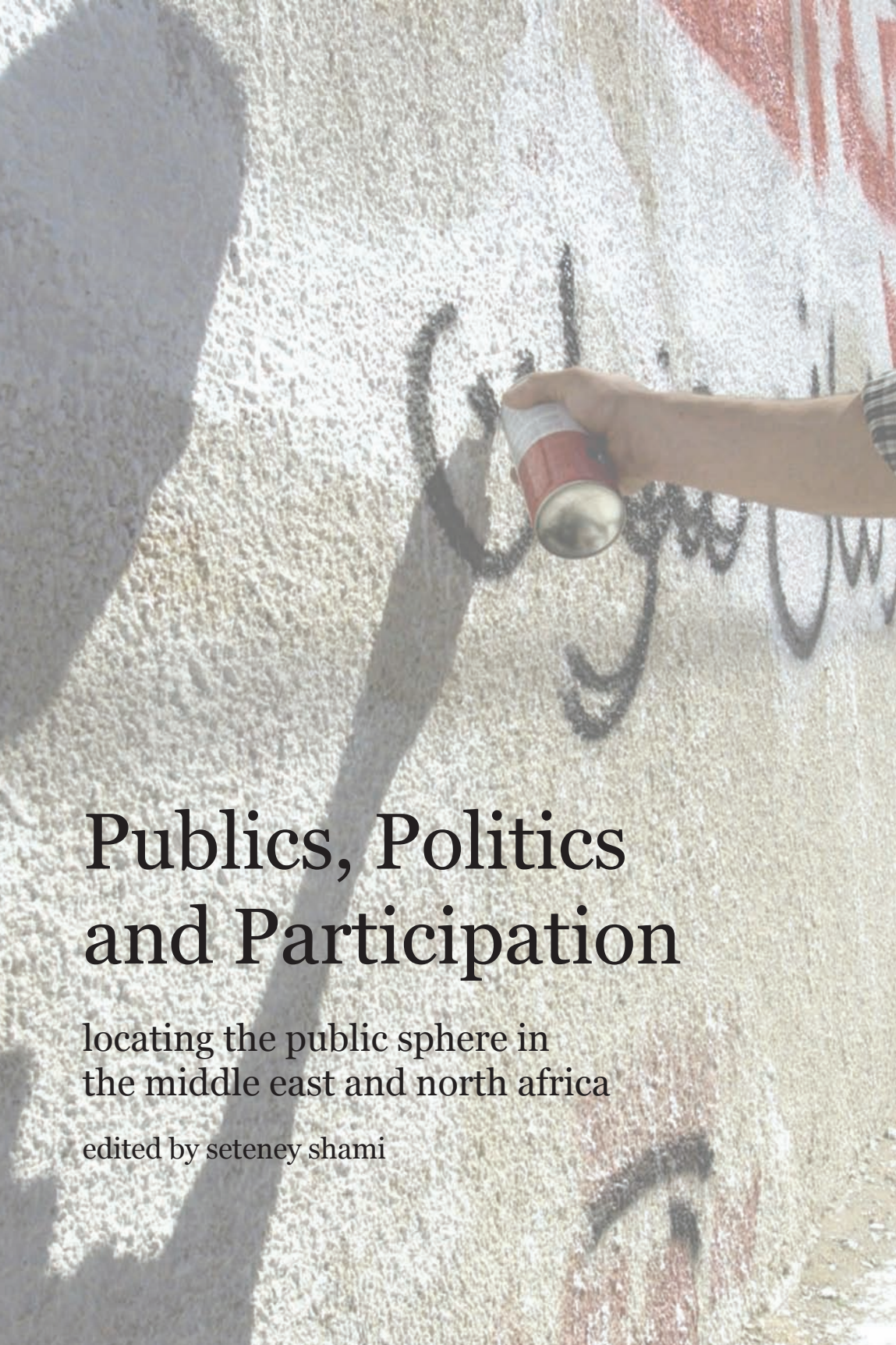




Publics, Politics and Participation

locating the public sphere in
the middle east and north africa

edited by seteney shami

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Locating the Public Sphere in the Middle East and North Africa

Edited by Seteney Shami

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A Note on Transliteration

The transliteration of Arabic, Persian and Turkish terms follows the standards established by the International Journal of Middle East Studies, with a small number of exceptions.

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In addition to the “Beirut Conference on Public Spheres,” activities of the project included workshops in Amman (2002) and Cairo (2003), two workshops in Florence, in collaboration with the European University Institute’s Mediterranean Programme annual meeting (2003, 2004), one panel at the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies in Mainz (2002) and one panel at the Middle East Studies Association meeting in Alaska (2003).

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Seteney Shami
SSRC

Introduction

Seteney Shami

As 2008 was drawing to a close and this volume was being finalized, the Middle East and North Africa region was once again gripped by a new round of extreme violence with the air and ground Israeli attacks on the Gaza strip. Arab populations poured into the streets in protest, as much against their own governments as against Israel and its supporters in the West, while Arab leaders crisscrossed the region in search of an elusive common strategy and response. The U.N. Security Council held one deadlocked session after another, while images of victims and fighters flooded television screens around the world.

Once again, the repetitious media representations served to fix the Middle East as a theater of action, whose publics are revealed to the globe only through violence, suffering and frustration. However, the well-rehearsed statements by Western commentators concerning “cycles of violence in the Middle East” masked important re-alignments of power and public response in the region and beyond. Some Arab states were coordinating action and reaction with Turkey, while others reached out to Iran and the Muslim countries of South and Southeast Asia. The huge Turkish public outcry over Gaza exceeded Arab and even Iranian protests. Much more visible than before was the international mobilization of Arab, Middle Eastern and Muslim communities in Europe, North and South America and Australia, many of whom seemed better allied than previously with sympathetic political groupings in their host countries.

The “Arab Street,” the reports of whose death had been greatly exaggerated by the Wall Street Journal in 2001,¹ became a virtual transnational highway with the *Al Jazeera* network playing a key role in linking commentary and responses from across the globe while making good their claim of being the only international network reporting directly out of Gaza.

Together with the world financial crisis, which especially impacted the oil economy and markets of the Gulf States in ways that have yet to reveal themselves fully, the close of the first decade of the 21st century seems to be heralding a re-regionalization and a shifting landscape of state and society across the Middle East and North Africa. The dramatic elections in Lebanon and Iran indicate both the waning and the waxing of Islamic politics and power. Publics made visible through street demonstrations and protests, old and new forums for regional and inter-regional deliberation and decision-making, the media-tion of information and political response—all these point to the increasing relevance of locating the public sphere in this region, not only for understanding the underlying dynamics of public mobilization and the means through which it is achieved, but also for clarifying the implications for state, society, politics and participation.

Locating the public sphere in the Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa region may seem an unlikely candidate for a successful exploration of the concept of public spheres, heavily inflected as this concept is with normatized Habermasian principles of critical debate, communicative consensus, deliberative reason and bourgeois democracy. The Middle East and North Africa region has long been characterized by its Orientalizers, past and present, as not only lacking in civility but also in public-ness and public-ity. Historically the region was represented as one where the state was an extension of the private realm of the ruler, where even economic and religious space was subjected fully to political authority. Social and economic groups were seen as lacking in autonomy such that Orientalists often argued that the teeming historical urban settlements of the region were not, sociologically speaking, “cities.”² Thus, both the historical and contemporary

public appears in scholarly and media representations of the region only as the passive and pacified mass or the angry mob (incomprehensibly the former turns into the latter).

This volume begs to differ. It seeks the mutual advancement of the literature on public spheres and the literature on the Middle East and North Africa and uses the concept to make the region, and its publics, visible in ways that do not focus exclusively on violence and exceptionalism from democratic ideals. However, this collection also goes beyond explicating processes particular to geo-politically or culturally or civilizationally defined entities. The point of this volume is not simply to demonstrate that a public sphere exists or has historically existed in these societies or to find Muslim public spheres as a counterpart to western (Christian?) public spheres. Rather, the essays, through their different topics, begin the work of methodically conceptualizing the construction and dismantling of public spaces and places in relation to particular political entities and processes (nations, states, political movements, cities, identity politics, elections, wars). In such times and spaces, people coalesce to constitute publics and engage in public communication, and political participation takes on the qualities of intermediacy that hold promise for democratic development. This perspective follows the notion that democratization is to be understood and measured as the advancement of reasoned collective choice through public communication.³

The collection of chapters in the volume represent a five-year project (2000–2005) organized by the Social Science Research Council entitled “Reconceptualizing Public Spheres in the Middle East and North Africa.” The impetus behind deploying the public sphere as a conceptual framework for the SSRC project and this volume was not so much to *carve out* a delimited space of social science inquiry that emphasizes specific and distinct social and political processes, as much as to *integrate*, within a new analytical field, research endeavors that are currently fragmented and variously labeled as civil society, private/public domains, urban social movements, gender identities, youth cultures, the welfare state, new media and cultural production. It is the integrative promise in the notion of public spheres that enables new perspectives on the region, its societies and politics. As Hoexter stresses, “The importance of this concept ... lies largely in that it goes beyond appeals to the formal institutions of the Western civil

society model, to address the entire realms of societal and cultural life that has relevance to the social and political order.”⁴

In these papers, the notion of the public sphere provides ways of thinking about societal transformation that neither compartmentalizes nor homogenizes the units of analysis. It helps unpack the concepts of “nation” and “nation-state” as well as focus on transnational, non-national and virtual spaces and processes. Importantly, the role of space and place in enabling the emergence and institutionalization of publics and political participation are highlighted and “located” in particular settings. In this way, the volume challenges, and adds to, prevailing models and modes of understanding the public sphere as well as provides valuable comparative insights, largely lacking in the current literature. At the same time, it has to be admitted that the task of “talking back” to the literature on Western liberal democratic public spheres (and those that would universalize it as an ideal) is at its beginning, especially from the perspective of the Middle East and North Africa region. In this endeavor, this volume joins a small number of books and edited volumes that have appeared in the last decade.⁵

Even within this sparse literature, certain themes come clearly to the fore as important for understanding the overlapping regions variously defined as the Middle East, Arab World and Islamic World. These themes are also explored in this volume: A focus on Islam is apparent, even paramount, in order to locate (or re-locate) religion in the public sphere, account for contemporary religious political and social movements and serve as a historical and civilizational framework of analysis. A second and related preoccupation is with understanding the shifting line between the private and the public (in Muslim societies) and the functioning of gender roles and identities in negotiating this distinction. An interest in democratization and participation also shapes many of the questions raised by the literature, which is apparent in studies of the media, especially new media and its role in creating new publics and the ways in which virtual publics differ from national publics.

This volume shares these concerns with the available literature.⁶ However, these themes are inflected through a primary interest in politics and the ways in which publics coalesce around political dynamics that may be local, national or transnational. The issue of political, and armed,

conflict is ever-present in the foreground or background of these chapters. Historical and contemporary processes of political mobilization and resistance are also given central focus. Additionally, it should be noted that each section is organized to map out the different dimensions of the four themes of the volume and to open up future theoretical discussions and research agendas.

The first section, **Philosophical Frames**, offers alternative conceptions of the public sphere as evidenced in the region. The chapters focus on the role of collective action, the relationship between nationalism and democracy, and the notions of the public employed by socio-religious movements. These highlight different aspects of the public sphere, comparatively, historically and in the light of new and changing political configurations of states, citizenship, participation and discourse.

In the first chapter of this section, Fawwaz Traboulsi discusses what he finds most valuable in the Habermasian notion of the public sphere, namely its relationship with the democratic process and thus its motivational, rather than instrumental, potential. Criticizing the tendency to multiply terminology and redefine social reality in new and fashionable terms rather than to accumulate social knowledge, the chapter provides an instance of a historical, critical and comparative approach to the public sphere, through a focus on the Arab region. The emphasis quickly shifts from a (dichotomous) opposition between non-democratic and democratic public spheres and the “lacks” characterizing the former, to a processual understanding of the *democratizing* public sphere. Such an approach necessitates not only looking at non-Western societies through their own historical and social specificities but also questions dominant interpretations of Western and European history. In Traboulsi’s perspective, this means understanding the non-bourgeois and non-urban roots of modern democracies, distinguishing between revolutions for liberty and revolutions for equality and, finally, acknowledging the role of “popular power.”

In their chapter LeVine and Salvatore also emphasize the importance of popular power and explore challenges to “the hegemony of liberal norms of the public sphere” in notions of the public, social justice and the common good utilized by socio-religious movements, specifically in Muslim countries. They remind us that in these cases resistance goes

beyond mere challenges to the liberal order to the development of alternative programs and that the public sphere is a “site for solidarities.” The authors turn to Gramsci and Foucault to look at the relationship between religion and collective action where the transformation of power relations is simultaneously a transformation of subjectivity, of the self. The conceptual apparatus offered by the authors enables an analysis of socio-religious movements that brings together within one framework their welfare and social solidarity functions with their politics of resistance and their philosophical formulations and trajectories—aspects of such movements that are often studied separately (and by different disciplines). Their discussion also holds the promise of understanding such relationships beyond the case study, beyond Islam and beyond East and West.

Zeynep Gambetti’s chapter provides yet another perspective on the types of theoretical linkages and social relationships that the concept of the public sphere elucidates. She focuses on the role of micro-practices, everyday life and “spheres of circulation” that create and recreate publics and public spheres. In this, Gambetti’s goal is to “expand the scope of communication” thus broadening the understanding of the ways in which publics are constituted, as well as the spaces through which communication takes place. She particularly focuses on “liminal” spaces and moments where conflict and rupture in fact become forms of communication that allow for the reformulation of power relations. Citing examples of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in Turkey and the Zapatistas in Mexico, she argues that the public sphere needs to be rethought in terms of “its connection to struggle, collective action and self-determination.” This perspective highlights “the creative potential built into the structure of crisis,” where even armed conflict is a field of interaction, communication and negotiation over the parameters and substance of political engagement. Gambetti is careful to point out that the finding of a “middle ground” or “common ground” through conflict is not automatic but dependent on a number of factors. Still, for her as for the other authors in this section, the promise in the notion of the public sphere is in creating a new theory of action.

The issues engaged by these three theoretical interventions are taken up in different settings by the case studies in the following three sections. The second section of this volume, entitled **Between Private**

and Public, addresses the emergence of a wide range of locations, social statuses, discourses and practices that destabilize the notion of distinct private and public domains: from memoirs and testimonies to strategies of surveillance, from the Tehran bazaar to migrant domestic workers. For the Middle East and North Africa region, the shifting, porous and yet often ideologically rigid line between the private and the public has been dealt with most comprehensively by the literature on gender and sexuality. And yet those insights tend to be neglected or sublimated when “public spheres” are invoked, thus leading (once again) to positing easy and misleading distinctions. This section explores the various ways in which privacy and publicity are organized and negotiated in the changing cultural, political and economic relations between state and society, and the ways in which the construction and representation of the self, the domestic, the collective and the national intersect in different settings.

The chapter by Haugbolle takes the case of Lebanon after the civil war (1975–1990) and explores the boundary between private and public as the boundary between self and society and biography and history. Memory, and the writing down of autobiographies and testimonies, is the medium that translates back and forth between these realms and becomes vital for the reconstitution of publics in postconflict societies. Such societies, Haugbolle points out, are “packed with voices” as a result of social groups having been torn apart and set against one another. The publication of such memories in books, and even more significantly in that most public of spaces, newspapers, makes them essential building blocks of new postwar public discourses and spheres.

The Lebanese case is interesting and special because these “private” voices engage and inflect a “feeble national history,” further fragmented by the sectarian violence of the civil war to an extent that might reverse the usual relationship between the hegemonic nation and its counterpublics. Haugbolle focuses on women’s voices, showing how the war enabled the access of women to formerly masculine realms and the emergence of a voice that had “previously depended on representation by others,” although these voices often seem to lament the destruction by the war of the selfsame “civility” that had previously silenced them. Haugbolle then explores the paradoxes of the attempt to create a new postwar nationalism through the testimonies of former militiamen (and women), who stress

the importance of reconciliation with the self as the first step towards the reconciliation with the other, who decry the sectarian politics of the past and undergo “public rituals of catharsis.” His account ends with a caution to not take the apparent emergent public consensus for granted, given the fact of the continuing sectarian distribution of power and thus the necessity of “reading between the lines” in a public sphere “unusually rife with coded signals, masks and voices in play.”

Moors, Jureidini, Özbay and Sabban explore a very different topic, that of migrant domestic workers in three localities (Dubai, Istanbul and Beirut), but equally question how the private and the public, the domestic and the national are to be distinguished. Examining how domestic workers, who are meant to be invisible and encapsulated within the domestic and the private, actually achieve “being present in the public” raises interesting questions: on the one hand, it points to the gendered access to public space operating in many of these settings that apply to all women whether “migrant” or “national”; on the other hand, it also illustrates how the invisible existence of migrant women in the home enables the participation of “national” women in the construction of a national public sphere. Finally, domestic workers are made public by becoming objects of, if not participants in, popular culture through soap operas, novels and movies as well as in public and media debates on human rights, immigration laws, national identity and the meanings of motherhood.

The importance of mobility is emphasized in this chapter as well as the “politics of presence,” the sheer act of being visible outside the domestic space as a communicative device in the public sphere. The authors find that understanding present-day migrant domestic labor necessitates a historical perspective and an understanding of the various types of shifts in domestic labor from slavery to wage labor to the current situation, which can be seen as a return to slave or bonded labor. This history of labor in the domestic sphere shows that it cannot unambiguously be seen as a private sphere. Since the private/domestic space is actually the workplace for the domestic worker, she has to access privacy by going into public space. Public spaces, on the other hand, are being “privatized” or at least challenged in their claims to “openness” through the creation of subaltern public spaces (such as church groups, restaurants or NGOs) particular to such groups who not only have no legitimate claim to a public presence,

but who also, by virtue of their “foreignness,” do not constitute part of the national body.

The constitution of the “body politic” in the mid-19th century Ottoman Empire is the main focus of the chapter by Kırılı who emphasizes that the public sphere emerges at, and through, the intersections of state and society rather than at their interstices or in the spaces between their dichotomous domains. He argues that the public sphere is not independent of state power but rather an arena of political struggle between the ruler and the ruled. He demonstrates this by showing how the strategy of surveillance of conversations in public places such as coffeehouses was in fact an outcome of a new interest of the Ottoman state in “public opinion” and thus was also “the moment when subjects were constituted as political citizens.” Kırılı sees this moment as part and parcel of a new relationship between state and society, where each becomes more visible to the other. A sign of the new visibility of the state to what can now be termed its public is the increasing accessibility of the sultan to his subjects. Through trips around the empire and direct engagement with different segments of the population, the sultan became visible and touchable and sought through his appearances to bring the people closer to him, to connect the corners of the empire to the capital and to constitute his subjects as a collective identity. Not coincidentally, the first Ottoman newspaper is launched at the same time and publicizes the new activities and image of the ruler in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian and French. Surveillance, Kırılı argues, is a central feature of modernity.

Keshavarzian uncovers similar points in his examination of the relationship between state and market in the Tehran bazaar in post-revolutionary Iran. Examining the common perception in Tehran that the bazaar exists “in the shadow” of the state, Keshavarzian examines the relationship between place and collective identity, that of the *bazaaris*, well known for their key involvements in the social and revolutionary movements of modern Iran. He stresses that at various points in history, the bazaar “became a venue to organize and stage dissent—to make it *public*,” and he emphasizes the importance of everyday forms of interpersonal interaction in the formation of publics and public spheres. Keshavarzian thus argues against excluding the market from the public sphere, stating that a “narrow understanding of the public sphere and strict dichotomy

between private and public, or personal and political, would preclude a full understanding of Iranian politics and of the *bazaaris'* political power."

Building on the connections between public spheres and networks, Keshavarzian investigates the interpersonal relationships and generalized trust that long helped make the bazaar a place of "openness" and publicness. His investigation of the relationship between place, networks and power, and the changes wrought by state policies and globalization of the economy, leads to the conclusion that in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the bazaar is no longer a locus of publicness and political efficacy—a public sphere, and indeed the public associated with it, is no more. This study shows that, paradoxically, the very proximity of the market and the state that was pointed to by earlier scholars as proof of the lack of publicness and public mobilization in Muslim societies, in fact was an essential part of enabling the constitution of a public and a public sphere in and around the bazaar. Now that the relationship between the merchants and the state is shrouded in secrecy, and commercial exchange takes place in transnational spaces such as Dubai, this has diminished the place of the Tehran bazaar and of *bazaaris* in democratizing the public sphere.

As mentioned above, the Middle East and North Africa region has long been seen as characterized by "private politics" rather than public participation, as well as by a strict separation of the private domains of family and neighborhood from public spaces and the state. These chapters, focused on different places and different times, raise a series of questions concerning the ways in which connections between state and society provide means of achieving collective identity, social mobilization and public consensus. This leads to another set of questions around the relationships between public opinion, public debate and public action, which are taken up in the third section of the volume, **Mediated Publics**.

Undoubtedly, the media plays an essential role in the constitution of modern public spheres. As Ku notes, the media "are situated at the interface between publicity and secrecy, which thereby allows for struggles over the boundary of state openness/secrecy in the public sphere."⁷ It is important to question, however, whether (and if so, how) new information technologies and forms of media are creating new arenas of discussion that are empowering and in what ways they may be disempowering or neutralizing public action and public debate. What kinds of media

create new publics that challenge existing social as well as political boundaries?⁸ The chapters in this section provide compelling accounts of the ways in which communication through technology has vitally expanded the notion of the public in the Middle East and North Africa region. Imagination is a central factor here—how nation but also community and self are imagined and refracted through the lens of various media from traditional print to new information and communication technologies. A historical perspective is important in this endeavor, so as to assess continuities as well as differences between different kinds of media and the ways in which they create their publics.

While Kırılı in his chapter discussed the important role of the first Ottoman newspaper, launched in 1831, in creating a “public” in the modern sense of the term, in her chapter, Michelle Campos examines the press in the last years of Ottoman rule in Palestine as “an emergent revolutionary public sphere” that took upon itself the role of defining the “Ottoman public.” The newspapers in this multilingual press aimed at different ethnic, religious and linguistic readerships (Turkish, Arabic, Greek, Armenian, Ladino, Bulgarian and Hebrew) while aspiring at the same time to create a transcommunal Ottoman imperial public. The papers were to be “the voice of the people” while at the same time shaping what “the people” were to be. The outcome was a constant tension between “the Ottomanizing impulse of the press and its particularistic thrust.” Thus, Campos shows that the hegemonic public and the counter-publics were being created through the self-same medium of the newspaper. Campos shows how these papers, in their different languages and targeting different communities, worked to constitute a national / imperial public through their didacticism, through their news from all parts of their empire, through comparing governance practices in different cities, through discussions about universal conscription and through debates, editorials and letters from readers that operated as a public forum for discussion. At the same time, by targeting specific linguistic and ethnic groups as their reading public, they highlighted, often implicitly and sometimes explicitly, the particularities and competing interests of these groups within the larger imperial entity.

Campos also looks at the practices of reading newspapers and shows that the public sphere created by the newspapers was not composed simply

and directly through the audience they created, the imagined community of print capitalism, but also through the social practices that clustered around them. This included public readings and institutionalized “reading nights” and the passing of papers from hand to hand, between friends and neighbors. Despite the effectiveness of the press in creating its audience and its public, the stories of communal strife and divided interests in the press itself reveal the “limits of Ottomanism” and its ultimate failure in the face of new nationalisms that eventually tore the Empire apart.

In contemporary times in the Middle East and North Africa region, satellite television also operates, often in unexpected ways, to both consolidate and challenge collective identities. As Hadj-Moussa describes in her chapter, on a practical level, obtaining satellite TV in Algeria necessitates collective action, since satellite dishes are owned and managed by groups of neighbors, which also implies agreement over which channels to view. Collective action is also needed to defend the ownership, and viewing, of satellite television, which “became the technological medium at the center of the struggles between the state and the Islamists, with the viewers in the middle.” Both the state and Islamists attempt to forbid or curtail the watching of satellite television, the latter even resorting to armed threats and forced dismantling of dishes. At the same time, satellite television has also led to a heightened awareness of differences and divisions, by social status and class, by gender and by identity politics. For these reasons, Hadj-Moussa argues that “satellite television [has] permitted Algerians to negotiate their modernity” and that watching television in Algeria is an everyday act of resistance, vis-à-vis the state but also Islamists.

Satellite TV also becomes a site of drama in the domestic sphere and a new connection of domestic space to public space, to the “outside.” On the one hand, there is the retreat of men into the domestic, away from coffeehouses and public squares, in order to watch television. On the other hand, there are conflicts and contestations over which channels to watch and with whom to watch, which reflect both gender and generational hierarchies. Thus Arabic channels are seen by men as appropriate for women, and bind women to Arabness, Islam and Algerian values, whereas the French stations are for males and, perhaps unintentionally, a channel to democratic modernity. Interestingly, access to French television and other satellite channels (including Arab news channels) are

not only a way of accessing global news but also *national* news and even reports on local or neighborhood events, which are usually suppressed by national television.

New media, participation and democracy also appear as themes in the chapter by Bahíyyih Maroon on the use of the internet in neighboring Morocco. The interplay of the global and the local is also very much in evidence as youth in cybercafés use Skype to call friends within the city and use chat programs to flirt with another person sitting in the same café. Maroon argues that the introduction of a new technology in Moroccan society is mediated through the mores and morals of the “Muslim public sphere,” as evidenced in the kinds of physical spaces created by the technology (cybercafés) and the modes of interaction within these spaces. At the same time the technology enables the development of new dimensions in youth culture and creates new cultural and social spaces. Thus, “Cybers gently push the limits of the moral terrain of society by creating spaces of desegregated sociability, and by generally expanding the types of information and modes of communication available to Moroccans.”

Maroon’s account shows how state interest in modernization, Islamic values that positively view science and technology, and the social aspirations of youth, work together to create change, even if this change is currently contained within “new public spaces” while older spaces such as coffeehouses, streets and parks remain governed by longstanding notions of morality and gender identities. However contained in terms of numbers they may be, Maroon’s account clearly shows the emergence of a new public and a new youth culture in Morocco, both mediated and enabled through the Internet and the World Wide Web.

In Iran as well, the Internet is a tool and a weapon in the hands of a new type of public. Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi examines the emerging terrain of “Weblogistan” and the ways in which virtual spaces enable interactions and identities that are strictly controlled or prohibited in public spaces. Blogs not only become a vehicle for “public” dissension and contestation of the state and hegemonic moral authority but also a means for creating and recreating selves and identities. Amir-Ebrahimi examines the freedoms of the “dis-embodied” virtual spaces of the Internet in light of the severe restrictions on bodies in actual public space. As in all the chapters in this section, the ability to communicate internationally impacts the

local and the national. Amir-Ebrahimi furthermore shows the linkages between different forms of media, the press, satellite TV and the Internet, and how one means of communication helps compensate for the restrictions imposed by the state on the other.

“Weblogistan” is a highly diverse territory differentiated along gender, age, geographical and ideological lines; it is national and transnational at the same time; and it is first and foremost a site of resistance with bloggers and their readers using all technological and discursive skills at their disposal to expand their autonomy and to claim cyberspace as their own. The state’s continued attempts to regulate, control and censor this virtual space is an attestation of its power.⁹ For “Weblogistan” is also a “communal” space, which has evolved its own norms and styles of interaction. Finally, it is an “intimate” space, a “mirror,” enabling both self-representation but also self-discovery. Inner and outer spaces, public and private, once again intersect and realize themselves most fully through their opposites.

Continuing on many of the same themes, the fourth section of the volume, **Resisting Publics**, shows how conflict (and post-conflict reconstruction) and resistance can be generative forces in the production of national publics. Nationalism, national identity and the relationship between the state and its constitutive groups are the issues raised by these chapters. The construction of national publics entails discourses about self and other and the complex relationship between the existence of multiple and competing public spheres on the one hand and democratization processes on the other. Here, particularly, historical research illustrates not only how particular groups and publics are formed and transformed over time, but also how the transnational is always present in the formation of the national. The role of religion and political groups mobilized around religion also reminds us not to neglect the inflections of the religious and the national in each other.

Noor-Aiman Khan’s chapter examines the ways in which the public sphere in European imperial metropolises provided the space and means for the simultaneous production of the national, the international and the transnational. The networks formed between students from the different colonies of the British Empire and specifically the friendships and collaborations between students and activists from India and Egypt enabled the

creation and imagination of other national public spheres, that of the “victims of English domination.” The colonial public sphere was thus formed transnationally—through efforts of nationalists both at home and in the colonial metropole—but also internationally, through parallel nationalisms that collaborated in their anti-imperialist struggles, thus foreshadowing third world internationalism and the non-aligned movement.

Khan describes the ways in which the European metropolitan landscape was negotiated by these young nationalists and internationalists, with different countries and cities providing different freedoms and constraints. She also focuses on the spaces carved out by the activities, the congresses, associations, cafes, salons and newspapers that shaped these new public spheres that were both subaltern and not. Paradoxically, “the public sphere cultivated in Europe and protected by its own society’s shared assumptions was a direct threat to the political, economic, and cultural dominance of that society globally.”

Examining the case of colonial and post-colonial Iraq, Eric Davis presents an analysis of the development of one such national public sphere. Among the “means of communication” important in creating a national Iraqi consciousness at the turn of the twentieth century, he examines the role of poetry, short story-writing and art as well as the press. The spaces for these discussions were clubs, coffeehouses, professional organizations and literary and artists’ salons, the nature of which changed over the course of the century, reflecting the changing class structure and political context and contestations. In light of challenges faced by the Iraqi state and society today, Davis pays particular attention to the ways in which these communicative and discursive spaces crossed ethnic, sectarian and regional lines, as did labor movements and, by the mid-century, political parties. It is political parties that show most clearly the transnational and Arab and/or Islamic character of the institutional underpinnings of the Iraqi public sphere.

Turning to contemporary Iraqi politics, Davis shows how this understanding of the roots of Iraqi nationalism and of the importance of the nationalist public sphere is crucial to interpreting the instigators and targets of internecine violence. It explains the “hostility of sectarian groups towards a historical memory based in tolerance, diversity of knowledge, and cultural pluralism.” As with their counterparts across

the border in Iran, the “blogosphere” is an active weapon in the hands of those Iraqis who have only their ideas and words to deploy against the violence they witness in their everyday lives.

The last two chapters by Joseph Alagha and Marie Le Ray examine a different kind of resistance, one where state and minority come face to face to contest the meanings of governance, society, identity and memory. Le Ray examines a particular local context, in this case, a Kurdish Alevi province in Turkey. This locality has long represented an “overregulated space of surveillance” filled with check-points, fences, curfews and strict security that governed all aspects of life. This included access to and dissemination of information, thus controlling “any means of meaning-making.” However, in the relative peace prevailing at the time of the research, social practices, pilgrimages, festivals and commemorations created “breathing spaces” that may have a transformative effect and, over time, contest state definitions of the “public grammar.” Le Ray shows how an encounter between passengers on a bus and checkpoint policemen and soldiers turns into a public discussion of state tactics and public perceptions. The construction of heterodox religious spaces complicates the identities of the inhabitants of Tunceli to highlight both their Kurdishness and their Alevi-ness. Even more publicly and collectively, protests against a state project to construct dams in the region takes up the discourses of environmentalism. Thus the inhabitants of Tunceli complicate and multiply their identities, which in itself contests state definitions of them as “terrorists” or “heretics.”

Another thread of the Tunceli story is those of migrant workers from Europe who come home to participate in festivals, to fund development projects and to participate in collective action. Once again the production of the subaltern public sphere is simultaneously local, national and transnational.

In the final chapter of the volume, Joseph Alagha presents us with a highly detailed account of the evolution, over a mere 30 years, of Hizbullah from a marginal sectarian Shiite protest movement in Lebanon to an organized subaltern social movement, to a fully fledged political party that participates in and attempts to dominate national politics and the national public discourse. The author’s attentiveness to large and small shifts in Hizbullah’s political strategies and discourses shows the dramatic

changes in both the internal and external relations of the movement with regards to a changing national and regional context. Political assassinations, street demonstrations and war with Israel marks the pivotal events triggering Hizbullah's transformation—and with it the transformation of the domestic Lebanese landscape.

Given that this volume is largely a result of the SSRC conference held in Beirut, it is fitting that its case studies, which begin with the second section, should start with Haugbolle's essay on Lebanon and close with Alagha's. In many ways, Alagha's account applies Haugbolle's recommendation to "read between the lines" and illustrates the ways in which the post-conflict "reconstruction" of the national public sphere is itself riddled with conflict. At the same time, however, and despite the latent and manifest violence associated with Hizbullah's ascendancy in Lebanese national politics, the constant commitment and recommitment by various parties to achieve a modicum of national consensus is all the more remarkable given its elusiveness and fragility.

Publics, politics and participation

The authors variously draw upon Habermas, Arendt, Foucault, Gramsci, and many other recent theorists in developing their understandings of the public sphere in the Middle East and North Africa region. As emphasized above, the integrative promise of the concept of public spheres brings together diverse literatures and topics. However, this should not be at the expense of analytical clarity. The literature often shows slippages between concepts: most noticeably between "public sphere" on the one hand and "civil society" and "public space" on the other. In addition, the terms "public" and "political" and "national" and even "urban" are often conflated. The problem with such slippages is not just analytical fuzziness but also that some important qualities of each type of institutional form and political practice are lost when merged with one other. These chapters show that public spheres as an analytical framework helps distinguish and explore three aspects of societal forms and practices, which cross-cut the sections of the volume, namely (1) the spatial formations of the public, or spaces of publicity; (2) the formation of publics as process and emergent forms of publicity; and (3) the multiple institutionalizations of political participation.

The spatial formations of the public

Sociological approaches to the study of public spheres have emphasized the structural and institutional arrangements that emerge from, and embody, public discourses, actions and lives. This focus can be usefully complemented by a spatial theory of the public sphere that is sensitive to the nuanced construction of public spaces and the ways in which public lives and publicity are practiced in different spaces. This would help sustain attention on the everyday constructions of public spheres, highlight agency and practice as well as structure, and help retain both sociological and cultural aspects at the center of analysis. The notion of the public sphere needs to be grounded in specific contexts, times and places to highlight the social arrangements and interactions that are implicated in the construction of such spaces, to historicize the emergence and transformations of various (and competing) public spheres, and to understand the mediums through which “public discourses” are enabled and disseminated. This view, from the ground up, may help alert us in particular empirical cases to emergent publics and new spaces of contestation that would be overlooked if the analytical gaze is focused only on hegemonic forces and discourses.

The importance of linking publics, publicity and space comes to the fore in several of the chapters in this volume, which variously examine the ways in which particular spaces enable different kinds of interaction and collective action as well as ensure “visibility.” The Tehran bazaar in Keshavarzian’s chapter is a clear example of how spaces can be opened up and closed down, but Moors et al. also highlight the ways in which public spaces emerge and make visible those migrant women who are meant to be encapsulated within the domestic. The small spaces of the “cybers” in Morocco described by Maroon are incubators of a new kind of youth culture and a new way of “being” in public. In a different context, Le Ray shows how contestations over meanings of public spaces and public events come together in the struggles over defining the landmarks of a Kurdish town in Turkey.

The fact that all the chapters of the volume focus on cities or urbanizing spaces is not coincidental. A focus on the city and its intimate relation to the production of public spheres is particularly relevant to the

Middle East and North Africa region with its long and rich urban history. The importance of spaces that bring together strangers in discussion, opinion exchange and consensus building is at the heart of the Habermasian notion of public spheres, the sites of the coffee shop or salons providing the prime example of physical spaces, and journals providing the example of mediated spaces. The chapters describe the role of cafes, markets, plazas, churches, associations, bookstores and theaters in enabling public discussion and participation. They describe how spaces are sometimes taken over by state and other hegemonic forces and therefore controlled or neutralized, but that other spaces are able to evade that control, even if only partially or some of the time, and somewhat occlude the manifestations of power and hierarchy that threaten their autonomy. And finally, the virtual spaces of new media operate their own modes of inclusion and exclusion and construct consensus or dissent.

A spatial orientation in thinking about public spheres brings to the fore a problem in the conception of public discussion and disputation that is restricted to a certain understanding of “rational-critical discourse.” Not only does such a conception ignore the manifold ways in which public participation, political struggle and political community are formed, it also neglects what Göle calls the “ocular” dimensions of the construction of the public sphere. Communication takes place not only through speech but rather the public sphere provides “a stage for performance.”¹⁰ Just as it is important to recognize the “imagined” quality of “publics” and political communities, it is also important to examine the ways in which participation in collectivities and constructions of self vis-à-vis publics takes the form of bodily practices, visual and symbolic cues and performative interactions. The making of the self and the public are thus intertwined and interconnected processes.¹¹

Publics as process

Thinking of public spheres as “spaces of contestation” and giving the notion of “space” the full range of its interpretive power of the visual, experiential and everyday experience of built environments and social interactions highlights the processual and emergent quality of public spheres. In understanding the relationship between publics and nation

(via the state, but not only the state) a historical perspective is particularly important. Kırılı discusses the beginnings of the formation of an Ottoman public, and argues that surveillance, the notion of public opinion and the growing proximity of state and society were all signs of modernity. Campos, interestingly, talks of another Ottoman public, one that was aborted by the ascendancy of the national politics of exclusion over the Imperial politics of inclusion. And Khan describes the role of students from the colonies in creating overlapping publics that coalesced and diverged in the metropolitan capitals and worked to create an array of nations.

The “nation” is the primary locus of the public and the unit of analysis for Habermas. As Calhoun points out, however, the nation itself should be seen as a political community constructed through identity politics and “is a product, not simply a precondition, of the activity of the public sphere of civil society.”¹² The naturalized notion of nation has been exploded through a variety of interpretive devices, from conceptualizing it as “imagined” to investigating national rituals and commemorations as “invention of tradition.” Another way to simultaneously think about nation and about hierarchy, power and difference is by seeing difference as manifested through a series of publics (which may overlap, intersect or compete). This recognizes the social facticity of the ethnicities, races, classes, genders, ages, legal statuses, etc. that make up a national entity, while keeping the analytical focus on the question of how, and if, these differences produce political communities that partake in imagining and making the nation through interaction in a variety of public spheres. Examining the construction of different types of identities as “public” processes usefully questions the very notion of public/private spheres as dichotomous or bounded and brings us to the question of who and what constitutes the “public” in public spheres. This, in turn, leads us to “democratic inclusiveness” or “how the public sphere incorporates and recognizes the diversity of identities people bring to it from their manifold involvements in civil society.”¹³

Historical research demonstrates that, rather than *one* (bourgeois) public sphere or *one* form of participation in political life, there have always been “a variety of ways of accessing public life and a multiplicity of public arenas.”¹⁴ Therefore, analysis now focuses on the multiplicity of

publics, on competing publics and on counter-publics.¹⁵ In addition, Göle stresses that, “Public spheres undergo changes. We cannot speak therefore of the public sphere as a pre-established, immutable arena. The inclusion of new social groups requires a redefinition of that sphere’s frontiers and normative values. Newcomers reveal the limits of the public sphere as it is constituted and imagined by society and its legislators at a given time.”¹⁶ Göle alerts us to the fact that “the question of a social bond with the stigmatized and excluded is the essential problem of democracy,”¹⁷ and such “newcomers” may represent those very groups (publics) upon whose exclusion the nation has been constituted.

These theoretical moves lead us to see publics as historically created through turbulent, provisional and open-ended processes of struggle, change and challenge. Publics are (continually) *emergent* rather than stable units. Publics and counter-publics form through, and in relation to, certain discourses, texts, performances, structures and institutions. They may be overlapping in their constituencies and they are always partial (if only because they are gendered and distributed along various axes of power), but they tend to represent themselves as totalities and inclusive: *the* public rather than *a* public.¹⁸ Publics are created through processes of inclusion but also of exclusion (of women, of minorities, of the handicapped, of refugees, of migrant workers, of youth—the list could go on). Hegemonic publics are often unmarked (e.g., assumed to stand for the whole, most often the nation) but it is important to remember that this ‘homogeneity’ is enforced through law, sanction and social practices of exclusion.

What of counter-publics then? Could one generalize that hegemonic publics are characterized by naturalization and silencing of difference, while counter-publics, forced to recognize and struggle against dominant categories, are therefore reflexive—though they may be equally exclusionary through a “membership” that is rigorously and publicly defined and enforced?¹⁹ Göle’s interpretation of the furor in the Turkish parliament over an MP wearing a headscarf would also support such a conclusion.²⁰ She indicates that the authoritarian and secular “dominant” public (including its female members) is marked by a lack of reflexivity vis-à-vis both their past and modernity, while the Islamists stand in a disjunctive relationship to both the “modern” (whether the West or the secular Turks)

and (traditional) “Muslim” identity and are thus reflexive. Which raises the question of which “public” is therefore the more modern one?

Haugbolle’s description of the complex set of publics in Lebanon and the ways in which they are differentiated along ideological, gender and sectarian axes illustrates the difficulties of treating certain publics as hegemonic and national and others as counter-hegemonic and sub-altern. The fluidity and open-endedness in the narratives about the self and the collective in the case of conflict and post-conflict situations marks publics as fragile and contested but also capable of extreme violence. Le Ray’s description of post-conflict reconstruction marks both Turkish and Kurdish publics as contested and the public sphere as transient and changeable, at times manifested only through fleeting encounters in buses and checkpoints. Amir-Ebrahimi’s discussion of the “Weblogistan” in Iran also highlights the changeable and fluid quality of the Iranian public sphere as well as the intangible qualities of both physical and virtual public spaces. Complicating the issue are the ways in which discourses from within and outside societies and region often collude to dichotomize forms of discourses and actions. In addition to the emergent, fluid and changing realities of public spheres within societies, the role of transnational actors, as in diaspora groups, migrant communities and international intervention, also are in play in constructing the nation and its publics.

Political participation and its institutions

Another way of posing the relationship between the nation and its publics is to examine the ways in which public spheres produce citizenship. Investigating the sociology of emergent publics is important in order to focus upon the construction of subjectivities, the agency of the people constituting these publics and the nature and quality of their participation in public life. If the issue at the heart of the matter is to examine public participation that produces, as well as enables the practice of, citizenship and the construction of imagined political communities, then such participation can take a multiplicity of forms.

As Nancy Fraser points out, one of the promises of the notion of the public sphere is its importance for critical social theory as well as for democratic political practice through its identification of an “institutionalized

arena of discursive interaction [that] is conceptually distinct from the state [and] is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state.”²¹ In some writings on processes of democratization, the terms civil society and public spheres tend to be used interchangeably due to the many overlaps in the political spaces that they both open up for investigation. In an essay addressing this issue, Craig Calhoun points out that Habermas’s phrase, “the public sphere of civil society” clarifies the close relationship but also the distinctness of the two domains and processes.²² Just as not every type of association or political community can be considered an instance of civil society, similarly the term the public sphere should refer only to certain kinds of discourses and political participation. Calhoun elaborates that “the importance of the concept of public sphere is largely to go beyond general appeals to the nature of civil society in attempts to explain the social foundations of democracy and to introduce a discussion of the specific organization within civil society of social and cultural bases for the development of an effective rational-critical discourse aimed at the resolution of political disputes.”²³ In other words, adding the concept of public sphere to that of civil society helps refine the latter concept by narrowing down the types of associations for which it can be used, while at the same time broadening the terrain of political action and practice considered and adding the discursive and processual elements without which the idea of civil society would remain a static, structural concept.

