, so did the Iraqi situation. The "suffering Iraqi people" became a vital touchstone for all Arab debate, a starting point of consensus rather than a point to be established. Indeed, concern for the Iraqi people became, in a very real sense, part of what it meant to be Arab in the late 1990s. Even Iraq's fiercest enemies found themselves forced to justify their support for the sanctions or for American military efforts in terms of their concern to "liberate the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein's regime." And for growing numbers of Arabs, those responsible for the suffering of the Iraqi people dovetailed with those responsible for the suffering of Palestinians: not only Israel, but also the United States and the Arab regimes that either actively supported or did nothing to overturn the pernicious policies. The hostility to the American campaign against Iraq, so baffling to many Americans, arises out of this particular conception of identity, a narrative of solidarity and enmity that has shaped the meaning of all that happened. And the new Arab public sphere was a primary source of this identity and this narrative.

Iraq has therefore been central to the meaningful debates *in* the new Arab public sphere in the last decade. It has also been central to the debates *about* the new Arab public sphere, with the Iraqi opposition taking the dominant Arab position toward Iraq as the main evidence for Arab corruption, failure, and self-deception. The most important book on the failures of the Arab public sphere, Kanan Makiya's *Cruelty and Silence* (1995), is primarily about Iraq, and Makiya

himself was an important intellectual figure within the Iraqi National Congress. Fouad Ajami's widely read *Dream Palaces of the Arabs* is framed around a gripping account of the 1996 death of exiled Iraqi poet Buland Haidari, and Ajami places Iraq under Saddam Hussein at the center of his reflections on the degradation of Arab political culture (1998: 173).

Unlike the issue of Palestine, which has tended to produce an unchallenged consensus unifying different sectors of Arab opinion, Iraq tended to exacerbate differences and to bring real disagreements into the open. Where Israel produced mobilization and an artificial consensus through which any politician could score easy points, Iraq produced real arguments. These arguments themselves demonstrated the possibility of disagreement, the simple and essential lesson that policy disagreements need not *necessarily* mean excommunication from a community of identity. Certain Iraqi opposition figures (those who declined to cooperate with the United States) appeared frequently in *al-Quds al-Arabi*, the most Arabist of Arab newspapers. The debates, by virtue of their heat and passion, focused the attention of audiences on arguments that could make a difference, on an issue where change seemed possible. From the first Gulf War to the growing dissension over sanctions, from Desert Fox to the American campaign for war, Iraq repeatedly took center stage. And unlike in Palestine, where Arab states seemed hopelessly stymied, Iraq—at least in the eyes of the Arab public—was an arena in which Arab states could actually do something if they really wanted to: stop complying with the sanctions, support or oppose the war, support or oppose regime change attempts, allow or refuse the reintegration of Iraq into Arab institutions.

These hot debates spanned nearly a decade and a half, the entire life span of the new Arab public sphere. As a historical trauma and ongoing issue about which endless argument seemed possible, Iraq served as a focal point for private Arab debates after 1990. It is not obvious that it should have become such a vehicle. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait shattered Arab norms against inter-Arab warfare; the dissension at the Cairo Summit of 1990 decimated the official Arab order; and the intense divisions between popular support for Iraq and official support for the coalition in many Arab states exacerbated domestic tensions. In

contrast to Palestine, about which regimes often encouraged popular mobilization in order to deflect domestic criticism, Iraq was seen by most Arab regimes as an issue to be avoided. The Iraq issue intensified the political differences of Arab states, while simultaneously helping to reconstitute and to mobilize an Arab public critical of the failure of the Arab order to deal with the problem.

