

Arab Mass Media

WILLIAM A. RUGH



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NEWSPAPERS, RADIO, AND TELEVISION IN ARAB POLITICS

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Since September 11, 2001, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, many television viewers in the United States have become familiar with Al Jazeera as offering an alternative take on events from that presented by mainstream U.S. media, as well as disseminating anti-American invective. Westerners have tended toward simplistic views of Arab newspapers, radio, and television, assuming that they are all under government control and that freedom of press is non-existent. William A. Rugh, a long time observer of the Arab mass media, offers a more nuanced picture of the Arab press as it relates to the political situation in the Arab world today. Although governmental influence over the media is stronger in the Middle East than in Europe or the United States, Rugh argues that there is more diversity in the Arab media than most people in the West realize. In reality, the Arab media are coming to reflect the diversity and wide range of opinions of those within the Arab world itself. In particular, the advent of privately owned Arab satellite television in the 1990s has led to significant liberalization of the media throughout the region. Rugh concludes that a democracy of ideas and voices is slowly growing in the Arab world, and he remains guardedly optimistic about the positive role the Arab media can play in processes of democratization and nation-building.

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