Calhoun critiques the slippage between civil society and the public sphere through a review of the literature on “transitions to democracy” in Eastern Europe and in China. In many countries of the “second” and “third” worlds, the 1990s witnessed a burgeoning of civil society associations, propelled both by domestic dynamics and the search for alternatives outside ossified political structures, and (very importantly) by external impetus and funding from international organizations and bilateral aid programs. While the growth of civil society may have achieved important domestic aims as well as created important linkages to transnational activism and advocacy groups, it is important to evaluate its success in terms of long term changes. The impact of civil society, however lively, on formal democratic processes may be extremely limited (as in Egypt for example) and it also raises contentious and difficult questions regarding the

proper balance between state building and civil society/nation building (in Palestine for example). Examining the public spheres created by these associations and activities gives us a further dimension by which to judge relative success: is the growth of civil society accompanied by the development of spheres of participation and discussion that deepen the sense of citizenship, accountability and rights and consequently has positive implications for the development of political communities and social mobilization?

The concept of public spheres thus promises to elucidate the diversity of civil society, of resistance practices and democratization processes. Much of the writings on democratization and civil society (especially on the Middle East and North Africa region) have been ahistorical as well as technicist and prescriptive. As mentioned, civil society research often focuses narrowly on certain forms of association and types of mobilization and action, thus ignoring social arenas where dynamic change and innovation may be taking place, as well as long-standing historical forms of association and mobilization that do not fit the definition of civil society. The notion of public spheres promises a more synthetic and inclusive analysis that could bring in realms of social life that the concept of civil society tends to exclude.²⁴

This is amply illustrated by the chapters of Davis on Iraq and Alagha on Lebanon, which take on questions of civil society and political movements. Both are concerned with the issue of sectarianism and mobilization through and across ethno-religious lines. They show the ways in which political participation, and its goals and purposes, change over time, even when such identities remain salient and even become further essentialized. Hadj-Moussa also is primarily concerned with collective action and the ways in which identities are shaped and reshaped in relation, and in resistance, to the state as well as to powerful social movements. Her analysis supports Saba Mahmood's argument that "the public sphere is also a space for the creation of particular kinds of subjects and for the cultivation of those capacities and orientations that enable participation within this sphere ... while much of this literature focuses on the technologies of discipline through which public subjects come to be produced, relatively little attention has been paid to the contrasting conceptions of social authority that undergird such disciplinary practices in specific cultural and historical locations."²⁵

Several chapters in this volume join a growing literature that seeks to incorporate the realm of religion into current research on the public sphere. Here research on societies of the Middle East and North Africa helps in the development of a transcultural notion of the public sphere that can be applied to the transformation and conscious reform of religious traditions. The emergence of socio-religious movements are important to examine, especially in the ways that they challenge and/or intersect with nation-state projects on identity, justice, welfare²⁶ and secular modernist notions of body, self and gender.²⁷ Other work on the region explores the ways in which rationality and debate may be constructed and oppositional discourses maintained in Muslim societies.²⁸ These works show that narrow notions of the public sphere cannot capture the ways in which “Public Islam” operates.²⁹ This is one arena in which the literature from the Middle East and North Africa region has a great deal to contribute.

Conclusion: Beyond specificity

As discussed above, this volume joins a growing literature that explores public spheres in non-western, non-European spaces. It offers interesting signposts as to how histories of the public can be rewritten in the Middle East and North Africa region. Comparative-historical work on the public sphere is the ‘missing chapter’ in historical social science³⁰ and an approach strongly endorsed by Traboulsi in this volume. Gambetti’s chapter offers ways of bringing together politics and culture—power and culture—in the study of the public sphere as advocated by Eisenstadt.³¹ And, as LeVine and Salvatore point out, the centrality of liberal values in the construction of public spheres can be questioned through looking at socio-religious movements and the place of religion in defining the public good.

In many ways, the chapters of the volume celebrate the specificity of historical and contemporary processes of “public-making” in different parts of the Middle East and North Africa region. However, this volume is also an experiment in how particularities can be subjected to critical theoretical and comparative perspectives that reveal the temporal and spatial dimensions of all theory-making. It begins to “talk back” to a “Western”

experience that provides the basis of much that is represented as theoretical and even universal. If this introduction began with acknowledging the violence and “incivility” of much of contemporary life in the Middle East, critics point out that also within the United States more and more “incivility, rancor and meanness . . . characterize public talk.”³² It may be wise to consider whether the fleeting and temporary quality of public spheres, as described in many of these chapters, is particular to the Middle East, or to parts of the world outside the institutionalized liberal-democratic order. It might be that fragility is rather an essential quality of the public sphere itself—and that public civility needs to be continually and vigilantly constructed, buttressed and protected.

Notes

1. Asef Bayat, "The 'Street' and the Politics of Dissent in the Arab World," *Middle East Report* 226 (Spring 2003): 10–17.
2. For critiques see the classic article by Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City—Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 2 (May 1987): 155–176; and Miriam Hoexter et al., eds., *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), especially the essay by Haim Gerber, "The Public Sphere and Civil Society in the Ottoman Empire," 65–82.
3. Andreas Koller, "Public Sphere," in *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*, edited by Helmut Anheier, Regina List and Stefan Toepler (New York: Springer, 2009).
4. Miriam Hoexter, "The Waqf and the Public Sphere," in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, 119.
5. See, for example, Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); John L. Esposito and Francois Burgat, *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and Europe* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Armando Salvatore, ed., *Muslim Traditions and Modern Techniques of Power*, Yearbook of the Sociology of Islam, Vol. 3 (Münster: LIT, 2001); Armando Salvatore and Dale Eickelman, eds., *Public Islam and the Common Good*, Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia Series (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine, eds., *Religion, Social Practice, and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies*, Culture and Religion in International Relations Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); *Social Research* 70, no. 3, Special Issue on Islam: The Public and Private Spheres (Fall 2003). The volume by Hoexter et al. deserves special mention for its broad historical view of Islamic empires from the ninth to the twentieth century and for its institutional focus in understanding "Islam as a regulator of the social order," *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, 10.
6. Thus, the SSRC Beirut Conference included four roundtables, in addition to the panel presentations. These focused on "Gendering the Public

- Sphere,” “Rethinking Publics and Politics,” “New Media and New Publics” and “Democratic Transitions and Public Islam.” For summaries and a synthesis, see Seteney Shami et al., “Reconceptualizing Public Spheres in the Middle East and North Africa,” *Items and Issues* 5, no. 4 (2006): 27–40.
7. Agnes Ku, “Boundary Politics in the Public Sphere—Openness, Secrecy and Leak,” *Sociological Theory* 16, no. 2 (1998): 172–192, 172.
 8. Jon Anderson, “New Media, New Publics: Reconfiguring the Public Sphere of Islam,” *Social Research* 70, no. 3, Special Issue on Islam: The Public and Private Spheres (Fall 2003): 887–906.
 9. See, for example, AFP (Agence France-Presse), “Iran Creates Internet Crime Unit,” http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iIhi0Jg_yCUOBbB3K8234uOahjQ (accessed 24 February 2010).
 10. Nilüfer Göle, “Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 173–190, 177.
 11. See also Saba Mahmood, “Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt,” *Social Research* 70, no. 3, Special Issue on Islam: The Public and Private Spheres (Fall 2003): 837–866.
 12. Craig Calhoun, “Civil Society and the Public Sphere,” *Public Culture* 5 (1993): 267–280, 280.
 13. *Ibid.*, 279.
 14. Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1992), 109–142, 116.
 15. *Ibid.*; Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).
 16. Nilüfer Göle, “The Voluntary Adoption of Islamic Stigma Symbols,” *Social Research* 70, No. 3, Special Issue on Islam: The Public and Private Spheres (Fall 2003): 824–825.
 17. Nilüfer Göle, “The Gendered Nature of the Public Sphere,” *Public Culture* 10 (1997): 61–81.
 18. Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere”; Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*.
 19. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*.
 20. Nilüfer Göle, “Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries.”
 21. Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 110–111.
 22. Craig Calhoun, “Civil Society and the Public Sphere,” 273.
 23. *Ibid.*, 269.

24. The discussions at the Beirut conference confirmed this, sometimes in unexpected ways. It was interesting to note, for example, the generally positive attitude to the term itself. Several of the participants stated that the term "civil society" suffered from having been "tainted" due to its close association with various kinds of political and development projects popularly seen as imposed by powerful international actors. "Public spheres" on the other hand had the benefit of freshness and even unfamiliarity.
25. Saba Mahmood, "Ethical Formation and Politics," 839.
26. Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*; Armando Salvatore, "The Islamic Reform Project in the Emerging Public Sphere: The (Meta)normative Redefinition of shari'a," in *Between Europe and Islam: Shaping Modernity in a Transcultural Space*, edited by Almut Höfert and Armando Salvatore (Brussels, Berlin and Oxford: Presses Interuniversitaires Europeennes-Peter Lang, 2000); 'Amr Hamzawy, "Mulahazhat awwaliyya hawla al-istinara wa l'hadatha wa ma ba'da l'hadatha" [Notes on Enlightenment, Modernity and Postmodernity], in *Ishkaliyyat at-tahayyuz* [The Problematic of Subjectivism], edited by 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Masiri (Cairo International Institute for Islamic Thought, 1995), 745–752.
27. Nilüfer Göle, "The Gendered Nature of the Public Sphere" and "Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries"; Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
28. Talal Asad, "The Limits of Religious Criticism in the Middle East, Notes on Islamic Public Argument," in *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Mehdi Abedi and Michael Fisher, "Thinking a Public Sphere in Arabic and Persian," *Public Culture* 6 (1993): 219–230.
29. Armando Salvatore, <http://www.isim.nl/newsletter/8/salvatore.htm>.
30. Andreas Koller, "The Public Sphere and Comparative-Historical Research: An Introduction," *Social Science History* 34, no. 3, Special Issue on The Public Sphere and Comparative Historical Research (forthcoming).
31. Shmuel Eisenstadt, "Concluding Remarks: Public Sphere, Civil Society and Political Dynamics in Islamic Societies," in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, 139–161.
32. Harry C. Boyte, "Habermas and the Public Sphere: Citizenship as Public Work," *Contention* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 181–202.

Philosophical Frames

Public Spheres and Urban Space: A Critical Comparative Approach

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My guiding assumption is that theories, concepts and notions that arise in one national or regional situation are not necessarily applicable in another.¹ Although many ideals and values have become universal, irrespective of their initial birthplace, not every theory or concept or idea produced in one theoretical field—the West in this case under study—is necessarily endowed with the vocation of universal application without prior testing or critical verification. In fact, the notion of the public sphere is one that seems to be very much identified with the experience of Europe and North America to claim a priori universal value and application.

To dispel any misunderstanding, I hasten to distance myself from two of the implications usually associated with such a statement. First, the method implied by this assumption, far from adopting any form of national or cultural essentialism, leads us primarily to engage in a historical critical and comparative approach to the question of the public sphere. Second, the mere fact that ideas, concepts and notions are conceived and propagated by international institutions and declared “global” does not, by itself, render them any more universal. Likewise, the claim to “globality” does not bestow on such notions and concepts any semblance of innocence.

After a number of preliminary remarks inspired by the above-mentioned assumption, I will establish a comparison between the situations that gave rise to public spheres in Europe and North America and the Arab

world. Then I will address the problematic role of the public sphere in the democratization process. Habermas has often repeated that the idea of the public sphere is motivating, not simply instrumental. He is here emphasizing the public sphere's independent influence on action, political action in particular. However, the aim in both cases remains the same. It is the contribution of public spheres to the democratic process, whether as a factor in the transition to democracy, in countries with nondemocratic regimes or as a corrective agent of the distortions and the corruption of democratic institutions and practices in the advanced countries of the West.

Preliminary remarks

The prevailing uncritical acceptance of much of the globalized intellectual production in the countries of the South during the post-Cold War era raises a number of critical and methodological questions and comments. The ever-shifting modes of approach to the questions of the region have generated a *tabula rasa* approach to the production of social knowledge. Thus intellectual production changes course with every “intellectual fashion” globally imposed, frequently blocking any attempt to critically assess the previous “fashion,” which is generally castigated as obsolete or unfit for coping with new international developments or the new world order. The result is invariably repeated beginnings with little or no accumulation of knowledge as elements of social reality are constantly redefined, redesigned and sometimes simply renamed.

This tendency can be traced in practically all fields of intellectual production. A good illustration of this are the Human Development Reports initiated by the UN on the region. “Human development” now replaces “development” as the idea of development itself is displaced from the economic realm (now left to the deregulated markets and referred to at best by the more modest term of “growth”) to cover the new trinity of freedom, knowledge and gender. That displacement, rather than incorporating the novelty into the body of real problems of the region or assimilating it in its theoretical problematic, more often than not simply occults them. Studies in poverty replace studies on income distribution—the latter at best restricted to the global level (the rich billion and the rest)—as

poverty begins to resemble a natural catastrophe or a contagious disease. Consequently, we study poverty without studying wealth. We define the “poor” but not the “rich.” As for the middle classes, they are either pictured as being reduced in size and effectiveness and consequently dying out or are assigned the role of repositories of the democratic mission. In both cases, very little in terms of sociopolitical effort is invested in studying their political behavior, assuming that they might tend toward a homogeneous and unidirectional political behavior. As for the solution to the problem of poverty, it is no less an ambitious UN project to eradicate poverty on the world scale with fixed dates to complete the “job.” The outcome is that the final eradication of poverty is annually deferred as the campaign’s meager results are revealed.

Human rights and civil society occupy the political stage as the same treatment mentioned above is reserved for the state/civil society dichotomy. Rather than being a welcome complement and a corrective to the rich and complex body of knowledge on state/society relations developed by the social sciences over long decades, the famous “couplet” is turning out to be a factor of theoretical impoverishment due to its imposition as a simplistic and reductionist formula over all the theoretical fields in question.

I shall limit myself to two observations on this matter.

The first has to do with the intellectual production on democratization in the Arab world. This has been increasingly dominated by the explanations, and even theorization, of an absence—the absence of democracy—rather than the most elementary and pressing task of explaining, analyzing and diagnosing the presence of the actually existing authoritarian and despotic regimes. On the other hand, “filling” that absence tends to increasingly take the form of simple modeling or wish fulfillment both focused on the Western democratic model. Not that there is anything wrong with wishing for that model, though it is not very clear to what extent its advocates have assimilated it. The problem resides rather in the fact that very little attention and even less intellectual effort have been devoted to the diagnosis of authoritarianism and to the tracing of the ways and means of the transition from authoritarian and despotic regimes to democracy, despite the iconographic importance given to “democratization.” Such intellectual effort needs to produce knowledge on

the socioeconomic requirements of democracy (compared to the inflation of opinions on a “cultural” basis), on the costs of that transition (in terms of priorities, sacrifices, etc.) and on the time span involved (in terms of the stages of that transition, the accumulation of its necessary and sufficient conditions and measures, etc.).

The second observation concerns the dominant state/society relationship. Here we suffer a double confusion. One is the confusion between the state—i.e., the institutional forms of political society—on the one hand, and the transient political regime/system in place in a specific historical moment on the other. The second confusion is the one between society and civil society, i.e., between the general forms of human social organization on a specific territory, including its state, and the sum total of autonomous collectivities and forms of voluntary associations within society that have in common their autonomy vis-à-vis the state.

Is a weak state always a guarantee of a strong civil society? What effect does a weak state have on the cohesion and integration of society in general; any society, that is? Can we maintain the claim that Western democracies are distinguished by weak states? If we take the extreme example of liberalism in politics and economics, can we safely say that the United States of America is a weak state/government? Conversely, are all dictatorships characterized by “strong” states; and what does that precisely mean? Finally, does the weakening of the state always lead to an expansion of the public sphere and of civil society and consequently to the progress toward democracy?

Such questions, and other similar ones, need to be seriously addressed in the intellectual production concerning democratization in the countries of the “South.” This is not the place to deal with this matter in detail. Nevertheless, we might content ourselves with noting that the state plays, in many countries of the South as it had played in the historical experience of the countries of the North, an important—at times primordial—role in the cohesion and integration of society as a whole. In that case, the weakening of the state, or its breakup, may be tantamount to the breakup of society itself rather than the construction of a strong civil society or the progress toward democracy.

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq is a tragic illustration of that problem. During that war, the semiplanned, semispontaneous (read: anarchic)

breakup of the Iraqi state—which was not by any means a necessary requirement for the overthrow of the Ba’th regime—merits ample and deep reflection insofar as it has been and still is a cause of deep concern. By the “sempianned breakup of the Iraqi state” we refer to the process that had for its code name “nation building” rather than “regime change.” It comprised the refusal by the U.S.-led occupation forces to defend any government institution save the Ministries of Oil and of the Interior in addition to the postoccupation decisions to disband the whole of the Iraqi army, the administration and the Ba’th Party. “State destruction” had turned out to be the precondition, as it were, of “nation building.”

If we wish to evade the question of intentions, the least that can be said about that process is that it had two quite disastrous consequences. First, on the level of the democratization process: Let us assume, for the sake of argumentation, that the democratization process in Iraq was a serious concern of the U.S.-led coalition. Then we can safely say that that democratization process has been relegated to a minor position as the issue of security and the rebuilding of the Iraqi state takes priority over everything else. Second, the Iraqi case illustrates a situation in which the state—which is not synonymous at all with Saddam Hussein’s Ba’thi regime—was a vital component of the unity of the multiethnic and multi-sectarian Iraqi society. We cannot merely attribute the increasingly rapid division of Iraq and the Iraqis along ethnic and sectarian lines exclusively to Saddam Hussein’s policies. The objective factor of the destruction of the Iraqi state—as a state—has a lot to do with the above-mentioned situation. Of course, the relationship here can be said to be dialectical. One can even venture to propose that the present Iraqi crisis can be partially looked at as the result of a weakened state that is becoming increasingly incapable of achieving the minimum required degree of unity and integration of its society at a time when that society is incapable of generating the forces required to organically produce a new state.

On the role of the public sphere in the transition to democracy in the European experience

Is the public sphere a cause of the democratic transformation of European societies or a product of it; or is it both? Habermas seems to be quite ambivalent in his answers to the question. To begin with, he attributes the idea of the public sphere historically to the Europe of the eighteenth century where “bourgeois” public spheres arose as counterweights to the absolutist state and were independent of it, the second characteristic being the precondition for the first function. It is precisely this historical reference that raises a number of questions concerning the conditions and forces that operated in the transition from absolutism to democracy.

I will limit myself to raising only two questions.

First, are the proposals for recreating a civil society in countries outside Europe and North America more than attempts to re-create one of the historical processes that Europe already passed through, that of the development and consolidation of industrial capitalism? In answer to this question, Partha Chatterjee says that “the central assumption of this proposal is that it is only the concepts of European social philosophy that contain within them the possibility of universalization . . . the *provincialism* of the European experience [is] taken as the *universal* history of progress.”² In all fairness, Habermas never pretended that his own analysis of advanced capitalism and his notions of civil society and public sphere contained any lessons for the rest of the world. He readily agreed that his is a “eurocentrically limited view.”³ This admission constitutes additional proof—not that there is nothing to learn from that experience, but that what is required is a critical historical approach that draws inspiration and lessons from it.

Second, were the “bourgeois” public spheres—that undoubtedly played the role of counterweights to the despotic state—a necessary and sufficient condition in the transition of Britain and later of other European countries to democracy? In answering this question, I wish to argue that Habermas seems to underestimate the role of a decisive factor in the democratization of European societies: the nonbourgeois and anti-bourgeois forces in effecting radical revolutionary changes in their societies which culminated in the final transition to democratic systems. This Habermasian *bévue* can be attributed to a set of different but converging and interrelated factors.

Habermas views public spheres primarily as arenas of peaceful rational-critical debate, in which are emphasized language, discourse, deliberations, opinion formation and education, all contributing to his famous concept of “discursive interaction.” Perhaps the most succinct characterization of Habermas’s public sphere is contained in Nancy Fraser’s definition: “a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk.”⁴ But let us quote Habermas himself:

The public sphere is a social phenomenon just as elementary as action, actor, association, or collectivity, but it eludes the conventional concepts of “social order.” The public sphere cannot be conceived as an institution and certainly not as an organization. It is not even a framework of norms with differentiated competences and roles, membership regulations, and so on. Just as little does it represent a system; although it permits one to draw internal boundaries, outwardly it is characterized by open, permeable, and shifting horizons. The public sphere can best be described as a network for communication, information, and points of view (i.e., opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes); the streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions... *the public sphere is reproduced through communicative action, for which mastery of a natural language suffices...*⁵

Habermas further insists on the bourgeois nature of the public sphere, implying that it is permanently threatened by the possibility of the nonbourgeois social strata (namely, the subaltern classes) to gain access to it. That initiates the debate about the dialectics of inclusion/exclusion in Habermas’s conception of democracy: namely, his exclusion of class and gender, as many critics have reproached him. Habermas explicitly warns against “populist movements” which represent “the frozen traditions of a lifeworld endangered by capitalist modernization,” movements that he considers as basically “antidemocratic.”⁶ In fact, his main contention here is that such intrusions would blur the necessary distinction of state/civil society.

Habermas rejects radical change in contemporary society and in political power, at least in Europe and the United States, and his warnings against “social revolutions” increased after the collapse of the Soviet experience. The classical Marxist project of workers’ power is abandoned by him because the working class had failed in making good the promise of liberalism. It revealed itself incapable of bringing capitalist social and political institutions into conformity with such professed “bourgeois” ideals as freedom, and democracy. He even goes so far as to say that capitalism (i.e., the capitalist market and the capitalist state) cannot be superseded.⁷ The surprising thing about Habermas’s thesis here is his assumption that equality was a “bourgeois” ideal. The confusion no doubt arises from the assumption that the French Revolution was itself a “bourgeois” revolution.

The point to be made here is that the decisive transition in Europe to democracy was not only a function of the political influence of the public sphere, but the product of radical violent political and social revolutions in which the popular masses played a major role. The end result was finally a radical change not only in the form of the state but in its very nature and function. The democratization process was thus a historical process that combined radical revolutions (four in the case of France, in 1789, 1830, 1848 and 1870) and protracted periods of cumulative change to finally produce the structural transition from absolutism to democracy.

In fact, each of the two major European revolutions, the English and the French, unleashed not one but two revolutionary processes: a revolution for liberty and a revolution for equality. Each represented a different alliance of forces. In the English experience, the radical elements were represented by such movements as the Familists who called for the abolition of private property. The Levellers opposed both feudalism and capitalism and advocated equality of all Englishmen and the representative franchise to all males without property requirements. The end result in both revolutions was a forced compromise in which the idea of equality was restricted to the legal and political fields whereas inequality remained the norm in the socioeconomic field. It is of course known that that compromise—which in the French experience produced the famous trinity of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*—was imposed on the representatives of the subaltern classes by the violence of the state and its legislation.

Public spheres in historical perspective: An arrested development

I would like to advance here the argument that in two historical moments the emergence of the public sphere in the Arab world, spurred by the development of peripheral capitalism, was arrested mainly by the exacerbation of the colonial, national and identitarian questions.

The Ottoman Tanzimat of 1839 and 1856 were simultaneously an ambitious program of centralization, secularization, modernization and political reform. They were spurred by a contradictory drive: first, to bow to European pressures to reform the structures of the Empire; second, to adopt some European values and state institutions in the hopes of creating the conditions for viable competition with the growing economic and military power of the European states.

There seems to be little doubt among historians that the Ottoman Tanzimat were one of the last attempts to create an Ottoman individual whose allegiance is to the state rather than to his community and *millet* or even to the Sultan. The impact on the Arab regions of the Empire was quickly noticeable as that region had already known Mohammad 'Ali's modernist and reformist movement which was itself thwarted by the Empire and its British allies.

The post-Tanzimat period witnessed the flowering of different aspects of an emerging public sphere all over the Arab regions of the Ottoman Empire. Though this is not the place to discuss and analyze that multifaceted movement in detail, it is necessary to highlight some of its most salient aspects.

The impressive modern urban development was perhaps the most noticeable aspect of the emerging public sphere. Not only were urban spaces opening up, in the form of public squares, gardens, wider roads, promenades, etc., but cities were witnessing the same phenomena that Europe had known in the eighteenth century: a proliferation of cafés, associations, theaters, scientific, literary and learned societies, salons, etc. In addition, independent and autonomous secret societies were actively engaged in organizing the youth, calling for constitutionalism, decentralization or simply Syrian or Arab independence.

The countryside was not on the margin of those developments. In the 1860s and 1870s, a cycle of rural revolts by commoners and peasants swept

over Algeria, Tunisia, Palestine, Northern Syria and Mount Lebanon. The rebels had in common a resistance to exorbitant taxation and the demand for land and for political and judicial equality. The period 1820–1860 in Mount Lebanon witnessed three major commoners' revolts in 1820, 1840 and 1858 which established the tradition of elected village representatives, the *wakils*, commissioned to lead their fellow villagers as long as they remain "faithful to their own conscience and to the interests of the villagers and to those of the general good."⁸ In the Kisrawan revolt of 1858–1861, which combined an anti-tax resistance and a peasant *jacquerie*, the region was ruled for some three years by a council of one hundred elected *wakils* in the name of "the power of the republican government" [*bi-quwwāt al-ḥukūma al-jumhūriyya*]. Their leader Tanius Shahin often referred to the Ottoman reform edicts of 1839 and 1856 to demand "full equality and complete freedom" [*taswiyya āmma wa-hurriyya kāmila*].⁹

The renaissance of Arab culture, the *nahḍah* in its two main centers Cairo and Beirut, relied on a rapidly developing cultural infrastructure of expanded education networks, private and public schools, increased literacy and mixed education, progress in the printing press, and the development of "print capitalism," represented by an impressive number of newspapers and magazines. Ahmad Faris al-Chiyyaq's *al-Jawā'ib*, published in Istanbul, was both semiofficial yet zealously independent of the Ottoman authorities (and had its publication suspended by official order more than once) and was read all over the empire from Algeria to Yemen. Common to all those developments was the increased emergence of the "individual" as opposed to the "subject" and the member of the community. Both the Islamic reform of Afghani and 'Abdu and the secular Lebanese intellectuals were proposing rationalism, education and individual freedom in both religious and secular affairs. In 1861, for example, Butrus al-Bustani freely translates Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as if to imagine the birth of the individual in the Ottoman Empire. His colleague Ahmad Faris al-Chiyyaq would emphasize the ideal of equality, including social equality, the work ethic, the liberation of women and the respect for time.

However, as the Ottoman Tanzimat declared political and judicial equality between the Empire's subjects and imposed measures to carry it out, launching a growing process of secularization of the state, European powers reverted to the policy of "protecting the religious and ethnic

minorities” in the Ottoman Empire. That policy would constitute the basis for the legitimization of the post-WWI mandates of Britain and France over the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

The justification by France of its colonial “rights” over natural Syria took the form of the defense of the Christians, Shi’a, Druzes and Alawis. On the other hand, the famous Balfour declaration tells everything concerning the manipulation of the question of minorities to serve colonial interests. The promise of a national home for the Jews in Palestine not only recognized the national character of the Jews all over the world and denied it to the Arab people of Palestine—negatively defined as “the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”—but the Palestinians themselves were viewed as “communities” and their defined rights as “civil and religious” but not political.

The same logic presided over the partition of the Middle East after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Sunni minority rule was imposed on Iraq where ethnic Kurds were deprived of their rights to self rule, the Bedouins constituted the basis of the new Emirate of Transjordan (later to rule over a Palestinian majority), and Syria was partitioned into five states along sectarian lines: two states for the Sunnis (in Aleppo and Damascus), a Christian state in Greater Lebanon, and one Alawite and one Druze autonomous region.

I would like to argue that the transformation of clans, ethnic groups and religious communities into political organizations had a direct bearing on the development of the public sphere. Not only did those political entities sanction subnational forms of identification and solidarity as communal repositories of rights and duties, but they also established patronage networks encouraging the growth and development of notables who entertained an ambiguous relationship between state and society, in which the communities were neither fully autonomous nor completely representative of their members; more importantly, individuals were constantly reduced to a dominated status.

The second point concerns the relationship between nationalism and democracy in the comparative experiences of Europe and the Arab world. Nationalism and democracy were complementary in the European case, as the dissolution of the absolutist state opened the way for the emergence of the individuals whose loyalties to the nation were progressively

gained—embodied by the nation-state—away from the family, region, religion, and ethnic community. In the second case, the colonial experience created a situation in which a break occurred between the anti-colonial movement for independence and unity on the one hand and the democratic demand on the other.

The two realms were not that antagonistic under the Mandates and the first independence regimes characterized by the parliamentary regimes of the merchant-landowner notables. However, the gap widened in the post-1948 period as a reaction to the creation of the state of Israel and with the rise of new nationalist movements and the establishment of the “radical populist” regimes.

During that period, colonialism and the resistance to it played a major role in blocking the public sphere as an agent of democratization. The Palestinian *nakba* of 1948 and the intensification of the Arab–Israeli conflict served to justify the imposition of authoritarian military regimes. However, public opinion reflected considerable confusion, and reproduced the situation as a conflict between rejecting Western colonialism on the one hand and rejecting democracy and modernity as Western products on the other. The present debate on Iraq’s occupation is a stark example of the resilience of this schism, which produces its own dichotomies. On the one hand, there are those who want to mythically resolve the duality by simply wishing away “nationalism” as a defunct ideology in the era of globalization—while the very factors that reproduce it even in its most extreme forms are increasing. On the other, you will find those who want to wish away democratization. This is done for a multiplicity of justifications: in the name of the primacy of the national question or because democracy is considered a Western ploy (a means of domination), at best a Western product which is either foreign to the national and religious heritage of Arabs and Muslims or initially present in that heritage in the form of the *al-shūrā*.

City and countryside

The notions of civil society, the Enlightenment and public spheres have been commonly associated with the urban setting. I wish to argue here

for the relativity of this assumption. Let us begin with the European experience. Can we safely say that the role of the countryside in the democratic transformations in Europe can be reduced to a reactionary role, in this case meaning an antidemocratic one? Is the French *Vendée* the only model for the intervention of the countryside in the democratization process in European societies? The answer seems to be no. Not only because of the Jacobin feat of linking the peasant masses to the Revolution by incorporating the land question in the revolutionary program but also because of the fact that the ultimate sociological foundation of the French Republic was the independent peasant and farmer.¹⁰ Revisionist historians of the French Revolution have come to question many aspects of the traditional, mainly Marxist interpretation of the revolutionary process. François Furet, for instance, focuses on the role of clubs and middle class professionals in the revolutionary process and maintains that revolutionary power was in fact exercised by a small militant oligarchy; yet, he still maintains that the French Revolution was a “popular revolution.”¹¹

Similarly, rural social groups played a major role in the English experience. As expressed above, the Familists called for the abolition to private property; and the Levellers, who opposed both feudalism and capitalism, advocated equality of all Englishmen and the representative franchise to all males without property requirements and not the merchants of the city.

Similarly, but on a much more limited scale, in the history of the elective systems in the Arab world, the role of the countryside cannot be overlooked. The Kisrawan commoners’ revolt (1858–1861), discussed above, succeeded in imposing the first electoral system on the *mutaṣarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon (1861–1915), the first practice of electoralism in the Ottoman Empire.

On another but intimately related register, can we safely say that “civility” is an urban exclusivity? Gramsci distinguishes between industrial cities and nonindustrial cities. Only the first are endowed with the quality of being more advanced than the countryside whereas in the second, the urban nuclei are drowned in a sea of nonurban inhabitants.¹² Despite the fact that Gramsci deals with the issue in terms of progressive/reactionary, this couplet can easily be subsumed into the pair democratic/anti-democratic. Fredric Jameson puts the matter more bluntly when he says: “Perhaps the most momentous specification of this opposition between

the country and the city . . . is that between planning and organic growth.” Jameson is referring here to the debates over the French Revolution in which for the first time in history was asserted “the primacy of the human will over social institutions and the power of human beings . . . to reshape and fashion society according to a plan, an abstract idea or ideal.”¹³

That distinction leads to the question about the role of merchant cities, rentier cities, administrative cities and the like in the production of a public sphere. The question can be addressed from another angle: are all public *spaces* necessarily public *spheres* and necessarily contributive to the democratic process?¹⁴

Insofar as a public sphere is an area of inclusion, it is simultaneously an area of exclusion. In societies in which tribes, regions, religious sects, and ethnic groups are organized as political institutions and representative bodies, can we safely assume that a public space restricted to part of a community—or hypothetically to the whole community—constitutes a component of the public sphere and is conducive to democratization? Is the constitution of an urban space for Hizbullah in the southern suburb of Beirut a closed space (because restricted to one sect to the exclusion of other sects) or is it a public sphere because it brings together members of otherwise closed and exclusive families, clans, regions, and others?

Do family associations, politicized religious sects and organized ethnic groups belong to civil society or are they its opposite? In the civil society discourse in Lebanon the question was circumscribed by the creation of two “societies,” as it were: first, communal society [*al-mujtama’ al-ahli*] to cover the above-mentioned, and second, civil society [*al-mujtama’ al-madani*] which contains the voluntary associations such as trade unions, political parties, NGOs and the like. The same problem could be applied to Jordan, the Gulf states, Yemen, etc. But that distinction remains incomplete as it requires further research and definition concerning the influence of the former on the latter (in the form of traditional loyalty or voluntary associations) and the degree of relative independence of civil society proper vis-à-vis the state. Research in Egypt has shown that the majority of existing NGOs were either created by the state or dependent on it. In short, the countryside is capable of unleashing social forces that contribute to democratization insofar as the city may contain social forces that constitute obstacles to it.

The transition to democratic society

Many critics have made the point that Habermas treats the question of public spheres as if the capitalist market and the capitalist state were immutable and final. The best that can be achieved is counteracting their worst effects on democracy—the maldistribution of income and of government services on the one hand and the ills of bureaucracy on the other. For that purpose, Habermas has recommended three models. First, the siege model in which the state is besieged by the public sphere in order to counterbalance the power of money and bureaucracy. This is the more modest and passive model. Second, the sluice model, in which public opinion influences decision-making through the inner periphery of power—universities, charitable organizations, foundations, etc.—and thus acts on the administrative center.¹⁵ Third, and in the worst of cases, Habermas admits civil disobedience as the ultimate recourse for the opposition by popular forces.

In the interest of expediency, we can disregard the debate on the “End of History” and on the fate of capitalism and the market. But we should at least mention that many a critic of the notions of civil society and the public sphere has pointed to the systemic incompatibility between capitalism and democracy. What is meant, of course, is that the former keeps the latter incomplete and partial. Michael Hardt, following Deleuze, anticipates the “Withering of Civil Society” as late capitalism moves from the disciplinary mode to the control mode in which power relations now fill all social space.¹⁶ Slavoj Žižek’s critique elaborates on a more structural causality: the discrepancy and noncontemporaneity, he maintains, are to be seen as structural necessities of capitalism. The critique is leveled against Habermas’s notion of “modernity as an unfinished revolution,” based on precisely the same assumption of an existing contradiction between capitalism and democracy. The task of accomplishing that revolution—which is simultaneously that of democracy—is to bring its two facets together: instrumental reason (i.e., the scientific-technological manipulation and domination of nature brought about by capitalism) on the one hand, and intersubjective communication free of constraints on the other. Žižek maintains that bringing the project of modernity to completion by actualizing the potential of the second facet, as Habermas

proposes, is an impossible mission because of the very nature of capitalism itself. He asks:

What if we cannot simply supplement instrumental Reason with communicational Reason, since the primacy of instrumental Reason is constitutive of modern Reason as such?¹⁷

However, the issue is still the process of democratization itself. The above-mentioned measures suggested by Habermas are designed to rectify the corruption of the public sphere—and, ultimately, to deal with the crisis of democracy—in postmodern advanced industrial societies. The big misunderstanding likely to arise here is to treat those tactics as if they were necessary and sufficient measures for democratization in the non-Western countries of the world, i.e., for the transition from authoritarian and despotic rule to democratic elective rule under the rule of law and the alternation of power.

The question of means: How to dislodge authoritarian regimes?

Is the political influence of the public sphere, as designed in the above three models, enough to dislodge authoritarian regimes in the countries of the South? To begin with, it is worth noting the correlation between the reluctant and partial democratization measures taken in a number of Arab countries and the social rebellions occurring in all these countries. The urban turmoil of January 1977 in Egypt was greatly instrumental in the political liberalization measures, including the recognition of political “forums.” The 1988 rebellion of youth (the “*hitistes*”) in Algerian cities was the prime factor that brought about the collapse of the FLN’s one-party rule, imposed the recognition of the media and political groups and led to the organization of free elections, that were later interrupted by the army as they gave a substantial lead to the Islamists. The liberalization measures taken by King Hassan II of Morocco in the second half of the 1990s—the drafting of a new Constitution, the acceptance of the principle of the alternation of power which finally brought the main opposition party—the Socialist Union of Popular Forces—to form a government, the release of political prisoners; all those measures were taken under the pressure of

the “bread riots” that rocked the major Moroccan cities. The same could be said of Jordan where the revolts of Salt and Ma’an had a great bearing on bringing about the liberalization measures of King Hussein in his last years. Paradoxically, those contestation movements were primarily socially motivated (not only the bread riots in Cairo and Morocco, but also the poverty and unemployment motives behind the youth rebellion in Algeria, and the regional economic and social marginalization in the Jordanian case). Yet their main achievements were in the political field. Here is a further correlation to meditate upon between the socioeconomic and the political.

Those movements come quite close to the civil disobedience that Habermas suggests as a last resort. Of course, they degenerated into more violent encounters due to the reaction of the existing regimes.

It is worthwhile to compare those social movements with the short-lived public sphere during the Damascus Spring of 2000–2001 mainly represented by a proliferation of autonomous associations and cultural clubs all over the country and the intense activity of human rights organizations animated mainly by merchants and ex-Leftist intellectuals. That movement—which unfortunately has not yet been the subject of thorough academic research—was easily repressed and quickly recuperated by the regime because it was deprived of a popular dimension.

Finally, the overthrow of the Iraqi regime is a crucial case for research into the modalities of the transition to democracy in the Arab world. The tragedy of the popular insurrections of March 1991, the climax of the opposition by large segments of the Iraqi people to the Ba’th regime over two long decades, raised the question of the relative weakness of large-scale armed popular insurrections even facing an army that had just been defeated in an external war. While this problematic does not in any way justify the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, it does raise serious questions concerning the question of the dismantling of authoritarian regimes in the Arab World. The least that can be said is that it requires the application of stronger popular power in which violence is unfortunately not to be excluded. Or, to use Habermas’s own terminology, the intervention of popular power is required in order to move the process of democratization from the “discursive” level to the “strategic” level.

Notes

1. This article first appeared in *New Political Science* 27, no. 4 (December 2005): 529–541. We extend our gratitude to the editors for kind permission to reprint this article.
2. Quoted by Michael Hardt, “The Withering of Civil Society,” in *Masses, Classes and the Public Sphere*, edited by Mike Hill and Warren Montag (London: Verso, 2002), 174, note 1. My italics.
3. Jürgen Habermas, “A Philosophico-Political Profile,” an interview by Perry Anderson and Peter Dews, *New Left Review* 151 (May–June 1985): 104.
4. Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 110.
5. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 360. My italics.
6. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 371.
7. Jürgen Habermas, “Conversations about Questions of Political Theory,” in *A Berlin Republic: Writings on Germany* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 133.
8. Iliya Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711–1845* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 213–214.
9. Yehoshua Porath, “The Peasant Revolt of 1858–1861 in Kisrawan,” *Asian and African Studies* 2 (1966): 77–157.
10. See Eugen Weber, *Peasants to Frenchmen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).
11. See Francois Furet, *Revolutionary France, 1770–1880* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
12. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 91. For an example of the recycling of traditional loyalties in urban space, see Waddah Sharara, *al-Madina al-Mawqufa* (Beirut: Dar al-Matbu‘at al-sharqiyya, 1985).
13. Fredric Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia,” *New Left Review* 25 (January/February 2004): 48.
14. See Craig Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 1–48.

15. Ted Stolze, "A Displaced Transition: Habermas on the Public Sphere," in *Masses, Classes, and the Public Sphere*, edited by Mike Hill and Warren Montag (London: Verso, 2002), 146–157.
16. Hardt, "The Withering of Civil Society," 158–176.
17. Slavoj Žižek, *Revolution at the Gates* (London: Verso, 2002), 298. According to Žižek, the same impossibility applies to Habermas's view of the progressive aspect of capitalist globalization (that of the deregulated markets) that only needs to be supplemented by adequate political globalization to become an accomplished revolution, 299.

Religious Mobilization and the Public Sphere: Reflections on Alternative Genealogies

Mark LeVine and Armando Salvatore

Introduction: The public sphere of socioreligious movements

This chapter does not offer a case study of any particular socioreligious movement; neither does it aspire to provide a modeled framework for a comparative enquiry. Instead it attempts to conceptualize the complex and conflicted relation of religious mobilization to modern public spheres. First, we attempt to delineate the philosophical foundations of the variety of notions of the “public” utilized—explicitly and implicitly—by socioreligious movements to define their ideologies and actions to achieve social power, by relating to the much discussed concept of “religious tradition.” Second, we critically explore the contribution of some writings of Gramsci and Foucault in terms of their rooting in “common sense” (Gramsci) and their potentially eruptive “political spirituality” (Foucault) as factors of change, hegemony, and even revolution, to help us characterize religious mobilization. Our combined reading of these two notions should help sharpen the understanding of the potential of socioreligious movements to develop a politics of common good through an upgrading of commonsensical practical reasoning, in order to challenge the hegemony of liberal norms of the public sphere.

Socioreligious movements attempt to formulate and implement discourses of the common good that aspire to legitimate specific forms of political community. Such communities are based on methods of public

reasoning that are in tension with modern liberal conceptions of the public sphere. Specifically, they remain unbounded by the strictures of liberal norms of publicness premised on atomistic views of the social agent and contractually based notions of trust; by a strict interpretation of the dichotomy between private and public spheres; and by the ultimate basing of public reason on private interest. For socioreligious movements public reasoning is mostly based on a practical reason sanctified by religious traditions, however variably interpreted.¹ Such a perspective provides these discourses with a fluidity that accounts in large measure for their success in mobilizing large numbers of people to their cause.

To understand how the concept of the common good entertained by many socioreligious movements is linked to notions of practice and “common sense” we need to consider the recent literature on civil society and the public sphere, and the role of religion therein. Specifically, we argue that the operation performed by socioreligious movements comes close to Gramsci’s notion of “good sense” [*buon senso*] as the key to mobilize politically marginalized sectors of society. Such movements thus contribute to the constitution and contestation of norms of public life by providing services to their communities and articulating social justice claims that challenge the discourse of rights that is the daily bread of secular elites. A specific combination of “resistance” and “project” identities² deployed by socioreligious movements impinge on the legitimacy of both state and (more recently) NGO elites, and through them, on the allocation of resources for development, welfare and education. This process unfolds through the creation of historically novel lines of solidarity that, without being utopianly “horizontal,” challenge state-centric, vertically defined, disciplinary discourses of the social.