The collective trauma of the first Gulf War, and the failure of the Arab order to deal with it, opened up the field for public argument. Indeed, the sense of general crisis almost demanded it. This potential remained tentative and untapped for several years, however, because of the absence of an appropriate media. Writers did debate the Iraq issue in the elite newspapers, which arguably had some limited influence on Arab state policies, but in general this represented a quiet, internal dialogue within clearly defined red lines. Over the course of the 1990s, however, popular movements from below, often led by social activists working beneath the radar of the official media, forced the Iraqi issue onto the agenda. The Iraqi regime encouraged these activists in a number of ways (described in chapter 3), but they did not create out of nothing the anger and outrage felt by Arabs who deeply identified with Iraqis visibly suffering under sanctions. Palpable public anger over the sanctions and over American bombings of Iraq undermined the pragmatic inclinations of the Arab regimes, forcing them to address the issue at least rhetorically.

With Al-Jazeera's explosive coverage of the December 1998 "Desert Fox" bombing campaign, this new Arab public sphere finally found its voice. Al-Jazeera was virtually the only network operating in Iraq by the end of 1998—just as it was virtually alone in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. Personnel of al-Jazeera themselves "regard this as the milestone event that brought it to the international attention of many Arab viewers" (Rugh 2004a: 217). After watching the massive street protests against the bombing of Iraq in December 1998 on al-Jazeera, one Arab writer declared that "as the night does not resemble the morning, the winter of 1998 cannot resemble the summer of 1991. . . . Where the Gulf crisis divided the Arabs, these attacks united us."[13]

That Arab opinion changed over time cannot seriously be doubted. A number of major Arab states, including Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, joined the American coalition against Iraq in the 1991 war,

with that campaign authorized by an Arab League resolution (albeit a contested one). An early study of elite public opinion in the Gulf found that as late as January 1991 some 86 percent agreed that Saddam Hussein bore primary responsibility for the crisis (Ismael and Ismael 1993). Seven years later, in February 1998, 94.1 percent of Palestinians supported Iraq in its confrontation with the United States. By April 2002, only 3 percent of Egyptians favored an American attack against Iraq and 84 percent were against; 7 percent of Lebanese for and 84 percent against; 11 percent of Saudis for and 80 percent against; 13 percent of Kuwaitis for and 61 percent against.[14]

A Zogby poll in early 2003 found that 95 percent of Saudis, 58 percent of Jordanians, and 74 percent of Lebanese believed that the war would create less rather than more democracy; 97 percent of Saudis and 78 percent of Jordanians believed it would create more terrorism. A BBC poll in Jordan in February 2003 found that 68 percent of Jordanians believed that the American motivation for attacking Iraq was to secure oil supplies, while only 4 percent thought that it was to prevent another 9/11 and only 16 percent thought it was to depose Saddam.[15] 64 percent thought that removing Saddam would not make Iraq better off, and 22 percent thought that it would.

State policies followed these changes in public opinion, rather than creating them. At the time of the Gulf War, the entire Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Oman) took strong positions against Iraq, as did Egypt, Syria, Morocco, and Lebanon, in spite of often pro-Iraqi public opinion. By the mid-1990s, only Saudi Arabia and Kuwait remained strongly supportive of American policy toward Iraq in public, even if many Arab leaders continued to support the containment of Iraq privately (Ebert 1992). By the end of the 1990s, most Arab leaders opposed the sanctions in private as well as in public. The first full Arab summit in a decade, held in 2000 in response to Arab popular anger over the Intifada, pointedly included Iraq, signaling the linkages between these two key Arab issues. In March 2002 an Arab summit in Beirut finally brought about a public Arab consensus on restoring Iraq to the Arab order, while a succession of Arab leaders pointedly rejected American vice president Dick Cheney's suggestion that they privately supported the American agenda of war against Iraq.

This change in attitude did not take place naturally, nor did it reflect some pre-rational emotional bond with fellow Arabs. On the contrary, the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 came at the end of a long, tortured public Arab argument. The antiwar consensus produced by these arguments was deeply rooted not only in Arab interests but in this newly constructed Arabist identity. Opposition to the invasion of Iraq merged with a general anger with American policies, as well as disgust with actors viewed as American proxies in the region—from Israel to the Iraqi opposition and Kuwait. The sympathy with the Iraqi people, embodied in the demand to lift the sanctions and opposition to military action against Iraq, emerged through a complex and sustained public argument in the new Arab public sphere. This new public prioritized questions of Arab identity, searching to define Arabness in new ways and to challenge the stagnant and repressive status quo.