Habermas’s famous definition of the public sphere considers it “above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public.”³ This definition is, however, too limited to explain trajectories of formation of and access to public spheres—not only for the non-Western world. It cannot capture the actions for reclaiming the common good performed by those socioreligious movements which do not endorse the kind of secularity produced by the modern state and by any variant of liberal, republican, or socialist (and, not to forget, fascist) ideologies. We do, however, build on Habermas’s recognition of the possibility of “plebeian,” alternative

or counterpublics that, according to him, are basically “the periodically recurring violent revolt or a counterproject to the hierarchical world of domination with its official celebrations and everyday disciplines.”⁴

When plebeian/subaltern/marginalized popular movements enter the public sphere, they can remain unbounded by the strictures of liberal conceptions and norms of publicness, and possess a level of complexity and rationality that goes beyond their potential characterization as mere resistance movements, i.e., that challenge bourgeois hegemony but are devoid of a positive, alternative sociopolitical program.⁵ We propose to look at socioreligious movements by employing a theorization that is not restricted to the public sphere’s Western secular forms. This is because in both non-Western and premodern settings public spheres have been articulated through a combination of partial consensus and a shared hierarchy of leadership, which are mediated by informal and pervasive patterns of influence, responsibility, and shared expectations.⁶ These arrangements offered a framework for discourse and practice that went beyond immediate localities, facilitating discussions of the common good and redefinitions of patterns of inclusion and exclusion. When not limited to modern secular settings, the public sphere can be understood as the site where contests take place over the definition of the obligations, rights and especially notions of justice that members of society require for the common good to be realized.⁷

The idea of the public sphere is at once a wider and a more specific notion than that of civil society. “Civil society entails a public sphere, but not every public sphere entails a civil society,” is how Eisenstadt concisely put it, because not every public sphere has the market-based and trust-oriented economic dimension that is crucial to civil society’s functioning.⁸ Habermasian definitions of the public sphere are too rigidly premised on a notion of a civil society of private citizens, a limitation that becomes a particular handicap to contemporary theorization when we confront two other problems inherent in the way the public sphere is often described: first, such definitions do not sufficiently consider the modalities through which modern states introduce disciplining and legitimizing projects into public sphere dynamics, or the tension between such activities and the public sphere’s specific role as a site for solidarities against the discursive power of the state; second, public spheres interact continuously

with popular cultures in a manner that allows non-elites to challenge and shape hegemonic public discourses.⁹

The public sphere and its underlying, competing cultures open a space for various actors, including those mobilized by religious discourses and symbols, to challenge or negotiate with elites at various levels of access to state power. Grounding the public sphere on the interests, rights and duties of the “private citizen” is just one—albeit historically powerful and largely hegemonic—practiced and theorized approach to the correct functioning of the public sphere. But in contemporary Muslim majority societies this approach—and the historic experience on which it is based: those of former colonial powers, not of colonized peoples—clearly fails to capture the range of expressions and activities involved in the public sphere, while also failing to account for the increasing frailty of some state structures, Iraq and Palestine key among them.

In Muslim majority societies, several socioreligious movements construct alternative models of the relationship between state institutions and the interests of grassroots communities, starting in particular from their educational and welfare projects. Backed up by discourses of social justice, these projects have a strong impact on views of political community, citizenship, and legitimate authority among their constituencies. We see this dynamic in groups as diverse as Hizbullah in Lebanon or Hamas in Palestine, where the constitution of an “Islamic state” means a “just social order” as much as if not more than a “religious,” i.e., shari‘a-based state.¹⁰ Such a paradigm can be defined as articulating a sort of parallel or alternative civil society-*cum*-public sphere with its own distinctive forms of social control, political deliberation, and techniques of power and governance.

In such approaches, the discourse of justice is more central than the desire and move to take over, appropriate, and reshape state power. Whether providing social services¹¹ or coordinating insurgency, socio-religious movements in Islamic contexts (whether such movements are classified as “Islamist” or not) chart their social environment through active social knowledge, produced through the creation and mobilization of dense social networks and communal frameworks that depend largely on voluntary action. Unlike the secular abstractions of NGOs that target a society that is fundamentally different from the way the actors see

themselves as agents of change, socioreligious movements relate to the societies as an extension of their own discourses of justice, something they are intimately part of and equal to in a web of relationships that are partly horizontal and partly vertical, since they are based on ties of (imagined or effective) authority.

The largely egalitarian and voluntaristic modes of interaction make Islamist charities often effective and sometimes hegemonic. At the same time, these strategies are woven into larger, global financial and moral economy networks that have become inseparable from resistance—supported by a variety of organized uses of violence—by these same groups to the military occupations of Palestinian, Lebanese, Afghani or Iraqi territories. Once such movements engage in or support violent resistance activities, it is very difficult for them to avoid an ambivalent and often suspicious and offensive stance toward those they view as external to and encroaching upon their communities.

Even when supportive in principle of larger nationalist projects, these movements can undermine the legitimacy of those projects through alternative educational and social policies, political rhetoric, and particularly, violent activities. Hamas and the Iraqi insurgency are cases in point. This has been the main thread of the relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority, but it can also be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the attitude of the ultraorthodox movement and party Shas to the Israeli state. With this understanding, we propose to explore socioreligious movements and the public spheres they create as rational responses to insufficient provision of crucial services (health, education, welfare, security) by either “public” or other “private” institutions. While before the war of July 2006 the integration of Hizbullah into the Lebanese political culture and system seemed to provide a counterfactual example to this general assessment, the current situation now represents yet another case of ambivalence between the communitarian power and the hegemonic challenge launched by socioreligious movements. The latter component still consists in the project to restructure the national community in more democratic terms than allowed by the sectarian bias of the Lebanese political system.

Maṣlaḥa, the common good, and civil society

Such modern articulations—or disarticulations—of notions and practices of the common good opening up ways to construct and challenge national public spheres should be assessed in light of premodern developments. Traditionally, the notion of “public” as tightly related to specific—mostly religiously higher—forms of goods was a specification of the idea of a common *and* supreme good of all humanity, from good life in this world to salvation in the hereafter. Premodern views of the public were not based on a radical distinction of “private” and “public” spheres, but on a view of the socio-legal-political order that was at once more articulate and more compact, allowing for combinations of layers and hierarchies of values. Within such grids, the idea of what in due time became, in Roman law and in the Roman polity, the *res publica*, emerges as a good *sui generis*, non-negotiable, and becomes for many authors (both from among religious Abrahamic traditions and other traditions such as those of Plato, Aristotle, or the Stoics) the condition for the pursuit of all other social goods.

The discourse of the common good as the kernel of publicness has indeed a long genealogy that cuts across the conventional borders of Europe or the West to encompass the heritage of Muslim societies.¹² The religious idea of partnership in faith, and the ensuing collective action for the common good, is rooted in classical views of the social and political dimensions of human agency that modern theories of civil society have difficulty identifying. For its part, Islam provided a sophisticated version of the above-schematized Abrahamic tradition, incorporating elements not only of Platonic and Greek speculation on the social goods and their origin, but also of Roman law. The most important element for our purposes is the Islamic jurisprudential notion of *maṣlaḥa*, based on the root *s-l-h*, which denotes being and becoming good, conveying the full scale of positive values from “uncorrupted” up to “right,” “honest,” “virtuous,” and “just.”¹³ More specifically, the root meaning of *maṣlaḥa* is “cause or source of something good or beneficial.”¹⁴ The foundation of the conceptual network around *maṣlaḥa* was laid by thinkers and discussions between the eleventh and fourteenth (fifth and seventh *hijra*) centuries and was revived by modern reformers, such as the early twentieth-century public intellectual Rashid Rida and the contemporary “global” *‘ālim* Yusuf al-Qaradawi.¹⁵

The passage from a model of social relationships between *ego* and *alter* (self and other) that is mediated by the common faith in God (the triad ego-alter-God) to an ego-alter dyad unmediated by any transcendent third instance constitutes a drastic rupture in the history of the emergence of the notion of the social bond, incorporated in programmatic visions of a “civil society”—a transformation corresponding to a passage from faith to trust as the main glue of society.¹⁶ Within faith-based relationships it is the transcendent otherhood that helps the human self to know himself/herself and connect to terrestrial otherhood; trust implies a reciprocal recognition of the other’s dignity and capacity to act, irrespective of the outcome of the interaction, or at least without having any guarantee about the outcome, which is no longer covered by strong role expectations.¹⁷

In a counterprogram to the modern reconstruction of the social bond, the eighteenth-century Neapolitan thinker Giambattista Vico argued that humanity’s historical emergence into “the human age” of politics and civility was accomplished through the move to ever more complex constructions of symbolic mediation between ego and alter.¹⁸ In this context, he focused on the collective power of *senso comune*, i.e., common sense, intended as a stock of ordinary knowledge present in poetic discourse, and preceding the irruption of revelation into history.¹⁹ The *senso comune* placed myth squarely in the fundamentals of the *civitas*—which, importantly, can mean the state, citizenship, a city-state, or a city; that is, various levels of political and social interaction and authority.²⁰

But Vico’s notion of common sense was not to hold sway within the mainstream reflection on civil society. Hume, Smith and other protoliberal thinkers grounded the emerging sociological dimensions of the modern conceptualization of civil society not on a historicized common sense but on a transhistorical notion of a “moral sense.” In so doing liberal thought produced a highly simplified view of the human and social actor. Of course, a complexification of civil society was undertaken by several authors, following up on the Scottish Enlightenment and linking it with other streams of Enlightenment thought and its critique through Romanticism. Kant, Hegel, Marx, and later Nietzsche are highly original, indeed towering figures of this train of reflection. It is telling that these thinkers were located in a part of Europe (Germany) that lived through a particularly ambivalent historical experience in the eras of the Protestant

Reformation, the commercial revolution, and the industrial revolution, if judged by the standards of social and economic “progress” set in England, Scotland, the Low Countries, France, and New England.

Indeed, Habermas’s well known model of the public sphere can only be fully appreciated if located at the sensible border between the mainly Anglo-American liberal tradition and the German critical voices.²¹ Continental Europe provided other avenues of critical reflection, however, which unfortunately Habermas himself neglected to a large extent. In the following section, we provide a combined reading of Gramsci’s and Foucault’s assessment of the counterhegemonic potential of religious practice and mobilization vis-à-vis the bourgeois, hegemonic forms of political order and the public sphere.

Gramsci’s movement: From common sense to alternative hegemonies

The twentieth-century Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci was moved by a mixture of respect and aversion in his approach to religion, seeing in it a token of antimodernity but also the possible key to an alternative modernity—to the extent that it could be seen to possess a kernel of immunity from contemporary forms of socioeconomic and cultural domination. This ambivalence prompted him to analyze religion in terms of its capacity to guarantee a degree of resistance to, and a critique of, hegemonic discourses which would not alienate the cultural worlds of the rural masses. Accordingly, some specific dimensions of religion had the potential to allow to reconstruct an alternative hegemony based on notions of the common good liberated from the ideologies concealing class domination—including the domination of the high hierarchies of the Catholic church.

Gramsci’s diagnosis was that in a still largely precapitalist country like Italy of the 1920s and 1930s one could not destroy religion. What could be achieved was the establishment of “a new popular belief, that is, a new common sense and thus a new culture and a new philosophy that is rooted in the popular conscience with the same solidity and imperative-ness as traditional belief.”²² Given this power of religion, Gramsci believed

that the proletariat could succeed in becoming the hegemonic class by creating a system of alliances with other classes, especially the peasants. The “Catholic question” was ultimately a “peasant/rural/farmer question” [*questione contadina*], since in Italy one could not reach the peasants without dealing with the church, which traditionally asserted hegemony over them.²³

This alliance was made possible by the fact that the church as a community of believers had developed over the centuries in almost constant political-moral opposition to the church as a clerical organization.²⁴ Most important, religion to Gramsci was the “creative spirit of the people”—which we will shortly relate to Foucault’s political spirituality—and the source of this oppositional, though mostly amorphous politics.²⁵ Basically, the merit of Gramsci’s approach consisted in his ability to astutely penetrate religion’s basis in practice and common sense.²⁶

For Gramsci, “every religion ... is in reality a multiplicity of distinct and often contradictory religions.”²⁷ Gramsci’s examinations of religion reflect both a richness of themes and a complexity and multiplicity of levels: epistemological, ideological, historical, social and political.²⁸ Indeed, there is in Gramsci a fair degree of ambivalence not just vis-à-vis the Catholic church, but also towards Islam, about which he wrote several entries in his *Prison Notebooks*. From these passages we can determine that he believed that Islam could be examined in comparison to Christianity only if one had the “courage” to question the ubiquitous equation of Christianity with “modern civilization.” To the specific question of why Islam failed to follow in the modernizing footsteps of Christianity, Gramsci felt that however “torpid from centuries of isolation and a putrified feudal regime,” it was “absurd” to assume that Islam was not evolving. A major hindrance was the lack of a large-scale ecclesiastical structure that, by acting as a “collective intellectual,” could facilitate the “adaptation” to modernity.²⁹

Equally important to note is that Gramsci believed that Muslims saw the “great hypocrisy” in Europe of the church’s adaptation to modernity, which provided them with less incentive to pursue their own modernization. And even if Islam was compelled to “run dizzily” toward modernity, “in reality it is the same with Christianity,” with both involving “grand heresies” that promoted “national sentiments” tied to a supposed return to a

pure origin. Gramsci further observed the contemporary focus on origins by many in the Muslim world, and he explained this trend as being common to widely diverging, if not opposite discourses such as Wahhabism and Atatürkism/Turkish republicanism; together they constituted a record of modern expression as developed as that of Catholicism.³⁰ In fact, if religion was politically central to the creation of the “historical bloc” that could challenge bourgeois hegemony, Gramsci believed that “the absence of a clear link that would serve as a *trait d’union* between theoretical Islam and popular belief,” along with the “great space between the intellectuals and the people,” would be a cause of the problematic modernization of Muslim countries in a manner similar to the situation of the church in Italy. Thus the “fanaticism” of some Muslim countries was in reality very similar to Christian fanaticism in history and in the years before World War I.³¹

Considering his focus on the production of knowledge by intellectuals, it is not surprising that Gramsci urged close study of the theological importance of both the “clerical” structure and that of Islamic high education in these processes. Given the similarities Gramsci believed existed between Islam and Christianity in spite of all evident differences, we can extrapolate Gramscian elements for approaching the question of the public sphere in Muslim majority societies through his strategy vis-à-vis the church, which was the subject of the vast majority of his writings. What is important here is that Gramsci saw in the history of Christianity, particularly the early church and the Protestant Reformation, seminal examples of a cultural revolution of the masses that was also possible in the Muslim world.³²

In this context we should recall Gramsci’s argument that in every country, including those of the Middle East, intellectuals are impacted by the specific local dynamics of capitalist development. Gramsci’s analysis calls upon us to explore the specific relationship between emerging leading classes and the “organic” intellectuals they interacted with, who themselves led various styles of reform movements in the region that were crucial players in the political arenas as well as in the broader public spheres. It is in this context that we can understand his perspective:

Implicitly Christianity is considered inherent to modern civilization... [but] why could Islam not do the same as Christianity? It seems to us rather that the absence of massive

ecclesiastical organization of the Christian-Catholic type ought to make this adaptation easier. If it is admitted that modern civilization in its industrial-economic-political manifestation will end up by triumphing in the East... why not therefore conclude that Islam will necessarily evolve? Will Islam be able to remain just as it was? No—it is already no longer what it was before the war. Is it possible that it will fall at a stroke? Absurd hypothesis... in actual fact the most tragic difficulty for Islam is given by the fact that a society in a state of torpor... has been put into brusque contact with a frenetic civilization already in its phase of dissolution.³³

Gramsci attempts to unravel the power relations between historical religions and social structures through a reading of folklore, popular religion, the religion of the intellectuals, and most important, the Vichian “common sense” [*senso comune*].³⁴ For Gramsci, the crucial dynamics that would determine the success of the venture of socialism would be determined by the extent to which the common sense incorporated in everyday religious practice could be dialectically exalted, as it were, to the status of “good sense” [*buon senso*], a common sense turned reflective and potentially dominant.

Common sense is a central concept in Gramsci’s analysis of religion. Indeed, the relationship between religion and common sense is what leads Gramsci to see a fundamental ambivalence in the historical and contemporary expressions of Christianity.³⁵ Common sense here means a shared sense, experience or consciousness. It is inevitably fragmentary, not unitary. It is disorganized and inconsistent, “realistic” and “superstitious” at the same time. Religion is thereby the “principal element” of a larger body of disorganized common sense, yet is never reducible to common sense because it has the potential to constitute a total social praxis.³⁶

We notice here a sophisticated view of a “living tradition” (though not named as such by Gramsci) where fragmentation prevails, only to be recondensed and integrated through the necessary search for coherence inherent in practice. Moreover—and moving one step beyond Vico—Gramsci believed that people share in the common sense, which gives them the potential to elaborate critically the cultural base to achieve transformative social praxis and thus supersede its original reality as “common

sense” turned “good.”³⁷ “Good sense” is what enables “common sense” to metamorphose into the pursuit of “common good.” We should deduce that according to Gramsci a pursuit of common good can only succeed if a popular philosophy, also in the form of religion, becomes self-conscious and hegemonic. Without this step, common sense will be at the service of the hegemonic culture of the dominant classes.

What makes this possible is that common sense facilitates the connection between the two extremes of high culture and popular culture, and, being mobile and flexible, continually transforms and enriches itself with new ideas to shape the range of maxims through which principles are translated into moral guides for everyday life—a back-and-forth pendulum between universality and local, common knowledge.³⁸ Yet because neither religion nor the larger body of common sense in which it participated was reducible to a unity and coherence in either the individual or collective conscience, Gramsci remained skeptical about the possibility that religion and common sense could provide the cultural material for constructing an intellectual order leading the proletariat to cultural and political hegemony.³⁹

In the final analysis, Gramsci’s diagnosis of the predicament of the peasant masses of southern Italy was quite pessimistic. For Gramsci the only source of optimism lay in voluntary action, ultimately culminating in organized, revolutionary political action. This understanding of the relation between common and good sense will become important when we turn to Foucault’s analysis of the Iranian Revolution, a case where religion *did* accomplish the transformation into good sense, precisely because of what Foucault saw as the unity of will of the masses. As we will see, for Foucault religion stopped being common sense in Iran, at least for a short while.

Yet if Gramsci saw religion as “a need of the spirit,” and even a key to the needed “public spirit,” he was echoing Marx’s belief—and anticipating Foucault’s—that religion is the spirit of a spiritless time.⁴⁰ A metamorphosed religion has the potential to unify the will of the masses, and as such is central to executing the philosophy of praxis. It is key to the “intellectual and moral reformation” that must precede any revolution. Reinterpreting Gramscian categories, one could dare to say that religion itself—not as a theoretical activity but as a stimulus to action and a source

of mobilization—is a philosophy, and thus a potential launching pad for a philosophy of praxis. Indeed, the concept of religion as the opium of the people was one of the points of departure of Gramsci's thought from Marx's. That is, while religion can express an alienated and illusionary ideology, it can also be a stimulus for revolutionary action—at least a “passive revolution,” when the hegemonic power oppressing the masses is too great for active resistance.⁴¹

Foucault's “political spirituality”: Beyond the post-colonial paradigm?

Gramsci believed that cultural dependence is always an indication of political dependence. This realization has been shared by leading Muslim critics of the West and of capitalist modernity for two centuries, including Iranian thinkers such as Shariati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad. In making sense of the revolutionary events in Iran Foucault took an approach quite different from his wider work, where he privileged the prism of agential motivation more than the goal of building up an alternative hegemony based on ethical-political claims to the common good. During his stay in Iran he saw his role as “[showing] people that they are much freer than they feel” when they accept as permanent and absolute situations and truths which are of quite recent vintage.⁴²

When a colonial people tries to free itself of its colonizer, that is truly an act of liberation, in the strict sense of the word. But we also know that ... this act of liberation is not sufficient to establish the practices of liberty that later on will be necessary for this people, this society and this individual to decide upon receivable and acceptable forms of their existence or political society.⁴³

Foucault has been criticized by scholars, especially from a postcolonial perspective, as devoting little attention to the colonial situation. We would not defend Foucault on this count, but would like to point out, via the quote above, and through his direct engagement with the early Iranian revolution, that while the colonial was not a major theme in his work, he

did frame it in specific situations. Chief among the insights he produced is that “liberation” cannot engender real liberty without a certain level of what can be termed “discursive control” by the people of the regimes of governmentality produced by such liberation.

In this framework, “the enigma of revolt” in the Iranian revolutionary events of late 1978 was a crucial discovery for someone exploring the manner in which the revolt was being lived:

[The revolution] was dreamt of as being as much religious as political ... [staying] close to those old dreams which the West had known at another time, when it wanted to inscribe the figures of spirituality on the earth of politics ... What else but religion could provide support for the distress and then the revolt of a population which had been traumatized by “development,” “reform,” “urbanization,” and all the other failures of the regime.⁴⁴

The active role Foucault assigns to religion is related to his insights into how the discourses surrounding the formation of modern subjects use religion as a backdrop to force potentially transgressive dimensions of the person into modern disciplinary matrices. If the struggle for our selves constitutes a politics of our selves, the key campaign in that struggle, according to Foucault, will be a new mode of fashioning an “ethical way of being a self.”⁴⁵

If Foucault’s well known work on early Christianity aims to reveal how the religious subject is constituted, his writings on the Iranian Revolution (based on his visits to the country in the fall and winter of 1978) help us question how the new Iranian religious subject was self-created and managed to end the thousand-year reign of the shahs. His general interest was to examine how religion creates forms of subjection by developing new power relations; the Iranian Revolution was particularly interesting to him because of the transformation of subjectivity it brought about. Thus he wished to examine “different ways of governing oneself through a different way of dividing up true and false—that is what I would call political spirituality.”⁴⁶

As Gramsci before him learned by dealing with the Catholic church in Italy, Foucault’s work on early Christianity taught him—as he wrote

only months before leaving for Tehran—that religion has always been a political force; a “superb instrument of power for itself; entirely woven through with elements that are imaginary, erotic, effective, corporal, sensual, and so on.”⁴⁷ The Iranian revolution fascinated him; it seemed to plot an “escape” from history; it was “irreducible . . . there is no explanation for the man who revolts. His action is necessarily a tearing that breaks the thread of history and its long chains of reason.”⁴⁸ Even more so when the man revolting is Muslim, since “the problem of Islam is essentially a problem of our age and for the years to come.”⁴⁹

Foucault felt that the Iranian thinker Ali Shariati exemplified the possibility of such spiritual politics and enlightened mysticism enshrined in religious activism.⁵⁰ Shariati’s early politicoreligious experiences as a member of the “movement of God-worshipping socialists” reveals precisely the type of revolutionary sociopolitical program, rooted in Islamic Iranian intellectual culture, that would appeal to Foucault. This is not surprising, since for Shariati the root of Iran’s predicament was in significant part due to “the penetration of European values” into the country, which exacerbated the existing lack of faith and ignorance of the Qur’an. The ideology of the group to which Shariati belonged, as laid out in its platform, included the necessity of belief in God, the defense of the real rights of workers and peasants, and the opposition to dictatorship, exploitation and colonialism.⁵¹

Shariati was especially fond of Frantz Fanon, who taught that the colonized must return to their “true selves” to defeat colonialism.⁵² For Foucault, of course, there was no “true self” to which one could return; rather one could return to a focus on the self as a project, a “complex microsocial structure, replete with foreign relations,” and not the disengaged autonomous self of the modern self-imagination.⁵³ What Shariati’s approach had in common with Foucault’s was that the project of self-realization involved the politicization of an ethical sensibility, one that solicits us to join the quest for a different future. If we consider this ethical sensibility in a political register, we can understand the relationships it might establish with religiously motivated movements of resistance around the world.

Yet if the Iranian Revolution provides evidence of the utility of technologies of power from below against hegemonic systems of domination, Foucault’s “revolt with bare hands” clearly lacked coherent long-term

goals. Unfortunately the absence of a plan—particularly by the leftist-student-intellectual coalition that led the early part of the revolution—proved to be its undoing against Khomeini’s ruthlessly well thought-out strategy.⁵⁴ By combining a simplistic view of the forces operating in Iran with his longing for a “political spirituality” that he perceived to be exhausted in the West, Foucault saw that the Iranian events represented not just a rejection of the shah and his American backers, as well as American interference and exploitation of Iran’s resources, but more profoundly, a “cultural revolution”—at once a “more radical *denial*, a refusal by a people, not simply of the foreigner, but of everything that it had constituted, after years, centuries, his political destiny,” and a radical *affirmation* of a new subjectivity.⁵⁵

What this means for our discussion, as Georg Stauth argues, is that Foucault understood the situation as one in which the people on the street had become increasingly conscious of the fact that the system had come to depend on their own active ideas for its sustenance.⁵⁶ To use Gramsci’s categories, they realized that they had to become their own “organic” intellectuals, to forge the ideology for their own appropriation of the Iranian state based on a hegemonic reformulation, or philosophization, of religion from “common” to “good” sense. The organic quality of this discourse would have to be tied specifically to the larger social class and set of economic relations from which it emerged,⁵⁷ thereby articulating and complexifying the notion of “common good.”

Of course, reading the Iranian Revolution backwards in combined Foucauldian and Gramscian terms is highly problematic. There is, however, another layer in Foucault’s analysis which is part and parcel of his larger approach. Though admittedly naïve, it is nonetheless particularly interesting for our argument. It is the idea according to which the genealogy of the popular Islamic insurrection cannot be explained through motivational prisms based on Western notions of power. Most of all, Foucault realized that motivating the revolution was a desire by the people to “change themselves,” to affect a

radical change...in their experience. Here is where I think Islam plays a role... Religion was the promise and guarantee of finding a radical change in their subjectivity... This was compatible with traditional Islamic practice that already

assured their identity; in this fashion that had brought to life Islam as a revolutionary force.⁵⁸

And here, crucially, he reminds the reader that in the sentence before Marx's famous line about religion being the opium of the people, Marx argues that religion is "the spirit of a world without spirit"—"Let us say, then, that in 1978 Islam was not the opium of the people precisely because it was the spirit of a world without spirit,"⁵⁹ i.e., a form of affirmation of will unknown to the way technologies of power worked within modern politics. It was almost a non-biopolitical (and therefore "spiritual") form of power, yet one with a legitimate aspiration to modern credentials, and therefore conducive to uncertain effects. In this light, the dilemmas and the discursive breaches of Islamic reformers and revolutionaries in the modern era, in Iran as in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, might no longer be assessed as a failed attempt at constructing an endogenous modernity, but simply as a variation in an effort of metamorphosing traditions—and therefore the "authentic self"—under the structural conditions of modernity, an effort that is always painful and never fully successful, not even in such rare revolutionary eruptions as the Iranian events.

Conclusion: From common sense to politicized spirituality?

The concept of the public sphere delineated through religious mobilization's orientation to the "common good" reflects an intersection of class and political cleavages with religious discourses. This intersection becomes increasingly powerful as governments face chronic shortages of funds for social welfare and development, especially in the post-9/11 era, in the framework of an increasingly militarized neoliberal globalization. Equally important is that these developments reflect the drive by socio-religious movements to achieve political, social, and cultural justice for their constituencies at the same time as they exhibit a deeply intolerant stance toward those viewed as situated outside their community. A project examining the dynamics of the Palestinian Hamas and Israeli Shas movements in Palestine/Israel in which we participated demonstrates that this drive depends on at least three processes: a redefinition of the organizational and programmatic outlook of socioreligious movements vis-à-vis

class composition; a gender-related division of labor and attitudes toward national goals; and a reschematization of the public sphere from the viewpoint of grassroots reconstructions of ties of solidarity and communication generated by the potentially counterhegemonic activities of socio-religious movements.

This state of the art on the ground can be compared with the alternative genealogies of religious mobilization we have presented, as well as with their impact on the notion of the public sphere. In response to his Iranian experience Foucault called for a “hermeneutic of social action” that, if combined with the “rhetoric of authenticity” articulated by Iranian clerics, had the potential for engaging in the kind of praxic philosophy that Antonio Gramsci famously advocated.⁶⁰ Gramsci too saw religious spirituality as an embryonic force of reform if not of revolution, both as a collective will and as a lived idea. If Foucault argued that the Iranian Revolution saw a convergence of the individual need for personal transformation and traditional religion emerging as revolutionary practice, Gramsci too saw this possibility in a potential alliance between workers and peasants through a rejuvenated Christian ideology-*cum*-praxis, where religion would be lived as a “radically transformative,” revolutionary force.⁶¹

Clearly the Foucauldian perspective has the potential to deepen and complicate the concept of religious mobilization emerging from discrete case studies. It involves a deeper revision of Western paradigms than allowed among conventional critics of Habermas’s approach. Even when publicly criticized by a Muslim woman for believing that “Muslim spirituality” was preferable to the shah, Foucault argued that the Iranian Revolution should remind the West of something it had forgotten since the Renaissance and the Reformation—the possibility of a political spirituality that in Iran had created a

unified collective will ... perhaps the greatest ever insurrection against global systems, the most insane and the most modern form of revolt ... the force that can make a whole people rise up [importantly, even ‘with no vanguard, no party’], not only against a sovereign and his police, but against a whole regime, a whole way of life, a whole world.⁶²

This focus on insanity as a moment of resistance to the modern condition is clearly related to Foucault's desire to move beyond a Kantian ethics. However, the spirit of martyrdom of the millions in Iran who took to the street in September 1978 can turn into the suicidal-homicidal madness of militant *istishhādiyyūn*, if there is no space for either a truly revolutionary or a reform-oriented and electoral process that can absorb and channel this "praxic" religious territoriality. It is clear to us—as it is clear now to several generations of Islamist leaders and cadres—that while reform and a democratic process is the preferred path for several mass-based socio-religious movements, if the prevalently secular forces controlling regional states and the international system effectively prevents such a process or poses unrealistic conditions to it, the only alternative becomes one between an unlikely revolution and a much more likely spiral of violence in which repression and the continuation of military occupation might endlessly beget a readiness to (suicidal-homicidal) sacrifice—whose "religious" nature in turn becomes increasingly difficult to assess.

As part of a brief genealogy of fanaticism as an accusation hurled against socioreligious movements, we would find that in Gramsci's own writings this label was used neither to stigmatize violence or militancy nor scripturalism-literalism, but rather to denounce the sheer refusal to participate in official politics and public sphere debates, as did Italian Catholics between 1870 and the end of World War I, due to the unitarian Italian state's suppression of the pope's temporal powers. On the other hand, we must certainly discount some naïve enthusiasm and even neo-Orientalism in Foucault's position and in the notion of "political spirituality" itself, as ultimately nourished by a projection and displacement of subjectivity and will from the "West" to an "Orient" still uncontaminated by modernist ideologies.⁶³ The Gramscian approach to the sociopolitical potential of religious traditions and movements, though immune from such neo-Orientalism, was itself trapped in a too rigidly secular notion of hegemony and accordingly of the role of intellectuals vis-à-vis the "ordinary people" or the "masses."

The key concept of *buon senso* was epitomized by how intellectuals might capitalize on the fact that the peasant masses of southern Italy do not possess any ideology of liberation but have a latent passion for justice. In current jargon, we would say that while for Gramsci religion represents

a defective source of “agency,” for Foucault this source is potentially excessive and expressive—a combination of passions or aesthetics that Bataille and Deleuze have also pointed to as being one of the crucial, albeit problematic means by which those excluded from or opposed to modernity and its spheres of influence can attempt to escape its strictures.

Given his position in the political struggles of the 1930s and notwithstanding the obvious fact that from prison he could produce neither ethnographies nor journalistic accounts (but at best rely on those of others), Gramsci’s influence upon authors of the second half of the twentieth century—such as the Neapolitan anthropologist Ernesto De Martino—remains seminal. Located between Gramsci and more contemporary “subaltern studies,” De Martino saw religion as intrinsically disjunctured yet vital, inherently—though unpredictably—dislocating the power relationships between dominant and dominated classes, between colonizers and colonized.⁶⁴

Learning from this trajectory of critique, if we unwind the absolutist categories of post-Reformation and post-Enlightenment discourse, we are reminded of the necessity of moving beyond a focus on “religion” as a separate category, and thus on “Muslim” public spheres. On a more basic level, we need to develop the critical view that the Western observer (whether philosopher, social scientist, or journalist) fails to see the extent to which socioreligious movements, before they can create an alternative subjectivity or “political spirituality,” have to reforge social solidarity via piety and welfare deeds, in turn based on notions, and passions, for justice—facing the evidence that nation-states, especially in postcolonial sociopolitical contexts, cannot provide social justice to the majority of their populations. Distrust and Nietzschean resentment are certainly part of the genesis of such movements, but they function more as the trigger rather than the formula of social reconstruction.

Finally, we should recall Foucault’s belief that

European thought finds itself at a turning point. The turning point is none other than the end of imperialism. The crisis of Western thought is identical to the end of imperialism... If a philosophy of the future exists, it must be born outside of Europe or equally born in consequence of meetings and impacts between Europe and non-Europe.⁶⁵

Notes

1. Armando Salvatore, *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33–98.
2. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
3. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1989 [1962]), 27.
4. Jürgen Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 427.
5. See Castells, *Power of Identity*.
6. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “Concluding Remarks: Public Sphere, Civil Society, and Political Dynamics in Islamic Societies,” in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, edited by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 139–161.
7. Dale F. Eickelman and Armando Salvatore, “Muslim Publics,” in *Public Islam and Common Good*, edited by Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Brill: Leiden, 2004 [2002]), 5.
8. Eisenstadt, “Concluding Remarks,” 141.
9. Mark LeVine, “Popularizing the Public and Publicizing the Popular: Contesting Popular Cultures in Mandatory Jaffa and Tel Aviv,” in *Popular Palestine: Palestine, Israel and the Politics of Popular Culture*, edited by Ted Swedenburg and Rebecca Stein (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
10. Regarding Hizbullah in Lebanon, see Lara Deeb, “‘Doing Good, Like Sayyida Zaynab’: Lebanese Shi’i Women’s Participation in the Public Sphere,” in *Religion, Social Practice, and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies*, edited by Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine (New York: Palgrave, 2005); and Lina Kreidie “Hizbullah and the Challenges of Modernism and Secularism,” paper presented at the Workshop on Socioreligious Movements and the Transformation of Political Community: Israel, Palestine, and Beyond, University of California (Irvine), 12–15 October 2002.

Regarding Hamas in Palestine, see Reema Hammami, “Palestinian NGOs, the Oslo Transition, and the Space of Development,” paper presented at the Workshop on Socioreligious Movements and the Transformation of

- Political Community: Israel, Palestine, and Beyond, University of California (Irvine), 12–15 October 2002; and Sara Roy, “The Transformation of Islamic NGOs in Palestine,” *Middle East Report*, no. 214 (2000): 24–27.
11. We find empirical evidence for our arguments in the above-sketched alternative approach in the engagement with “development” by the Palestinian Hamas, as shown by Hammami, “Palestinian NGOs,” among others, instead of mapping the needy through the standard statistical measures and assessment of poverty lines.
 12. Salvatore, *Public Sphere*.
 13. Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Shatibi's Philosophy of Islamic Law* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2000 [1995]), 135. See also Masud, “Communicative Action and the Social Construction of Shari’a in Pakistan,” in *Religion, Social Practice, and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies*, edited by Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine (New York: Palgrave, 2005).
 14. Felicitas Opwis, “*Maslaha* in Contemporary Islamic Legal Theory,” *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 2 (2005): 182.
 15. On Rashid Rida see Dyala Hamzah, “From ‘ilm to *sihafa*: Defining the Public Interest in Egypt, at the Turn of the 20th Century,” paper presented at the Summer Institute on Public Spheres and Muslim Identities, Hanover, New Hampshire, August 2002. On Yusuf al-Qaradawi see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, “The ‘Ulama’ of Contemporary Islam and their Conceptions of the Common Good,” in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, edited by Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Brill: Leiden, 2004), 129–155.
 16. Salvatore, *Public Sphere*, 215–242.
 17. Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 13–43.
 18. Giambattista Vico, *New Science: Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of the Nations*, 3rd ed., trans. David Marsh (London: Penguin, 1999 [1744]), 397–398.
 19. Salvatore, *Public Sphere*, 173–214.
 20. Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World: The Poetic Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 147.
 21. Armando Salvatore, “The Exit from a Westfalian Framing of Political Space and the Emergence of a Transnational Islamic Public,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 24, no. 4 (2007): 41–48.

22. Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 4 vols. (Rome and Trento: Istituto Gramsci/Einaudi, 2001), 1400.
23. See Tommaso La Rocca, "Introduzione," in Antonio Gramsci, *La religione come senso comune* (Milano: EST, 1997), 41, 46.
24. Antonio Gramsci, *La religione come senso comune*, edited and with an introduction by Tommaso La Rocca (Milano: EST, 1997), 133. For both Gramsci and his heir, the post-world war anthropologist Ernesto De Martino, "the study of popular religion is a political act, or at least a prelude to that act." They called us to "understand popular religion because it is itself intrinsically political, though its politics are complex, fragmented and contradictory." George R. Saunders, "The Magic of the South: Popular Religion and Elite Catholicism in Italian Ethnology," in *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country*, edited by Jane Schneider (New York: Berg, 1998), 188.
25. Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 19.
26. John Fulton, "Religion and Politics in Gramsci: An Introduction," *Sociological Analysis* 48, no. 3 (1987): 197–216. Interestingly, even in Italian, most of the work on Gramsci and religion seems to have been done in the 1970s and 1980s—at the very moment that liberation theologies were gaining theoretical and political force (see La Rocca, "Introduzione"). The rise of Catholic liberation theologies was something Gramsci might have appreciated, without being able to anticipate it, as he felt that ultimately socialism would replace religion as a "total philosophy of praxis."
27. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 420.
28. La Rocca, "Introduzione," 24.
29. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 247.
30. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 247–48.
31. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 621–23.
32. Roberto Vinco, *Una fede senza futuro? Religione e mondo cattolico in Gramsci* (Verona: Mazziana, 1983), 10.
33. Gramsci, quoted in Michael Watts, "Islamic Modernities? Citizenship, Civil Society, and Islamism in a Nigerian City," in *Cities and Citizenship*, edited by James Holston (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 67.

34. Fulton, "Religion and Politics in Gramsci," 203.
35. La Rocca, "Introduzione," 110–129.
36. See Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 1378, 1396, 1397; see also Fulton, "Religion and Politics in Gramsci," 206.
37. La Rocca, "Introduzione," 11.
38. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 325–7. In one of the attempts to reconcile Gramsci with Anglo-American progressive pragmatism, Nadia Urbinati has written that "the movement from common sense to philosophy might be seen as a gradual (and revolving) move from a lesser to a greater level of generality in the expression of the moral principles that are already shared by a political community." See Nadia Urbinati, "The Souths of Antonio Gramsci and the Concept of Hegemony," in *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country*, edited by Jane Schneider (New York: Berg, 1998), 151. The problem with this interpretation is that common sense as articulated within the Anglo-American tradition, unlike Gramsci's (and probably Vico's) view, is considered not an expression of the ideology of subaltern classes but instead as an epistemic foundation elaborated in the ideological terrain external to the masses that express it. See Salvatore, *Public Sphere*, 215–242.
39. Gramsci, *La religione come senso comune*, 157; Vinco, *Una fede senza futuro?*, 102.
40. Quoted in Fulton, "Religion and Politics in Gramsci," 202.
41. See Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 748, 1447; and Vinco, *Una fede senza futuro?*, 48, 57, 58.
42. Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, edited by Luther Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 10.
43. Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture, Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–84*, trans. Alan Sheridan et al. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 2–3.
44. Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault*, edited by Jeremy Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), 132. This seeming celebration of the power of religion might seem strange to many readers of Foucault, yet religious themes are central to Foucault's oeuvre. In fact, Foucault's "life-long project" has been described as an attempt to overcome the alienation from the soul by exploring how the human sciences and politics turned the

- soul into something lifeless, ghostly and separate from the world. See James Bernauer, "Cry of Spirit," foreword to Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, xiii. Foucault's work can thus be seen as an attempt to identify the underlying forces that control and shape the religious subject, and as an exercise to uncover the silenced and subjugated discourses of both religion and the Other. See also Jeremy Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 25.
45. James Bernauer and Michael Mahon, "The Ethics of Michel Foucault," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, edited by Gary Gutting (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 151.
 46. Foucault, quoted in Carrette, *Foucault and Religion*, 137.
 47. Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, 107.
 48. Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, 131.
 49. Michel Foucault, "Réponse à une lectrice Iranienne," *Nouvel Observateur*, 13–19 November 1978: 26. See also Armando Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1997), 145–155. Foucault's writings on the Iranian Revolution for the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* and other publications are collected in Michel Foucault, *Taccuino persiano* (Milan: Guerini, 1998).
 50. Michel Foucault, "Taccuino persiano: Ritorno al profeta?" *Corriere della Sera*, 22 October 1978, 1–2; and Michel Foucault, "Taccuino persiano: L'esercito, quando la terra trema," *Corriere della Sera*, 28 September 1978, 1–2.
 51. See Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 14, 30.
 52. Ali Shariati, "The Return to the Self," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, edited by John Donohue and John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 305–307.
 53. William Connolly, "Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault," *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (1993): 370.
 54. See Georg Stauth, "Revolution in Spiritless Times: An Essay on Michel Foucault's Enquiries into the Iranian Revolution," in *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, vol. 3, edited by B. Smart (London: Routledge, 1994 [1991]), 393.
 55. Michel Foucault, "L'esprit d'un monde sans esprit" (interview), in Claire Brière and Pierre Blachet, *Iran: la révolution au nom de Dieu* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 231. Emphasis added.

56. Stauth, "Revolution in Spiritless Times," 385.
57. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 12.
58. Foucault, "L'esprit d'un monde sans esprit," 234.
59. Foucault, quoted in Stauth, "Revolution in Spiritless Times," 398.
60. Stauth, "Revolution in Spiritless Times," 387; see also Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), particularly the chapter on Jalal Al-e Ahmad, for a relevant discussion of how authenticity and discontent are tied together in the Iranian revolutionary psyche. The importance of bringing these two seminal figures into dialogue is clear if we consider Edward Said's critique of Foucault vis-à-vis Gramsci: "Gramsci would find Foucault's [history] uncongenial. He would certainly appreciate the nuance of Foucault's archaeologies, but would find it odd that they make not even a nominal allowance for emergent movements, and none for revolutions, counterhegemony or historical blocs." See Edward Said, *The Word, the Text and the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 246–247. It is not clear whether Said was aware of Foucault's writings on Iran, but neither is it clear whether they completely respond to his criticism. Gramsci more explicitly focused on how to develop strategies to facilitate the emergence of movements of resistance, like Foucault (if anticipating him by almost fifty years).
61. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 214. See also Stauth, "Revolution in Spiritless Times," 394.
62. Michel Foucault, "Réponse à une lectrice Iranienne," 27.
63. See Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*, 146–155.
64. This is something which contemporary postcolonial theory has yet to succeed in impressing on the larger academy (never mind the public).
65. Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, 113.

Conflict, “Communication” and the Role of Collective Action in the Formation of Public Spheres

Zeynep Gambetti

Despite Marxist, feminist and postmodern misgivings about the notion of the “public sphere” (especially concerning its liberal, masculine and modern connotations), not only ordinary language but also social theory has obstinately allowed both the term and the notion to persist. In fact, there seems to be a recent renewal of interest in the notion, one that is sparked more by sociologists, anthropologists and historians than by political theorists. The multiple, contradictory and amazingly innovative ways in which the notion is used outside of political science is, by all means, an indication of its productiveness. But the proliferation of approaches and interpretations is such that “public sphere” has now come to connote a wide variety of phenomena, from the production of cultural modes of stranger-relationality to the institutionalization of debate, from the site of resistance to the medium of opinion formation and circulation. This may be too much for a notion to bear, especially when it has not yet disentangled itself from its legal, Hegelian connotation of state-related space or activity pertaining to the public good. The public sphere cannot consistently signify the state *and* society *and* a body that stands between state and society, all at the same time. Furthermore, it cannot be brought to designate rational activity and everyday relationality to strangers at the same time.

Or can it? The growing number of anthropological studies on publics and stranger-relationality has forcefully demonstrated that the contextual prerequisites of debating publics are produced by the circulation

of various discursive practices and narratives.¹ Social imaginaries and representations of collective selves emerge, shift, change and reestablish themselves through microprocesses that create and recreate an array of overlapping publics. Not only are publics formed as performative consequences or effects of everyday social interaction,² but the latter also constitutes a basis of resistance to domination. These relatively recent studies have been valuable in detecting minute forms of subversion where none had been noticed by political or economic analysts. In addition to laying bare the intricate relation between social practice and publicity, anthropologists have also outstripped political theorists in theorizing hitherto unidentified dynamics of change, resistance and insurgence. Much light has been shed on how unexpected and uncontrollable alter-narratives or counternarratives seep through the cracks and leaks in dominant discourses to performatively subvert them.³ By expounding upon the plural character of processes of textualization, anthropological studies show how spaces of communication gradually emerge or wither away in the interstices of everyday social activity. The state also becomes enmeshed in the micropractices of everyday life. What political scientists call “state” is but a bundle of multilayered structures and discourses that set compelling norms and subjectivate subjects by regulating their behavior. At the same time, however, the negotiation and eventual subversion of these same norms is also enabled by the state’s own ambiguity and “illegibility.”⁴ Instead of separating state and society into neatly identifiable entities, then, anthropologists point to the complex interaction between the two.

So the public sphere can and does incorporate several interrelated levels of activity, from everyday intercourse to state-related activity, passing through rational debate and communication, all of which open spheres of circulation between strangers. Subversion, after all, is a risk inherent in stranger-relationality⁵ and public spheres are those venues in which otherwise unconnected strangers enter into nonintimate relationships that either make or break sociopolitical hierarchies and norms.

But in the anthropological context, a crucial question remains: is there no difference between public and public *sphere*? Is mere stranger-relationality (as opposed to kinship ties) a sufficient basis on which to ground the notion of public sphere? Indeed, don’t the various ways in which the public is distinguished from the private, predicated either

upon the ancient Greek distinction between *idion* and *koinon*⁶ or on the more modern demarcation between the intimate and the civic, suffice in themselves such that they do not call for the additional qualification of “sphere”? One might think that the spatial and relational nuances that obtain from the public/private distinction and that have come into focus through rich and diverse anthropological studies would, for both practical and theoretical purposes, render the notion of a public *sphere* redundant; or at least would allow it to be used interchangeably with related concepts such as “public,” “space,” “publicity” and “culture.” The basic categorical argument of this essay is that to assume this is so would be a serious theoretical and political mistake.

It should be conceded at the outset that the numerous critics of the normative Habermasian model of the public sphere as a civic arena of deliberation and reasoned opinion-formation are all highly convincing. There is no need to reiterate their position here at length, for Habermas’s model is not the driving force of this essay. Briefly put: the deliberative model cannot take power differentials into account; it lacks gendering; it heavily emphasizes a masculine and bourgeois use of reason and persuasion; it fails to conceive of social identities as constitutive of the public stances of individuals; it is highly rigid in its separation of the public from the private, of the state from society, and of the public sphere from everyday life; finally, it glosses over the constitutive role that conflict or political struggle plays in the formation and upholding of public spheres.⁷ Carrying these points onto another plane, recent studies suggest that we retain the communicative aspect of publicness inherent in the normative model, but quite convincingly expand the scope of communication, refusing thereby to constrain ourselves to the Kantian ideal of the public use of reason. This exercise not only expands the means whereby publics are formed, but also broadens the spaces in and through which publicness takes effect. The salons, reading societies and informed journals mentioned in Habermas’s historical account of the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere then cease to be the privileged spaces of critical publicity.⁸ Justifiably, the language of anthropology speaks of representational spaces, symbolic spaces, spaces of circulation, spaces of performance, margins and in-betweens.

But it should also be observed that the overly antimodernist fervor of anthropologists debilitates their notion of the public sphere. Discarding

the main and foremost distinctive features of the theoretical horizon in which the notion of public sphere was conceptualized does away with the normative potential inherent in the liminal moment. Developed primarily by the anthropologist Victor Turner, liminality denotes antistructure or a threshold on the periphery of everyday life. Turner talks of liminal periods or episodes (social dramas), as well as of spheres or spaces in which structural and norm-bound constraints are lifted in such a way as to allow for a creative distancing or alienation from social life.⁹ Liminality is what distinguishes public relations from kinship ties. As Sirman notes, in liminal public spaces characterized by encounters with strangers, “each exchange marks a performative moment when the subject has to find the proper code to behave according to.”¹⁰ The temporary suspension of norms and structures paves the way for a refounding of modes of relationality upon new and potentially egalitarian grounds. Thus, opening up venues for collective agency, and eventually for self-determination, is a distinguishing feature of the public sphere.

Analytically speaking, the difference between a community that is passively constituted within a structure of communication (“passively” meaning independently of the expressed wills and conscious intentions of its members) and a community actively shaped through communicating agents must not be obliterated. The consequences of such an obliteration are not slight. To illustrate what I take to be a mere public, let me refer to Benedict Anderson’s account of the nation as a fictive binding together of otherwise unrelated individuals through modern vernaculars, mainly capitalism and the invention of print.¹¹ Imagined but not actively constructed, the nation is a typical example of a community structure that individuals are *subjected to* without being its *subjects* in the constitutive sense of the term. As seen from this perspective, such a community cannot be said to have emerged through collective self-determination. Rather, as in Adam Smith’s “invisible hand,” everyday modes of communication and interaction are thought to add up to produce a structure that is both *different* than what the deeds were intended to achieve and *beyond* the making of specific agents. The spectral shadow of Marx’s notion of alienation, long denigrated for its essentialism, looms above such structures. To wit: “Powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them.”¹²

What is missing from the recent anthropological turn in studies on publicity is the challenge faced by all democratic politics: how to order collective life according to rules that we ourselves have set? Often related to power structures or conceptualized as the effect of dominant discourses, norm-bound practices provide the condition of existence for anthropological public spheres. The focus of attention is, curiously enough, on how these norms are contested and perverted from within and through a gradual and anonymous process. Both the reproduction of norms and their perversion is thought to occur in the institutionalized space of everyday practices. Social movements are then conceptualized as the mere reproduction on a larger scale of the latter. As seductive as it may be, an overly textual reading of the “fruitful perversity”¹³ of public discourse fails to address the question of political action which, needless to say, is one of the most pressing questions of social and political thought at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

My objections to both the Enlightenment and the anthropological accounts of the public sphere are informed by the Kurdish uprising in Turkey (1984–1999). I have dealt elsewhere with what I called the “conflictual (trans)formation” of the public sphere in the urban space of Diyarbakir, the largest city in Kurdish-populated southeastern Turkey.¹⁴ Here, I will draw on theoretical insight obtained from that study to rethink the public sphere in its event-character, in its relation to conflict and political struggle and, consequently, with respect to its distinguishing feature of self-determination through collective action. In doing so, I will engage (albeit briefly) with a highly thought-provoking exchange between Dana Villa and Craig Calhoun regarding resistance and political action.¹⁵ The whole meaning of the otherwise scholarly exercise of trying to rethink the public sphere in its connection to struggle, collective action and self-determination is actually contained in this exchange whereby the question is not about whether the public sphere is a theoretically valuable concept or not, but about whether political action is possible *at all* in the present era.

I. Diyarbakir: An agonistic public space

The nonrecognition of Kurdish identity is a complex problem that has persisted in a more or less subterfuge manner since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. It turned into an acute crisis in 1984 when the extralegal Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) raided two army outposts in southeastern Turkey. The crisis immediately turned into a bloody war that realigned most of Turkey's social and political groups into two strictly antagonistic camps. By the early 1990s, it was barely impossible to speak from a "middle ground." Those who defied the language of division were persecuted on both sides. The civil war was constitutive of antagonistic publics that positioned themselves with respect to an issue that took different names according to where one stood: terrorism/separatism or the Kurdish problem/Eastern problem.

Although this alignment ruled out deliberation or communication between the camps, it nevertheless imposed a single event—that of war—on what thereby became a nationwide public of spectators. Besides, it made it impossible to ignore the fact that there was a problem, whatever the name given to it. It was clear to everyone, even to the mainstream media, that the PKK had wide grassroots support in the provinces populated by Kurds and that qualifying the situation as isolated acts of terrorism or as the *folie des grandeurs* of a small number of radical Kurdish leftists would simply not suffice. Although genuine discussion and debate were totally lacking within the Turkish public, the reality of conflict simultaneously separated *and* connected the two publics. Not only were Kurds and Turks both claiming rights to the same territory, but they were also now part of the same space of existence. The situation corresponded much to a paradox, elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe, according to which hegemonic struggles construct a single space in the very process of partitioning available discursive elements into two opposing fields.¹⁶ Irrespective of what one may have to say about the desirability of nationwide political spaces, the case in hand demonstrates the degree to which the constitution of single spaces hinges upon antagonistic division rather than consensus and harmony.

In the Kurdish case, this paradox was accompanied by another: notwithstanding the intensification of the ideological content of discourses

on both sides, the war also produced a consciousness-raising effect on part of the Turkish public. During the course of fifteen gruesome years, a fact that had long been suppressed from hegemonic Turkish discourses—that Turkish “normality” was characterized by the oppression of Kurdish identity—was forcefully brought to the attention of a significant number of Turkish intellectuals and activists. The following avowal, coming from a prominent journalist, may be said to represent the *état d’âme* of a portion of the Turkish intelligentsia:

In Turkey, neither journalists nor the press fulfilled their duties with respect to the Kurdish or the Southeastern problem. The number of those who did remained low. I admit it. As a graduate of political science, I did not know what the Kurdish problem was. It was only when the PKK entered the political scene that I started to learn ... If, at that time, we could have exposed the Diyarbakir Military Prison as the horrible space in which crimes against humanity were being perpetrated ... maybe certain things could have been different in Turkey.¹⁷

Gradually breaking out of its communitarian confines, the “Kurdish problem” evolved into a problem of democracy and minority rights, thus mobilizing a portion of “ethnic Turks.” Several unions and civil associations picked up the cause. Among other instances of collective mobilization that modified the terms of the struggle by redefining norms and structures in the second half of the 1990s was the Saturday Mothers’ Vigil inspired by the Chilean Mothers. A group of Turkish and Kurdish mothers whose sons had either disappeared or been victims of extrajudicial executions sat for over two hundred Saturdays at the heart of Istanbul to demand explanations from authorities. Politicizing the hitherto “private” domains of womanhood and motherhood, the vigil mustered support from among leftist and feminist groups. Statements made by public figures, novelists and businessmen calling for an end to military operations, as well as pop concerts and music albums that promoted peace contributed to attracting more and more attention to the human dimension of the armed conflict. Such activities were particularly important as they appealed to the broader public. They could not stop the Turkish state from pursuing military operations in the Southeast, but they created a space of

contact that blurred the otherwise rigidly drawn boundaries between the two antagonistic camps. Kurds were no longer automatically equated with “terrorists” or “assassins” but took on a more human face for a portion of the dominant public. Minority cultures started attracting popular interest.

Although there was a whole range of political or social issues that prompted other forms of collective action in the 1990s, it is not an exaggeration to claim that the Kurdish movement was one of the most mobilizing agendas in Turkey for over a decade.¹⁸ What is important for our purposes is to note how the public gaze was outstandingly directed to the novel concerns that emerged once the armed conflict waned.

With the relaxing of tension in the second half of the 1990s, political and social actors, particularly in the southeastern provinces, found themselves generating new practices or responding to new demands. Reasoned or otherwise, debate or negotiation then became inevitable between state and non-state actors in the region—though the same did not hold on the national scale. New spaces of interaction were opened up through competition between state institutions and municipalities that were governed, from 1999 onwards, by Kurdish parties. The latter, following the example of Islamic parties elsewhere in Turkey, initiated and refined local practices of democratic governance that brought constituencies, associations and party members together in deliberative processes. Diyarbakir, the largest city in southeastern Turkey, became a nexus between the region and the rest of Turkey, with Turkish intellectuals and activists streaming in to initiate research, hold joint conferences and engage in social work. An urban space that had been ravaged by fighting and ideological colonization was re-appropriated and reinvested by local cultural elements¹⁹ and a public space of action and interaction was created among a plurality of actors (both Kurdish and Turkish) where none existed a few years ago. Local politics acquired a considerable degree of independence from the armed forces of both camps, creating its own dynamics until very recently.

Likewise, such novel concerns as whether to allow for broadcasting in minority languages or to redefine citizenship such that the ethnic term “Turk” would be replaced by the more encompassing “Türkiyeli” (literally, “of Turkey”) came to preoccupy the dominant public. The latter was prompted into debating each unorthodox demand that was generated by the new practices of solidarity. A public sphere in which the norms and

structures of collective life were exposed to critical scrutiny and eventually modified through debate or actual practice was seemingly emerging in the period that roughly began in the middle half of the 1990s and continued till 2006.

The Diyarbakir case, now left in limbo owing to renewed Turkish nationalist frenzy, shared similarities with examples of mobilization where conflict, rupture and struggle have also become “communi-cative”: the case of the Zapatistas in Mexico’s Chiapas, the alter-globalization movement that forged itself a space of existence in Porto Alegre and in the World Social Forums, and the peace movement that emerged as a result of the 2003 Iraq War. Together with feminist struggles and the making of working classes throughout the past century,²⁰ these recent instances of collective action sufficiently demonstrate that conflict is not always destructive. But to what extent public spheres so constituted acquire staying power is the next question that needs to be answered.

II. On dangerous grounds: Revisiting conflict

Dana Villa’s claim is tragic: resistance is the only responsible mode of action in a world where the space of politics has been usurped by the modern subjectification of the real²¹ and by the automatism of natural and technical processes. Echoing the distraught tone of some of Heidegger and Arendt’s work, Villa contends that the absence of a genuine public sphere frustrates efforts to “resurrect the agora or some approximation thereof by appealing to deliberation, intersubjectivity, or ‘acting in concert.’”²² We have, then, no other alternative but to resist falling into the trap of norm-bound functional behavior and must preserve “as far as possible, our capacity for initiatory, agonistic action and spontaneous, independent judgment.” Of course, resisting and preserving cannot accomplish what genuine political action can in the way of founding spaces of freedom. But in the public realm that Villa depicts, “the only things that are ‘seen and heard by all’ are the false appearances ... offered up under the single aspect of mass culture.”²³ Resistance is a “re-action”; but it is the only modality of acting available for dissidents, the only bulwark against the total withdrawal of politics. Although the chances of beginning something new are

not totally eradicated from the modern world, the public realm is such that conferring any amount of permanence to new spaces of freedom has become highly exceptional indeed. As the recent degradation of the “communication” established between the Kurdish and Turkish publics seems to demonstrate, power structures operating in the wake of the twenty-first century are too resilient to acts of subversion on a microscale.

As sobering as this admonition may be, however, there seems to be a catch in the conceptual framework. Owing in large part to the ambiguity of Arendt’s own postulates, the question of whether action requires the prior existence of a public sphere where it can establish freedom rather than wreak havoc (or lead to *hubris*, in Arendt’s terms) or whether public spheres are themselves results or effects of collective action is left unanswered. Adopting a Foucauldian mode of local/everyday resistance or taking a negative-critical stance much like what Adorno, in his despair, proposed as the sole way of circumventing the trap of ideology, would indeed be the only alternatives left if it were agreed that a common world is the prerequisite of action and politics. The question is not merely a scholastic one, as is readily indicated by Villa’s (and Foucault’s, not to mention others’) claim that the condition of possibility of political action per se has almost disappeared from today’s world.

The claim to the contrary, defended by Calhoun, is that public space is a result of political action and that refraining from action would actually spell disaster in the form of the comeback of the totalitarian reflex inherent in modernity as an epoch. Calhoun, in fact, rightly argues that if action should be conceived as a new beginning in the Arendtian sense, no institutional arrangement can be regarded as its condition—action is what creates public spheres or new meanings, relations and identities. The problem facing us in late modernity is not whether or not we are to recover some historical model of the public sphere—the agora or the *salon*—but whether or not new conditions of publicness can be created. In fact, the quest for a single retrievable model of the public sphere is itself problematic, according to Calhoun. One alternative seems to be “to think of the public sphere not as the realm of a single public but as a sphere of publics.”²⁴ As such, the issue links up with that of down-to-earth democratic politics and not with some ontological conception of authentic political action.

As a matter of course, the grandiose problem of modernity and of politics after Auschwitz cannot be treated lightly. I will limit myself here to making the following humble remarks in order to introduce a theoretical perspective that, when compared to the totalizing evenness of disheartened narratives, is more likely to take into account the various examples of collective action and self-determination that still continue to subvert power structures, produce cracks in ideological boundaries, or disturb the functionalist universe of consumer capitalist society.

As against the totalizing apprehension of earlier critical theorists, Arendt notwithstanding, new approaches to power draw a slightly less ominous picture of patterns of domination and subjugation. More often than not, they point to the ambiguity of dominant structures and underline the ever-present possibility of resistance. One particular idea in the now ample literature on power structures is that of liminality, as stated above. According to Turner, liminality is a “state of being in between successive participations in social milieux dominated by social considerations, whether formal or unformalized.”²⁵ This condition of being unqualified, undetermined and unbound indisputably carries a Heideggerian underpinning of groundlessness. But Turner’s way of appropriating Heidegger is peculiar in that liminality becomes a sphere of action rather than an ontological “archmodality.”²⁶ Arising from human processes, liminal situations or periods are actually nothing but “undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct and nonrational (though not *irrational*)”²⁷ relationships that do not fit readily into available patterns of behavior. What Turner has to say about societies in general is in a way contained in the microlevel encounter with strangers that defines a relation as public instead of intimate or private.

As such, liminality is well supplied with some of the conceptual components of the public sphere and particularly with what John Austin calls the “performative.” By way of example, it lends itself to the analysis of relationships that fall outside the kinship-based realm of the private or the rule-governed field of institutions. This is an egalitarian moment because in the public domain exchange is uncertain and ambiguous in contradistinction to the space of the household where kinship is regulated by hierarchical structures. Göle, for instance, uses the notion of liminality to highlight the fractured identity of Muslim women in cosmopolitan

Turkey.²⁸ Studying the case of Merve Kavakçı, a U.S.-educated woman with fashionable headscarf who was elected deputy to the Turkish Parliament, Göle maintains that the transcultured and crossover performances of such veiled women in spaces formerly forbidden to them both by secularists and by the Muslim tradition enact a liminal way of being public. They are neither Islamic nor modern, neither private nor republican, but *between* established social identities and codes. The mode of publicness that ensues is negotiated and renegotiated in a series of micropractices that performatively modify the existing republican space of appearances. As such, publicness is construed as a field of possibility rather than as a structure or an institution.

Translating the above into the (modernist) language of political philosophy, liminality would then have to do with groundlessness, understood as the possibility to change the way things are; to recreate the world, as it were. The performative as opposed to the normative is the liminal precisely because it is the moment in which the unpredicted may occur, the unforeseeable may appear and a new mode of relationality may emerge. The liminal, then, seems to testify to the contingent character of all human structure and discourse, on the one hand, and relocates freedom in the ambiguity of public relations, on the other.

Individuals who find themselves in liminal situations can no longer depend on former meaning and behavior structures within the field of normality. Instead, liminality compels the use of imagination and creativity in working one's way out. This character of liminality accounts for its role in bringing forth social change. The most genuine liminal situations are instances of crisis where normative structures collapse and new ones are yet inexistent. Turner's idea of "social drama" corresponds to such instances. These are "public episodes of tensional irruption" or "units of aharmonic or disharmonic process, arising in conflict situations."²⁹ While a series of gradual processes may cumulatively result in major transformations in social structures, dramatic events or conflict seem to "bring fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence."³⁰ This is why a given social unit becomes most self-conscious when a crisis-provoking breach occurs in the normal functioning of social relations.

The self-reflexivity that characterizes liminal situations implies that a qualitative difference exists between dramatic and gradual processes of change. Whereas daily interaction remains within the bounds of norm-governed behavior and goes unquestioned, both liminality and what Turner calls “*communitas*” refer to “the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses.”³¹ This provides for what Villa would qualify as the sort of positive alienation that allows for the de-naturalization of the norms of mass society.³²

This creative potential built into the structure of crisis comes as a misconstruction for ears tuned to the discourse of rational deliberation. The idea that crisis may not only be awakening, but also liberating has, of course, been one of the tenets of Marxist thought, from Marx himself to Gramsci and beyond.³³ What makes Turner’s anthropological account of crisis particularly apt for theorizing public spheres (as well as revolutions) in the postmodern era is the indetermination that marks the liminal moment. Crisis does not reveal any objective structure underlying subjective belief; it liberates from all belief and structure. As such, neither the liminal moment itself nor what Turner calls the moments of redress and reintegration that follow a crisis take on a foreseeable facet or direction. While the moment of redress may open the way for a “distanced replication and critique of the events leading up to and composing the ‘crisis,’”³⁴ the phase of reintegration may reinstitute the former structures or witness the emergence of totally new ones.

It is this latter possibility (which is only a possibility and not a necessity) that links Turner’s discussion of crisis and liminality to my initial question concerning the particular circumstances of action and politics in the present era. Leaving unchallenged the austere premonition that today’s world is characterized by the full internalization of subjectivating norms, one can still make a case for a salutary “disruption of reference” in the Heideggerian sense. This would obviously require construing politics and public sphere formation not only in terms of deliberation and cooperation, but also in terms of breaches and crises. The task owes its meaning and urgency to the presentiment that today this might be the only other alternative to passivity or mere resistance.

Resistance need not be considered as a mere substitute to action in the proper (foundational) sense of the term, either. Curiously enough, the relationship that Arendt establishes between acting and resisting follows a logic that is somewhat similar to Turner's. Arendt begins her essay, "The Gap between Past and Future," with one of René Char's aphorisms: "Our inheritance was left to us by no testament." As a member of the French Resistance, Char and others find that they are stripped of all the masks that society assigns to them; they go naked, as it were, caught between the past and the future. The "apparition of freedom" visits them in their togetherness as *résistants* in the space of relationality that they create in becoming "challengers" and in taking the initiative upon themselves to fight "things worse than tyranny."³⁵ No other testament than their own imagination and togetherness guides their future action. Instead of being substitutes for action, resistance under domination—and redress in crisis situations—may actually be how we enact "initiatory, agonistic action and spontaneous, independent judgment"³⁶ in today's world.

The "revolutionary tradition," as Arendt somewhat awkwardly calls it, may involve both resistance and a new beginning. But it is actually the *world-making capacity* of any collective endeavor that confers permanence upon spaces of freedom that may emerge in the course of action. As Villa rightly remarks, Arendt is

acutely aware of the modern de-worlding of the public world to subscribe to the belief that a politics of everyday life confined to 'local' struggle and resistance can effectively prevent the further withdrawal of the political... A slightly different way of putting this is to say that not all forms of resistance (or activism) are political and that resistance itself is, at best, a kind of displaced or second-best form of political action.³⁷

The preceding elucidation of the creativity of conflict needs to be thoroughly qualified, for it is as provocative as it is risky. Liminal situations may in fact stem from the *hubris*-generating capacities of political action that fail to bring a common world or public sphere into being. Fanatical frenzy or mob reactions do not create liminality in that they accentuate normative or ideological-structural distinctions rather than disturbing them; but the rise of the Nazi movement undeniably carries liminal

dimensions. Furthermore, liminality may have different outcomes. Instead of letting something new emerge, the phase of reintegration following a crisis may reinstitute former behavioral codes or result in heightened subjugation and domination.

This is what seems to be happening to the Kurdish movement in Turkey. Following a series of distressing and provocative events of national concern,³⁸ methods were devised to have the dominant public close up on itself so as to become impervious to alternative voices. Thus, the potentially transformative effects of the new public spaces of action and interaction that emerged in Diyarbakir and elsewhere in Turkey over the past decade have largely waned. More homogeneous and autocratic than they have been in over twenty years, mainstream public opinion and political actors have successfully been able to turn the liminal situation to their advantage. Although much has been written on how this came about, it suffices to point out here that a passive public such as that described in Anderson's *Imagined Communities* is potentially prone to ideological manipulation and disciplining. That only a portion of the Turkish public could actually become actors in the reshaping of cultural and political norms prior to the orchestrated obstruction of alternatives points to the validity of what I will presently argue. It seems that only when the publicness created during social dramas ends up becoming the ground for effective self-determination, understood as the collective shaping or restructuring of the social space available to the communicating publics, that a public sphere—or a sphere of publics—may be said to have staying power. Without presuming to be exhaustive, I will explore two conceptual elements that seem indispensable for rethinking the public sphere today: visibility and world-making.

III. Crossing the threshold between resistance and transformative action

Reformulating Simmel, the literature on public spheres now abounds with references to stranger-relationality.³⁹ Unlike intimate or kinship-based forms of communication, public discourse is conceptualized as performatively constituting the public to which it is addressed. Circulation thus

appears as the means through which public discourse comes to be shared by strangers, thereby forming larger social units or even nations as imagined communities. In modern societies equipped with print and visual media, public spaces become “metatopical,”⁴⁰ that is, they are nonlocal spaces that create a plethora of bonds between the recipients of publicized discourses. This seems to be the general anthropological sense of the term “public.”

But while the anthropological approach would seem to render a distinct theory of the public sphere unnecessary, it also leaves us with no conceptual framework within which to understand the truly self-reflexive liminality implied in Turner’s idea of social drama. Anthropology conflates dramatic publicity with the everyday functioning of discursive circulation. The confusion between public and public sphere seems in fact to stem from the indiscriminate use of the concept of visibility.

Not confining oneself to the limited sense of visual performance, but taking up the question in a more ontological sense, it can be said that the opening of a space of appearance transforms otherwise unconnected people into a “commun-ity.” Without the appearance, to heterogeneous publics, of conflicts and identities, differences, commonalities and power structures, neither the designation of a given problem as a *common problem that prompts action*, nor proper “commun-ication” (rendering common) is possible. It is only within this space and through the interactions that bring it about that subjects can truly become agents of change. However, while visibility certainly denotes appearance, politically speaking, it may also take on the meaning of “mere appearance.” A whole range of issues may have “ocular” visibility in technologically advanced societies (thus becoming “spectacular” objects on television screens) without ever calling into being a reflexive-critical public. The passive reception of such visible objects must be distinguished from the more active taking up of space within any given social imaginary. Likewise, becoming an object of spectacle has little to do with becoming visible as a subject of action. Mere coexistence or copresence does not open up a space of action per se, for the simple reason that it does not disturb any mode of normal behavior. The kind of presence that carries the potential of creating spaces of action or new spaces of “commun-ity” could schematically be called “making an appearance” or “gaining publicity” in contradistinction to

“mere appearance.” This type of publicity is necessarily a mode of action, as opposed to being a mere modality of coexistence. Instead of being characterized by the more passive and gradual process of circulation, it tends to be a willed and conscious endeavor of articulation.

The actor in a social drama is surely an agent of novelty, but she is not the sole agent. The situated meaning of action is different from the meaning attributed to the action by the actor herself. It is the way an event is narrated by others that inscribes action within the spatiotemporal reality of any given community. The dependence of action on a public of both spectators (onlookers) and narrators (storytellers) hints at the incredibly productive and intricate ways in which a web of relations and significations are created in social spaces. But the spectator’s judgment not only confers its sense on action, but also determines whether the action will be carried through or not. The distinction Arendt makes between the two moments of action, to begin (*arkhein*) and to carry through (*prattein*) is of particular importance here.⁴¹ Something new may be begun by a solitary actor or group, but no transformation can acquire any amount of permanence without being sustained by others.

The point that needs to be made here is that given the relative closure of the space of action in today’s world, the visibility of different forms of relationality may actually depend much more upon the effectiveness of dramatic staging than in previous eras in human history. It is also true that this capacity pertains only (or mainly) to what Warner calls “counterpublics.” These depend more heavily on performance spaces than on print media, supply different ways of enacting stranger-relationality and are even dependent on stranger-circulation for their very constitution. Counterpublics differ from dominant publics in that the latter are “those that can take their discourse pragmatics and their lifeworlds for granted, misrecognizing the indefinite scope of their expansive address as universality or normalcy. Counterpublics are spaces of circulation in which it is hoped that the poesis of scene making will be transformative, not replicative merely.”⁴² Merely being “counter,” however, does not guarantee the opening up of a sphere of collective action. A counterpublic that has not created the right conditions for appealing to other publics in the process of self-reflexivity will probably fail to obtain an adequate modification in the power structures that it is opposing.

In Turner's framework a breach is not a breach unless it is visible, unless it imposes itself on a public in such a way that it disturbs the normal functioning of social relations. As Turner puts it: "Each public crisis has . . . liminal characteristics, since it is a threshold between more or less stable phases of the social process, but it is not a sacred limen, hedged around by taboos and thrust away from the centers of public life. On the contrary, it takes up its menacing stance in the forum itself, and as it were, dares the representatives of order to grapple with it. It cannot be ignored or wished away."⁴³ Visibility takes on here an implication that goes beyond the more innocuous sense of interconnectedness. It becomes a sort of challenge that needs to be taken up by the former power structures if they are to go on functioning. Such was, I believe, the effect of the Kurdish movement in Turkey or the Zapatistas in Mexico.

As opposed to mere visibility which assumes the prior existence of a space of appearance, conflicts and dramas could therefore be said to create such a space. Conflict may bring the "other" closer in proximity. Although "[o]verpoliticized definitions of identity and arguments of conspiracy exclude the possibility of finding semblance and familiarity [and] reinforce the demoniacal definitions of the adversary,"⁴⁴ extreme polarization may, as Turner also demonstrates, be considered as the shock necessary to bring a hegemonic public into self-reflexivity. The effectivity of communication may, in the most extreme cases, depend on the rupture of normality produced by conflict.

But this cannot be taken to mean that conflicts and crises will inevitably create a public sphere or a community of actors. Publicity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for creating a mobilizing bond that alters or reshapes power structures. This initial phase must be followed by world-making, if a public sphere of equals is to emerge at all. Thus, while redress and reintegration are stages that follow breach and crisis in Turner's social drama, the creation (or re-creation) of a world between actors and spectators is the second stage of Arendt's drama.

While there is no doubt as to the existential precedence action has in relation to the public realm, the capacity of a social or political movement to become a *conditioning factor*, that is, to leave its traces on the world, actually depends on the (re)appropriation of space. Seizing or opening up a space of existence bestows a tangible reality on a political

community, stabilizes the power generated by collective action and institutes the conditions of remembrance.⁴⁵ It was Lefebvre's insight that any "social existence" aspiring or claiming to be 'real,' but failing to produce its own space, would be a strange entity, a very peculiar kind of abstraction unable to escape from the ideological or even the 'cultural' realm."⁴⁶ The claim that any imaginary that attributes agency to publics is ideological stems, in part, from the failure to grasp the materiality of discursive practices.⁴⁷ A public is not only constituted through linguistic performativity, but through material and practical performativity.

This may be the basis on which to build a theory of social solidarity and commitment, as Calhoun suggests, as "a setting for the development of social solidarity as a matter of choice, rather than necessity. Such choice may be partly rational and explicit, but is also a matter of "world-making" in Hannah Arendt's sense. ... New ways of imagining identity, interests, and solidarity make possible new material forms of social relations. These in turn underwrite mutual commitments."⁴⁸ Speaking in terms of relationality, the world opened up between the actors and spectators becomes their common "inter-est" that binds, the "inter-esse" (being between) that characterizes togetherness.

The city of Diyarbakir, for instance, had become a common concern for its inhabitants, shifting attention from who the Kurds were (as a public or as an ethnic group) towards how the city could be made a better place in which to live. Commitments other than an imaginary Kurdish unity were then being made—not only by Kurds but also by other minorities in the region as well as by Turks. New material practices and social policies were instigated to resolve infrastructural problems, issues concerning women, forced migrants or children (especially those roaming the streets for pocket money). One practice that was particularly innovative was the initiative taken by locally elected mayors to negotiate with Ankara concerning local as well as national issues, thus short-circuiting the formal leaders of the Kurdish party. But the broader Kurdish movement was unable to seize upon the collective energies generated in Diyarbakir; it could not, in other words, translate this "communication" into transformative practice elsewhere in Turkey. Solidarity must become the basis on which to construct a form of community that does not reiterate or reinstall the power structures it set out to resist and overturn in

the first place. Appropriating the “political universality”⁴⁹ made possible by the rupture of former norms and establishing new forms of commitment requires breaking out of the claustrophobic politics of resistance. Remaining within (or lapsing into) the alternatives dictated by power indeed opens up the way to being overwhelmed in the stages of redress and reintegration.

It is necessary, therefore, to stress that the imagination and resourcefulness at play in creating new relations on more microlevels need also to be summoned concerning forms of political organization. Not unlike Marx and for much the same reasons, the council system, beginning with the Paris Commune, is Arendt’s “political form, at last found”: this is the “amazing formation of a new power structure which owed its existence to nothing but the organizational impulses of the people themselves.”⁵⁰ The particular form of the councils—the rejection of representative democracy or party politics, the multiplication of spaces of participation, the deprofessionalization of administrative tasks—is an alternative to political structures considered as natural and inevitable today—the state, party politics, bureaucracy. The council system opens the ground for plurality and spontaneity, as well as reducing the gap between the rulers and the ruled. Alternatives need not be limited to what was historically available, though, especially when innovative local experiences such as those in Porto Alegre or Chiapas provide sources of inspiration.

To conclude this roughly outlined theoretical proposition, my understanding of the difference between a public and a public sphere entails reflection upon the chances that the normative elements contained in the latter notion—self-determination, critical distance to power structures, “commun-ication” between divergent standpoints and participation in decision-making—would turn into enduring features of society, rather than being localized, temporary and eventually manipulated or overpowered strategies of resistance. The relationship between action and the public sphere then acquires much significance in that the passive intake that constitutes publics no longer suffices to assume any deliberate “community” formation is actually taking place. What we may need today is a new theory of action, rather than of agency as is very much the inclination today.

Notes

1. I bear the guilt of oversimplification by lumping together a range of anthropological, cultural and historical studies under the convenient title of “anthropological studies” or, further on in the text, “anthropology.” The main rationale for such an aberration is merely to distinguish these from mainstream political science. I have in mind, particularly, the contributors to the special issue of *Public Culture* (14, no. 1 [2002]) on public spheres: Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, Arjun Appadurai, Craig Calhoun, Michael Warner, Nilüfer Göle, Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, but also historians, such as Joan Landes, Geoff Eley and Mary Ryan.
2. Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 49–90.
3. Cf. Homi Bhabha, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 299.
4. Veena Das, “The Signature of the State: The Paradox of Illegibility,” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, edited by Veena Das and Deborah Poole (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press/Oxford, UK: James Currey, 2004), 225–252.
5. Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 88.
6. According to Aristotle, citizens in the Greek polis belonged to two orders of existence: what is one’s own (*idion*) and what is communal (*koinon*). Arendt draws on this distinction to found her notion of the public realm. She writes that this distinction “was not just an opinion or theory of Aristotle, but a simple historical fact that the foundation of the *polis* was preceded by the destruction of all organized units resting on kinship.” Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 24.
7. Cf. particularly Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” and Geoff Eley, “Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century,” both in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 109–142 and 318–331, respectively.
8. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

9. Cf. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974); and Victor Turner, *From Ritual To Theater: The Human Seriousness Of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982). I am indebted to Nükhet Sirman for having brought Turner's perspective to my attention.
10. Nükhet Sirman, "Intimate Publics: Equality and Competition Among Strangers in Turkish Society," unpublished paper presented at the *Journées d'Etudes* organized by the Institut d'Ethnologie Méditerranéenne et Comparative and the Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes, Istanbul, 7–8 May 2004, 6.
11. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
12. Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 1st ed., edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 128.
13. Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 81.
14. Zeynep Gambetti, "The Conflictual (Trans)formation of the Public Sphere in Urban Space: The Case of Diyarbakır," *New Perspectives on Turkey* (Spring 2005): 43–71.
15. Dana Villa, "Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation and Critique," and Craig Calhoun, "Plurality, Promises and Public Spaces," in *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of the Political*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 179–206 and 232–259, respectively.
16. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 137.
17. Hasan Cemal, "Basin General Emri Dinlememeli" (interview with Nese Düzel), *Radikal*, 26 May 2003, 2.
18. The only other movement that prompted a comparable amount of mobilization was the Islamic movement.
19. Cf. my "Decolonizing Diyarbakir: Culture, Identity and the Struggle to Appropriate Urban Space," in *Comparing Cities: The Middle East and South Asia*, edited by Kamran Asdar Ali and Martina Rieker (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009).
20. Cf. Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures," who bases his analyses on E. P. Thomson's *The Making of the English Working Class*.
21. By which Villa ("Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation and Critique," 184) refers to Heidegger's critique of modernity. The problem with

modernity, according to Heidegger, is that Cartesian and Kantian metaphysics have redrawn the ontological horizon and have reduced all realms of Being to the generic category of experience [*Erlebnis*]. Modernity has, in other words, reduced the real to what the subject experiences, expresses or can represent.

22. Villa, "Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation and Critique," 200.
23. Villa, "Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation and Critique."
24. Calhoun, "Plurality, Promises and Public Spaces," 250.
25. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, 52.
26. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, 52.
27. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, 47.
28. Nilüfer Göle, "Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries," *Public Culture*, 14, no. 1 (2002): 173–190.
29. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, 33 and 37.
30. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, 35.
31. Turner, *From Ritual To Theater*, 44.
32. Villa, "Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation and Critique," 198: "One can speak ... not only of our loss of feeling for the world but also of the world itself, for modernity's will to will overwhelms the dimension of artifice that 'frames' genuine action, destroying mediation and contributing to the growing 'naturalization' of human existence."
33. Although representing the second generation of the predominantly Marxist Frankfurt School, Habermas sought to substitute debate for class struggle and participatory democracy for an egalitarian society when he developed his model of the public sphere.
34. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, 41.
35. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 4.
36. Villa, "Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation and Critique," 200.
37. Villa, "Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation and Critique," 201.
38. The European Union's double standards in dealing with Turkey's demand for full membership, the Annan Plan for a solution to the Cyprus issue and the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq have provoked a sense of national injury and fear.
39. Warner derives the term "stranger-relationality" from Simmel's 1908 essay "The Stranger," which was an attempt to grasp how encounters with

- “marvelously exotic” traders or wandering Jews disturbed patterns of everyday life in the early modern town. Warner notes, however, that the presence of the stranger is no longer exceptional, but, on the contrary, inscribed into to the very nature of modern polities, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 56.
40. Charles Taylor, “Modern Social Imaginaries,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 114.
 41. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 189.
 42. Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 88.
 43. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, 39.
 44. Göle, “Islam in Public,” 186.
 45. This is where the distinction between being in the world and being of the world becomes most evident. Cf. Jacques Taminiaux, *La Fille de Thrace et le penseur professionnel: Arendt et Heidegger* (Paris: Payot, 1992), 162.
 46. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 53.
 47. Cf. Warner’s claims as to the mental/imaginary constitution of publics, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 82ff.
 48. Craig Calhoun, “Imagining Solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, Constitutional Patriotism, and the Public Sphere,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 148–149.
 49. To quote at length Slavoj Žižek, “The One Measure of True Love Is: You Can Insult the Other” (interviewed by Sabine Reul and Thomas Deichmann), *Spiked*, 15 November 2001, <http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000002D2C4.htm>: “Here I need to ask myself a simple Habermasian question: how can we ground universality in our experience? Naturally, I don’t accept this postmodern game that each of us inhabits his or her particular universe. I believe there is universality. But I don’t believe in some a priori universality of fundamental rules or universal notions. The only true universality we have access to is political universality. Which is not solidarity in some abstract idealist sense, but solidarity in struggle. If we are engaged in the same struggle, if we discover that—and this for me is the authentic moment of solidarity—being feminists and ecologists, or feminists and workers, we all of a sudden have this insight: ‘My God, but our struggle is ultimately the same!’ This political universality would be the only authentic universality. And this, of course, is what is missing today, because politics today is increasingly a politics of merely negotiating compromises between different positions.”

50. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), 257. Arendt's favorite examples are the 1871 Paris Commune, the soviets of the 1905 Russian Revolution, the 1919 Räterepublik in Germany and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Cf. also Arendt, *On Revolution*, 262; and Arendt, "Totalitarian Imperialism: Reflections of the Hungarian Revolution," *Journal of Politics* 20, no. 1 (1958): 28.

Between Private and Public

Counterpublics of Memory: Memoirs and Public Testimonies of the Lebanese Civil War

Sune Haugbolle

The climax of the social scientist's concern with history is the idea he comes to hold of the epoch in which he lives. The climax of his concern with biography is the idea he comes to hold of man's basic nature, and of the limits it may set to the transformation of man by the course of history.

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*

In the reconstituting publics of postconflict societies, memory can function as a realm of counterhegemonic discourse in which defeated and excluded elements speak against the grain. Lebanon after the Civil War from 1975 to 1990 is a case in point.¹ This article discusses the negotiation of Lebanese identity in counterpublics of memory²—by which I refer to discourses about the past and particularly about the civil war that Lebanese groups and individuals use to mark off their social identity vis-à-vis each other—through a reading of autobiographies and testimonies of the war. The analysis focuses on how personal narratives of violence and suffering interact with “common sense” narratives of national history, and what this interaction meant for the possibility of national reconciliation in the postwar period, defined as the period under Syrian hegemony from November 1990 to May 2005.³ More broadly, postwar Lebanon presents an opportunity to explore consensus and deliberation in the context of identity politics and social memory in a stratified society.⁴ While many

of the arguments developed about war memory may apply equally to the period after 2005, the scope here is restricted to the specifics that characterized the public sphere in the 1990–2005 era.

The multiple voices of war memories

—*You know, Lina, one day we'll be looking back at all this with nostalgia.*

This is what a friend of Lina Tabbara tells her as she is leaving Beirut at the end of the “two-year war” in 1975–76,⁵ after she has given up on “survival in Beirut,” the title of her war memoirs from 1977. The idea that anyone would think about a bloody civil war in nostalgic terms may seem uncanny. But in fact, nostalgia for the war was not an uncommon sentiment in postwar Lebanon. This was partly due to a sustained social, political and economic crisis in the postwar period, which made some people look to the past rather than to the future. Lebanese intellectuals, artists, academics, activists and politicians have offered various explanations for the apparent lack of historical consciousness. Some point to the failure of the state to encourage remembering and teach the younger generation what happened in the war, while others look for an explanation in the inconclusive end to the war. Whatever the explanation, the idea that a “collective amnesia” was plaguing society gradually became a common sense notion in itself, to the effect that most attempts to make the memory of the war public in postwar Lebanon, and particularly after 1998, were formulated in response to this so-called “collective amnesia.” Silence was seen as hegemonic, and remembering and commemoration as “truth telling.” As we shall see, this dichotomy between silence/forgetting/death and speech/memory/life, which prepared the ground ontologically for the popular slogan of “the truth” in the Independence Intifada in 2005, glossed over the complexities of the public sphere in Lebanon by ignoring the existence of multiple memory narratives and their precarious interrelations.