Saddam, the Iraqi Opposition, and the Arab Public

Saddam himself enjoyed little popularity by the late 1990s. In a February 1998 survey of Palestinian opinion, for example, 72.4 percent supported Iraq against the United States because of their sympathy with the Iraqi people and only 28.9 percent because of their support for Saddam Hussein's regime. The collapse in support for Saddam personally came partly because of deep frustration with the endless crisis, but also in no small part because the horrors of his regime were far more widely aired in the new Arab public sphere than they had been during the 1980s, when Saddam's Iraq had been the Arab champion against Islamic Iran and Saddam himself had been lionized in the Kuwaiti and Gulf media. While the sanction-induced suffering of the Iraqi people became a core shared point of Arab identity over the course of the 1990s, however, most commentators carefully distanced themselves from overtly glorifying Saddam's regime. For many critics, such a distinction was untenable: protests against the sanctions strengthened Saddam's hand in negotiations with the United Nations, regardless of the sympathies of the protestors. Such criticism became more influential, and more poignant,

after the fall of Baghdad allowed many Iraqis to vent similar frustrations with the Arab public.

As early as 2000, Kuwaiti officials worried that "Saddam Hussein has begun to penetrate [through al-Jazeera] the Gulf positions."[16] The relationship between al-Jazeera and Saddam's regime was intensely controversial, fueled by incendiary allegations of penetration of the station by Iraqi intelligence, which in April 2003 led to the resignation of station manager Mohammed Jassem al-Ali (see chapter 4). While it had always covered the humanitarian side of the sanctions—perhaps because of the emir of Qatar's interest in initiatives to end them—after Desert Fox al-Jazeera's coverage of Iraqi suffering increased dramatically (el-Nawawy and Iskander 2002: 36, 58). After this, al-Jazeera enjoyed privileged access to senior Iraqi leaders, not because of a preexisting relationship with Saddam's regime but because Saddam recognized the value of a good relationship with the most popular and influential Arab television station (Miles 2005). Intense popular interest in Iraq was not created by al-Jazeera, nor was al-Jazeera's coverage dictated by Iraqi intelligence.

The Arab public was not mindlessly supportive of Iraqi policy, and indeed was often quite critical of Saddam's tyrannical regime—in chapters 3 and 4 I present considerable evidence against the conventional wisdom that the Arab media ignored or downplayed the nature of Saddam's regime. This was a genuine argument, in which contrarian voices were widely heard, if not widely accepted. Kuwaitis and the Iraqi opposition were well represented in the new Arab public sphere, with regular access to opinion columns in the major Arab newspapers and to the talk shows on al-Jazeera and other satellite television stations. These opponents of Saddam had access to the public sphere, and substantial political and economic resources behind them—and yet they conclusively lost the argument.

Claims that the Arab media's coverage of Iraq over the years represented "not only the denial of mass graves, but a crisis of the Arab soul" should not be taken at face value, no matter how poignant.[17] Hundreds of articles appeared in the major Arab dailies—written by Iraqi opposition figures and regime sympathizers as well as non-Iraqi Arabs—discussing the possibilities for change in Iraq and proposals for post-Saddam structures. Saudi influence over much of the Arab

media ensured a prominent voice for defenders of the sanctions and critics of Saddam. Kuwaitis and Iraqi opposition figures regularly appeared even on al-Jazeera, if for no other reason than that their unpopular positions guaranteed good television. The chief editor of a leading Arab paper once wrote that Saddam Hussein was personally responsible for everything that had gone wrong in the Arab world for two decades. And hardly any al-Jazeera program on Iraq lacked at least one representative of the opposition or numerous phone calls from their sympathizers.