In Lebanese war and postwar literature and films the attempt to come to terms with the difficult relation between personal memory and national history is a common theme. The prominent novelist Elias Khoury and many others like him describe reality as it appears through the blurred filter of memory. Compared to novels, memoirs represent a

more formally historical approach to personal history, where the narration stays closer to an ostensibly objective concept of “what happened,” and where the alterations between several voices—internal, external, dialogical—typical of the Lebanese war-novel are filtered out to give room for straighter narratives of the war. This is not to say that a straighter narration produces a more realistic rendering of the past. Rather, the existence of several voices in one and the same discourse is often the norm rather than the exception in both oral and written accounts of the past.⁶ Using Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia or “differentiated speech,” anthropologists have described how internally contradictory narratives of the past are formulated differently depending on context and audience—in social interaction as well as in a literary context, which is where Bakhtin’s ideas were first formulated.⁷

The negotiation of multiple voices and multiple truths offers a key to understanding the formation of social memory. Bakhtin argued that individual speech and thinking responds to preceding utterances, recycling, as it were, bits and pieces of current world views. The common sense of social groups, he believed, is essentially made up of disparate voices, including “other voices” of often dominant discourses such as that of the nation-state. People can communicate with each other because they identify and understand the multiple world views or voices that are necessarily present in any form of communication.⁸

Lebanon, a country with confined space and an intensely diverse and conflicted population, is so to speak packed with voices. This necessitates extremely flexible strategies of code-switching. In the public negotiation of the civil war, existent themes and prior points of view mingle with politically and emotionally charged personal experience and interpretation. For example, most Lebanese juggle narratives of communitarian solidarity together with narratives of antisectarianism and all-inclusive nationalism, simply because they experienced both of these sentiments during the war and are torn between the different voices and the stories of self and society they provide. The focus of the following examination of war memoirs and testimonies will be to sort out why certain voices were privileged in public and others blotted out.

One should not assume too much structure in narratives that are, for the most part, fragments of memory. Because individuals who have

lived through violent conflict tend to remember the past in fragments it also often appears fragmented in public renderings.⁹ The nation-state will often seek to straighten the bended fragments and create national history out of their confusing disparities. In fact, many studies of social memory highlight how hegemonic state-sanctioned discourses of the past are received, reformulated and countered by civil society.¹⁰ Since there was little or no state-orchestrated attempt to create homogeneous history out of the disparate parts of war-memory in postwar Lebanon, the debate was shaped in a way that reflected the elements of society and their power relations. The result was not silence or amnesia, as some Lebanese claimed, but a dislocated discussion in various tempi and various spheres, each with their villains and heroes, and each their conclusions on the Lebanese Civil War.

Autobiographies—"self life stories"—and related genres (testimonies, diaries, letters) have been studied mostly by literary critics who show how structured narratives help people make sense of existence on the individual level by telling their lives to themselves.¹¹ On a more critical note, Bourdieu has argued that the creation of self through the re-creation of the past is nothing more than an "autobiographical illusion."¹² What seems to be an organized life in the rendering may in fact, on closer inspection, have been a series of chances and random opportunities. At best, he suggests, this is a case of *ex post facto* explanations; at worst, self-delusion or even a deliberate cover-up operation. Other writers have noted that autobiographical writing tends to substitute historical time with a subjective concept of time, in which objective criteria for what is important to tell are overshadowed by the situation of the writer and restricted by the finality of the time span of his or her lifetime. Within this personal time, a linearity is often invented which may not have been visible (or present) in the lived moment. Life, if told in hindsight, seems to have been lived towards a goal, a *telos*, creating a narrative imbued with "retrospective teleology."¹³

In autobiographical accounts of the Lebanese Civil War, the personal level of self-creation is invested in the re-creation of the country's feeble national history during and after the war. There is much truth to be found in these texts, but also a fair share of retrospective teleology on behalf of the nation. Memoirs and testimonies, like all public statements,

involve and engage the gaze of the public eye and hence relate to the “typical” or the common sense in the way Gramsci thought of as “fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential” conceptions of the world shared by “the mass of people” in a political community.¹⁴ This examination of biographical accounts of civil war therefore pays attention to the effect that the situation of the writer, consciously or unconsciously, wields on him or her. How do commonly held notions about the war shape the public formulation of personal experiences? How do memory fragments conform to national discourses of the past?

Early war memoirs

War memoirs have existed in Lebanon since the very beginning of the civil war, but never as a very widely read genre.¹⁵ Some of the first biographies to appear were written by (or edited interviews with) some of the leaders from the early war. Nawaf Salam has examined three of these books, by the Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt, the Palestinian leader Abu Iyad and the Maronite leader Camille Chamoun.¹⁶ All three writers present themselves and their people as victims of the circumstances and their actions as purely defensive, rational and of course completely “necessary.” More than anything, these early autobiographies are telling documents of the sectarian-ideological vigor driving the war in its early stages. They are skewed mirrors of the “realities” of the war, seen from the perspective of some of the men who directed it.

Historical personalities like Jumblatt and Chamoun do not have to justify why they are writing and why we should read about their lives. They incarnate common sense—not of the Lebanese, but of their own communities. Accordingly, their memories and general understanding of the war defend their respective political ideology. As an example, consider the following coarse summary of “Lebanese” history in Chamoun’s book: (my emphasis) “*The Lebanese* has often been prosecuted through his history, because he *is of the Christian religion* and represents a civilisation which makes him closer to the West.”¹⁷ So much for the approximately two million Muslim and Druze Lebanese!

In the postwar period, statements like these could still be heard in private settings, but were severely tempered in any national context. During the war the national public sphere fractured and particularistic ideas of Lebanese identity were given free reign within “policed” communitarian spaces. As representatives of certain fractions and sects, the leaders spoke on behalf of “their people,” often no more than a synonym for their sect, even when that sect was dressed as “the Lebanese,” like in the quote from Chamoun. A certain ideological standpoint translated into a specific collective memory, which in turn translated into the ethos, or common sense, of the sub-national group in question. Such was the prevailing logic when the war was at its most divisive. After all, this was the time when Kamal Jumblatt, who led a movement to break down barriers between sects and unite the Lebanese people in a popular revolution, allegedly declared that in case of a war in the Shuf-mountains, “one-third of the Christians would be killed, one-third forced to emigrate and one-third subjugated.”¹⁸ Daily retributions, intimidations and petty violence as well as actual massacres in the “two-year war” (1975–76) induced many people to rally behind the party of “their” neighborhood and sect. Later in the war, as the militias became entrenched and increasingly mafia-like, people largely rejected these particularistic representations, albeit to no great effect, since the war carried on until 1990.

Civilian memoirs present a more complex and often more human reflection on the past than those of political leaders, who are strictly confined by their role as representatives. One of the many transformative effects of the civil war was that it altered public representation in Lebanon and made way for the subaltern voices of Shi’a, Palestinians and women to express and represent themselves independently of interlocutors in the political and cultural realm. While the militias gave this released energy a military expression, Palestinian writers, the poets of the South [*shu’arā’ al-janūb*] and female novelists rendered new voices to parts of the Lebanese which had previously depended on representation by others, the others principally being *zu’amā’* [traditional political elites], bourgeois cultural elites, husbands and fathers.¹⁹ The next part of the article examines women’s war memoirs as examples of civilian voices and new counterpublics that emerged as an effect of the war.

The autobiographies of three Lebanese women

Lina Tabbara wrote her memoirs as early as 1977, a time when many people thought that the civil war had come to an end. Tabbara's book is a breathless account of the political events of the two-year war, seen through the eyes of a young, well-off woman from the liberal end of West Beirut. Like most other stories of the civil war, she starts her narrative with what psychologists call a "flashbulb memory" of 13 April 1975.²⁰ Her narration picks up the pace in synchrony with the pace of events, as ordinary citizens like her and her husband find themselves encroached upon by a conflict which they do not support and whose murky sociocultural driving forces they fail to grasp. Yet the war gradually imposes its own logic on people, and Lina and her husband watch with bewilderment and fear as the first passport-murders²¹ are reported close to their home in 'Ayn al-Muraysa²² and friendships in their circle break along sectarian lines. In the frenzy of this climate, the author herself finds it increasingly difficult to maintain her neutral place between the pro-Christian and pro-Palestinian positions, and after the massacres on Black Saturday,²³ she loses control of her emotions:

Today, 7th December 1975, no one in Lebanon can pretend any longer not to have taken sides. Noble humanitarian feelings and sanctimonious pacifism have had their day. I am Lebanese, Moslem and Palestinian and it concerns me when three hundred and sixty-five Lebanese Moslems are murdered. I feel the seeds of hatred and the desire for revenge taking root in my very depths. At this moment I want the Mourabitoun or anybody else to give the Phalangists back twice as good as we got. I would like them to go into offices and kill the first seven hundred and thirty defenceless Christians they can lay their hands on.²⁴

These memories illustrate how the enforced representation by political parties and militias could seem strangely alien to the represented at one point, only to make all the sense in the world when one's own community comes under attack. At the same time, the book paints a portrait of people who fought with all their might to resist this logic. Tabbara does

not consciously reflect on these things. In the immediacy of the war, it is hardly possible to make sense of the rapidly evolving events. Her memories respond to the ever-evolving conflict. Everything is adrift, nothing is certain and new battles, treaties and information constantly bring the author to new conclusions about the war. In the end, Tabbara and her husband, he before her, give up and escape to Paris, where the book is subsequently written.

Tabbara's story resembles that of thousands of educated middle-class Lebanese who felt unsafe, but also marginalized by the new, ultra-sectarian climate, and eventually left the country. Jean Makdisi, sister to the late prominent academic Edward Said, belongs to the same group of secular, liberal people, many of whom lived in the area close to the American University at the tip of Beirut (Ras Beirut), yet she stayed and lived through the whole war. Her memoirs from 1990 still represent one of the best attempts to understand what the war did to people on a personal and societal level. Writing in 1990, she has the advantage of hindsight. Her account is at once intimate and sociological, and although she is also driven by necessity and immediacy, she allows herself more reflection than Lina Tabbara.

Makdisi's main concern is to understand how the war changed people's perception of themselves and their place in the world. She explores this ontological makeover by listing a "Glossary of Terms Used in Times of Crisis": idioms that the war created and turned into common sense for the Lebanese. For example, the expression *māshī al-hāl* [everything is going well] now came to signify that the person saying it had just barely escaped death! Such cynical twists to normal-day language reflected the perversion of normal life. Faced with the overwhelming memory of fifteen years of conflict, Makdisi concedes that she cannot hope to make sense of it all—only to attempt to register it and express it as well as she can. "All I can do is to set down what I have seen, my glimpses into the heart of violence and madness, of a society being—dismembered? constructed? reconstructed? destroyed? resurrected?—*changed*."²⁵

This preoccupation with the results and effects of the war is typical for Lebanon in the early 1990s, before reconstruction set in on a mass scale. Beirut's ruined urban landscape provided staggering evidence that on all levels, the country had not yet recovered from civil conflict.

Reflecting on her neighborhood in Hamra, she bemoans the fall from grace of prewar Ras Beirut. Whereas the public space before the war was ordered by the values (and power) of what she calls “bourgeois cosmopolitanism,” it is now a cacophony of lowlife refugees brandishing cheap copies of Western products.²⁶ This comment should not be taken as an attack on the intrusion of socially marginalized groups onto the stomping ground of Beirut’s liberals. The real source of her spleen is the permeation of sectarian values and sectarian representation in all of Lebanese society. If anything has changed because of the war, she finds, it is this: that the narrow strip beyond sectarianism that she and her peers inhabited has been reduced to a patch. She, as a Leftist Christian, feels branded by her religious background and in perpetual danger of being misrepresented by the political parties, and misunderstood by outsiders who buy into that representation:

People use the word *Christian* too often when referring to certain political parties. I squirm. It is not the same, you know: political ideologies and religious, cultural heritage are two different things ... For years, foreign journalists spoke of “Christian Rightists” and “Muslim Leftists,” and we chided them for their simplistic reduction of complicated history to these clichés in which we were caught, branded.²⁷

Her memoirs also include riveting descriptions of the Israeli invasion in 1982 and of the last part of the war in 1989. These chapters are powerful renderings of civilian suffering: of the jagged rhythm of personal life during the worst fighting; of the constant concern with *al-hawādith* [the events], of shattered nerves and broken human relations, but also of the survival mechanisms which carried people through the war, not least of which was a black, black humor.

Soha Beshara’s *Resistance* was published thirteen years after Makdisi’s book was written, and a quarter of a century after Tabbara’s *Survival in Beirut*. Beshara’s story of the war is written from a more subaltern perspective than those of the two bourgeois, even if socially committed, Palestinian women from liberal West Beirut. What also sets her apart is that, rather than being of interest as a documentation of the typical, her tale is a rather unusual one. As a young Greek Orthodox girl from

a village in the South, she became involved with the Communist movement during the war and was eventually assigned the dangerous task of assassinating the leader of the SLA,²⁸ General Antoine Lahad. In 1988, she attempted to kill him disguised as an aerobics teacher, but failed and was subsequently thrown into the notorious al-khiyam prison.

Her book provides a straight narrative of her involvement in the war and how she was won over by the Communist cause, not for ideological but for nationalistic reasons. The quiescence of her surroundings compelled her to take action to liberate her (part of the) country from the Israeli presence. Although her book presents the memories of an involved party, its focus is on popular resistance against Israel. For Beshara, the war did not end in 1990. She spent most of the 1990s imprisoned in al-khiyam, where she developed friendships with women from Hizbullah, their ideological and religious differences notwithstanding. Her memoirs are a nationalist tale with a triumphant culmination in her release in 1998 and her elevation to a true, national hero of the kind people stop to congratulate on the street. Indeed, Beshara became the symbol of that period of national unity triggered by the liberation of Southern Lebanon in May 2000:

For a time, with the liberation of the South, life even became beautiful. It was a rare moment of unity for the Lebanese. For fifteen years, with guns in hand, they had torn each other to shreds, and after a peace that refused to deal with the damage they had done to each other, they remained deeply divided, too irresponsible to heal such painful wounds. The liberation showed how our civil war had been, like any fratricidal conflict, a vain illusion—when compared with the strength of our resistance against the Israeli occupation.²⁹

The “reality” of the war, thus defined in the book, was the fight against Israel. Compared to this reality, all fighting between Lebanese can be explained away as sheer madness, an aberration of reality. Although there are fleeting references in the text to collaborators and malicious Falangists, they are never the main focus. As a result, the memory of the war does not appear as a divisive issue. On the contrary, she recommends, the war must be debated so people can understand “what it is to grow up under occupation, to live at the mercy of checkpoints and curfews.”³⁰ The

reference to the Second Palestinian Intifada is clear here. But Beshara's first and last concern is with the Lebanese and their attempt to regain their national pride:

There remains the basic causes for which I fought: a free Lebanon, a country at peace, but also grounded in the ideals of justice and democracy. This is above all a question of memory. If the people let themselves forget, then this hope will be lost and the spirit of the Resistance vanish.³¹

Although Beshara's account is touching in its humanism, a dilemma remains: her discourse represents what she perceives to be the righteous side in the war, even if she attempts to cover this bias by claims that the war was "madness" and a "mistake." These attempts to define Israel as the real enemy and in turn connect the liberation of the South with the post-war period were two significant new formulations of Lebanese nationalism. It is an attractive narrative, because it offers a nationalist teleology and a positive ending to the war (in 2000, not in 1990). However, even if it is never stated, the members of the Christian Right who worked with Israel would have to ask for absolution, and the group that successfully concluded the war by defeating the national enemy would have to be rewarded. Contrary to the official discourse of *lā ghālib, lā maghlūb* [no victor, no vanquished] the Lebanese were not equal partners in this new nationalism, just as they were not equal partners in the war. The pretense of an inclusive public sphere against the backdrop of perceived political marginalization had several detrimental effects. As we shall see, it urged excluded elements, like the Left and the Christian Right, to buttress their war memories, albeit in careful ways that reflected the ambiguities and sensitivities of postwar Lebanon.

All three memoirs are created out of present concerns of the authors and address three periods in Lebanon's modern history: the war, the immediate postwar period, and the period after 2000, when the war began to be a sufficiently distant memory to be discussed as a historical event rather than a pressing reality. It is no coincidence that all three memoirs were written outside of Lebanon. Reflections need distance, in space and often also in time, in order to be successfully disentangled from the habitual, internalized memory which people do not see but which shapes the

actions of individuals and societies. Symptomatically, Soha Beshara only started dealing with her memories after she had moved to Paris. One day, a former inmate in al-khiyam sent her some of her papers and clothes from the prison in a package, which became her Proustian madeleine cake and set free the memory that would otherwise “still be in chains.”³²

Testimonies and memoirs of former militiamen

After the war, Lebanese intellectuals and artists recurrently berated the “chained memories” and “traumatic repression” of their compatriots. The War writ large, they argued, had become a “taboo,” was “repressed” and had produced “amnesia” in society, and it was high time the Lebanese took a lumpy bite of the proverbial madeleine cake. There had to be “closure,” they believed, in order for Lebanon to “move on.”³³ Reading the testimonies and memoirs of former militiamen, there is reason to believe that these absolutist explanations, supported by buzzwords taken from Western political lingo and put forth by people who often did not fight in the war themselves, obfuscated a much more complex situation. Certain aspects of the war, as for example the resistance against Israel and popular coexistence in spite of the boundaries imposed by militias, were capable of creating a positive memory and could therefore be shared in public free of risk; whereas other aspects, like personal and collective pain, guilt, shame and responsibility associated with the war, could be considered truly contentious issues.³⁴

Perpetrators and victims more than anyone embody the shadow which the war continued to cast over postwar Lebanon and the problematic nature of the mantra of “no victor, no vanquished.” While most of the Lebanese population can be considered victims in one way or another, women often bore the brunt of the suffering, although, as we have just seen, rarely as passive victims. One of the major achievements of women was to hold together the collapsing structures of Lebanese society. Soha Beshara in the role of assassin is the most radical example of a woman entering the masculine realm, but far from the only example of the transformative effects which the war had on gender relations in Lebanon. The death or absence of so many males during the war forced Lebanese

women into the public sphere of the labor market. Some research suggests that, although they suffered, many women appreciated the social responsibility that came with their new role and sense of importance for society.³⁵ The war brought about if not a revolution then at least a good basis for social change, yet neither Tabbara, Makdisi or Beshara picks up on this theme in a consciously feminist way. Other women writers, like Etel Adnan and Hanan al-Shaykh, suggest that the war was intimately linked to sexual repression and male domination. However, this can be a disturbing conclusion to draw in public, since it points the finger at Lebanese society, or even worse, Lebanese culture. It is more comforting to point to the fact that the militias never represented a large proportion of the population, and that many men were active in the peace movement in the late 1980s. In the words of Charles Corm, the truth of the war is that it was never based on mass mobilization or popular participation, only on a rule of terror by a scrupulous minority legitimized by pseudo-ideologies which the ordinary population rejected.³⁶ This idea of a “war of the others” certainly became one of the most prevalent “common sense” explanations of the war, and one which jeopardized the role of the 10,000–20,000 involved.³⁷

A law of general amnesty in 1991 allowed former militiamen to take up peaceful occupations. While many managed to find jobs in security, the army or the transport sector, others were less successful in securing a role for themselves in peacetime Lebanon. They found themselves frowned upon and mostly preferred to keep quiet with their former profession. If the war was “a war of the others,” as many Lebanese have it, how can we then explain what motivated Lebanese to fight Lebanese? Perhaps the memories of these people were repressed, by themselves and others, because their experience potentially holds the answer to the most nagging question of them all, namely what drove the war. Is it really true that the Lebanese who participated were orchestrated from the outside? How did ordinary citizens transform themselves into professional killers, where did the violence come from and who bears the responsibility for it? How did the “banality of evil,” in Hannah Arendt’s famous formulation, enter everyday routines during the war, not just of those who carried out the violence but also of the masses who accepted it?

Troubling as these ethical questions are, the Lebanese press did not completely fail to confront them. And who better to ask than the soldiers

who took part in the war? From the mid-1990s, several Lebanese newspapers published interviews with former militiamen. Some of them spoke out anonymously, while a few chose to step forward of their own initiative. All parties from the war are represented in these articles, but not in equal measures and not in similar ways. A relatively large group of former militiamen from the Christian militias have made their memories public, partly as a result of an ongoing debate within the Maronite Christian community over the recent past. At the other end of the scale, the Shi'i parties Amal and Hizbullah have been the least exposed, which may have to do with the relative coherence of those groups in postwar Lebanon. A number of intellectuals involved with the Lebanese Left during the war have written novels and memoirs, which cannot be described as testimonies but have nevertheless added to a gradually better understanding of the ideological zeal in the socialist camp and how it changed during the war.³⁸ As a whole, these public representations conjure up a multivocal narrative of the reasons for the outbreak, the different periods and the aftermath of the war, and offer tentative answers to the difficult problem of guilt, punishment and retribution.

The Christian debate

Former militiamen involved with the Christian Right figured prominently in public testimonies of the war. More than any other community in Lebanon, the Christians in general and the Maronite Christians in particular underwent a process of reorientation after the war. Divergent interpretations of the last phase of the war pitted followers or quasi-apologists of General Aoun, the Lebanese Forces (LF) or Kata'ib against those who see the downfall of the Christian Right as a natural and well-deserved outcome of the Christian nationalist strain that emerged before and during the war. How people positioned themselves in the debate about the Syrian presence in Lebanon was equally important. The most manifest example of this conflict was the split of Kata'ib between a pro-Syrian strand under Karim Pakradouni and an anti-Syrian strand under Amin Jumayil. The latter strand and the many groups who were loosely affiliated with it or shared their opinions saw a direct link between the struggle during the

war and Syria's grip on postwar Lebanon. For a long time any attempt to come to terms with the radicalism of the past was preceded by the necessity of continuing the struggle for independence. This widespread sense of loss in the Christian community, termed *al-iḥbāt al-Masīhī* [the Christian disenchantment], produced nostalgia for the time before the civil war and for the war itself, which in turn isolated the position of the Christian Right, both on a popular and a political level, and made it even more unreceptive to critique.³⁹

The political fragmentation of the Christian community hardened communitarian defensiveness but also gave birth to a certain row over the Christian past. In 2000, the sociologist Nasri Salhab in his book *al-Maṣ'ala al-Maruniyya* [The Maronite Question] subtitled *al-Asbāb al-Tārikhiyya li-l-Iḥbat al-Marūnī* [The Historical Roots of the Maronite Frustration] called for the Maronites to face up to their past mistakes. If the Maronites took a critical look at themselves, Salhab wrote, they would see that their "war of liberation" ended in suppression, and that they lost the moral guidance of Christianity and closed themselves off in a defensive and degenerate sectarianism.⁴⁰

Other attempts to dismantle the ideology of the Christian Right have come from outside the Christian community, and even from outside Lebanon. In 2004, French journalist Alain Ménargues published *Les Secrets de la Guerre du Liban* which portrays the Christian Right from Bashir Jumayil's ascent to Sabra and Shatila, based on interviews with key actors in the war.⁴¹ The book became a bestseller in Lebanon. The portrait is anything but flattering and includes details of the leadership's close connections to the Israeli government. Of course, the Christian Right was not alone in committing massacres and getting caught up in sectarian exclusiveness. But in the context of the ongoing conflict with Israel and widespread sympathy for the Palestinian Intifada, their cooperation with Israel constitutes something akin to a cardinal sin. The climax of this cooperation and the "main file" against the Christian Right remains the Sabra and Shatila massacre in September 1982, in which Christian militiamen killed more than two thousand Palestinian civilians in revenge of Bashir Jumayil's death days earlier. The massacre caused an international uproar and forced then-Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon to step down. In the postwar period, Sabra and Shatila, more so than other

massacres, have been probed several times in feature articles and publications.⁴² Elias Khoury has played a particular role in the attempt to integrate the Palestinian war experience into Lebanese collective memory, both through activism⁴³ and in his literary work, which includes the novel *Bab al-Shams* [Gate of the Sun] about the Palestinian experience in Lebanon, released in a popular screen version in 2004.⁴⁴

Another significant example of Christian strife over the past was the release of Robert “Cobra” Hatem’s book *From Israel to Damascus* in 1999.⁴⁵ The memoirs of this former bodyguard of Elie Hubayqa were intended to indict Hubayqa, widely regarded as a traitor in the anti-Syrian camp of the LF. Apparently, the stir caused by the book did succeed in alienating Hubayqa from the political elite, and some have even speculated that the disclosures in the book started a downward spiral culminating with his assassination in January 2002. Hubayqa’s past was indeed uncommonly criminal, and as political support gradually fell away, so did the political protection which had kept him in power and, perhaps, kept him alive through the 1990s. In TV interviews he repeatedly denied any responsibility for the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982. As part of a series of articles about former militiamen, the *al-Nahar* newspaper in 1998 published a rare and candid interview with Hubayqa tracing his personal history. When the discussion turned to the war, the interviewer began to focus on his memories and guilt:

Q: Do you know how many people you killed?

A: No. I don’t want to think about it, and if I do, I don’t want to talk about it.

Q: How do you look at your former enemies?

A: We decided slowly to fight them, and so did they about us. And he [the Muslim or Leftist] also has right on his side, he considered me a danger to his presence and his principles.

Q: Do you have any regrets?

A: I regret that I belonged to a party and not to the army, that I belonged to a splinter-group, not to a public institution.

Q: Are there any pictures coming back to you?

A: Yes, some of these pictures, which I was responsible for, and other pictures with me as the victim.

Q: Do you think about the victims of the war?

A: When I talked about experiences, these thoughts are part of it. I was once at Saint George watching that beautiful Solidère, and to each building on the road of destruction belongs a story. And I thought to myself, how many people occupied it, defended it and died there. Today it has become a big hotel designed to create financial benefit. To the revenues from it stick more blood than the rain has showered over Lebanon. The building stayed, but where are those who paid with their life to keep their position in it?

Q: If there would be a war again, would you participate?

A: No, I'm sure I wouldn't.

Q: Can we consider that you regret?

A: I consider that I learned.

Q: No words of repentance?

A: That's between me and myself.⁴⁶

Hubayqa is right: had repentance been between him and society, he would have been talking to a judge and not to a journalist. Here he is allowed to keep the secret chamber of his memories closed off to the public. When words are not followed by the threat of retribution, it is easy to be sorry and say, like Muhammad Abdul Hamid Beydoun, a former Amal fighter and postwar minister whose interview was published together with Hubayqa's, that "the idea of the other has ended. The other has become a partner in the country. And I can assure you that no one is ready to repeat the experience, neither individuals nor organizations." This is as close as these former leaders get to repenting, saying that they, and the whole country, have learned from their follies and promise not to repeat them. They realize what created the idea of the other and produced the violence, but in their mind that idea has been replaced by a national idea of a partner in the country. This change of perception and new nationalism grant

them redemption. In this regard, Hubayqa is no different from his bodyguard, Robert “Cobra” Hatem, who wrote around the same time:

Today, in my lonely exile, haunted by memories, I am neither worried nor frightened that I personally participated in the assassination of some Shia Moslem prisoners. I carried out my orders as a soldier, kidnapped persons during the Israeli occupation, out of anger by rights, to avenge our innocent victims killed in cold blood, and in keeping with the line mapped out by our leaders [like Hubayqa].⁴⁷

As we shall see, there is a marked difference between the explanations of former leaders like Hubayqa and lower ranking fighters like Cobra. Unlike the leaders who gave the orders, the common militiamen tend to evade their responsibility by pointing to “*al-zu’amá*,” “the big shots [*al-kibār*],” or most often simply the “responsible [*al-mas’ūlūn*].” Seen in this perspective, the apology delivered in *al-Nahar* on 10 February 2000 by a former colleague of Hubayqa’s in the top ranks of the LF, Assa’ad Shaftari, was a radical breach of the self-imposed silence regarding one’s own misdeeds, not only of former Christian leaders, but of all former high-ranking militiamen in Lebanon. In his letter, Shaftari apologized to all his victims, “living or dead,” for “the ugliness of war and for what I did during the civil war in the name of Lebanon or the ‘cause’ of ‘the Christians.’”

The letter is formed by a series of confessions all introduced by *a’tadhir* [I apologize]; apologies for having “misrepresented Lebanon,” for having “caused disgust,” and for having “led the destiny of Lebanon astray.” Commenting on the dogma of no victor, no vanquished, Shaftari writes that “a distorted picture has emerged, that during the 15 years of war everybody who participated on whichever side was a war criminal.” The truth is that “a shameless minority” has built up this image. Hopefully, he writes, these people will see that his public apology “is the only way out of the Lebanese distress and that it will clean the souls of hatred and ill will and the pain of the past.” To conclude, he calls for “true reconciliation with the self before reconciliation with the others.”

Shaftari’s piece did not cause a sudden wave of true reconciliation with “the others” to take place in Lebanon. Perhaps due to the abstract

formulations and the absence of any concrete details to match those revealed by Cobra, the letter went largely unnoticed. But in 2002, Shafтари returned with a more elaborate account in the style of Cobra, only without the irreconcilable tone.⁴⁸ The narrative presented in these articles constitutes an interesting and rather unique example of a public apology from a former leader.

The three articles published in *al-Hayat* concentrate on three issues, namely the difficulties of remembering the war, memories from Shafтари's childhood and youth and, most substantially, memories from the war. Given the precarious nature of these memories, he is clearly aware of the possibly upsetting consequences of his revealing statements. Yet, he writes, "the purpose... is to relate this trial to those who did not live it without embellishing or shortening. And the truth needs to be said in order for us to deserve the forgiveness of our children." He knows "that the war was both ugly and complicated and the difficulties surrounding it many," but, he states, "I hope that others will realise what I have realised; especially that the tragedy was mutual and that everyone was implicated." The intention is not "to call for all files from the war to be published," but to encourage others to display the sort of courage that he has had to mount before revealing what he calls "the truth of the war."

After a childhood spent in the "lion's den" of the Christian neighborhood Jummayza, Shafтари joined Kata'ib in 1974, just before the war broke out. At this point he clearly believed that "Lebanon was a country made to be for the Christians and modelled for them," and that their fight against the Palestinians was therefore justified. Kata'ib's "just war" broke out in April 1975 but soon turned ugly. Random violence was the name of the game, both internally and externally. Militiamen treated civilians with absolute carelessness, and Shafтари himself signed several orders for captives to be executed. In one of the most chilling accounts, he recalls how at one point the LF phoned a movie theatre with a hoax bomb threat, forcing it to evacuate the audience and then bombarding them once they were outdoors. By way of explanation, he writes:

There was no reason for this clearly pointless violence, but elements of it were founded in my feelings. The political problem transgressed every possible restriction and allowed us to act the way we felt.

By “us,” Shaftari appears to be referring at once to militiamen, the Christian community and its leaders. His memories of close encounters with Bashir Jumayil, Elie Hubayqa, Samir Ja’ja’ and other top officials illustrate how devoid of any moral standards their war became. The question of his own guilt only occurred to him in a religious context. He remembers meeting a priest and confessing some of the atrocities he had committed. When he left the church it was always with a clear conscience: “I was guilty in my misdeeds and mistakes... but at this stage my mind was at ease, because the (Christian) society was living my situation and had allowed for what I did.”

This was the logic that prevailed on all sides of the conflict and which made the Lebanese believe that they could resort to any means in their fight. After the war, in an uncharged atmosphere, it is only natural that Shaftari and others like him should begin to question the validity of this logic and face their guilt. However, the stakes are high for those who confess, both in terms of personal security and integrity. There has to be a redeeming factor, and in the case of Assa’ad Shaftari that factor is his dismantling and deconstructing of the sectarian discourse of the Christian Right, and by extension any sectarian discourse that still maintains that the war was justified and that their leaders in it died as martyrs for a *national* cause. This is by no means an exclusively Christian strategy. Similar expressions of regret and disbelief of the ideologies which drove the war can be found in testimonies from all sides. The former Communist leader Karim Muruwa, in his memoirs from 2002, relates how the war transformed him from a pacifist to a proper warrior. One of his tasks as commander was to visit fellow Communist fighters on the frontline and assure them that they would be redeemed in the end:

I tried to motivate them, promising them that the future would compensate the price paid for this war. I don’t know from where I got that certitude. Today I cannot believe the confidence which I must have possessed in order to act like that.⁴⁹

By implicating himself and his group, Muruwa blames all Lebanese who got carried away. This historical lesson fits with the officially accepted narrative of the war, which renders the memory constructive and therefore suitable for a national public. The same is true of Shaftari’s narrative. The

Bashir Jumayil and Samir Ja'ja' who appear in his account are far from righteous, national leaders. As much as any other participant they committed awful atrocities. Shaftari speaks as someone who used to occupy a position within the very sectarian realm that he criticizes, and by doing this he distances himself from it and implicitly annuls the past. His apologies become confessions in the Christian sense of the word and grant him absolution for his sins; absolution for what he did during the war as well as for having belonged to a sectarian mindset in Lebanon.

Foot soldiers remember the war

In a number of interviews published in the big Lebanese dailies since the late 1990s, former militiamen from all factions except for Hizbullah reminisce and reflect on what they did during the war. Asked how they relate to the misdeeds they committed, they repent and apologize, but only in abstract terms. None of them go as far as Shaftari and none admit to killing anyone during the war. Therefore these interviews can hardly be considered full apologies, which would address themselves to a victim and name the crime. Instead of taking the blame, these former foot soldiers direct a great deal of bitterness towards their former and present leaders. First, they reproach them for having manipulated the Lebanese people before the war and for having lied to them about their enemy:

The leadership implanted feelings of sectarianism in us and emphasized that the Muslim was the enemy. (Niqula, the LF).⁵⁰

Only the *zu'amā'* gained anything. Today they are MP's and ministers and they couldn't care less about the fate of those who died. They died for nothing. And the war ended without resolving anything. We don't understand how it ended. They forced us into fighting by saying: kill, or you will be killed. They are laughing at us today. If only Sayyid Musa Sadr had been here today to change the situation ... (Hussein, Amal)

By presenting themselves as victims of a historical condition, in which various ideologies were imprinted on them through propaganda led by

an “unscupulous minority of leaders,” they externalize the guilt that they know is widely attributed to them. Kamal, who had entered the Sunni militia Murabitun at the beginning of the war to fight for the Palestinian cause, soon realized that he had been deceived and left the group in 1978:

They told me I was isolationist [sympathizing with Kata’ib]. I began thinking, who is an isolationist? We were actually fighting ourselves, Lebanese against Lebanese, and I started telling the other fighters this. We were drinking tea with Kata’ib at the frontline, and then: back to the fighting! Neither he nor I understood what the war meant.

Many others left their respective militia in the time of the “little wars” between and inside different sects after 1982. They all reject sectarianism today; in fact, to them the most important lesson of the war is that there has to be room for all opinions and that Muslims and Christians are equally worthy citizens. In hindsight, most of these militiamen discover that they were actually Lebanese nationalists all along, who had merely been led astray momentarily. Today they are united by a common understanding that the war was pointless and that they were, and still are, hoodwinked by *al-kibār*. When the talk comes around to the violence and the atrocities of the war, they describe with disbelief and detachment what their comrades or soldiers on the other side of the divide committed. A typical story goes:

One time, we were in Ras en-Naba’ [in West Beirut, close to East Beirut] and one of my comrades shot a woman who was hanging up her laundry in Ashraffiyeh [East Beirut]. He came down and told us, and I lost my temper. I wanted to kill him. I tried to bite his throat. The other guys beat me up. How can a person possibly kill a woman? And another time we were in a battle. I saw a man running back and forth on the rooftop of a building. I tried to aim for him. But I told myself that he was civilian and that I shouldn’t injure him. Then I changed my mind and thought: he is a fighter. And in the end I managed to fire, missing by far. He ran away. A third time, we captured a spy during a mission. And I took his belt and started to pound him. It felt like electricity was running through me, and I gave

him to another guy ... In any case, 90% of those who fought were decent. The war was fought by great heroes and exploited by great cowards. I don't think that a human being who sacrifices his soul can be mean and despicable. (Hisham, PSP)

The externalized cause of the war is here represented by the other ten percent of non-decent fighters and their leaders. According to confessions like this, the leaders manipulated the militiamen and their co-fighters committed atrocities, while they themselves were caught between a rock and a hard place not knowing what was going on:

I regret all those who killed and died in vain. It was a war of gangs. I regret that I took part in the war. I was a kid and I didn't know where I was going ... During a battle in the Amal-Murabitun war, we raided my neighborhood and threw my neighbors out. The *qabāday* [popular leader] beat them up, but I didn't. That day I cried and I regretted. I was afraid that they would kill them. They were children of my street, my folks [*awlād al-ḥayy*]. Their family knew my family. *Ḥarām*, what had they done? That day I understood that the war was a lie. And that 'the movement' [Amal] was chaos and was lacking every sense of organisation. Since that day I began to separate myself gradually from the movement until I finally left it. (Hussayn, Amal)

Many people gained a lot and ended up in power. Today they are ministers. They took advantage of us and they still do by leading the country in a dishonest way. They are laughing at us. (Niqla, the LF)

Apart from resenting "the responsible," they also regret their own participation in the war and what it did to the country. George (the LF) considers that:

The war achieved nothing. I am sorry for all those who died. The fighters fueled the war. A car doesn't drive without fuel. But fuel burns out; and this is how all these young men evaporated. And those who didn't die lost a great deal in terms of society, family and economy. I also regret what happened

to the nation, what was destroyed of the infrastructure, the army and the economy. As for the group responsible for the war, it became clear that they didn't do anything for those who joined them. Only those close to them made profit.

This [Lebanese nationalism] is what the war destroyed. Lebanon doesn't mean anything to me. (Abu Juwad, Amal)

No one gained anything, but we all lost. We became "the sick man of the Orient," like the Ottoman Empire was before the First World War. (Pierre, NLP)

I regret the sad destiny of Lebanon. *Harām*, it was a shame what happened. Everyone used to envy us. (Karim, the LF)

Reading these accounts one gets the impression that the fighters have truly learned from the war. In the words of Hisham (PSP), "Perhaps the only good result of the war was that it taught me who is my enemy; not the Christians, but the responsible who are truly to blame." However, this solidarity between the victims against *al-kibār* is a partial truth. Other, more reproachful and self-vindicating discourses also exist, produced by communitarian solidarities which, if anything, have grown stronger since the end of the war. One might suspect that the journalists or newspapers have had their own agenda in bringing out a specific discourse. To borrow a term from Andrew Shryock, "off stage" and sometimes even "on display," many Lebanese still have grudges to bear.⁵¹ The former Leftists are an interesting example in this respect, since their solidarity cannot be described as communitarian. Because their vision of a secular society lost out in the war and the postwar period, many today feel that sectarianism as a political system has "won" the war, and that they were in the right in defending the Palestinians and calling for social and political change back in 1975. As Ahmad, who is still a member of the Lebanese Communist Party, explains:

I feel a personal loyalty towards those martyrs who are among the cost which can't be redeemed in the fight that was taking place at that time. And maybe loyalty for the people who fell. I can see how it has been overshadowed by the general fight for a different nation.⁵²

In fact, this discourse resembles the way in which other groups who feel excluded from power in postwar Lebanon formulate their regret. Most people involved with the Christian Right feel that they lost the war to Syria and its supporters. Others, including a member of the Kata'ib's female unit *al-niẓāmiyyāt* [The Female Regulars], maintain that they were right in defending Lebanon against the Palestinians in 1975, and what they see as their nationalist sacrifices have not been paid due respect in postwar Lebanon:

I cannot say that I completely regret having taken part in the war. And especially in the first two years when we acted in lieu of the army. ... But I can say that the war didn't lead to any results. As for the Palestinians, we [Christians] weren't the ones who expelled them. We only wanted to safeguard Lebanon, but we participated in its destruction. (Pierre, NLP)

I ask myself: had it been possible for those meeting in Ta'if to decide that Lebanon is the ultimate homeland for all Lebanese, had it not been for the sacrifices of our [Kata'ib's] young men? What hurts me most is when people accuse the young men of betrayal, because people's memory, and especially in the young generation, has blotted out parts of the resistance and only remembers the fighting in the last two years [the Aoun-Ja'ja' war]. I long for the day when we will be able to honour the young martyrs who sacrificed their lives so that we can live. (Jocelyne, Kata'ib)⁵³

The fall guy

Several observers have argued that the Lebanese Civil War created a new nationalism out of the experience of suffering "simultaneously, but not together," as Samir Franjeh has put it.⁵⁴ The fractured public during the war created an ambiguous foundation for postwar nationalism, where memories of "imagined fraternity" and bodily experiences of separation blended, competed and were manipulated by social and political actors. This article has shown how public memories and interactions in

the public sphere in general were shaped by such ambiguity, contravening more homogenous forms of nationhood.⁵⁵ At the same time, the weak foundations for cross-sectarian nationalism often necessitated, and continue to necessitate, strong attachments to the nation in the form of symbols and discourses that are blatantly “Lebanese”—such as cross-sectarianism and the Lebanese flag—but often enacted or uttered in a specific sectarian context, medium or physical space that makes the nationalism open to sub-national readings “between the lines.” As I have argued in another article, this dynamic was exposed in dramatic ways during the so-called “Independence Intifada” in 2005.⁵⁶

Arguably, the dilemmas of overlapping and unresolved identities and nationalist imaginaries that have confronted the Lebanese in their struggle to construct an inclusive public sphere on the ruins of the civil war are not particular to the postwar period, but are products of Lebanon’s specific brand of sectarian power-sharing and can be traced back to the foundation of modern Lebanon.⁵ Before the war, the situation in Lebanon could be described as a stalemate of competing nationalisms, all of them struggling to achieve a hegemonic position. The war transformed this competition into violent struggle. After the war, a new public consensus stressing coexistence, tolerance and, more implicitly, Syrian tutelage effectively effaced the strident ideologies from public discourse. In a gendered understanding of the war, the men might be to blame, but in an ideological sense the culprits are the particularistic brands of nationalism, which the men fought for, and by extension the people who ran the militias. In national discourse, the particularistic ideologies became the fall guy, and their former adherers therefore had to distance themselves publicly from sectarianism and isolationism in order to renew their membership of the national realm. The amnesty law in 1991 gave them legal amnesty, but in order to achieve public absolution they had to denounce their former attachment in public rituals of catharsis. Other groups were politically or socially marginalized and simply sought recognition of their perspective by remembering the war: women stressed civilian suffering; secular middle classes stressed that the war was not of their making; Christian parties used memory of the war to come to terms with their fall from power; and former foot soldiers blamed their leaders. Disparate parts of Lebanon’s confused civil war sought integration of their experience in the collective

understanding. And all of them, in one way or another, pointed the finger at sectarianism.

Since the Syrian retreat in April 2005, a new and potentially constructive interpretation of the war has been gaining ground, stressing at once Israeli, American, Iranian, Palestinian and Syrian interference in Lebanese affairs as the main reasons for Lebanon's fratricide. As for sectarianism, it continues to structure the public sphere. Doubletalk and *kalām fāḍī* [empty talk], but also guardedness and vulnerability shape public interaction amongst the Lebanese no less than before. More crucially, the political system from the national to the local level still operates according to a sectarian distribution of power. The postideological realm constructed in the name of national reconciliation and "truth telling" is therefore largely imagined and depends on a public consensus of civic nationalism or "intellectual patriotism."⁵⁸ The fall guy, in other words, was neither dead nor gone, but continued to be present "between the lines" in postwar Lebanon. He was a product of a public sphere unusually rife with coded signals, masks and voices in play. In such a public sphere, the truth is invariably slippery, and therefore invariably highly prized.

Notes

1. Parts of this chapter appear in my book *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
2. The expression refers to Nancy Fraser's definition and Michael Warner's elaboration of alternative publics of subordinate social groups. See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 49–90; and Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).
3. Sune Haugbolle, "Spatial Transformations in the Lebanese 'Independence Intifada,'" *Arab Studies Journal* 2 (2006): 60–77.
4. Here I refer to Nancy Fraser's discussion of "societies whose basic institutional framework generates unequal social groups in structural relations of dominance and subordination." Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 122.
5. The first phase of the Lebanese Civil War, which ended when the Syrian army entered Lebanon on 15 November 1976.
6. Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of a Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1995).
7. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Andrea L. Smith, "Heteroglossia, 'Common Sense,' and Social Memory," *American Ethnologist* 2 (2004): 251–269; Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997).
8. Bakhtin, *Dialogical Imagination*; Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin*, 18–148.
9. Peter van der Veer, "The Victim's Tale: Memory and Forgetting in the Story of Violence," in *Religion Between Violence and Reconciliation*, edited by Thomas Scheffler (Beirut: Ergon Verlag, 2002).
10. Swedenburg, *Memories of a Revolt*; Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, eds., *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Andrea L. Smith, "Heteroglossia, 'Common Sense,' and Social Memory," *American Ethnologist* 2 (2006): 251–269.
11. Jens Brockmeier, ed., *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2001).
12. Pierre Bourdieu, "L'illusion biographique," in *Raisons Pratiques: Sur la Théorie de l'Action*, edited by P. Bourdieu (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994).

13. Brockmeier, *Narrative and Identity*.
14. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 419–425.
15. In addition to the memoirs discussed in this paper, see Henri Eddé, *Le Liban d'où je Viens* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1997); Karim Pakradouni, *De la Malediction Libanaise a la Guerre du Golfe* (Beirut: FMA, 1991); and Fawwaz Traboulsi, *Surat al-Fatah bil-Ahmar* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1997).
16. Nawaf Salam, "La Guerre Civile au Liban (1975–76): Lecture dans le Miroir des Mémoires," *Revue Francaise de Science Politique* 4 (1981): 769–789.
17. Camille Chamoun, *Crise au Liban* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1977), 6.
18. Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I.B. Tauris, 1993), 392.
19. For changes in cultural representation in Lebanon, see Elise Adib Salem, *Constructing Lebanon: A Century of Literary Narratives* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003), 97–173.
20. Flashbulb memory is a memory laid down in great detail during a highly personally or historically significant event. Flashbulb memories are perceived to have a "photographic" quality.
21. A common form of execution in the two-year war, where random Muslims or Christians were stopped and executed solely on the grounds of their religious identification.
22. A West Beirut neighborhood close to the American University of Beirut.
23. On Saturday 6 December 1975, the assassination of four young Falangists near the Tall al-Zatar refugee camp provoked random killings of Muslims and Palestinians on the streets of Beirut. As many as 150–200 people were murdered.
24. Lina Mikdadi Tabbara, *Survival in Beirut: A Diary of the Civil War* (London: Onyx Press, 1979).
25. Jean Said Makdisi, *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir* (New York: Persea Books, 1990), 32.
26. Makdisi, *Beirut Fragments*, 67–89.
27. Makdisi, *Beirut Fragments*, 138–139.
28. The South Lebanese Army, a pro-Israeli militia, set up in 1978 and only dissolved in 2000 following the withdrawal of the Israeli army from Southern Lebanon.

29. Soha Beshara, *Resistance* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2003), 140.
30. Beshara, *Resistance*, 141.
31. Beshara, *Resistance*, 140.
32. Beshara, *Resistance*, 2.
33. Sune Haugbolle, "Public and Private Memory of the Lebanese Civil War," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 1 (2005): 191–203.
34. Sune Haugbolle, "Memory as Representation and Memory as Idiom," in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon*, edited by Youssef Choueiri (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).
35. Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, ed., *Women and War in Lebanon* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999).
36. Charles Corm, "Myths and Realities of the Lebanese Conflict," in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, edited by N. Shehadi (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988).
37. These numbers given by Corm are hardly reliable. There are no official surveys of participation in the militias. One report estimates that as many as one out of six Lebanese males participated in the "war system" in Lebanon. See the American Task Force on Lebanon, "Working Paper from Conference on Lebanon" (Washington, DC, 1991), 10. Many militiamen were loosely affiliated and are difficult to account for.
38. Among others, Fawwaz Traboulsi, *Rihlat al-Fatah bi-l-Ahmar*; Elias Khoury, *al-Wujuh al-Bayda'* [The White Faces] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Abhath al-'Arabiyya, 1986); Rashid al-Daif, *'Azizi al-Sayyid Kawabata* [Dear Mr. Kawabata] (Beirut: Dar Muhtaraf, 1995); and Karim Muruwa, *Karim Muruwa Yatadhakkir: fi ma Yashbah al-Sira* [Karim Muruwa Remembers: Something like a Biography. Interview by Saqr Abu Fakhr] (Damascus: Dar al-Mada, 2002).
39. Carole Dagher, *Bring Down the Walls: Lebanon's Postwar Challenge* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2000), 15–32.
40. Nasri Salhab, *al-Mas'ala al-Maruniyya: al-Asbab al-Tarikhiyya li-l-Ihbat al-maruni* [The Maronite Question: The Historical Roots of the Maronite Disenchantment] (Beirut: Bisan, 2000), 11.
41. Alain Ménargues, *Les Secrets de la Guerre du Liban: Du Coup d'État de Béchir Gémayel aux Massacres des Camps Palestiniens* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2004).

42. E.g., selected parts from the document of Sabra and Shatila, September 1982, in *al-Safir*, 8, 9, 10 and 12 May 2003.
43. Laleh Khalili, "Places of Memory and Mourning: Palestinian Commemoration in the Refugee Camps of Lebanon," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 1 (2005): 42–43.
44. Elias Khoury, *Bab al-Shams* [Gate of the Sun] (Beirut: Dar al-'Arab, 1998).
45. The book is banned in Lebanon but widely read on the Internet at <http://www.israeltodamascus.com>.
46. "Rihla fi Nufus Milishiyyin Sabiqin 3/3" [A Journey through the Souls of Former Militiamen], *al-Nahar*, 13 February 1998.
47. See Robert Hatem, *From Israel to Damascus: The Painful Road of Blood, Betrayal and Deception* (La Mesa, CA: Pride International Publications, 1999), chapter 5, <http://www.israeltodamascus.com>.
48. "Musa'id Hubayqa al-Sabiq Yakshif Millafat min Harb al-Lubnaniyya" [Hubayqa's Former Aide Reveals Files from the Lebanese War], interview by Hazim al-Amin, *al-Hayat*, 14, 15 and 16 February 2002, parts 1–3.
49. Muruwa, *Karim Muruwa Remembers*, chapter 14.
50. All the quotes in the following are taken from "Rihla fi Nufus Milishiyyin Sabiqin" [A Journey through the Souls of Former Militiamen], *al-Nahar*, 11 and 12 February 1998, unless otherwise stated.
51. Andrew Shryock, ed., *Off Stage/On Display: Intimacy and Ethnography in the Age of Public Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).
52. "Muqatilan 'Sabiqan' Yasta'idan Harb al-Madi bi-wa'i al-hadir" [Two 'Former' Militiamen Recall the War of Yesterday with the Consciousness of the Present], *al-Safir*, 15 April 2004.
53. "Muqatilan 'Sabiqan' Yastaidan Harb al-Madi bi-wa'i al-hadir" [Two 'Former' Militiamen Recall the War of Yesterday with the Consciousness of the Present], *al-Safir*, 14 April 2004.
54. Marius Reinkowski, "National Identity in Lebanon Since 1990," *Orient* 38 (1997): 493; Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*.
55. Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).
56. Haugbolle, "Spatial Transformations."
57. Michael Hudson, "The Problem of Authoritative Power in Lebanese Politics: Why Consociationalism Failed," in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, edited by N. Shahade (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988);

Ussama S. Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

58. Reinkowski, "National Identity in Lebanon Since 1990," 512.

Migrant Domestic Workers: A New Public Presence in the Middle East?

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A discussion of migrant domestic labor brings together three developments that have hitherto remained largely unconnected in academic debate: the rapid growth of paid domestic labor, the feminization of transnational migration, and the development of new public spheres.¹ In the last decades of the twentieth century paid domestic labor has become a growth sector in many areas of the world; the number of migrants employed as domestic workers has increased even faster. As the large majority of these migrant domestic workers are women, we have seen the feminization of international migration. Not only in Europe and North America, but also in East Asia and the Middle East, growing economic inequalities on a global scale, shifts in family relations and household composition, and changing patterns and evaluations of women's employment and unpaid domestic work have drawn migrant women into this field of employment.

This chapter investigates one particular effect of the rapid increase of migrant domestic workers in the Middle East: their presence in the public.² We start by sketching the context and preconditions for their public presence in three localities, Dubai, Istanbul, and Beirut. These sites were selected because of differences in their historical trajectories of paid domestic labor, their processes of state formation and patterns of transnational migration. We then briefly revisit conventional notions of "the public," highlighting the variety of modes of "being present in the

public”—including bodies, spaces and associations—and locating these various modes in fields of power. The mainstay of this article is an analysis of the presence of migrant domestic workers in public space that includes tracing its historical trajectories in order to highlight the particularities of the present-day situation. Finally, moving to the arena of public debate and representation, we briefly discuss migrant domestic workers’ presence in the media.

Contexts and preconditions

A key concept that provides insight into the public presence of migrant domestic workers in the Middle East is mobility. In order to become present in public space in the Middle East migrant domestic workers need to make two moves: they have to cross international borders to travel from their place of origin to the site of employment; and once there, they need to have the opportunity to move outside the confines of their employer’s home.

International migration needs to be seen within the context of tremendous inequalities in wealth on a global scale. In the Middle East a crucial moment was the development of the oil economy after 1973. The very rapid rise of income in the oil-exporting countries, such as in the United Arab Emirates, brought about a strong demand for migrant workers in infrastructure and construction, education and health services, as well as in domestic labor.³ At first migrant workers—especially the large numbers employed in education and health services—tended to be mainly from the Arab world. From the 1980s on, Arab migrants were gradually replaced by Asian labor in those fields of employment that do not require Arabic language proficiency, as Asian labor was cheaper, seen as less of a political risk, and easier to control, while some of the better positions were taken up by nationals. With the economic recession of the later 1980s, demand for workers in construction and infrastructure fell, while the demand for domestic workers continued. As a result migration from Asia became increasingly feminized.⁴

Such an influx of migrant labor did not remain limited to the oil-producing countries in the Middle East. The development of the oil

economy also had an effect on non-oil-exporting countries in the Arab Middle East, such as Lebanon and Jordan. The latter witnessed the development of new middle classes, often based—at least in part—on the remittances sent home from employment in the Gulf states. Changing family structures also stimulated the employment of paid domestic labor, as the younger generation tended to leave the extended family early in the life cycle and the growth of women's education and their subsequent employment further increased the need for paid help for housework, childcare, and elderly care. Simultaneously, local women who may have done this work previously were able to leave this unattractive field of employment as other sources of income became available. The net result has been that it is mainly *migrant* women from South and Southeast Asia who are currently engaged in this work. Because they may well earn ten times what they could make if locally employed, even well educated women who would never consider working as a domestic at home go abroad to gain employment as domestic workers.⁵

The rise in migrant domestic labor does not only enable female employers to work in the public sphere; it also facilitates a particular higher-status lifestyle that could not be sustained without domestic workers.⁶ While in some settings employing a migrant domestic worker was in itself an indication of the status and standing of the employer's household, further distinctions also become important. Nationality is a major marker of stratification among migrant domestic workers. Filipina domestics, among the first to come as migrant labor to the Middle East, tend to be held in high regard and are often the best paid because of their high level of education, good knowledge of English—an asset especially appreciated in households with children of school age—their “modern” appearance and their professionalism. Yet the arguments employers provide for or against particular categories of domestic workers are far from stable. They are often stereotypical and change over time, partly because they are developed in contrast to domestics from other nationalities. With the more recent influx of Indonesian domestic workers in the Middle East, for example, Filipinas are increasingly seen as “too assertive” compared to the Indonesians workers’ “obedience.” As Muslims, the Indonesian domestics are also perceived as being “cleaner” and “more civilized” than the Sri Lankan women working in large numbers in the Middle East.

In spite of the great differences in wealth, often exacerbated by neo-liberal policies of economic restructuring, labor migration from Asia to the Middle East has not come about as an unmediated, natural process. Often women have been actively induced to work abroad as domestics. In some settings, such as the Philippines, state policies have actively encouraged international labor migration, and these workers' remittances have become a crucial source of income for the state as well as for individual households. Indeed, the Philippine government has granted so-called "Overseas Filipino Workers" (OFW) with the honorary status of "the new heroes." Recruitment agents—some licensed, many not—have also been instrumental in inducing women to work abroad,⁷ sometimes deceiving them with respect to wage levels, conditions of employment and even location of employment. Such deception is considered to fall within the framework of human trafficking. In this sense, migrant domestic labor ought also to be seen as forced migration, especially in the case of refugees.

More generally, studies focusing on the motivations of women to migrate abroad indicate that it is often hard to distinguish between family and individual strategies. Whereas many women argue that they leave for the sake of their families (in order to provide a better future for their children), some also leave in order to get away from abusive relationships or to escape particular family demands.⁸ Others continue to stay away as they find it problematic to "fit in" again in their families of origin and see advantages in remaining abroad.⁹

If this is the wider context of migrant domestic labor in the Middle East, our research sites have their own specificities with respect to the proportion of migrants to the national population and the patterns and directions of migration. In the United Arab Emirates, a major oil exporter, there are tremendous differences in terms of wealth and benefits between the very small national population and the large majority of non-national residents. By the mid 1990s 75% of the population and 90% of the labor force was expatriate; estimates for Dubai are even higher.¹⁰ This foreign labor force is employed in a wide range of fields and on many levels of employment. In addition to manual labor, a considerable number of migrants work in (semi-) professional jobs. As a result, a substantial nonnational middle class has emerged. These Asian, Arab and Euro-American expatriates also employ a large number of foreign domestic

workers. Though most migrant domestics in the Dubai are from countries such as India and Indonesia, there are also substantial numbers of workers from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia.¹¹

Turkey, with a much larger population, offers a contrast to the Arab Middle East. Not only is it much less influenced by the Middle Eastern oil economy, but it also has its own history as a labor exporter (to Europe). It is true that the tendency for Turkish middle- and upper-class households to employ domestic workers is widespread, but most of these households employ Turkish women as day workers.¹² Further, most migrant domestic workers in Turkey are not from Asia but from the former Soviet republics. The small contingent of Filipinas in Turkey is mainly employed by corporate executives and other internationals.¹³ The Turkish upper middle-class households, in contrast, tend to prefer Moldavian domestics, especially the Gagauz, a group of Christian-Turkish origin who are not only seen as well educated, obedient, and professional, but also combine their ability to speak Turkish with an image of Western modernity.¹⁴ Moldavian domestics are also preferred over Turkish domestics, as the latter either refuse to work as live-ins (or would demand higher payment to do so) and are, in the eyes of their employers, far less “professional”: they “do not keep their distance,” attempt to personalize their relations with employers to gain additional benefits, and have their own families to care for.¹⁵

In Lebanon and other countries in the central Middle East such as Jordan, the development of the new middle classes—in some cases influenced by the lifestyles in the Gulf states—has engendered a rapid increase in the number of migrant domestic workers. It is true that some local women, often refugees, women from ethnic minorities, or women from marginalized areas, still engage in paid domestic labor, yet their number is small and decreasing. Both in Lebanon and in Jordan most migrant domestic workers are from Sri Lanka (so much so that the Arabic term for “migrant domestic worker” has become *srilānkiyya*), while some of the wealthier households also employ Filipinas, some of whom were pushed out of nursing when this sector was closed to foreign labor. In Lebanon a considerable number of Ethiopians are being employed, while in Jordan the number of Indonesian domestic workers is rapidly increasing.¹⁶

If the first precondition for migrant women to become present in the public is the ability to enter their country of employment, a second

prerequisite is the ability to exit the home of their employer. Having arrived at their site of employment, migrant domestic workers often face restrictions on their mobility. In the Arab Middle East migrant domestic workers are usually employed on short-term labor contracts, need a visa sponsor [*kafil*] who is responsible for them, are not allowed to change employers or work for anyone else and have to surrender their passports to their employers.¹⁷ Further, in everyday life, the freedom of movement of migrant domestic workers is severely restricted, as leaving the house is in itself often an arena of contestation between employers and domestic workers. Some employers even go so far as to lock the doors when they leave the house and only allow their domestic workers to leave the house under some sort of supervision.¹⁸ Moreover, if domestic workers are contractually entitled to one day off per week, this does not necessarily mean that they actually have freedom of movement on this day.¹⁹ Some employers are simply reluctant to forego one day of service; other factors also play a role.

The limited freedom of movement of migrant domestic workers needs to be seen within established patterns of gendered access to public space in some Gulf states; restricting the freedom of movement of female migrant domestic workers ties in with such patterns. Yet there is more at stake than simply complying with local norms of gender segregation. Domestics' access to public space is often a contested issue because employers see this as endangering their control over them. Some worry about the ways in which "unknown others" (that is, unknown to employers) may influence their domestic workers. They fear that the latter may be attracted to, or fall prey to "the wrong company," epitomized in male conationals who may tempt or force them to engage in sexual relations or to allow them into the house in their employers' absence. Some employers consider any contacts domestics have outside of the family of employment as potentially threatening because these can be a source of knowledge (about wage levels, other forms of employment and so on) and may function as support networks that ultimately encourage and enable them either to ask for more pay and other benefits or to leave their jobs altogether. Before turning to an analysis of the ways in which migrant domestic workers have nonetheless become present in the public, we first briefly discuss the notion of the public we are working with in this study.

Reconceptualizing the public sphere

In order to discuss migrant domestic workers' participation in the public sphere, conventional notions of the modern public sphere need to be reassessed—in particular, the Habermasian notion that participants in the modern public sphere are considered equals in public debate, who acknowledge the power of rational argumentation and are not hindered by attachments to particular interests or identities. As Fraser has convincingly argued, such an account of the modern public sphere fails to address issues of voice, authority, and exclusion, and does not recognize that the public sphere is in fact an arena for the formation and enactment of social identities. Rejecting the notion of a unified public sphere, she argues that members of subordinate groups, such as women, may find it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. To this end she proposes the term “subaltern counterpublics”: “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs.”²⁰

But “subaltern publics,” whether women or migrants, also have their own forms of exclusion. Simply recognizing that inequalities between men and women need to be included in debates on the development of the public sphere is insufficient; a focus on the case of migrant domestic labor highlights that there are severe inequalities and hierarchies *between women*. This understanding also entails a critique of the ways in which the public is constructed as separate from the private. For it is precisely because of the presence of large numbers of domestic workers—migrants or not—that middle-class women have been able to participate in the public while simultaneously living up to the norms of private domesticity common in their social circles. The employment of domestics has in fact made it possible for middle-class women to become the epitome of domesticity “without becoming dirty.”²¹ Migrant domestic workers, in contrast, have been criticized for not living up to the norms of motherhood and domesticity by leaving their children in the care of others.²² At the site of employment, there is a similar contrast. Whereas the home is a site of privacy for the employer, it is a workplace for the domestic worker; in order to find some privacy domestics need to leave the home and move “into the public.”

Another problem with a Habermasian concept of the modern public sphere is that rational debate is seen as the only legitimate or viable form of participation. If the public sphere is recognized as an arena where group identities and interests are always at stake, there is a need for a more all-encompassing “politics of presence” that allows for the inclusion of other forms of critical expression and nonverbal modes of communication, such as bodily comportment, appearance, dressing styles and the nature of the language, rather than only its substance.²³ In other words, a politics of presence, as a broadened notion of engagement in the public, allows for the inclusion of a far greater variety of ways in which people “make a statement,” as it were. This is especially important when discussing contributions of subaltern groups who have fewer opportunities to take part in settings of “rational argumentation” and may be less well versed in presenting their points of view in such formats. Hence, the physical presence of migrant domestic workers in the public is a major field of investigation with which our work engages.

Subaltern public spaces

There is little doubt that gradually migrant domestic workers have become present in public space, but the ways in which they become present, and the meanings of such presence, need further scrutiny. Whereas in many settings they have developed some form of subaltern publicness, with as major sites the market and the church, often their presence is structured along lines of nationality and, to a lesser extent, religion.²⁴

Commercial spaces, recognizable bodies and “ethnic neighborhoods”

Commercial spaces are particularly prominent sites for migrant domestic workers to come together, such as the shops where they buy items of food and dress, the restaurants where they spend time, and the sites of entertainment they frequent. The way in which these cater to a particular national or ethnic community is often visible to the public through, for instance, the nature of the goods put on display and the language used on the storefront and audible through the language spoken and the music played. While such

places are not completely under the control of migrant workers—migrants often cannot own real estate—those in charge may well employ a wide range of informal means to keep out those who do not belong. Clusterings of such commercial spaces produce a certain density that turns certain streets or areas into “ethnic neighborhoods.” For in spite of immigration policies strongly discouraging any form of settlement, migrant workers—domestics and others from the same countries of origin—have over time gained a longstanding presence in particular areas. Some have succeeded in remaining in the country for a long period of time either by accumulating a number of consecutive contracts (engaging in circular migration with in-between trips back home) or by overstaying their visa. Moreover, it is not necessary for the same people to remain for some sort of community and collective presence to develop; it is sufficient to have a regular influx of migrants from the same country of origin (for instance, through chain migration). Such areas are also attractive as sites of residence for often undocumented live-out domestics, whose houses function as a nucleus for live-ins who frequent their apartments on their day off.

The ways in which migrant domestic workers are present in such neighborhoods differs from location to location. In Istanbul, for instance, since the fall of the Soviet Union the Laleli neighbourhood has become the center of the shuttle or suitcase trade with the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.²⁵ Thousands of small shops and enterprises serve this trade, which in turn has increased the demand for Russian-speaking migrants. This neighborhood is also strongly associated with prostitution by “Russians,” who are often from other parts of the former Soviet Union such as the Ukraine.²⁶ While Laleli is also the area where many Moldavian migrant domestic workers arrive and find their way to employment, the popular image of these Moldavian women is different: they are neither associated with prostitution nor labelled as “Russians.” In Laleli the recent, very rapid influx of migrants from the former Soviet Union, liberal visa conditions and the tremendous presence of suitcase traders have led to the development of a multiethnic neighborhood, with migrant domestic workers operating at its margins.

Dubai has a long history of non-Arabs being present in public space. The port of Dubai has attracted traders and immigrants from the Iranian coast, Baluchistan and India for centuries and in the 1930s an Indian

market area had already emerged in Deira (nowadays part of Dubai). South Asians, mostly Indians, are highly visible in a host of commercial arenas, including retail and wholesale, the gold market as well as garment production. Some shopping malls are frequented by a South Asian public employed in a large variety of professions. In a similar vein, residential areas where South Asians live vary from sophisticated upper middle-class housing areas to more popular neighborhoods. In the city at large, South Asian domestics are first seen as South Asian rather than as domestics, whereas in these parts of the city migrant domestic workers do not stand out as South Asians but are recognizable as domestic workers to those familiar with internal differentiations and social hierarchies. In other words, whereas certain areas in Dubai may be defined as South Asian or Indian public spaces, this space is internally stratified.

In Beirut the relation of migrant domestic workers to “the public” is different, though they too have gradually developed a presence in the public. For instance, in the Dowra neighborhood, a lower-class commercial area, a variety of small shops, services and restaurants cater to various foreign nationals, mainly from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia, and also from India. Although there are internal differentiations among migrant groups in Beirut as well, the large majority of the women are employed as domestic workers and it is their presence that has been crucial in the development of these migrant spaces. The net effect is that in Beirut South Asian or African women are often *a priori* seen as domestics.

The above indicates that the ways in which migrant domestic workers are actually *visible or recognizable as such* in the public is important for discussions about their public presence. In this respect the situation of Moldavian women in Istanbul (not so easily recognizable as foreign) is quite different from that of Sri Lankan women in Beirut (immediately taken to be domestic workers), or South Asian women in Dubai (seen as Indians, but not necessarily as domestics).

Churches and NGOs: From spaces to advocacy

Among the semipublic sites where domestics gather in their free time, churches are particularly popular. In several locations churches have developed into meeting grounds for domestic workers and one may find

domestics of different religious backgrounds coming together for a great variety of activities, religious or not. In Dubai, where churches were established in the 1970s with the permission of the ruler, there are two huge compounds. The Church of the Holy Trinity, belonging to the Anglican Church, allows a large number of denominations to use its rooms; plaques on the wall indicate that there are over seventy different churches present, not only the mainstream protestant denominations but also Pentecostals and smaller groups, such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, and local churches, such as the Church of South India. Tens of thousands of visitors come here weekly, including large numbers of migrant domestic workers, who frequent the Christian resource centre: a small coffeeshop where books and CDs are sold, and where support is given to migrant domestic workers in distress. The nearby Catholic St. Mary's Church is said to perform 60,000 communions every week, and functions similarly as a meeting ground. On Friday (the weekly day off in the Emirates) mass is celebrated simultaneously at different parts of this huge compound in Mayalam and in Arabic. These churches are not only frequented by domestic workers, but by a broader section of the non-national population, including their employers. This is also the case for the Hindu temple in Dubai, a smaller building in an old part of the city, where Hindus of various backgrounds come to worship.

While in the Emirates churches are only frequented by nonnationals, in countries such as Lebanon and Turkey there is also an indigenous Christian population. Yet when migrant domestic workers frequent the same churches as the local population, they generally do so at different times, at least in Lebanon. Moreover, because of language differences, domestics from different countries, in particular Sri Lankans and Filipinas, often do not celebrate Mass together. Still, as meeting grounds for domestics churches are highly inclusive. Non-Christians also frequent these for some spiritual experience. For instance, at the al-Wardiyya Church in Beirut, Buddhist women gather, some to touch the statues in the small grotto constructed in the courtyard outside. In the much larger St. Frances Church on Hamra Street, Filipinas gather not only to celebrate Mass but also, at the back, to trade in small items such as clothing and homemade food, and to provide services such as manicures. In the front and to the side of this church Sri Lankan women gather and male

photographers from West Africa offer their services. Other churches cater specifically to migrant domestic workers, such as the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Badaro, while Pentecostals, a group toward which some Ethiopian women seem to be turning, gather in a small church in Naba'a, where a Lebanese pastor leads the service with simultaneous translation into Amharic.

Church-related NGOs, particularly active in Lebanon, also cater to domestic workers from particular national origins.²⁷ In Lebanon in 1997 the Pastoral Committee of Asian-African Migrants was formally established under the direction of the Bishop of the Ecclesiastic Council of Lebanon. They administer social, legal and religious assistance to migrant workers, such as providing lawyers free of charge, and oversee a number of Catholic centers that cater to the needs of African and Asian migrant domestic workers. The Afro-Asian Migrant Center, which was started in 1987, has a particularly large constituency of Filipino workers, thanks to the activism of a Filipina nun who is also in charge of a 30-minute radio program in Tagalog on Sundays on the Voice of Charity station. Another center, run by a Sri Lankan nun, has functioned as the main point of reference for Sri Lankan domestic workers since 1988, Christians as well as Buddhists. In addition, Caritas-Lebanon, working on migrant workers' issues under the aegis of the European Community, had started its own migrant center in 1994, providing assistance to refugees and female migrant workers from Asia and Africa.²⁸ The presence of such NGOs supporting the rights of migrant domestic workers blurs the boundaries between being present in public space and participating in the public sphere, for they do not only function as a subaltern public space for migrant domestic workers but are also involved in public advocacy work.

Historical trajectories and shifting meanings of a female public presence

To understand whether and how the presence of (migrant) domestic workers in public space is new and what such public presence means, we need to investigate the historical trajectories of non-kin domestic labor. This does not only require an investigation into the predecessors of

present-day domestic workers (including their social characteristics such as gender and ethnicity), but also into the labor relations according to which these earlier categories worked (such as slavery and bonded labor). Transformations of these labor relations intersect with the development of nation-states and the growing importance of transnational relations.

In the Middle East generally, there is no longstanding tradition of employing paid domestic workers on a large scale. In the rural areas of the Middle East in particular, where the ideal was that new couples would live for some time with the husband's family, daughters-in-law were often responsible for the heavier household tasks, while elderly women also took care of children. There were, however, other categories of women that could be seen as predecessors of present-day migrant domestic workers: domestic slaves and "adopted daughters." Furthermore, impoverished local women, girl children and orphans were also employed as live-in domestics as part of webs of patron-client relations.

The institution of domestic slavery is one of the oldest forms of non-kin domestic labor in Muslim societies such as the Ottoman Empire. Great differences in the life experiences of slaves were often tied to the social position of their owners; slaves of the wealthy and powerful were able to rise to positions of power.²⁹ In the nineteenth century the majority of slaves were women, many of whom engaged in domestic labor.³⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century Ottoman antislavery policies had started to reduce the number of slaves available and in 1926 with the abolishment of Islamic law the institution was indirectly eliminated.³¹

As slavery gradually disappeared in the Ottoman Empire, the number of *evlatlıks* and paid live-in servants increased.³² Though the literal translation of the term *evlatlık* is "adopted daughter," Islamic law allows for fostering but not legal adoption. These adopted daughters were orphans or girls from poor, often rural, families who were taken into better-off urban homes at the age of six or seven, and who would work as unpaid domestics for unspecified periods of time, often ten to twenty years, when their foster families would arrange a marriage for them. In republican Turkey, *evlatlıks* became the substitute for domestic slaves, for although legal adoption became possible with the civil law of 1926, foster families did not formally adopt them. Many *evlatlıks* were war orphans (Balkan refugees, Armenians and Kurds), while poor Anatolian peasants

also gave their daughters away as a survival strategy, often for a small sum of money.³³ The avowed aim of the Turkish state was to turn these girls, often seen as “backward,” into civilized Muslim Turkish citizens. The adopting families, however, treated them very differently from their own daughters. They were purposely dressed in an unattractive way and often did not go to school at all, while virtually all biological daughters were able to continue their education. Rather, it was the very presence of adopted daughters that enabled biological daughters to refrain from doing housework and to learn “how to command” at an early age.³⁴ By the 1960s, however, industrialization and the growth of internal family migration started to provide other possibilities for poor rural families to make a living, and by the time slavery and slave-like practices were legally abolished in 1964, this institution had already practically disappeared. The middle classes had started to employ married cleaning ladies from the squatter areas around the large cities.³⁵ While there were still some live-in young girls from the rural areas, in contrast to the *evlatlıks* these girls received a wage (however low) and were no longer tied to one family.³⁶

If in the Ottoman Empire domestic slavery had already disappeared by the early twentieth century, in the United Arab Emirates as in other Gulf states, domestic slavery is part of living memory. In Dubai the growth and demise of slavery was tied to the development of pearl diving, with slaves brought from East Africa to work as divers, and women brought in their wake as wives for slaves or for domestic labor.³⁷ As elsewhere the position of slaves depended to a large extent on the position of their owner; female slaves could gain positions of prominence through intimate relations with their owners, especially if these were wealthy. In the case of the Emirates, British policy to abolish the slave trade coincided with the fall of the pearl diving economy. Until the 1960s housework was mainly performed by female kin and daughters-in-law, while in the case of the great tribal families the women of the households dependent upon them were also engaged in this work. After manumission, domestic slaves often remained attached to the wealthy households in which they had been living and working, while poor women from Iran and Baluchistan as well as a substantial number of Indian men took up paid domestic labor. By the 1980s, however, this had changed dramatically, and migrant women primarily from India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and

Ethiopia had become virtually the only form of paid domestic labor in the Emirates.³⁸

Present-day migrant domestic workers find themselves in a very different position from those engaged in earlier forms of domestic employment. First, whereas in the case of domestic slavery (but also to a considerable extent with *evlatlıks*) these girls were cut off from their families of origin, they were integrated, if in a subordinate position, in the household of employment. With the development of the nation-state, the legal regulation of nationality and residence—based on patrilineal kinship rather than on residence—has taken center stage in enabling and disabling forms of settlement. Such laws have become particularly restrictive in those states where expatriates outnumber the national population, for instance in Kuwait and especially the United Arab Emirates.³⁹ Whereas present-day domestics have many more possibilities to keep in touch with their families back home through technologies such as email and cell phones, they have virtually no possibilities to settle in their country of employment. The result is that even having worked there for decades, they remain temporary workers dependent upon their visa-sponsor.⁴⁰ Furthermore, regulatory policies frequently force migrant workers to deal with at least two different legal systems, that of their country of origin and that of their country of employment, with certain acts legal according to one system and illegal according to the other. Some countries, for instance, only allow women to migrate as domestics abroad if they are over a certain age or earn a certain minimum income, yet many of the countries where they work do not follow such legislation.⁴¹

The relation of migrant domestic workers to public space has also been transformed with respect to the activities and positions of their employers. Migrant domestic workers do not only find themselves in a different labor relation; the meanings of being present in public space have also changed dramatically. When, among the better off, the seclusion of women was still an expression of high status, the presence of domestic slaves and other female low-status workers in the public enabled their female employers to remain secluded. In other words, these women's presence in gender-mixed public spaces was not so much an opportunity for mobility, but rather an indication of, and further contribution to, their low status position. This began to change with the growth of

nationalism and the modernization of the nation-state that, especially in the case of Turkey, strongly propagated women's presence in the public. Simultaneously, in contrast to the domestic slaves in the Ottoman Empire, the adopted daughters of republican Turkey were more likely to be kept inside private homes, as their employers claimed that they needed to be controlled and could not be trusted on their own. Indeed the configuration in which present-day migrant domestic workers find themselves is rather similar to that of the *evlatlıks*. Their restricted access to public space coincides with the increased participation of local middle-class women in the public, be it through formal employment in the professions, through participation in NGOs or women's associations, or, under conditions of gender segregation, through their presence in female semipublic spaces. It is the very presence of migrant domestic workers in the home that enables their employers to have such a public presence.

The mediated presence of domestics

NGOs are not only (semi-) public spaces where migrant domestic workers can meet and find some privacy. Many of them are also involved in debates about migrant domestic workers that are often mass-mediated. Such debates shift the status of migrant domestic workers from one of absence into one of presence, although more as objects of debate than as participants in such debates.

International NGOs and human rights groups are major actors in making public the problems and abuse some migrant domestic workers face. The reports these groups produce often include specific cases of abused migrant domestic workers, the most shocking ones finding their way to the Internet, onto television screens and into newspapers worldwide.⁴² As a result migrant domestic workers are first and foremost portrayed as victims, duped by agents and exploited and mistreated by employers. While dramatic stories of victimhood generally have strong appeal for media audiences, cases of *migrant* domestic workers seem to attract far more attention than those of local domestics.

If the development of new technologies has greatly speeded up the circulation of information and images of migrant domestic workers,

older print media have also at times dealt with non-kin domestic labor. In the late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, for instance, women writers expressed their criticisms of slavery as an institution.⁴³ This was not so much because they considered slavery itself as inhumane, but rather because they considered slavery as immoral for the very reason that it enabled the practice of concubinage. Writers were not necessarily much concerned with the experiences of slaves; rather they used slavery allegorically to address political issues, such as when the abolishment of slavery was read as freedom from state despotism. Neither were the information media much concerned about young girls working in households. As Ozbay discovered in her research on the relations between adopted daughters and the members of the families that had taken them in, newspapers did not address this issue. Their plight was most poignantly addressed by Republican novelists who strongly criticized the practice of using *evlatlıks* as cheap domestic labor.⁴⁴

More recently, especially in countries with a very small national population such as the United Arab Emirates, the employment of migrant domestic workers has been hotly debated.⁴⁵ While Emirati families consider the employment of domestic workers a necessity, in public discourse the employment of foreign women as domestic workers is deemed highly problematic. Warnings of “national disaster scenarios” abound in which children are seen as insufficiently socialized citizens of the nation-state in terms of language and religion, and Emirati women are blamed for neglecting their offspring.⁴⁶ Such debates also find their way into the press. Sabban points to some differences between Arabic language and English language newspapers in their reporting on this issue.⁴⁷ Comparing the English language *Gulf News* and the Arabic language *al-Khalij*, she concluded that *al-Khalij* had twice as many negative articles on migrant domestic workers, with more than one quarter of the articles criticizing the national dependence on migrant domestic workers. *Gulf News*, in contrast, more often defined migrant domestic workers as victims, and it was the only paper that also included a few success stories. This divide is not one of nationals versus non-nationals (all businesses are owned by nationals) but one of audiences, with the ability to read Arabic or English the critical distinction. Also relevant here is that *Gulf News* has become a leading newspaper in the Gulf, read by the

liberal elites of all nationalities, with some UAE intellectuals involved in writing editorials.

Domestic workers also have a presence in the entertainment media. In Turkey, contemporary television serials and films use particular “types” of domestic workers to mark the families employing them.⁴⁸ If domestics wear uniforms, we are dealing with an elite family; the presence of older black women symbolizes the well-to-do past of the family and adds to the positive qualities of family life such as loyalty, love and respect for the elderly; if governesses are employed the message is that we are dealing with a family aspiring to Westernization; and when unpaid peasant children are present, the cruelty of the family is underlined. In other cases domestic workers are the main protagonists. Jureidini focuses on how Egyptian melodramas hone in on the circumstances that have forced women into this type of work and the ways in which they succeed in moving out of this field of employment, often through marriage with their employer or his son.⁴⁹ In some cases this is presented as an evil plot by the domestic (whose sexuality is seen as a threat); at other times it is the romantic happy ending of a life of hardship (with the domestic worker represented as the upwardly mobile victim). In such fictional accounts, local rather than migrant domestic workers are the central characters. While this may be due to the fact that in Egypt a considerable number of local women are employed as domestics, migrant domestic workers may also be seen as “too different” for the audience to become emotionally involved. Yet, presenting domestics as the central characters has not gone uncontested in productions for an international public. The producers of the upscale docudrama, *Marriage Egyptian Style*, were sharply criticized for selecting a cleaning lady as its main protagonist rather than a well educated, modern and civilized middle-class woman. Because they chose a person deemed unsuitable “to represent the nation,” the producers (especially the Egyptian researcher) were accused of having severely damaged Egypt’s reputation abroad.⁵⁰

Although these are only a few examples of the presence of (migrant) domestic workers in the media, it is evident that different media focus on different categories of domestic workers and different issues. The publications of international NGOs deal with the abuse of migrant domestic workers, while the local press highlights the dangers of migrant domestic

labor for the reproduction of the nation. The entertainment media have local rather than migrant domestic workers as their main protagonists, whether as victims of an unjust class system or as a threat to the employer's household because of their sexuality.

To sum up, migrant domestic workers have gained a public presence in the Middle East. It is true that this is a far cry from the Habermasian notion of the modern public sphere in the sense of actively participating in public debate and deliberation; in media discourse in the Middle East migrant domestic workers are still by and large the object of debate rather than active participants. Yet when we employ a broader notion of participating in the public which includes their physical, embodied presence, migrant domestic workers have become increasingly present in public space. In spite of a host of state measures aimed to hinder any form of settlement or permanent presence, the cityscapes in the Middle East have also changed considerably, at least partly because of the presence of large numbers of migrant domestic workers.

The meaning of such a presence in the public is not self-evident, however; in order to understand and untangle what such a presence in the public means to migrant domestic workers themselves, we need to address the issue of agency. Their presence in public space indicates their ability to leave the site of their employment, but it may also be a sign of exploitation which further underlines their low status. Their presence in *subaltern* public spaces—shops and restaurants, churches and NGOs—is less ambivalent. Such spaces are often the sites where migrant workers are able to find some privacy, free from the control of their employers and in some sense “amongst themselves.” These sites then can be seen as a counterpublic of sorts,⁵¹ one that maintains an awareness of its subordinate status and marks itself off against a dominant public, even if not so much through participation in public debate as through these workers’ embodied presence.