It is therefore wrong to claim that Iraqi opposition voices were excluded from the new Arab public sphere. Despite their heavy presence in the elite media, however, Saddam's critics largely lost the Arab public debate—until their fortunes were reversed by the brute force of the American military. The survey evidence above, as well as the overwhelming weight of public discourse and the protests in the streets, suggests that they failed to persuade the vast majority of Arabs to support their cause. More than that, these voices favoring the sanctions and supporting a military action against Iraq sometimes came to be defined not only as wrong, but as non-Arab. The Iraqi opposition, therefore, more than almost any other group within Arab politics, felt keenly the sting of the politics of authenticity and identity.

The bitter experience of the Iraqi opposition members within the Arab public sphere fueled their anger against the Arab order as a whole, while the close alignment of some parts of the Iraqi opposition with the United States intersected with and contributed to the growing anti-American sentiment in the region. When the formerly exiled opposition came to dominate the post-Saddam Iraqi government, this struck much of this new Arab public as an imposition of power over reason, with the losers of open debate imposed by force as the winners in the new Iraq. Arabs bitterly resented that the losers of the argument had been catapulted to the top not by the power of their arguments, but by the military power of a foreign army. A substantial portion of the Arab hostility to the invasion of Iraq and the new Iraqi regime—as well as the visceral anger expressed by many of the new rulers of Iraq—stems from this reversal of fortunes.

The Iraqi opposition reciprocated this resentment with the metaphoric fury of a woman scorned, lashing out at the Arab media with criticisms tailored to fuel the American critiques and to draw American power—so useful against Saddam—against their other enemies. Once in power in postwar Iraq, the former opposition leaders continued to harbor resentment, and to treat the Arab media with suspicion. One of Iyad Allawi's first moves after his appointment as temporary Prime Minister in June 2004, for example, was to close down the al-Jazeera offices in Iraq, while other members of his administration (especially Defense Minister Hazem Sha'alan) repeatedly accused it of indirectly or even directly supporting the insurgency.[18]

The role of the Iraqi opposition in shaping official American views of the Arab media has not often been appreciated. Just as Ahmed Chalabi and the INC contributed significantly toward misleading Americans about the extent of the threat posed by alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs, and badly misled Americans about their likely reception as "liberators" by flower-throwing Iraqis, so did they also transmit their own intense hostility toward the Arab media to their American allies.

The greatest absence from Arab public debates was not the Iraqi opposition, but rather the voice of the Iraqi people themselves. The Iraqi regime hardly counted as a legitimate spokesman for their interests. The Iraqi opposition, particularly the exile groups favored by Washington, had little real influence inside Iraq and were discredited within Arab public spheres by association with the United States. A small number of Iraqi dissidents who maintained their independence from those groups were published in the Arab press and appeared on Arab television, but even these individuals could not claim to speak for the Iraqi people living under Saddam's rule. In short, the Iraqi people were endlessly invoked by all sides in the debate—by sanctions critics mourning for the "suffering Iraqi people" just as by Iraqi opposition figures claiming to defend "the oppressed Iraqi people" from Saddam—but they remained objects rather than subjects in the great debates about their own future. Almost immediately upon the fall of Baghdad, al-Jazeera and other Arab media outlets rushed to bring these Iraqi voices to the Arab public. As dis-

cussed in chapters 5and 6, the anger expressed by many of those Iraqis toward Arabs for their failure to act against Saddam stunned Arabs, whose very identity had been definanger-   h

form of manufactured demonization of foreign enemies—the West, Israel, imperialism—as a way of deflecting popular anger from the regimes themselves. Arab public opinion does not exist in any recognizable form; instead, cynical and repressive regimes monitor, control, and manipulate a dangerous and unpredictable, and ultimately irrational, Arab street. Barry Rubin, for example, dismisses the Arab media as "usually—with rare exceptions and slight variations—act[ing] as a wall, reinforcing unanimity, shutting out the kind of discourse that has become dominant almost everywhere in the world" (2002: 259). Al-Jazeera, in this view, "reinforced rather than undermined the existing system of ideas . . . [using] 'free speech' as one of the most effective forces combating the possibility of real free speech or democratic reform." For Benjamin Gilman, Republican chair of the House International Relations Committee, "the fanatical anti-American and anti-Semitic incitement that has permeated the Arab world . . . constitutes a real threat to long-term interests in the region."[21] When Gilman looks at the Arab media, he sees little but "nonstop incitement." Like many others, Gilman blames this incitement on the interests of powerful authoritarian states: "useful as a smokescreen for their nations' many problems, their internal corruption, their lack of legitimacy, the oppression of their own citizens."

This consensus transcended partisan lines. In Congressional testimony as late as 2002, Martin Indyk, a leading Middle East policymaker under Bill Clinton, complained that American peace-making efforts "were dogged every step of the way by a hate-filled environment in which official organs of the Arab states, as well as other means of communication, were pouring out a litany of incitement."[22] Indyk complained that Iraqi propaganda had persuaded Arab public opinion of American responsibility for the deaths of Iraqi children and that "nothing we could do could change the impact of the images and the rhetoric that were being spread throughout the Arab world." Al-Jazeera may have given "voice to a broad range of opinions," but "most of them [were] extreme in their anti-American and anti-Semitic sentiments." There is no point trying to "win the hearts and minds of the Arab world," because Arab leaders find it too useful to deflect hostility outwardly. David Hoffman similarly describes

Arab news as "obsessively anti-American," and mirrors Indyk in calling for pressure on Arab states to exert more control over "this kind of hate propaganda."[23] And Fareed Zakaria complains that al-Jazeera "fills its airwaves with crude appeals to Arab nationalism, anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, and religious fundamentalism" (2004: 3).

The burden of this book is to offer a more realistic assessment of the content, quality, and political impact of this new Arab media, one which neither exaggerates nor glosses over its troubling qualities. American observers have misunderstood and misjudged the Arab public with an impressive consistency. First they overemphasized the risk of violent uprisings against friendly regimes, and then under-appreciated the depth of hostility to American policies. American officials blame the "poisonous" Arab satellites for American problems in the region. But these claims are far more problematic than is generally assumed. Anti-American sentiment exploded throughout the world during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, in places far from the range of the Arab media, such as Europe and Latin America. Public support for the United States collapsed in non-Arabic speaking Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Pakistan, where al-Jazeera again had no impact. Furthermore, al-Jazeera rose to dominance in the Arab political arena in the late 1990s, but hostility to the United States only shot skyward in 2002. In the words of Abdallah Schleifer, the Arab media became "a convenient scapegoat for profound U.S. policy errors."[24]

The New Arab Public

Al-Jazeera has received increasing attention from academics, policy-makers, journalists, and even movies (*Control Room*, a documentary about al-Jazeera, was a surprise hit in 2004). But the new Arab public is more than just al-Jazeera. It is defined by the rapidly expanding universe of Arabs able and willing to engage in public arguments about political issues within an ever-increasing range of possible media outlets (Salvatore and Eickelman 2004; Anderson and Eickelman 1999). It is made up of dozens of competing satellite television stations, independent

newspapers, state-backed official media, and even on-line news sites. It comprises Islamic networks and mosques, NGOs and transnational organizations, and prominent public figures and intellectuals. It includes a vast Arab diaspora that is increasingly able to maintain contact with and actively engage with the politics of the Arab world through information and communications technology—whether by watching al-Jazeera in San Francisco or by emailing friends from Denmark. The new Arab public is actually composed of multiple, overlapping publics that should be defined not territorially but by reference to a shared identity and a common set of political arguments and concerns. Ironically, perhaps, the Arab world has achieved something of which European enthusiasts only dream: a transnational public sphere united by a common language and a common news agenda (van den Steeg 2002; Calhoun 2004).