Notes

1. We would like to thank Hana Jaber for her contributions to our discussions on migrant domestic labor. Although not a formal participant in the project, she organized our meeting in Amman and has actively participated in all of our meetings.
2. This contribution is the outcome of the SSRC-funded collaborative research project "Migrant Domestic Workers: Becoming Visible in the Public Sphere?" and part of a larger program on reconceptualizing public spheres in the Middle East. The mainstay of our project consisted of research visits to four locations in the Middle East: Istanbul, Beirut, Dubai and Amman. The research visits were followed by a meeting in Indonesia, a major sending country, organized by Irwan Abdullah (Centre for Cross-Cultural and Religious Studies, Gadjadara University, Yogyakarta). Because Amman did not end up as a formal part of the project, it was not included in this chapter.
3. David McMurray, "Recent Trends in Middle East Migration," *Middle East Report* 29, no. 2 (1999): 16–20.
4. For example, from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, the proportion of international migrants who were women increased from 15% in the 1970s to 60–80% in the 1990s. See Michele Gamburd, *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).
5. See Annelies Moors, "Economics: Migrant Domestic Labor: Central Arab States, Egypt and Yemen," and Rima Sabban, "Economics: Paid Domestic Labor: The Gulf and Saudi Arabia," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* (EWIC 4) (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 220–222 and 222–224, respectively.
6. See Rima Sabban, "Broken Spaces, Bounded Realities: Foreign Female Domestic Workers in the UAE," dissertation, The American University, Washington, DC, 1996. See also Rima Sabban, "Migrant Women in the United Arab Emirates: The Case of Female Domestic Workers," GENPROM Working Paper no. 10 (Geneva: ILO, 2002). See also Bridget Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politics of Domestic Labor* (London: Zed Books, 2000).
7. Hana Jaber, "Manille-Amman, une filière de l'emploi domestique: Parcours, dispositifs et relai de recrutement," in *Mondes de mouvements, migrants et*

- migrations au Moyen-Orient au tournant du XXIème siècle*, edited by Hana Jaber and Francoise Métral (Amman and Beirut: IFPO Editions, 2005).
8. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Ray Jureidini, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon," in *Gender and Migration in Arab States: The Case of Domestic Workers*, edited by Simel Esim and Monica Smith (Beirut: ILO, 2004), 63–85; Gamburd, *Kitchen Spoon's Handle*.
 9. Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipina Workers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).
 10. Sabban, "Migrant Women in the United Arab Emirates," 7.
 11. Sabban, "Migrant Women in the United Arab Emirates"; Sabban, "Broken Spaces, Bounded Realities."
 12. Gül Özyeğin, *Untidy Gender: Domestic Service in Turkey* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2000).
 13. Petra Weyland, "Gendered Lives in Global Spaces," in *Space, Culture and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities*, edited by Ayse Öncü and Petra Weyland (London: Zed Books, 1997).
 14. Leyla Keough, "Driven Women: Reconceptualizing the Traffic in Women in the Margins of Europe through the Case of Gagauz Mobile Domestic Workers in Istanbul," *European Journal of Anthropology* 21, no. 2 (2004); Rahime Arzu Unal, "Transformations in Transit: Reconstitution of Gender Identity Among Moldovan Domestic Workers in Istanbul Households," MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2006.
 15. Özyeğin, *Untidy Gender*.
 16. Ray Jureidini and Nayla Moukarbel, "Female Sri Lankan Domestic Workers in Lebanon: A Case of 'Contract Slavery'?" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, no. 4 (2004): 581–607.
 17. Sabban, "Broken Spaces, Bounded Realities."
 18. This practice is also strongly encouraged by agencies that replace the domestic workers if the employer is not content. Such a "guarantee" is given on the condition that employers do not allow their domestic workers to leave the house unsupervised.
 19. This is evident in the results of discussions between UNIFEM (the United Nations Development Fund for Women), the Jordanian government and NGOs about a special work contract for migrant domestic workers. The

- proposed standard contract is to be signed not only by the employer and the employee but also by the recruitment agency and to be ratified by the Jordanian Ministry of Labor and the embassy of the employee. While there are a number of innovative provisions about labor and residency permits (responsibility with employer), about holding the passport (right of employee) and about the payment of wages (on time), the provision concerning one rest day a week states that the employee shall not leave the residence without the permission of the employer. See Ray Jureidini, "Human Rights and Foreign Contract Labor: Some Implications for Management and Regulation in Arab Countries," in *Arab Migration in a Globalized World* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2004), 201–216.
20. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 123.
 21. Leonore Davidoff, "Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England," in *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class*, edited by Leonore Davidoff (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995); Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work*.
 22. Karen Hansen, "Domestic Service: What's in it for Anthropology?" *Reviews in Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (1991): 47–62.
 23. For an elaboration of the notion of a "politics of presence," see Annelies Moors, "Representing Family Law Debates in Palestine: Gender and the Politics of Presence," in *Media, Religion and the Public Sphere*, edited by Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 115–132.
 24. The forms of publicness mentioned here—the market and the church—are both excluded from Habermas's notion of the modern public sphere that is seen as separate from the state, the economy and religion.
 25. Deniz Yüксеker, "Trust and Gender in a Transnational Market: The Public Culture of Laleli, Istanbul," *Public Culture* 16, no. 1 (2004): 47–65.
 26. Sema Erder and Selmin Kaska, *Irregular Migration in Turkey and Trafficking Women: The Case of Turkey* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2003).
 27. That in Lebanon NGOs are allowed to act on behalf of migrant domestic workers is at least in part the result of pressure by the U.S. State Department that had condemned Lebanon in 2002 for not doing enough to stop human

- trafficking. As a result, Lebanon was upgraded in 2003 from a tier three to a tier two country, making it once again eligible for U.S. aid.
28. Caritas has financially supported improvements at the Detention Center for undocumented aliens (mainly migrant domestic workers) and, in exchange, has been allowed to have a social worker present there around the clock. More recently, with the support of General Security (the forces responsible for all foreigners in Lebanon), the Caritas Migrant Center has employed four full-time lawyers and has formally established a “safe house” for victims of trafficking that include abused domestic workers who have “illegally” absconded from their employers. Along with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Caritas Center was instrumental in assisting with the evacuation of many thousands of domestic workers to escape the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in July/August 2006. See Jureidini and Moukarbel, “Female Sri Lankan Domestic Workers in Lebanon,” 71.
 29. Slavery in Muslim societies was a relatively open system, with Islamic law recommending the manumission of slaves after they had served a particular period of time, often seven or nine years. In the case of female slaves, slave owners were legally entitled to have sexual relations with their slaves as concubines, but they could only marry them after manumission. As soon as these slave concubines were pregnant (and if paternity was acknowledged by their master), they could no longer be sold, and after the death of their owner, they would automatically become free women; their children, belonging to the father’s lineage, were born free. In the case of Ottoman palace slavery—sultans did not marry and had children only from slave concubines—the mother of the sultan, the highest position for a woman in the Empire, was a slave woman, often born neither a Turk nor a Muslim. See Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
 30. Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression 1840–1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).
 31. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise* (London: Macmillan, 1996).
 32. On the basis of a sample of Muslim households in the Ottoman censuses of 1885 and 1907, Özbay calculated that while the percentage of households with some form of domestic servants remained roughly the same (18%), the majority of which (85%) were female, there were major changes in labor

- relations. Comparing 1885 with 1907, domestic slaves declined from 58% to 21%, wage servants doubled from 13% to 27%, and *evlatlıks* tripled from 5% to 18%. See Ferhunde Özbay, *Female Child Labor in Domestic Work in Istanbul: Past and Present* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 1999), 9ff.
33. Özbay, *Female Child Labor in Domestic Work in Istanbul*.
 34. Ferhunde Özbay, "Invisible Members of Istanbul Households: Life Stories of Residential Servants," paper presented at ESSHC at Free University, Amsterdam, 2000.
 35. Özyeğin, *Untidy Gender*.
 36. Özbay, *Female Child Labor in Domestic Work in Istanbul*.
 37. Rima Sabban, "From Slaves to Domestics: A Fine Foreign Line," paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Historical Trajectories, Istanbul, 2003.
 38. Rima Sabban, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers in the United Arab Emirates," in *Gender and Migration in Arab States: The Case of Domestic Workers*, edited by Simel Esim and Monica Smith (Beirut: ILO, 2004), 85–104. Indian houseboys, for instance, had to face fierce competition from Filipina women who were willing to work for lower wages and were able to combine a number of tasks: driving, teaching and child care.
 39. Regarding Kuwait, see Anh Nga Longva, *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).
 40. Ever more restrictive measures have been taken. By 1996 officials in the UAE had become increasingly worried about the number of foreigners, especially Indians, and implemented measures explicitly aimed at limiting the employment of domestic workers. Expatriates are only allowed to employ one domestic worker and must pay a high fee to employ a foreign domestic worker (\$1400, about equal to their yearly salary); heavy fines were introduced to penalize those hiring a foreign domestic worker on a visa sponsored by a third party; and in an attempt to diversify its labor force and to curb illegal migration, nonnationals are not allowed to employ a domestic of the same national origin. See Sabban, "Migrant Women in the United Arab Emirates," 10.

Also, regulation does not necessarily mean improvement. In Jordan, the recognition of agencies has not led to greater security for domestic workers; it has merely added further steps that must be undertaken in the process of labor migration, with subcontractors all taking a share. See Jaber, "Manille-Amman, une filiere de l'emploi domestique." Finally, Jureidini and

Moukarbel conclude that “the administrative, legal and working conditions of Sri Lankan domestic workers in Lebanon can be described as a contemporary form of slavery.” See their “Female Sri Lankan Domestic Workers in Lebanon,” 603.

41. Ray Jureidini, “The Failure of State Protection: Household Guest Workers in Lebanon,” *European Review of International Migration* 19, no. 3: 95–127.
42. Annelies Moors and Marina de Regt, “Gender and Irregular Migration: Migrant Domestic Workers in the Middle East,” paper presented at the conference on Gender, Borders and Migration since 1850, Leiden, 2007.
43. See Gamburd, *Kitchen Spoon’s Handle*, 209. She deals with the circulation of “horror stories” about the ways in which Sri Lankan domestics were treated in the Gulf and points to the need to investigate which actors such stories actually empower and which political actions they advocate.
44. See Ferhunde Özbay, “Public Visibility of Slaves and Servants in the Ottoman Society,” paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Historical Trajectories, Istanbul, 2003.
45. Özbay, “Invisible Members of Istanbul Households.”
46. Sabban, “Migrant Women in the United Arab Emirates.”
47. In countries with high rates of unemployment, such as Jordan, poor local women have also been criticized for their reluctance to work as domestics, while migrant women are still brought in.
48. Rima Sabban, “Domestic Workers and Media Discourse of Inclusion and Exclusion in the UAE,” paper presented at the SSRC conference on New Public Spheres in the Middle East, Beirut, 2004.
49. Ferhunde Özbay, “From Slavery to Global Domestic Workers: The Case of Turkey,” paper presented at the SSRC workshop, Amman, 2004.
50. Ray Jureidini, “Sexuality and the Servant: An Exploration of Arab Images of the Sexuality of Domestic Maids Living in the Household,” in *Sexuality in the Arab World*, edited by Samir Khalaf and John Gagnon (London: Saqi Books, 2006), 130–151.
51. Reem Saad, “Shame, Reputation and Egypt’s Lovers: A Controversy over the Nation’s Image,” *Visual Anthropology* 10, nos. 2–4 (1998): 401–412.
52. Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 86.

Surveillance and Constituting the Public in the Ottoman Empire

Cengiz Kırılı

In large part, the history of political struggle has been the history of the attempts to control significant sites of assembly and spaces of discourse.

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White,
The Politics and Poetics of Transgression

Few concepts in the last decade have been invoked with more frequency and across more disciplines than that of the public sphere.¹ We are growing accustomed to the widespread use of the term “public” for people and “public sphere” for society. Harold Mah, in a timely and incisive analysis criticizing recent European historiography’s appropriation of the concept of the public sphere, called it “a phantasy.”² Drawing attention to the contradiction between social historians’ recent quest to recognize different identities and represent their varying interests in the public sphere on one hand, and the basic condition for Habermas’s ideal public sphere in which diverse groups set aside their particularities and assume collectivity on the other, Mah points to the “inescapable instability” in the representation of Habermas’s universal public sphere based on an order of abstract individuality.³

For somewhat different reasons, I argue that the enthusiastic appropriation of the concept of the public sphere in Middle Eastern historiography (and in other non-Western historiographies as well) is related to the political imaginary, to a phantasy that the concept promises to offer.

Two particular features in Habermas's definition of the public sphere have been instrumental in the recent appeal to the concept. First, in Habermas's original use of the term, it is not clear if the public sphere is an actually existing historical reality or a normative ideal.⁴ Emphasizing the historical specificity of the public sphere in Western Europe, Habermas argued that the public sphere cannot be "transferred, ideal typically generalized, to any number of historical situations that represent formally similar constellations."⁵ However, as many commentators have noted, the public sphere in which rational public discussions have emerged is also a normative ideal. It has, in fact, never actually been realized in the form defined by Habermas, and it was transformed in the nineteenth century with the disappearance of the conditions that had paved the way for its emergence a century earlier. Habermas responded to this ambiguity in his later work by emphasizing the normative character of the public sphere, "deploying the concept in relation to citizenship and 'democratic legitimation.'"⁶ As Geoff Eley argued, "in contemporary discourse, 'public sphere' now signifies the general questing for democratic agency in an era of declining electoral participation, compromised sovereignties, and frustrated and disappointed citizenship."⁷ While a large body of work using Habermas's public sphere oscillates between these two ends (normative ideal and historical reality), in non-Western historiographies the incentive to appropriate the concept stems largely from its normative appeal. Like the term civil society that was appropriated, particularly in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, as the agency for democracy,⁸ the concept of public sphere was increasingly used in the 1990s in Middle Eastern and other non-Western historiographies to attain similar normative ideals.⁹

The second important feature in Habermas's definition of the public sphere is the conceptualization of a (civil) society separate from the state—of state and society as two distinct spheres diametrically opposed to one another. Strict adherence to this binary opposition has served to reinforce the emphasis on the definition of the public sphere as a normative ideal in non-Western historiographies. Civil societies/public spheres in regions outside Western Europe, the argument goes, could not develop because of the authoritarian state tradition that kept these societies under its yoke, and/or because of the submissive political culture of societies unable to resist those oppressive states and develop a "rational-critical

discourse.” The basic ingredient of the submissive political culture is offered in essentialist terms—for example, Islam in the Middle East.

If the public sphere as an existing reality is a fiction in European history, even its partial realization is a phantasy in the non-Western present. The absence of the public sphere has recently become just another item in the history of absences that marks non-Western historiographies, and another means of validating the obsolete premises of modernizing approaches, by emphasizing the different temporalities that the so-called East and West occupy. Such terms as “latecomer” and “late-developing,” used in the 1950s to highlight the absence of “the necessary institutions capable of avoiding and braking the slide into political totalism, transmuting quantitative temporality into qualitative difference,”¹⁰ have more recently been replaced by “alternative modernities” or “retroactive modernities.”¹¹ We are now experiencing a similar phenomenon in studies on non-Western regions with the increasing use of such rhetorics as the “emergence” or “development” of the public sphere that underscores yet another temporality.¹²

This strong normative agenda has led to two tendencies in Middle Eastern historiography. First, the term has become an unbound signifier, appropriated “wherever people come together for collective exchange and expression of opinion,” making analytical and focused debate difficult, if not impossible.¹³ The fact that it is now possible to juxtapose a study on sixteenth-century coffeehouses in Istanbul next to another on the Intifada in contemporary Palestine with reference to the same conceptual framework of the public sphere is a stark example of this ambiguity. Considering that area studies has been delineated largely in relation to a loosely defined geographical orientation rather than a disciplinary focus, the conceptual ambiguity of the public sphere feels right at home.

Second, while a large body of scholarship is heralding the “emergence” or the “development” of the public sphere in the Middle East, there is also the tendency to swing the pendulum in the other direction: the distinguishing feature of what might be called defensive historiographies is the claim that the public sphere had already existed in the Middle East, even before its emergence in Europe in the eighteenth century. Coffeehouses, mosques, sufi lodges, baths and other public places where people have gathered had all the constituents of the public sphere before

similar public places appeared in Europe, or so the arguments go.¹⁴ As a variant of “cultural nationalism,” of which there are numerous examples and which long predates the appropriation of the concept of public sphere, this defensive response has been an all-too-familiar component of Middle Eastern historiography. As if driven by a sense of shame vis-à-vis modern Europe, it is an attempt to cover naked absences through interventions in the past.

This paper is not concerned with the emergence or development of the public sphere against the state, nor does it attempt to partake of the debate on the existence or absence of a public sphere in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Middle East. Instead of employing the conventional antagonistic conceptualization of state and society, and understanding public and public opinion as merely sociological referents that emerged despite and against the state, I will argue that the “public” and “public opinion” have been constituted in a series of governmental practices that redefined politics in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Although the term public opinion [*efkâr-ı umumi*] was not an explicit component of the Ottoman political lexicon before the 1860s, I will contend that it emerged as a new element in politics and as an implicit source of legitimacy for the Ottoman government from the 1830s onward. Constituting the public and construing its opinion as a source of authority were processes intimately linked with the changing “governmentality” of the Ottoman state, processes by which the population became the primary target to be acted upon.¹⁶ To this end, the political means employed were diverse, ranging from legislation to taxation, and from institutional organizations to ceremonial practices.¹⁷ Indeed, the second quarter of the nineteenth century provides abundant evidence for us to trace such changes in the Ottoman mode of governance, changes that marked a rupture between “the old” and “the new,” and were officially stamped as the much celebrated Tanzimat reforms that were initiated in 1839.

Underlying this rupture, I argue, was the surveillance of the population. Broadly defined, surveillance is “the collation and integration of information put to administrative purposes.”¹⁸ It is a new conception of society as a knowable entity, and it refers to such administrative practices as surveys, registrations, and the mapping of people and things for fiscal and political purposes that make society “legible.”¹⁹ Surveillance is not

merely intended for social control; although the latter is integral to it in that it identifies resistance. It is also constitutive, for surveillance equally provided the means for the state to act upon, and to shape and manage the population.²⁰ In other words, this paper departs from the emphasis on the “nonpolitical” character of surveillance in the literature²¹—an all-encompassing disciplinary power that leaves the governed population little or no voice, which makes it unpalatable for studies on the public sphere—and stresses that surveillance was fundamental to a new conception of politics and the redefinition of the public sphere. I will detail the process of constituting the public and public opinion by way of two examples. First, I will trace the changing status of public opinion that occurred with the establishment of surveillance, using a set of spy reports that were generated by the Ottoman government in the 1840s. Second, I will highlight the symbolic yet consequential meaning of an unprecedented practice in courtly behavior, namely, the Ottoman sultan’s public visibility.

Listening to the public

In 1840, the Ottoman government engaged in the intensive activity of gluing its ears to people’s conversations. Stationed in public places, and even in private houses and hotel rooms in the capital city of Istanbul, informers eavesdropped and recorded mundane exchanges about current events, and produced a significant number of reports, now housed in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul.²² The subjects of conversations recorded in these reports varied, but most of them consisted of political comments in the widest sense of the term: comments on the rebellions in North Africa and the Balkans, the new tax system, the corruption of high officials, the European Great Powers, and so on. Once the reports were submitted by the informers to their superiors, they would be dispatched to the chief of police and eventually found their way up to the sultan. While the reports consist entirely of conversations recorded in the capital, Istanbul, it is clear that informers paid special attention to those who had just come from the provinces and engaged in such topics as the irregularities of provincial land and income registration, or the corruption of tax collectors, governors, and local notables. The practice of listening in was therefore

not limited to the capital, although it is impossible to assert that the entire population was indeed under the purview of surveillance.

Informers recorded with great precision the identity of those on whose conversations they eavesdropped and the location in which a particular conversation took place. In addition to names, occupations, and places of residence, the provisional lodgings of those who came from the provinces were carefully noted. Their reports were not summary accounts of public moods based on the informers' impressions, but verbatim transcriptions of individual utterances reconstructed by the informers, some of which were recorded in dialogue form. After 1843, informers began to enter the exact date and time of each reported utterance, lending their reports an even greater level of detail.

The informers were not undercover security officials. They were recruited from among the local population, Ottoman subjects and foreign nationals alike.²³ This strategy ensured that informers could effectively penetrate the webs of society without being detected and listen in on conversations carried out in any of the nearly dozen languages that were widely spoken in the cosmopolitan city of Istanbul.²⁴ In many cases, the informer was a personal acquaintance of those on whose conversations he eavesdropped. Nor was he merely a good listener. Acting rather like a modern opinion pollster, he sometimes operated as an active participant by asking leading questions—and he did not hesitate to include the latter in his report.

The primary purpose of this surveillance activity was to investigate public opinion, not to indict perpetrators on the grounds of their political remarks. These reports were therefore not strictly conventional police reports, which tended to record sedition for the purpose of denouncement and ultimately, punishment. There is no indication that those whose political utterances were recorded in the reports were ever prosecuted. However, people were not necessarily aware of that; and a strong fear of punishment permeates their voices.

At this point, we need to ask why the Ottoman government engaged in this intense surveillance activity, and more importantly, what inspired it to generate these reports. One of the ambivalences of the history of early modern and modern states is the use of contradictory strategies to cope with public political discourse: on one hand, a manifest desire to know

what kinds of political issues people talked about and thought affected their lives and on the other, various attempts to place limits on people's expression of their political opinions.²⁵ In historical scholarship, this apparent contradiction is usually raised in connection to the practices of early modern forms of government—especially those of eighteenth-century France—and those of the so-called authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, such as the Stalin-era Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.²⁶

A basic principle of early modern governments that informed the relationship between the ruling elite and its subjects was that politics were the prerogative of the ruler. To the extent that this was so, and that it was recognized as the embodiment of the state, popular utterances regarding politics, government, and administrative matters were legally forbidden. Numerous archival documents testify that prior to the mid-nineteenth century, and especially in times of political crises, the Ottoman state had vigilantly monitored public places for “seditious” political conversations and punished subversive gossip-mongers. In 1798, the sultan wrote to his grand vizier:

It has been reported that lies and fabrications are being invented and circulated by fomenters of strife and mischief and by the malicious and devilish sort, and that some ignorant and half-witted people, unable to tell good from evil and benefit from harm, dare utter words about the state and impertinently tell these fabrications to each other in coffeehouses and barber shops. It is necessary to close these coffeehouses and barber shops, where these dissolute assemble and dare talk about the state, and to apprehend, punish, and banish both those who own these coffeehouses and barber shops as well as those who dare utter frivolous and nonsensical words ... From now on, those who dare talk about state affairs and those who listen to them in coffeehouses, barber shops, other shops and places of assembly, as well as officers who discuss state affairs beyond their duties in state offices, are to be apprehended without hesitation as a warning to others; and in order to execute this order, special undercover [agents] and spies are to be posted in such places, and state officers are to be warned by

their superiors that they, too, will be punished accordingly, in case they indulge in such talk.²⁷

Two important points need to be stressed here. First, for the government, popular opinions were perceived as noise that had to be monitored, controlled, prevented, and if disturbing enough, silenced. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, especially, the sheer violence imposed on coffeehouses, the most notorious public places in urban centers across the Ottoman Middle East, is an indicator of the state's objective to suppress "seditious" political conversations. Several times in the course of this period, coffeehouses in Istanbul were closed down wholesale. Second, in addition to the age-old practice of *tebdil-i kıyafet* (a personal control mechanism by which the higher echelons of state officials and even the sultan himself would prowl through the streets of Istanbul in disguise), placing spies at the nerve centers of the city had been a common practice before the 1840s. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, spies closely monitored coffeehouses and other public places to prevent insolent talk and punish seditious gossip-mongers. The extent of spying was limited neither to men nor to male-dominated public places. Authorities also employed women informers to persecute women allegedly engaging in seditious conversations, as in 1809, when a woman informer had a group of women discussing state affairs in a bathhouse arrested and imprisoned.²⁸

Although surveillance was extensive and inclusive, as the above example suggests, it was nonetheless erratic. It was not a permanent fixture of Ottoman subjects' everyday lives. Nor did the government succeed—if indeed they had intended it—to penetrate the social fabric. The success of social control depended as much on the luck of the informers' prowling as it did on people's negligence and inattention. Usually, gossip-mongers were alert to the presence of outsiders seemingly anxious to eavesdrop on their conversations, and were quite inventive in turning the whole process into a forum to voice their expectations and sufferings to imperial ears.²⁹

To sum up, although spying on the population was certainly carried out in the years preceding the 1840s, it took a radically different form in the mid-nineteenth century. The differences can be identified in relation to three factors: mode of execution, agents, and objectives. First, whereas before the 1840s spying had been sporadic and intermittent, it

was implemented in a continuous manner after this date.³⁰ Second, while social control through monitoring had been previously accomplished by military-administrative officials, the higher bureaucracy, and even the sultan himself, after the 1840s it became increasingly impersonal and “unofficial,” as local people were incorporated into the surveillance system. Third, and most importantly, while pre-1840s surveillance aimed to subdue the populace by persecuting “seditious” words, its new purpose thereafter was to investigate public moods and opinions through a subtle and elaborate system of collecting and recording conversations and exchanges. Thus, beginning in the 1840s, the Ottoman state was no longer confined to its traditional political sphere, interfering sporadically with the daily functioning of public places to keep the population under control. On the contrary, its authority began to permeate the minute practices of the governed population.

The changes in surveillance mechanisms cannot simply be conceived as mere technical matters pertaining to Ottoman administrative practices. While this extensive surveillance was a manifestation of the state’s emerging concern for public opinion, it also demonstrated a corresponding shift in the role of the ruling authority. This was a new form of political power, in which the state no longer dictated to the people but rather consulted them. The process of listening to conversations and conveying them to the ruling elite without any retributive penalty points, first and foremost, to the collapse of the distinction between “official truth” and “popular lies.”³¹ In this system of governance “popular lies” that had been hitherto persecuted acquired a legitimate status. This was the discovery of “public opinion.”³² In the long and uneven process of historical development, this was the moment when subjects were constituted as political citizens rather than subversive gossip-mongers, when word of mouth became worthy of note, and when political power implicitly recognized the legitimacy of public opinion instead of denouncing it.

Conceptualizing the public through surveillance reports was intimately linked with the new strategies of state involvement with the population which emerged at the same time. Just as listening in turned the population into an observed body, the unprecedented public visibility of the sultan marked a new conceptualization of the body politic in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Seeing and being seen

Before the reign of Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), the public visibility of Ottoman sultans was a rare phenomenon, if not a completely unusual one. Institutionalized in Mehmed II's Code of Law shortly after his conquest of Istanbul in 1453, the notion of the ruler's invisibility had been fundamental to courtly etiquette.³³ It remained more or less unshaken until the beginning of the eighteenth century,³⁴ but its most dramatic development occurred in the 1830s. Up until the late sixteenth century, the sultans had made themselves visible to the public mainly by leading elaborately staged military campaigns. In the following centuries, when the potential for defeat was greater (which could tarnish the monarch's glamour and authority), and when leading a military campaign became a more precarious affair, various sultans resorted to different means of appearing before the public, of which Mehmed IV's (r. 1648–1687) infamous hunting trips between Istanbul and Edirne are one notorious example.³⁵ In addition to these occasions, during which imperial pageantry was carried out outside Istanbul, monarchs took part in a few public ceremonial activities within the capital. Processions to and from Friday prayers, during which people could approach him to submit their petitions;³⁶ visits to the site of the mantle of the Prophet during the holy month of Ramadan; and succession ceremonials that culminated in the sword-girding ceremony in the town of Eyüp, served as extraordinary imperial spectacles in the Sublime Porte.³⁷

These staged and symbolically informed imperial displays did not challenge the notion of the ruler's invisibility. They were well regulated moments, embedded in a carefully observed body politic that centered on the seclusion of power. The sultan's exceptional public appearances were what Habermas called "representative publicity"; the ruler's visibility was not meant "for" the public but for a display "before" the public. This body politic provided the sultan with a symbolic yet crucial tool to perform his role as ruler in the complex web of absolutist politics. Just as politics, in principle, was the prerogative of the ruler, so the ruler's invisible body represented the immutability of the political order.³⁸ The ruler was mysterious, external, otherworldly; and so were politics, in theory, for the populace. Hence the illegality of political discourse by the ruled population and the invisibility of the sultan.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, during the reign of Mahmud II, the public persona of the sultan acquired a completely new character. His “country trips” [*memleket gezileri*] played a crucial role in this regard. Between 1830 and 1837, Mahmud II made no less than five country trips. The ostensible purpose of his travels, as was repeatedly stated by government sources, was to examine the living conditions of his subjects and provide charity for the poor.³⁹ In reality, he wanted less to see his subjects than to be seen *by* them. In his journeys to the provinces, Mahmud II indeed heralded a new era in which “westernizing” imperial monarchs took to leaving their capitals for the more remote corners of their empires, so as to make themselves visible to their people. Alexander II, Crown Prince of Russia, undertook extensive tours across the Russian countryside beginning in the late 1830s, and so did the Japanese emperors in various parts of their empire throughout the 1870s.⁴⁰

On each trip, Mahmud II went deeper into the empire, both literally and figuratively.⁴¹ Throughout his long journeys he took every opportunity to show his compassion for his subjects, offering large sums of money for the repair of churches, synagogues, and historic and sacred sites, going into small villages, and distributing gifts. In an attempt to capture the sentiments of his people, he constantly downplayed his supreme figure and presented the image of an invincible yet human and earthly ruler. He spent a night on a battleship, favoring a simple dinner in the company of sailors instead of splendid banquets given in his honor; he addressed large crowds of people who came to see him; and he frequently mingled with his subjects to make himself both visible and touchable, all as part of an unprecedented and strategic move to construct his new image. He appeared as a father figure when offering gifts, as a devout believer when ordering the repair of religious sites, as a caring administrator when listening to people’s complaints, and as a diligent commander when reviewing his troops. In short, the image he created was not that of a ruler delegating his authority while isolated in the luxury of his palace, but of one deeply committed to his subjects.

One of the most important purposes of the sultan’s visits to the distant provinces was to regain the loyalty of his non-Muslim subjects. This is evident in his choice of the regions he visited. He traveled extensively in the predominantly Christian Balkan provinces, whereas, in chiefly

Muslim Anatolia, he only visited Istanbul's neighboring town of Izmit. Considering this was a time when nationalist movements were gaining momentum in the Balkans, Sultan Mahmud II's visits were quite timely. Already in 1829, he had legally "offered non-Muslims and Muslims a common subjecthood/citizensry," by enforcing the new clothing law which eliminated the headgear as the chief marker of status and confessional identity.⁴² Now he personally delivered assurance to his subjects of the equity of his imperial eye toward Muslims and non-Muslims:

You Greeks! You Armenians! You Jews! Just like Muslims, you all are God's servants and my subjects. You differ in matters of faith. But you are all protected by the law and by my imperial will. Pay your taxes. They will be used to ensure your security and your well-being.⁴³

During his trips, Mahmud II promised his subjects that he would continue to visit them regularly. The message he conveyed was clear: "Law and order will be placed in motion not only in the capital but in the rest of the empire as well."⁴⁴ He promised more reasonable taxes, an end to the secondary status of the provinces, and the observance of justice irrespective of his subjects' faith.⁴⁵ His aim was to replace the public's widely held perception of government misconduct with that of law and order. In a strategic move to display his sense of justice, he often left a substantial sum of money to compensate for the town's expenditure in hosting his own reception.⁴⁶

Throughout his travels, Mahmud II sought to achieve personal popularity with his new image, and the response he received from his subjects was as welcoming as he could have hoped for. People embraced him with great enthusiasm, praying for him as he walked among them accompanied by his entourage. His presence in the far and distant provinces was an attempt to demonstrate the territorial unity of an empire on the verge of disintegration, as ethnonationalist movements in the Balkans and the disheartening rebellion of Mehmed Ali Pasha in Egypt gained ground.⁴⁷ He attempted to connect the remote corners of the empire to the capital of Istanbul and to bring the people closer to him both by seeing them and by giving them the opportunity to see him, thus eliminating the sense of aloofness that had existed between the ruler and his subjects. His

aspiration was both to constitute his subjects as a collective identity and “to take symbolic possession” of his realm.⁴⁸

In the capital, too, Mahmud II took every opportunity to make himself visible to the public, especially in the last decade of his reign. He frequently participated in the opening ceremonies of new schools and public buildings, and reviewed his troops. This newly established tradition of imperial public visibility continued during the reign of Mahmud II’s two consecutive successors, Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861) and Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876).⁴⁹

As Mahmud II began to make himself visible to the public, the official newspaper, *Takvim-i Vekayi* (the first Ottoman newspaper, launched in 1831) disseminated the mundane activities of the ruler to bolster the new image of an earthly sultan. The idea of an Ottoman newspaper had largely emerged as a counterattack to Mehmed Ali Pasha’s newspaper, *Vakayi-i Mısriyye*, that had been established in 1828. Once the loyal governor of the lucrative province of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Pasha rebelled and posed the greatest challenge to the empire as his armies defeated the Ottomans more than once, approaching a day’s march from Istanbul, in the 1830s. *Takvim-i Vekayi* began to serve as a new front in the continuous war between the sultan and his rebellious governor, and as the new arena for the battle over public opinion.

The newspaper aimed at constructing a caring and nurturing image of the sultan who was now directly involved in the affairs of the state. Originally published in Ottoman Turkish, different versions in Arabic, Persian, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, and French were also published and distributed. This signaled Mahmud II’s persistent urge to convey his message to his subjects, which was also evident in his efforts to make the original language of the newspaper simple enough to be easily understood by ordinary people. When Mehmed Esad, chief editor of *Takvim-i Vekayi*, submitted to him a draft of his coverage of the sultan’s 1837 trip to the Balkans, which he had written in florid style, Mahmud II thought it too complicated. His response is illustrative of his effort to eliminate both physical and linguistic estrangement between himself and his subjects:

Although your piece is beautifully written and well crafted, in these kinds of matters that are to be presented to the public, the wording should be such that everybody can understand.⁵⁰

In addition to the novelty of Mahmud II's decision to leave the capital and travel through the empire to "see his subjects," he also became the first sultan to make his personal portraits available for public viewing. Despite the Islamic ban on the reproduction of human images, Ottoman sultans since Mehmed II had had their portraits painted. However, these portraits had never left the secluded imperial palace of Topkapı. In his attempt to expand the public visibility of his rule, Mahmud II broke with this tradition. For the first time, the subjects of the empire had the opportunity to see what the sultan looked like. As portraitists rushed to Istanbul from Europe in the early 1830s,⁵¹ Mahmud II began dispatching his portraits to ambassadors, high-ranking bureaucrats, and most importantly, to the *Şeyhulislam*, the chief religious authority—much to the latter's displeasure.⁵² Mahmud II's self-conscious public image is intimated by the British ambassador Stratford Caning who remarked that the sultan appeared at all times as though he were posing for an artist.⁵³ By 1835, the monarch began to distribute his portraits to schools, official buildings, and military barracks throughout the capital, creating a symbolic presence as the ultimate overseer, even in his physical absence.⁵⁴

It is important to emphasize that these portraits were strikingly different from earlier ones, which had been painted in much the same fashion as those of his predecessors and had not been intended for public viewing.⁵⁵ In one of his earlier portraits, painted sometime between 1808 and 1829, Mahmud II is depicted with a long beard, in a traditional loose caftan and a large turban on his head, seated on his jeweled throne (Figure 1). His face looks pale, his body motionless and apathetic, and despite his young age he appears aged. By contrast, in a later painting, produced between 1829 and 1839, he is shown seated in a western-style chair. He dons a European-style military uniform consisting of tight trousers and a shirt enveloped in a cloak (Figure 2). His beard is much shorter, and projects a solemn authority and a younger look. Instead of the traditional turban, he wears a *fes*, which he had made compulsory for all officials in 1829. His bodily disposition is dynamic and vigorous. His right hand points out, conveying his role as the guide and leader of his subjects. In his left hand, a *ferman*, the sultanic edict, displays his imperial seal, and on the table next to his chair, a set of books signifies the authority of fixed texts. It is now these, and not his figure seated on the throne, that serve as the new metonyms of his power as the law-abiding and just administrator.



Figure 1: Anonymous (between 1808 and 1829). Reproduced from *The Sultan's Portraits: Picturing the House of Osman* (Istanbul: Isbank, 2000), 504.



Figure 2: Anonymous (between 1829 and 1839). Reproduced from *The Sultan's Portraits*, 505.

By both seeing his subjects and making himself visible to them, Mahmud II did not merely aim at emphasizing the collective identity and unity of his empire. He also aspired to the “ability to look back at the people.”⁵⁶ He asked his officials for detailed topographic and demographic information and requested maps of the places he visited, only to find out that such detailed maps did not exist.⁵⁷ Upon his order, cartographers began mapping the lands of the empire, an endeavor followed by two attempts at comprehensive censuses in 1831 and in 1844.⁵⁸ In addition, land and income surveys of the population across the Anatolian and Balkan provinces were conducted in 1840 and 1844; however incomplete, they served to establish the basis of a new tax system.⁵⁹ Quarantine reports must also be added to these statistical activities. Prepared monthly by centrally appointed officials as part of the state’s emerging concern for public health in the 1840s, these reports, which inventoried epidemics and major diseases, were sent to Istanbul from all four corners of the empire.⁶⁰

Within the same decade, then, while spy reports registered the mood of the people, quarantine reports listed their health conditions, income registers recorded their wealth, and maps and censuses charted the empire’s territory and its inhabitants. And while these maps and statistics rendered the subjects “legible,” the ruler was making himself visible to his subjects. In other words, as the symbol of power was rendered visible, the subjects were constituted as “objects of observation.”⁶¹

All these new surveillance practices, exemplified in the land, health, and opinion surveys, reflect a new governmentality based on the notion that the population is not an aggregate body, but a knowable entity; the attempt to make it legible must be seen in this light. Making the population legible was at once a process of inscribing that required a reconfiguration of power relations but also, and perhaps more importantly, inevitably opened up a new space of communication between the ruler and the ruled. As part of this new governmentality, even social control, which explicitly attributes a passive role to society and renders the state the only agent of an unequal yet reciprocal process, is located within this space. This is the space where politics is redefined. It is “disciplinary” in that it arranges, shapes, and controls, and it is “emancipatory” in that it lends a legitimate voice to those subjected to control in the business of government.⁶²

This is also how the public sphere was redefined: It was no longer merely a moral sphere within which the populace was to be kept aloof from politics and submit its loyalty to the ruler, but an actual political sphere where public and public opinion emerged as a legitimate force in the business of governance, and people were constituted as political subjects. In practice, surveillance brought about the state's active involvement in the minute details of the lives of the people. Encircled by the state's overt and covert interventions, the public sphere itself thus became a sphere of control. With the establishment, in 1844, of the first Ottoman police organization as a body separate from the military, this process was institutionalized.⁶³ The discovery of public opinion inevitably overlapped with public policing. While the public sphere was defined as the political sphere, it simultaneously became a zone of control. This extensive surveillance ultimately increased the state's capacity to sanction, while it decreased its need to flex its muscle before the public. European travelers point to the rarity of capital punishment in the 1840s, attributing it, with expected credulity, to the leniency of the young ruler Abdülmecid, son of Mahmud II. In 1844, the English traveler Charles White noted:

The present Sultan evinces extreme repugnance to sanction capital punishment, even in cases of malefactors whose crimes would inevitably lead them to the scaffold in France, England, or the United States. The knowledge of the sovereign's sentiments naturally influences those of the judges.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The elements of transformation of nineteenth-century Ottoman political culture presented here were among the ingredients of a new language of political authority that could no longer be effectively maintained by relying on the language of the conventional political order.⁶⁵ Ottoman absolutist rule depended on the mystification of politics, on the portrayal of the sultan as the sole representative of politics, and on the mystification of the ruler, ensured by his invisibility. This notion of politics was completely reversed towards the mid-nineteenth century: first, as demonstrated by

the spy reports, the popular political discourse was implicitly legitimized; second, people were constituted as political subjects; and third, the sultan was humanized by becoming more visible through his country trips, his portraits for public consumption, and the publication of his mundane governmental activities.

The new language of politics was that of modernity. Whether identified as restoration or reform towards Westernization or modernization, or imposed through revolutions or colonization, this new language was articulated as a response to “the new demands of modernity”⁶⁶ in many parts of the world from the late eighteenth century onwards. In the Ottoman Empire, this response, which took the form of a massive reform program in the legal, economic, and administrative spheres in the nineteenth century, was officially known as the Tanzimat. It was initiated by Mahmud II and culminated in the declaration of the Gülhane Rescript in 1839. It is commonly argued that the Tanzimat reforms were inspired by European models to bring an end to the “traditional” political structure that had presumably been in decline for nearly three centuries. As common and enduring as this view may have been in serving as an explanatory framework for nineteenth-century Ottoman historiography, it has lately become a punching bag for revisionist historians.

My purpose here is neither to propose yet another revisionist history nor to undermine the importance of the Tanzimat reforms. While we need to dwell on the *rupture* that was brought about by the reforms, the focus of attention should not be the so-called Western-inspired institutional changes as the proponents of modernization would have it. Indeed, this ideological position has tended to place the cart before the horse, by explaining social and political transformations through the institutional reforms that were initiated from the second quarter of the nineteenth century onward. Rather, we should shift our object of inquiry to the overall constitutive effects that these reforms have attempted to accomplish.

Here, the concept of surveillance may provide us with an opportunity to capture these effects. As a governing practice in the mid nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, surveillance was a tool that served to render the population legible. But it was at the same time a constitutive practice of the social reality with a new definition of politics and of the public sphere. What also needs to be noted is that surveillance was not

a peculiarity of Ottoman governance, nor of other so-called absolutist regimes. Surveillance as defined here was a common governmental practice of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century states, whether in Western Europe, Asia or the Middle East, and whether liberal, authoritarian, or totalitarian regimes. It was, in sum, a shared feature of modernity.⁶⁷

This view would allow us to conduct constructive—as opposed to defensive—comparative studies on the public sphere without attributing normative content to it. Moreover, it would help us to steer clear of the tendency to use “public sphere” and “society” interchangeably, and to see “state” and “public sphere” as disconnected, diametrically opposed, and historically developed in contradistinction to one another. This chapter has sought to demonstrate that the constitution of the public and the surveillance of the population were inextricably linked. The public sphere was not a place independent of state power, nor was it merely an object of power upon which control and discipline were implemented. It was an arena of political struggle between the ruler and the ruled, and an ideal locale to trace the changing language and dynamics of this struggle.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Shirine Hamadeh for her invaluable input.
2. Harold Mah, "Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians," *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 153–182.
3. Mah, "Phantasies of the Public Sphere," 169.
4. Keith Michael Baker, "Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 182–183.
5. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), xvii.
6. Geoff Eley, "Politics, Culture and the Public Sphere," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10 (2002): 224.
7. Eley, "Politics, Culture and the Public Sphere," 224.
8. See Andrew Arato and Jean L. Cohen, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); John Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society: On the Predicaments of European Socialism, the Prospects for Democracy, and the Problem of Controlling Social and Political Power* (London: Verso, 1988); John Keane, *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives* (London: Verso, 1988); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985). For a critique, see Ellen Meiskins Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" *Socialist Register* 60 (1990): 60–84.
9. It is impossible to provide exhaustive citations here, but see, for example, for the Middle East, Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman, eds., *Public Islam and the Common Good* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). For China, see R. Bin Wong, "Great Expectations: The 'Public Sphere' and the Search for Modern Times in Chinese History," *Chugokushi Gaku* [Studies in Chinese History] 3 (1993): 7–50; Philip C.C. Huang, "The Paradigmatic Crisis in Chinese Studies: Paradoxes in Social and Economic History," *Modern China* 7 (1991): 299–341; Philip C.C. Huang, ed., "Symposium: 'Public Sphere'/'Civil Society' in China: Paradigmatic Issues in Chinese Studies III," *Modern China* 19 (1993). For Japan, see *positions: east asia cultures critique*, Special Issue 10 (2002).

10. Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), xii.
11. Instead, Harootunian suggests the term “co-eval” modernity, which intimates contemporaneity. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, xvi.
12. It is this normative appeal associated with a strong agenda of democratic expansion and citizenship in the Middle East that seems to have secured funding for numerous international conferences, workshops and publications on the public sphere.
13. Eley, “Politics, Culture and the Public Sphere,” 224.
14. Sami Zubaida, “The Public and the Private in Islamic Law and Society” 1, Aga Khan University, 2 August 2005, <http://www.aku.edu/ismc/privpub-post.shtml>.
15. See Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 171–172. Baker’s assessment (especially in chapter 8) of “the public” and “public opinion” as political and ideological constructs has been influential in formulating my argument. However, my argument departs from Baker’s in that I place more emphasis on the new strategies of governance.
16. Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991). See also Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999).
17. Especially on matters of law and taxation, see Huri İslamoğlu, ed., *Constituting Property: Private Property in the East and West* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), especially chapters 1 and 9 on the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. See also Huri İslamoğlu, “Property as a Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858,” in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, edited by Roger Owen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
18. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 46.

19. For legibility, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
20. For surveillance as a constitutive practice, see Peter Holquist, "Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work': Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context," *Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997): 415–450.
21. For the "non-political" character of the Foucauldian conception of surveillance, see Huri İslamoğlu, "Towards a Political Economy of Legal and Administrative Constitutions of Individual Property," in *Constituting Property: Private Property in the East and West*, edited by Huri İslamoğlu (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 10.
22. For a detailed treatment of these reports with a different focus, see Cengiz Kırılı, "Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire," in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, edited by Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Most of these reports are catalogued under *İradeler* and some of them under *Cevdet* in the Prime Ministry's Ottoman Archives (hereafter BOA). For full citations of the reports, see the article cited above.
23. Informer payment registers clearly reveal that Ottoman subjects and foreign nationals were paid different sums. The latter group was better paid. For examples of these payment registers, see BOA, *Cevdet-Askeri*, nos: 4584, 8066, 8618.
24. All reports were written in Ottoman Turkish but in some cases the original language of the conversation was mentioned by the informer.
25. In Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), the author suggests that this is a contradiction that "all repressive, authoritarian regimes must try to resolve," as if the liberal-democratic regimes of the modern era were impervious to this contradiction, 164.
26. For examples of research on public opinion in eighteenth-century France, see Arlette Farge, *Subversive Words: Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century France*, trans. Rosemary Morris (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Mona Ozouf, "'Public Opinion' at the End of the Old Regime," *Journal of Modern History* 60, suppl. (1988): S1–S21; Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 232–246; Robert Darnton, "An Early

- Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000): 1–35. For examples derived from the Stalin-era Soviet Union, see Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934–1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, chapter 7. For examples from Nazi Germany, see Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich, Bavaria 1933–1945* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1983).
27. BOA, *Cevdet-Zaptiye*, no: 302 (27 Z 1212 / 12 June 1798).
 28. Cabi Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi: Tarih-i Sultan Selim-i Salis ve Mahmud-ı Sani* [Cabi’s History: A History of Sultan Selim III and Mahmut II], edited by Mehmet Ali Beyhan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003), 392.
 29. For an example of such subversive strategies, see Cabi Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi*, 947–948.
 30. The intelligence activity reached its peak during the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1908), but its main purpose was the denunciation and prosecution of political public discourse.
 31. For the distinction in the case of India, see Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 259.
 32. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, especially chapter 8, “Public Opinion as Political Invention.” Also, see Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault’s Thought* (New York: Penguin, 1984), 242, where Foucault says, “What was discovered at that time—and this was one of the great discoveries of political thought at the end of the eighteenth century—was the idea of *society* [emphasis original].”
 33. Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 16; Gülru Necipoğlu, “Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces,” *Ars Orientalis* 23, Special Issue on Pre-modern Islamic Palaces (1993): 304–342.
 34. Shirine Hamadeh, *The City’s Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007). See especially chapter 2.
 35. Delegating much of his power to the grand vizier, Mehmed IV, “the Hunter,” devoted a great deal of his time to hunting away from Istanbul, much to the dismay of the public.