While chapter 2 explains what I mean by a "public sphere" and presents the history of the Arab public sphere in more detail, a brief overview here may be useful. In the 1950s, radio broadcasting created a distinctive kind of adversarial, competitive political argument that crossed national borders. In the 1970s and 1980s, Arab states asserted their power over national and transnational publics alike, shutting down public debate beneath a stifling hand of censorship and repression. In the late 1980s, however, a renewed Arab public sphere began to emerge. In the early 1990s, a number of states began to allow some media freedoms as part of defensive strategies of partial liberalization. These tentatively emerging domestic publics emphasized domestic political issues, and the primary carrier of political debate tended to be the press as states retained a tight grip over television (Lynch 1999). When Arab satellite television stations began to be launched after the first Gulf War, they focused on entertainment and offered no real political transformation.

What has been called the "al-Jazeera Era" extends from 1997, when the Qatari station exploded onto the media scene, through early 2003 (Miles 2005; Rugh 2004a; el-Nawawy and Iskander 2002). Unlike the earlier satellite stations, it emphasized politics and open debate, and quickly assumed a dominant, near-monopoly position within Arab public discourse. Its coverage of the December 1998 American-British attacks on Iraq, and then its coverage of the outbreak of the Palestin-

ian uprising beginning in September 2000, cemented its status. It was the one station that virtually everyone watched—and that everybody knew that others had seen—creating a real sense of a single, common Arab "conversation" about political issues.

By 2003, greater market competition and the fragmentation of the media market—particularly with the February launch of al-Arabiya—challenged al-Jazeera's dominance. Whether that competition will lead to homogenization—either in a more radical direction or in a more centrist direction—or to market segmentation remains unclear. Pierre Bourdieu argues that "competition homogenizes when it occurs between journalists or newspapers subject to identical pressures and opinion polls, and with the same basic set of commentators" (1998: 23). That al-Arabiya initially imitated al-Jazeera's coverage of Iraq in order to gain market share supports that thesis. On the other hand, several Arab satellite television stations have sought to differentiate themselves from al-Jazeera by offering more staid, muted coverage or by appealing to specific markets. After the Iraq war, al-Arabiya hired journalist Abd al-Rahman al-Rashed to revamp its coverage in a more pro-American direction in order to appeal both to the United States and to Arab elites threatened by al-Jazeera's powerful critiques (Shapiro 2005). Abu Dhabi TV did surprisingly well with its restrained coverage of the Iraq war. The American station al-Hurra and a proposed BBC Arabic language satellite television station, as well as the radical propaganda of Hezbollah's al-Manar and many others, constituted a far more complex media environment even as al-Jazeera retained its overall market leadership.

The American-led invasion, and subsequent occupation, of Iraq coincided with this shift in the market structure of the Arab media, as al-Jazeera came to face intense competition and other media platforms competed for the same market segments. This market competition had curious, sometimes cross-cutting ramifications: sometimes pushing toward radicalism, other times pushing toward moderation. But what is clear is that this new Arab public sphere fundamentally shaped the Arab response to the Iraqi crisis and its aftermath, and will continue to play a key role for the foreseeable future.

Arguing the New Arab Public

Haven't the Arab satellites succeeded in forming an Arab public opin-
ion probably for the first time in modern Arab history?
>   —Faisal al-Qassem, *The Opposite Direction*, al-Jazeera, October 3, 2000

Why does nothing remain in the Arab arena except for some croaking
media personalities? Why does a loud television clamour suffice as an
alternative to effective action, and compensate for weakness?
>   —Faisal al-Qassem, *The Opposite Direction*, al-Jazeera, March 7, 2003

Egyptian analyst Mohammed al-Sayyid Said points out that "it is easy
to exaggerate the amount of change in Arab politics, but at the same
time . . . there is real change in the intellectual habits of viewers and
listeners, and in Arab political culture."[25] Enthusiasts for the new Arab
media correctly emphasize the novelty and importance of a transna-
tional television political public sphere that is both independent of and
harshly critical of the status quo. But against this must be set a political
context of fiercely defensive and powerful states determined to resist
any threat to their interests. Nor have the enthusiasts taken into full ac-
count the less normatively desirable potentials of such a public sphere,
whose particular incentive structure might well push away from rather
than toward rational critical debate or political moderation. The new
media might push toward democracy, but could also drive an identity-
fixated, defensive populism. While chapter 2 explores these questions
in detail, it is worth previewing here some of the most important is-
sues at stake.

The new Arab public sphere is defined by a particular set of incen-
tives, which have rapidly shifted in response to developments both in-
ternal and external, both political and technological. The incentive to
reach out to a larger regional rather than local audience is driven by a
competitive drive for market share, by the technological realities of sat-
ellite broadcasting, and by conceptions of an Arabist political identity
(Telhami 2005). The issues that have dominated the new Arab media
span the major areas of Arabist political concern, from foreign policy to
systemic areas of domestic concern such as the absence of democracy
or governmental inefficiencies. Issues of wider appeal tend to dominate

issues of purely local concern: Palestine, Iraq, and Arab reform at first, and then increasingly the war on terror, Islam, and the United States.

The new media has asserted a claim to represent the authentic Arab voice—to be the one free voice with the ability and the courage to speak out on behalf of the Arabs against both American power and against corrupt Arab regimes. This is a claim to authenticity, to identity, and ultimately to a very real political power. Mohammed Krishan of al-Jazeera argues that "our target is public opinion, the masses . . . to win the confidence of the people in this station, even at the expense of the anger of the official Arab institutions and the United States."[26] The deep unpopularity of most Arab regimes and their intolerance of domestic critique creates powerful incentives for the new Arab media to push an independent and critical line. On the other hand, the Arab self-conception of being dominated, threatened, and encircled by Western powers has empowered a fiercely oppositional mentality and a demand to prove authenticity and independence. The incentive structures of the new Arab public sphere, in other words, point toward confrontational and oppositional argument. But these incentives are malleable, and should not be misrepresented as either fixed or hopelessly rooted in culture, pre-rational hostility, or civilizational envy.

For all its newfound prominence, the Arab public sphere remains almost completely detached from any formal political institution. The political significance of a transnational public sphere disconnected from any effective democratic institution has hardly begun to be theorized. Can what Mihna al-Habil called "The Democratic Republic of al-Jazeera" really stand in for genuine representative liberal democracy?[27] Even where these voices hold genuinely democratic convictions and impulses, the Arab public sphere cannot be democratic in any institutional sense of the word. It is not clear who this media represents, which voices dominate, or how it can act. The public arguments and debates are disembodied from any grounded political activity, and cannot easily be translated into political outcomes. And intense market competition can make it appear that the satellite stations follow mass opinion as much as they shape it.

In the face of entrenched and repressive regimes, as well as American power, the new Arab public reached the limits of political possibility. Its limitations derived from the very conditions that gave it

strength. As a disembodied international public sphere, it had the unique ability to serve as a platform for political dialogue and debate that could challenge the stagnant Arab political status quo. It had the ability to crystallize an Arabist identity and background ideas that transformed the incentives for political actors in the region. It could even make a claim to speak for this disenfranchised Arab public opinion, for a while, and could point to the "movement of the Arab street" as evidence of its claims. But ultimately, the Arab public sphere lacked any mechanisms for translating its energy, its consensus, its symbolic power into concrete political outcomes. It remained a "weak public sphere," severed from any institutional capability and not grounded in any concrete civil society. As its failure to produce political outcomes became clear, frustration set in tangibly. By the summer of 2001—even before the 9/11 attacks and the beginning of the American war on terror—the tone of al-Jazeera's discussions had palpably begun to change. Coverage became coarser, angrier, more emotional, with the arguments taking on a fiercer edge. This shift, I argue, reflected the frustration and sense of impotence felt by a public that had so recently seen a newfound competence and influence within its grasp. On the other hand, the fervent debate over political reform that began to break out in untold numbers of talk shows in late 2003, and the heady excitement that greeted the coverage of the Lebanese and Egyptian protests in early 2005, demonstrate that there is nothing inevitable about such a negativist turn.

Even if the power of a new international public sphere is growing, it is not at all clear that it is a *liberal* public sphere. The politics of the new Arab public sphere tend toward populism, the politics of identity, of authenticity, and of resistance. As frustration grows with American policies toward Iraq and Israel, as well as with the political and economic failures of Arab governments, open public argument might well lead to nonliberal conclusions. Furthermore, the growing influence of religious identity among Arabs has significant implications for the kind of public sphere that might be emerging. To the extent that the participants in public argument and the relevant audiences take religious rather than liberal values as their reference point, public argument and debate need not necessarily produce liberal outcomes. The prominence on al-Jazeera of the Egyptian moderate Islamist Yu-

suf al-Qaradawi, who has long advocated the centrality of dialogue to all aspects of religious and political life and has firmly opposed the textual absolutism characteristic of radicals such as Osama bin Laden, suggests an important intersection between the Arab public sphere and "moderate" Islamism (Lynch 2005).

Whether the Arab public sphere develops in a liberal direction or in a populist direction, consumed by questions of identity and authenticity, is one of the most pivotal questions shaping the Arab future. In the final chapter, I argue for an American public diplomacy that encourages, through dialogue and engagement, the emergence of a liberal Arab public sphere.

The book uses Arab attitudes, arguments, and policies toward Iraq from 1991 to 2004 to show how this public sphere has been transformed, how it matters politically, and how it approaches contentious political issues. I do not offer a detailed or comprehensive history of the Iraq issue, instead focusing tightly on questions of public opinion and the new Arab public sphere. This inevitably has led to some painful decisions about what to include and what to omit. Because of the tight focus of the book on the question of the impact and nature of the new Arab public, vital aspects of the Iraq issue are treated here in only a cursory fashion: the sanctions, the weapons inspections process, the international and American arguments over invading Iraq, the war on terror, the insurgency. I do not offer an "insider's" account of American or Arab decision making, or of al-Jazeera itself (Miles 2005). The book also does not offer a full treatment of the *news* coverage in the Arab media.

My focus is instead on Arab debates themselves, whether on the al-Jazeera talk shows or in the op-ed pages of the pan-Arab daily newspapers or in Internet chat rooms or inside social movements and political parties. While I have interviewed an enormous number of people involved in this issue, the vast majority of the book's evidence comes from published op-eds and transcripts of television programs. Far too much discussion of the Arab public ignores what that public actually says and does, or ascribes beliefs or motivations without adequate evidence. The methodological argument encoded in this book is that what people say in public matters more for shaping political identities and strategies than their private beliefs or internal deliberations.

Debates about whether Yusuf al-Qaradawi, say, "really" supports at-tacks on American civilians in Iraq even though he publicly declared his opposition strike me as irrelevant distractions: the public state-ments of an influential figure, delivered on a widely watched television station such as al-Jazeera, matter far more than do his private beliefs, even were it ever possible to truly know such private beliefs.

The book uses Iraq as a vehicle for showing the dramatic changes in the nature and quality of Arab public life. Chapter 2 delves into this new public sphere in depth, charting its evolution and the fierce debates about its significance and its quality. Chapter 3 focuses on the period from the end of the first Gulf War through 1997, during which Arabs grew increasingly mobilized over the sanctions on Iraq but lacked outlets to effectively express their anger. Chapter 4 examines the crucial period 1997–2003, including the American-British bomb-ing of Iraq in December 1998 ("Desert Fox") that ended the United Nations weapons inspections, just as al-Jazeera emerged as a force in Arab politics. Chapter 5 examines the 2003 American-British invasion and occupation of Iraq, with a particular focus on the moments of uncertainty and open questioning after the fall of Baghdad that April. Finally, chapter 6 widens the lens to reconsider the prospects for the new Arab public, and its implications for American power, for democ-racy, and for the possibility for change in the region.