36. Mehmet İpşirli, “Osmanlılarda Cuma Selamlığı” [The Friday-prayer Ceremony in the Ottomans], in *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu’na Armağan* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1991).
37. François Georgeon, “Le sultan caché: Réclusion du souverain et mise en scène du pouvoir à l’époque de Abdülhamid II (1876–1909),” *Turcica* 29 (1997): 93–124.
38. The standard account of the body politic of absolutism in Europe is that of Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).
39. Abdülkadir Özcan, “II. Mahmud’un Memleket Gezileri” [Mahmut II’s Country Trips], in *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu’na Armağan* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1991), 362.
40. See, respectively, Richard Wortman, “Rule by Sentiment: Alexander II’s Journeys through the Russian Empire,” *American Historical Review* 95 (1990): 745–771; and T. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Fujitani’s work is indeed splendid and has been influential in formulating my analysis of Mahmud II’s visibility.
41. There are authentic sources covering Sultan Mahmud II’s travels. Mehmed Esad Efendi, the chronicler of the time as well as the editor of the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vakayi*, covered the Dardanelles-Edirne and Rumelia travels, the two long-lasting ones, in his works entitled *Sefername-i Hayr* and *Ayatü’l-hayr*, respectively. Helmut von Moltke, a Prussian officer in charge of training Ottoman troops personally, joined the Sultan’s last trip in 1837 and wrote his observations in *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei*. References are to its French translation *Lettres du Maréchal de Moltke sur l’Orient* (Paris: Librairie Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1877). Relevant information regarding the travels can also be found in Ahmed Lütfi’s *Tarih-i Lütfi* [Lütfi’s History], 9 vols. (Istanbul: Mahmut Beğ Matbaası, 1302/1885).
42. Donald Quataert, “Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997): 413.
43. Özcan, “II. Mahmud’un Memleket Gezileri,” 373–374; Moltke, *Lettres sur l’Orient*, 135.
44. Moltke, *Lettres sur l’Orient*, 135.
45. Moltke, *Lettres sur l’Orient*, 144.

46. Moltke, *Lettres sur l'Orient*, 144.
47. For an analysis of the spy reports covering the public opinion on the war with Mehmed Ali Pasha, see Cengiz Kırılı, "Through the Grapevine," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 10–16 November 2005, no. 768, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/768/sc2.htm>.
48. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 125.
49. Abdülmecid went on a 17-day trip covering Izmit, Bursa, Mudanya, the Dardanelles and several Aegean islands in 1844. Lütfi, *Tarih-i Lütüfi*, 7: 87–88. The sultan's visibility was radically reversed during Abdülhamid II's (1876–1908) rule, which was marked by the seclusion of power and the invisibility of the ruler. Despite the scarcity of secondary literature on Mahmud II's public visibility, lately there has been an increasing interest in the seclusion of power during Abdülhamid II's reign. See Selim Deringil, "Abdülhamid Dönemi Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Simgesel ve Törenselleşme: 'Görünmeden Görmek'" [Symbolic and Ritualistic Structure in the Ottoman Empire during the Reign of Abdülhamid II: Seeing without Being Seen], *Toplum ve Bilim* 62 (1993), 34–55; Georgeon, "Le sultan caché," 93–124.
50. Lütfi, *Tarih-i Lütüfi*, 5:90.
51. Tuncer Baykara, *Osmanlılarda Medeniyet Kavramı ve Ondokuzuncu Yüzyıla Dair Araştırmalar* [The Concept of Civilization in the Ottoman Empire and Studies on the Nineteenth Century] (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1992), 53.
52. Lütfi, *Tarih-i Lütüfi*, 4:65. Şeyhülislam Yasincizade Abdülvehab Efendi's opposition was so firm that he was removed from his office. Following this, a permanent portraitist was appointed for the palace service. Baykara, *Osmanlılarda Medeniyet Kavramı*, 55.
53. Baykara, *Osmanlılarda Medeniyet Kavramı*, 54.
54. Lütfi, *Tarih-i Lütüfi*, 5:50–52; Uriel Heyd, "The Ottoman Ulema and Westernization in the Time of Selim III and Mahmud II," *Scripta Hierosolymitana: Studies in Islamic History and Civilization*, vol. 9 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1961), 70.
55. See also Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy* for the transformation in the depiction of Japanese emperors in photographic representations, 175–80.
56. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 24.
57. Lütfi, *Tarih-i Lütüfi*, 5:90.

58. Mahir Aydın, "Sultan II. Mahmud Döneminde Yapılan Nüfus Tahrirleri [Census during the Reign of Mahmut II]," *Sultan II. Mahmud ve Reformları Semineri: 28–30 Haziran Bildiriler* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1990), 81–106.
59. These income registers (*temettuat defterleri*) amount to several thousand volumes. Our information about these registers is very limited. For a brief introduction to the income registers see Mübahat Kütükoğlu, "Osmanlının Sosyal ve İktisadi Kaynaklarından Temettü Defterleri [Income Registers as a Social and Economic Source Material of the Ottomans," *Belleten*, 59/225 (1995): 395–418; and Tefik Güran, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı [19th Century Ottoman Agriculture]* (İstanbul: Eren, 1998). For a significant study that goes beyond a description of these registers, see Huri İslamoğlu, "Politics of Administering Property: Law and Statistics in the Nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire," in *Constituting Property: Private Property in the East and West*, edited by Huri İslamoğlu (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 276–319.
60. These health reports are located in the Ottoman archives in the catalogue entitled *İradeler-Dahiliye: Tahaffuz Jurnalleri*.
61. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 25.
62. An adaptation of Michael Tsin, *Nation, Governance, and Modernity in China: Canton, 1900–1927* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 14.
63. The Police Organization was turned into the Ministry in 1846. For the development of the Ottoman police organization in the nineteenth century, see Ferdan Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis: Osmanlıdan Cumhuriyet'e Toplumsal Denetimin Diyalektiği* [The Modern State and the Police: The Dialectic of Social Control from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004); and Nadir Özbek, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet, 1876–1909" [Internal Security, Politics and the State], *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi* 16 (2004): 59–95.
64. Charles White, *Three Years in Constantinople; or, Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1844*, vol 1. (London: H. Colburn, 1845), 120.
65. See Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 169–170, for this new language that marked the dissolution of French absolutism in the eighteenth century.
66. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 55.
67. Holquist, "Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work," 443.

Places in Shadows, Networks in Transformation: An Analysis of the Tehran Bazaar's Publicness

Arang Keshavarzian

The Tehran bazaar is “that which is in the shadow [*sāyeh*] of the Shams al-‘Amareh.”¹ This was the response a *bazaari* gave when I asked him to describe the commercial entrepôt in which he had worked for several decades.² He was referring to how Tehran’s central marketplace is situated directly adjacent to the Golestan Palace compound, which includes the ornate clock tower named the Shams al-‘Amareh, or “Sun of the Architecture.” It is not particularly surprising that the central marketplace in Tehran, like many others in Iran and the wider Middle East and North Africa, is intimately associated with a distinct physical place, or “locale.”³ In many cities in the region, although not all, bazaars or *aswaq* (s. *suq*) are clearly demarcated by conspicuous edifices and morphologies that physically set these commercial environs apart from the rest of the city.⁴

But this rather poetic metaphor, which was repeated by other older merchants, also suggests that the Tehran bazaar is not simply an empty point or a two-dimensional space on the map, but a *place*, one which implies a series of social and relational dimensions that in turn produces a collective identity. The mere fact that merchants and shopkeepers are identified and self-identify as “people of the bazaar” [*bazaaris* or *ahl-e bazaar*] reflects the sense of place shared to some degree by people with *heterogeneous* social standings, religions, economic power, and sectoral affiliations. Historically, the multifunctional bazaar nurtured complex and long-term social, kinship, credit, and casual relationships engendering

shared (although not uniform) experiences in the bazaar's retail stores, commercial offices, passages, and caravansaries. Hence, a second aspect of place is that it produces a "sense of place" or place-defined and acquired identity.

Finally, the notion of being in the "shadow of" another object reminds us that places are "located," or situated in *relation* to other locales and according to relationships with other hierarchies and processes, such as the division of labor, global systems of production and distribution, and capitalist competition.⁵ In this case, since the Golestan Palace was the historic seat of government, the quote is suggestive of the relationship between the marketplace and the state. To the student of Iranian history specifically, it recalls the politics that emerged in the alleyways and caravansaries of Iran's bazaars and in the shadow of the public authority. The Tehran bazaar was a site for political rumor and organization, demonstrations and pamphleteering, and financing strikes and coordinating dissent; and *bazaaris* (always in consort with other social groups, be they clerics, students, or liberal nationalist elites) were famously and repeatedly involved in the social movements that have punctuated modern Iranian history—the movement opposing the tobacco concessions in 1890, support for the Constitutional Revolution in 1905–11, support and loyalty to the Mosaddeq government in 1951–53, its contribution to the 1963 Khomeini-inspired protest against the Shah's White Revolution, and the active participation in the events of the Islamic Revolution in 1977–79.⁶ The bazaar in Tehran and other cities became a venue to organize and stage dissent—to make it *public*; I will return to this point shortly.

How was it that a physical space primarily intended for private endeavors (i.e., exchange of goods and services between individuals) and associated with instrumental logic (i.e., maximizing profit) was simultaneously a place that allowed for communication among friends, acquaintances, and strangers alike; access to public life; and participation in politics? By presenting material from field research and reinterpreting existing literature, this chapter argues that in order to understand how the various dimensions of place are generated and transformed it is critical to study the intersection of place and networks. To develop this argument I conceptualize bazaars as *bounded spaces containing a series of ongoing and socially embedded networks that are the mechanism for the exchange*

of specific commodities.⁷ The morphology of the bazaar enabled *bazaaris* to develop autonomous commercial networks which were as essential for economic exchange as they were well worn channels for communication, mobilizing resources, and developing of repertoires of collective action that are vital for social mobilization. As I will argue, the spatial dimensions of the bazaar were the organizing principles of its interpersonal relations, and are essential to understanding the extent to which it has been a public sphere over the last half century.

If it is correct that the bazaar's place is politically positioned, we should expect that with the Islamic Revolution its social space was refashioned as the government's shadow has traced new areas of dark and light. I present evidence suggesting that new state policies have indeed reconfigured the Tehran bazaar's place and networks in ways that have simultaneously transformed the locales and locations of commerce and consequently reduced the bazaar's publicness and political efficacy. Thus, the articulation of politics in the bazaar is more contingent than implied by the rather permanent notion of physical space or highly structural notions of social groups and classes.

Degrees and contingencies of publicness

The discussion of place, interpersonal relations, and politics recalls the now classic writings of Arendt and Habermas on the public sphere.⁸ "Public sphere" refers to the discursive space where informed private citizens literally and communicatively meet to engage in rational-critical discourse about the common good. For these authors and those who have engaged with them in subsequent decades,⁹ the public sphere is an empirical heuristic and normative ideal through which political action (*praxis*) and participatory democracy are made feasible and meaningful. Despite Iran's lack of the constitutional and legal frameworks which enabled the construction, vitality, and effectiveness of public spheres in certain parts of Europe since the nineteenth century, the concept of public sphere does foreground the contingent intersection of socioeconomic and political registers in the case of the bazaar. Public spheres, like bazaars, are effects of everyday forms of interpersonal interaction.

Interpreting the bazaar's collective identity and operation as a consequence of protracted, polycentric, and multifaceted relations resonates with the Arendtian notion of the public sphere. The production of the public is conceptually related to interpersonal relations and exchanges that fashion private citizens and their potentials for politics. Arendt emphasizes that the public is something that is experienced (even produced) through social action and intercourse with others in a "web of human relationships."¹⁰ Actions would be meaningless without the presence of others (a public) to witness, judge, and give meaning to them (publicity). In his later writings Habermas makes the connection between the concepts of public sphere and networks even more explicit. The public sphere, he writes, "can best be described as a *network* for communicating information and points of view (i.e., opinions, expressing affirmative or negative attitudes); *the streams of communication* are, in the process, filtered and synthesized, in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified *public* opinions."¹¹ Yet in order to import Habermas's essentially normative notion of the public sphere into empirical studies, it is important not to treat the means of communication and dissemination of discourses as given or static. The pattern of interpersonal relations, the way that they bring people together and hold them apart, has consequences for accessibility, accountability, secrecy, and exclusion—i.e., publicness. By understanding the bazaar both as a unit of analysis and as the reality constituted through networks, the public nature of the bazaar is automatically treated more heterogeneously and dynamically. In other words, patterns of networks or interpersonal relations tell us a lot about how and why publics emerge, transform, and wane.

Secondly, a sometimes forgotten matter is that Habermas understood the emergence and transformation of the public sphere as intimately related to the mercantile and bourgeois class and the development of capitalist market economies. Thus, studying merchants and commercial institutions would be a potentially fruitful means to assess the particularities of public sphere(s) in Iran, and the Middle East region more generally. Additionally, this agenda helps relate political-economic and cultural issues to one another, rather than treating them as separate and autonomous realms.

Habermas, and Arendt before him, was quite clear that the public sphere is distinct, or more precisely becomes distinct, from the realm of

the market and the private sphere.¹² Normative political theorists, therefore, may not recognize the bazaar as a public sphere, especially since many of the issues discussed and debated within the bazaar's physical space or through its channels of communication can hardly be construed as constituting "the common interest." However, this narrow understanding of the public sphere and strict dichotomy between private and public, or personal and political, would preclude a full understanding of Iranian politics and of the *bazaaris'* political power. It is useful to think of degrees of publicness, as recent scholarly work tends to do, rather than approach "the public" in stark dichotomous terms juxtaposed to "the private."¹³ Publicness has "the quality of wholeness, openness, and availability," writes Setrag Manoukian.¹⁴ "Public is something whole, that is shared and total, encompassing everything, or having the possibility to do so. It is open and available in the sense that it is 'in view' and at somebody's disposal. The actualization of these characteristics is a matter of degree and depends on the particular situation and its means of implementation." Defined as such, Manoukian situates publicness at one end of a continuum, whose opposite end is secrecy, which is associated with "partiality, unavailability, and closeness." Similarly, in his more sweeping discussion of "Arabo-Islamic society," Nazih Ayubi restructures the public-private dichotomy as one between "sociability" and "domesticity" with the former being characterized as "open, revealed, [and] expressed" and the latter "hidden, covered, [and] withdrawn." He claims that in Muslim and some Mediterranean societies "life is often 'lived in public,' and all things in life acquire a certain cruel publicity."¹⁵

Unfortunately forgotten in discussions of public/private and secrecy is Georg Simmel's work, which develops a more general sociological account of the public and secrecy as inversely correlated and as an essential attribute of social evolution. "The historical development of society is in many respects characterized by the fact that what at an earlier time was manifest, enters the protection of secrecy; and that, conversely, what once was secret, no longer needs such protection but reveals itself."¹⁶ For Simmel, society is composed of individuals connected to one another through interaction, with lies and secrecy being one such form of interaction that requires social distance.¹⁷ "The secret is a first rate element of individualization. It is in a typical dual role: social conditions of strong

personal differentiation permit and require secrecy in a high degree; and, conversely the secret embodies and intensifies such differentiation. In a small and narrow circle, the formation and preservation of secrets is made difficult on technical grounds: everybody is too close to everybody else and his circumstances, and frequency and intimacy of contact involve too much temptation of revelation.”¹⁸ Simmel goes on to argue that as groups become larger and when the money economy dominates, individuals withdraw from social circles resulting in secrecy and individualization. Manoukian, Ayubi, and Simmel’s insights are helpful in that, first, they relate publicness to openness and reveal the nature of relations and interactions between individuals; and second, they contemplate how such interpersonal relations can take on the more closed, opaque, or hidden qualities associated with secrecy.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is not to ask if the bazaar is or is not a public sphere, but rather to gauge the various vectors that constitute and engender degrees of publicness or secrecy. Publicness is contingent upon historically specific political and spatial conditions that I decompose in terms of place and networks. I now turn to a discussion of the Tehran bazaar to illustrate how and why publicness must be spatialized and temporalized.

Publicness in the shadow of the Pahlavi state

As one of Tehran’s five quarters in the nineteenth century, the bazaar enjoys a historic position in its urban makeup. Differentiated from three ostensibly residential quarters and situated next to the governmental quarter of the *Arg* [citadel], in the early twentieth century the partly covered commercial “pulse of the city” expanded in importance as the capital outpaced historically larger and politically and economically more central cities such as Tabriz, Isfahan, or Shiraz. With the Constitutional Revolution and Reza Shah’s centralization and state-building initiatives, the Tehran bazaar quickly became the locale of national trade and increasingly the primary conduit for international trade. At around the same time, the modernist Pahlavi monarchy in the 1930s reshaped Tehran’s morphology by expanding the city borders and introducing a grid system

that fully enframed the one square kilometer (262-acre) area known as the bazaar with the street system that borders it. Consequently, the Tehran bazaar's built environment—bordering streets, narrow allies, vaulted ceilings, gates, and historic structures—have quite literally set it apart from the rest of the city. Thus, in Persian “bazaar” has maintained its geographic meaning alongside its newer metaphysical meaning of “the market.”

The bazaar, however, is not merely a geographic coordinate; it has long been an active commercial market which brings together importers, exporters, wholesalers, brokers, and retailers who have controlled large sums of credit, employed tens of thousands of workers, and distributed raw, intermediate, and finished consumer products through the city, the nation, and to the international market.¹⁹ While it is difficult to estimate the exact number of workers and commercial units in the Tehran bazaar, most sources estimate that there were between 20,000 and 30,000 commercial units within the Tehran bazaar and the immediate streets during the 1970s.²⁰ These large numbers of people were sorted into sectors and alleyways, such as the shoemakers' bazaar or the coppersmiths' bazaar. Traders, moreover, were located based on their position in the distribution network or value chain. For instance, import-exporters [*tujjār*] were often located in the side-alleys, tributaries and caravansaries. The locale functioned as a differentiating marker between economic activities within the bazaar; that is, between sectors and positions in the commercial hierarchy. As economic anthropologists and information economists explain, this type of localization reduces the costs of searching for sellers and facilitates the exchange of information about price, quality, and supply of goods, as well as reputations and backgrounds of potential exchange partners.²¹ Thus, the spatial configuration, including the human scale of the architecture, facilitated communication.

Before turning to a discussion of the Tehran bazaar's “sense of place” and “location,” let me say a few words about the rather involved issue of property ownership. The matter is complex because the bazaar has long been made up of a patchwork of buildings and land owned by private individuals, religious trusts, members of the royal family, and more recently economic foundations [*bonyād*] that manage property with the express aim of distributing earnings and profits to the disadvantaged.²² This fragmented situation along with the practice of key money and uncertainty

over property rights has continuously hindered attempts to draw plans and engage in (re)construction within the bazaar region. However, the main thoroughfares of the bazaar were always de facto public property, accessible to all and under the administration of the municipality. Historically, scholars of Islamic law, who have developed a relational understanding of public and private in general, recognized the market as a public space that was to be monitored (although not regulated) by an inspector [*muhtasib*] to ensure that Islamic law and local custom would be followed.²³

However, as Asef Bayat reminds us in his discussion of the urban poor and political activism, sharing a common locale or being in close proximity is not sufficient to transform a latent group into an active group.²⁴ Spatial concentration matters to the extent that it generates long-term, crosscutting, and multifaceted interpersonal relations, or the characteristics of what may be described as community or what Arendt would recognize as “a web of human connectedness.”²⁵ *Bazaari* ties are reproduced by and within the bazaar’s stores, alleyways, warehouses, coffee shops, restaurants, and mosques. To move from being a passive network of actors sharing a common space to an active one where actors consciously participate in group activities and mobilization, *physical* space must become a *social* space through activities, rituals, and interdependencies wherein individuals identify themselves as part of a group and as distinct from others and develop a semblance of generalized trust.

Up through the 1970s, the bazaar was a functionally mixed space that helped engender interpersonal relations among *bazaaris* that bridged the potentially divisive sectoral, hierarchical, ethnic, and political differences that could have rendered the commercial concentration socially insignificant and politically irrelevant. Within and surrounding the Tehran bazaar there existed public baths, coffeehouses, restaurants, *zūrkhānehs* [houses of strength], schools, mosques, and shrines. On a regular, if not daily, basis *bazaaris* would eat together, gather in coffeehouses, and hold meetings in their warehouses and at the entrance gates to their alleys. Mosques and shrines, often founded and funded by guilds and *bazaaris*, were places of routine interaction among pious merchants or those who wanted to at least display a degree of public piety. Hence, the bazaar had mixed uses—commercial, manufacturing, holy, hygienic,

recreational, and culinary. Many of these establishments catered to the *bazaari* community, although the mixed-use nature of the bazaar brought merchants in contact with society at large and other publics, in particular the clergy.

The bazaar's intimate work environment helped generate a social milieu wherein people of all walks of life did more than simply occupy the same physical location; they also engaged each other because of it. Open storefronts lining narrow alleys allowed passersby, whether customers or colleagues, to stop by and compare goods and prices, exchange economic news, inquire about potential exchange and credit partners, or trade political intrigue and predictions. This open quality encouraged and even obliged people to acknowledge each other's existence and allowed them to observe and judge the activities of others, whether they were strangers, relatives, neighbors, guild elders, competitors, or partners. In fact, personal interactions almost necessitated ritualistic small talk about families, the weather, and politics before turning to business matters. *Bazaaris* were together on a regular basis while they ate meals, drank tea, prayed, or sat around in each other's shops socializing. Potential cleavages along class, sectoral, and ethnic divisions were also prevented by casual social interactions that did not completely map onto social segmentation. The compact morphology allowed "eyes to be upon the streets,"²⁶ and enhanced the sense that the bazaar was a transparent and whole world in plain view of all its members.

This openness and accessibility, however, also was accompanied by a strong sense of *bazaari* distinctiveness and a set of exclusions that were articulated by spatial categories and networks. The morphology of the bazaar and the highly embedded nature of the economy was the facilitator of what researchers working on the bazaar in the prerevolutionary era often identified as a strong sense of "we" among *bazaaris*.²⁷ Participation in the multiplicity of facets of bazaar life instilled in its members norms of cooperation and solidarity. It was the participation in these polycentric multifaceted networks that brought diverse *bazaari* groups together to shape the way people thought of themselves and others who were "of the bazaar." Thus, place is productive in that it and networks mutually structure one another. *Bazaaris* and businessmen made, and to some extent continue to make, a distinct difference between the bazaar and

the *khiyābān*, or the streets located outside of the area associated with the covered market. In practical terms this distinction, recognized by *khiyābānī* as well as *bazaaris*, was that those located outside the bazaar did not work in the same guilds or participate in the commercial and social relations of the bazaar, and ostensibly lacked “membership in the bazaar.” One consequence for those deprived of membership in the bazaar was their inability to gain access to affordable credit, since interest rates were based on “being known” [*shenākhteh shodeh*] and/or having high status co-signers from the bazaar. They were often not involved in long-term and complex commercial relations with *bazaaris*, and hence were neither known to *bazaaris*, nor were they able to identify the guild elders and high-status members who could act as references and entrées into the bazaar’s world. This resulted in *bazaaris*’ characterization of *khiyābānī* as “inexperienced,” which was ostensibly a function of their absence from the bazaar’s space and networks, essential components of being visible and active members of its publicness.²⁸

In conclusion, this physically distinct space embedded networks in a shared social context creating a “sense of place.” The distinct geography and architecture of the bazaar’s buildings gave the bazaar a tangible quality that composed the identity of *bazaaris*. Therefore, it is these embedded and expansive networks that created a robust sense of solidarity and made the Tehran bazaar in the prerevolutionary era a community, despite hierarchical difference. Finally, the rooted nature of the market in a place helped establish the necessary foundation for communal allegiance with its confined nature fostering long-term and face-to-face interactions among *bazaaris*. To put it more emphatically, if you do not spend enough time in the bazaar, you cannot participate in the daily encounters and intercourse and will not become a *bazaari*; and if you do spend enough time in the bazaar to cultivate *and* participate in the essential interpersonal relations, you very well may inhale the dust and microbes that *bazaaris* imagined made them different and microbiologically identifiable.²⁹

Locating the bazaar in the Pahlavi political economy

Up until this point, the discussion of the bazaar has focused on its built environment and how it generated a sense of place, but place also refers to how a particular geography is *located* in relation to other places and socio-economic and political processes. Just as physical boundaries generated a place-based *bazaari* identity by facilitating a web-like set of relations and effected categorical separation between the bazaar and the rest of the urban society, the state's policies and Pahlavi monarchy's modernist gaze subordinated the bazaar and its inhabitants to "the modern economy" while making it a central node in Iran's petroleum-fueled consumerism.

The "othering" of *khiyābānī* by *bazaaris* is a direct reflection of the high modernism³⁰ of the Pahlavi state that sought to abolish the bazaar by *replacing* its commercial and economic system with a supposedly distinct and superior modern economy. State-sponsored and -owned chain stores, department stores, and banks were supposed to compete with and replace the bazaar's commercial and credit functions. A host of policies were adopted to discriminate against the *bazaaris*. For instance, state banks directed credit to allies of the Pahlavi family and away from smaller commercial figures; and tax laws and commercial regulations were arbitrarily applied in ways that did not favor the bazaar community.³¹ The Shah's rhetoric identified the bazaar as "traditional"—in contradistinction to "modern," the principle of public investment and political outreach. The state systematically discriminated in favor of those who shared the royal family's kinship and ideas and against those associated with the old, traditional, economic world. Not surprisingly, this helped *bazaaris* to band together and demarcate a group boundary.³² Rather than seeking to co-opt bazaar organizations such as the Chamber of Guilds and Chamber of Commerce in order to mobilize *bazaaris* on behalf of the regime, the Shah only took ad hoc and reactive measures that periodically admonished a group which was nonetheless considered to be anachronistic to modernization.³³

Despite the Shah's open hostility towards the *bazaari* class and their limited direct access to oil rents (though they could still access this liquidity indirectly), the Tehran bazaar remained commercially pivotal. Thanks to rapid urbanization and related capital accumulation and monetization

of wage labor; trade policies that encouraged consumption and imports; and the bazaar's ability to continue to dominate wholesaling and private credit markets, the Tehran bazaar translated its historical location in the economy to become the commercial fulcrum of an unevenly growing oil economy.³⁴ In the 1960s and 1970s, thus, *bazaaris* continued to be shaped as private citizens through their self-governing system of networks.

Contrary to the assumption of democratic theory, a public may emerge in isolation of and even in contradistinction to the public authority, or state. While in liberal democracies it has been assumed that the public sphere is protected, structured, and nurtured by legal protections, this finding resonates with more recent critiques of this liberal historical narrative of Europe that suggest that the emergence of public spheres is full of exclusions based on gender, class, and race.³⁵ In this case, the bazaar experience of exclusion was based on modernist principles that defined it as traditional, to be left behind in the dustbin of history.

Mobilization of *bazaaris*

As Fraser points out, there are “a variety of ways of accessing public life and a multiplicity of public arenas.”³⁶ Under authoritarian systems, which place restrictions on expressions of political disagreement and aspiration, contentious politics are an important path for entering public life. Given these parameters, how should we think about the bazaar's political power and ability to shape public opinion? I have argued elsewhere that the capacity of *bazaaris* to mobilize against the state has declined in recent decades as a consequence of the restructuring of the bazaar's networks.³⁷ Here I want to discuss how various aspects of space, networks, and publicness intersected and enabled collective action during the Pahlavi era by providing a site for repertoires of social mobilization, and by facilitating engagement with other publics through various means of copresence (the ability of people to interact through shared space), trust building, and sanctioning.³⁸

As a centrally located public space, the Tehran bazaar has been an important site from which to publicize dissent and challenge the state during much of the twentieth century. During the tobacco movement,

Constitutional Revolution, and pro-Mosaddeq and oil nationalization movement it was a place where gatherings took place, political speeches were given, opposition literature was distributed, and political rallies began. In the summer of 1963 protests against the Shah's White Revolution, the imprisonment of Ayatollah Khomeini, and clashes with the military were specifically centered around the bazaar. In addition, specific locations within the bazaar, such as Shaykh Abdol-Hossain Mosque (also known as the Azeris' or Turks' Mosque) and Chahr Suq-e Bozorg were sites of political events in past decades and thus held symbolic meaning.

More poignantly, these social movements were fueled by several meaningful spatial routines. The bazaar closures and strikes in Tehran, Tabriz, and other cities were effectively used against the Qajar monarchy in the late nineteenth century and during the Constitutional revolution to disrupt public life. In 1952 and 1953, *bazaaris* in Tehran organized roughly fifty closures of the marketplace as a display of opposition to the Shah's policies.³⁹ Indeed, the bazaar's support for Mosaddeq was so great that despite the fact that several clerics defected to the pro-Shah camp, the overthrow of Mosaddeq and his subsequent military trial, and the heavy-handed restrictions on student activists by the post-coup government, *bazaaris* formed committees to oppose the coup and continued to organize marketplace closures to publicize their opposition to the Shah.⁴⁰ Three months after the coup, the Shah responded by exiling several of the bazaar's organizers and by demolishing parts of its domed roof and defacing its doors.⁴¹ During the Islamic Revolution, national bazaar closures to commemorate the 1963 uprising, which itself was partly fueled by bazaar closures, were coordinated by activists through nation-wide inter-bazaar commercial networks. As a result the bazaars in Isfahan, Mashhad, and Tabriz were closed and seventy percent of the Tehran bazaar's stores and offices did not open.⁴² Of course, closure is effective, especially on the national level, because it disrupts the economy and impacts the lives of large numbers of Iranians who are either employees of or consumers in the marketplaces.⁴³ Even if one was unaware of the brewing political foment, the empty bazaar sent a poignant political message to would-be shoppers, workers, and passers-by.

Closures were often coupled with another spatial form of protest: the taking of sanctuary, or *bast*. For instance, economic conflicts between

the Qajar monarchy and the merchants came to a head in 1905 when the governor of Tehran bastinadoed two prominent merchants for protesting against orders to lower the price of imported sugar. The Tehran bazaar responded by closing its stores, after which hundreds of *bazaaris* of all standings along with clerics, seminary students, and Western-trained intellectuals took sanctuary in a shrine in Southern Tehran where they called for the establishment of a House of Justice.⁴⁴ This event in fact sparked the Constitutional Revolution.

A final spatial repertoire is the use of the bazaar as a starting point for marches. This was particularly the case during the 1953 protests and the 1979 revolution.⁴⁵ Between 1952 and 1953, *bazaari* organizations supported Mosaddeq by organizing rallies and demonstrations, most of which set out from the Tehran bazaar and ended at Baharestan Square, in front of the Parliament. Similarly, during the 1978–79 revolution many rallies began at the Tehran bazaar—but rather than culminating in front of the Majles, they typically ended at Tehran University. The shift from the Parliament to the university, which was surrounded by well established high schools and technical colleges, reflected the demise of public deliberative institutions during the last two decades of Pahlavi rule, the emergence of a politicized middle class largely based in modern institutions of higher education, and a northward shift in the city center. These rallies literally drew connections between the bazaar and other symbolic places with their emerging publics.

Political entrepreneurs among the *bazaaris* were able to tap into existing expertise in collective activities such as commercial and religious events to pool and distribute financial resources. Mosque associations and religious circles were critical in smoothly coordinating the rallies that reached tens and even hundreds of thousands of participants.⁴⁶

The multifaceted nature of the bazaar, its crosscutting networks, and the population density it engendered were essential for facilitating social mobilization. They did this in part because of the location of the bazaar in the larger economy. The bazaar's commercial relations integrated multiple cities across the country into an expansive web of relations between importers, exporters, wholesalers, brokers, and retailers. *Bazaaris* and their families enjoyed ties to a variety of social groups (e.g., clerics, industrialists, and workers in the service sector), and their own socioeconomic

standing and middle class sensibilities made for a population in contact with multiple urban publics and ideologies, such as nationalism, republicanism, and leftist and Islamist politics. Thus, they mobilized or were mobilized by others. In addition, the locale of the bazaar facilitated collective action through copresence. As a pedestrian area lined with public gathering places (coffee houses, mosques, and open squares) near government establishments, the Tehran bazaar was a ready-made space for public gathering and political demonstration. Word of political issues and activities could spread quickly through the bazaar.

The strong sense of solidarity and social policing of the boundary between *bazaaris* and non-*bazaaris* was important for two reasons. First, it helped limit the ability of the Shah's secret police (SAVAK) to penetrate the bazaar, since *bazaaris* were quick to identify outside agents and suspicious behavior.⁴⁷ Second, the *bazaaris* were able to effectively sanction those members who were hesitant to participate in collective action. For example, closures very often worked through peer pressure. When the Society of Merchants, Guilds, and Artisans called for strikes, those store owners that did not close in the morning closed in the afternoon.⁴⁸ Consider the statement of a shop owner in Amiriyeh, a quarter near the bazaar, explaining why he placed a picture of Khomeini in his shop window to prevent attacks against his store: "Most people want an Islamic republic ... And I want anything that most of the people want."⁴⁹ During the protests, space and active networks enabled *bazaaris* to identify, shame, and coerce non-participants and helped committed rebels reduce free-riding by cajoling and threatening unenthusiastic shopkeepers.

The withering of publicness under the Islamic Republic

During the prerevolutionary era networks were largely maintained within the physical space and social milieu of the covered marketplace and its immediate environs. The present situation is radically different. Commercial networks and many individual relations now transcend not only the state-bazaar divide but also national borders and center-periphery relations. Since the revolution, the Islamic Republic has created commercial circuits dominated by and dependent on state institutions

(e.g., ministries, procurement boards, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp, and free trade zones) and quasi-state organizations (e.g., foundations or *bonyād*) for trade licenses, subsidized hard currency, and credit. While in terms of form this sort of clientelism is not different from that of the Pahlavi regime, in terms of breadth it is far more pervasive, directly impacting the bazaar. In the shadows of this bureaucracy and crony capitalism, merchants have manipulated and evaded the bazaar's limits by patronizing transnational smuggling networks, shifting assets and activities to disparate loci (e.g., new commercial areas in Tehran, free trade zones in Iran and Dubai). Commerce has been both deterritorialized and reterritorialized, in the process displacing the networks of the bazaar.⁵⁰

Over the past quarter century, the combination of trade regulations, technological innovations, and new national and regional trade entrepôts have extended and reconfigured the set of commercial and social relations needed to participate in the import, export, and distribution of commercial goods and services. Today *bazaaris* communicate with and travel to locales across Tehran and even to distant locations in the frontier regions of Iran and the new commercial mecca of Dubai. My interviewees reflected a distinct generational difference when expressing their views on the new spatial coherence of the commercial network. For the generation of merchants that took up their trade in the past two decades, the Shams al-'Amareh and other old landmarks of the bazaar area are irrelevant to discussions about national, let alone international, trade. Younger *bazaaris* adamantly and correctly insisted that by studying "only the bazaar, one would miss out on the main commerce that was outside the bazaar area." Even from the perspective of the younger *bazaaris* the commercial world is divided into "inside" and "outside" the bazaar, the difference now being that commercial interactions and relations, or at least the significant ones, span across "the bazaar's borders" and must engage with the world beyond.

The factors of such decentralization are many. Urbanization and its accompanying sprawl and congestion, improvements in telecommunications and transportation, increased levels of industrialization and consumerism, and a rise in literacy and nuclear families have transformed the communication and spatial organization of the city and the bazaar and hence the flow of goods and information through it, as well as its

position in the larger economy. These socioeconomic transformations, however, are decades old; they do not explain the bazaar's specific transformation in the 1980s and 1990s. To have a more precise understanding of the shift from concentrated to dispersed value chains we must investigate postrevolutionary urban and commercial policies and how they have directed and accelerated the relocation of the bazaar in the urban space and economy. Specifically, changes in zoning laws and the creation of free trade zones drove commercial activities away from the old central core of the city and attracted commerce to more distant locales. Within the first year of the revolution, the government enacted a new law aimed at reducing traffic.⁵¹ A 22-square-kilometer zone was created in central Tehran, including the Tehran bazaar and its surroundings, which required special permits for automobiles and limited the hours during which trucks could legally operate. This new system unintentionally made wholesale and retail trade more difficult and expensive. As a result, many wholesalers established new branches outside of the bazaar area or relocated entirely in areas outside the central core. For instance, to ensure easier movement of goods and access to the airport and roads to the provinces, several carpet exporters recently moved their warehouses and carpet washing facilities to the periphery of the city.⁵² In recent years new commercial centers, such as the new china and glassware conglomeration of Shoush Square, have emerged outside of the traffic restriction zone and the Tehran bazaar, decomposing the *bazaaris'* locational monopoly. Despite complaints by guildsmen,⁵³ these trends have only been reinforced by other urban policies, such as the building of shopping centers by the municipality and the financing of various fruit and vegetable markets and chain stores as a means to generate income for the cash-strapped local government.⁵⁴

The Tehran bazaar's position in the economy has been relocated by another important policy initiative associated with the 1990s—the establishment of a host of free trade zones, special economic zones, and border markets in the geographic periphery of Iran. The historic centrality of Tehran and the bazaar in commercial flows has been undermined as capital is attracted to these new enclaves. Commercial activities increasingly rest on transnational circuits operating via three free trade zones in the Persian Gulf (Qeshm, Kish, and Chabahar), which include roughly fifty border markets and numerous border cooperatives and specially

protected regions.⁵⁵ The prominence of offshore import-export operations, both legal and illegal, has also contributed to the transformation of the bazaar's role. Rather than entering via the air and sea ports, many consumer goods enter the country on speed boats that crisscross the Persian Gulf and dock at makeshift jetties and unregistered ports;⁵⁶ rather than using letters of credit, traders began to use import allowances given to Iranians working abroad and tourists returning to the mainland from these zones. Since the outset of the revolution and the Iran–Iraq war, trading companies in Dubai have been the principal importers, with merchants in Tehran reduced to dependent clients. Thus, Tehran and its bazaar are no longer Iran's primary commercial nexus.⁵⁷ State policies, therefore, have facilitated and mediated the process of globalization and regionalization.

In the context of these and other government policies aimed at expanding state control over resources for the war effort, consolidating the postrevolutionary regime, and redistributing wealth, entrepreneurial capital has moved to new and unrestricted places—on the outskirts of the city, in Iran's border region, and internationally. The repositioning of the bazaar in the commercial economy was incremental, but deeply consequential. In the words of one merchant in the china and glassware sector, "The distribution of goods is like a funnel. Whereas the narrow stem of the cone used to be in the Tehran bazaar and the funnel distributed goods out to the rest of the country, now there are a whole series of channels and none of them begin in the Tehran bazaar." Rather than flow, imports skip and hop via a value chain that begins with importers in Dubai and leads (with the help of quasi-legal processes) to wholesalers in border markets and free trade zones, arriving at the warehouses and stores of wholesalers and retailers in Tehran, with the bazaar housing only a portion of these. At the level of national trade, the resituating of the networks has undermined the Tehran bazaar's focal position. Many retailers in southern Iran are no longer part of the Tehran-based commercial network. Instead, they directly purchase their goods from these new cross-border commercial networks. Enterprises in Shiraz have redirected their trade channels south and west to the Persian Gulf ports (Bushehr and Bandar Abbas), those in Kerman look east and south to the Pakistani border region (Chabahar and Zahedan), and Tabrizi traders eye the northern and western borders

with Turkey and Azerbaijan. These are in a sense a revitalization of historic patterns of socioeconomic relations, ones that predate the modern creation of a centralized nation-state in Tehran.

Lowering the bazaar's position in the hierarchies of the postrevolutionary political economy has introduced fissures within the *bazaari* community. Prior to the Islamic Revolution, commercial power accrued from one's position in the hierarchy, good reputation, and contacts within the bazaar's networks. As already suggested, this is no longer the case. Beyond contacts in Dubai, access to state resources and elites is the main source of commercial opportunity and status. Thus over time a distinction has emerged between those who have "remained in the bazaar" and managed to continue their trade in some form or another, and those who have benefited from kinship and political affiliations with the postrevolutionary state elite, who enjoy rents via exclusive importing licenses, tax exemptions, subsidized hard currency, and control over procurement boards and industrial establishments. The *bazaaris* who have established patronage channels have used them for personal and exclusive ends, not as a tool for the benefit of the bazaar as a corporate entity. The traders who from the outset developed intimate relations with state organizations and even took positions in ministries and parastatal organizations are no longer viewed as *bazaari*; despite their family roots in the bazaar they are referred to as *dowlatī* or members of the state. Even high-profile families that operate both in political and economic spheres, like the Asgarowladis, Khamoushis, Rafiqdousts, and Hajj-Tarkhanis lose their status among *bazaaris*, because their power and ability to engage in commercial activities stems from their privileged position in the new political system, rather than from their roots in the bazaar's system.

As the relationships of the Tehran bazaar to the commercial economy, the postrevolutionary state, and the process of urbanization have changed, it is not surprising that the bazaar's physical space and its social relations have also been transformed. Commercial activities and exchanges take place as much outside Tehran as they do within the bazaar; and while still based on personal relations, they radiate across several locations that typically do not lend themselves to crosscutting ties or multifaceted relations. Additionally, given the illegal or exclusionary nature of the arrangements, meetings and conversations with smugglers,

heads of ministries, and merchants in Dubai are often secretive, taking place in private spaces rather than in public. In the process commercial exchanges have become both less face-to-face and less embedded in the diverse social and spatial registers of the Tehran bazaar. *Bazaaris* who used to nourish strong and weak ties, ensuring identification of trustworthy traders and social deviants,⁵⁸ now find it difficult to distinguish between the trustworthy and the dishonest. Currently *bazaaris* fear that the trustworthy remain private knowledge and the dishonest are hidden by secrecy.

Moreover, many of the social spaces that brought *bazaaris* together to exchange information and opinions have been abandoned. The number of coffeehouses and restaurants in and around the bazaar, institutions known as areas of discussion, gossip, and evaluation of rumor, has plummeted: while in early 1979 there were 3500 coffee houses in Tehran, by 1990 there were as few as 900.⁵⁹ Another social shift is in the area of religion. It is difficult to assess if Iranians are less religious than thirty years ago, but evidence suggests that prayer in mosques and participation in public religious gatherings has declined.⁶⁰ This dynamic seems to be in effect even for *bazaaris*, who typically are assumed to be more observant than other Iranians. Some merchants and their families explained to me that they now tend to participate in neighborhood, rather than bazaar and guild-based, religious events and organizations. Others, sensitive to the political manipulation of the pulpit, choose to pray in the privacy of their shops and homes and avoid participation in events organized by Islamic associations in the bazaar. Consequently, one more public space for social interaction and developing and maintaining relations has become obsolete in the Islamic Republic. The trend away from openness and availability to spatial closeness and unavailability is reflected in the greater use of doors and display cases in stores and offices. When I began my research on the bazaar in 1999, I noticed that many areas of the bazaar tended to have open and inviting storefronts, but in recent years an increasing number of stores have installed doors, glass cases and other barriers that impede passersby from talking to shopkeepers and looking into stores. By adopting this practice, *bazaaris* have closed off their shop spaces from the more public passageways and broken up the bazaar's open plan. The result of this decline in social and casual intermixing has been that *bazaaris'*

economic and leisurely lives do not map onto or reenforce one another as seamlessly as they did in earlier decades.

Thus the ability of the bazaar's locale to generate a collective sense of place has diminished. More generally the fragmented and vertical hierarchies of the new system foster hidden relations and secrets. Competition among *bazaaris* has become more unrestrained; emerging alliances with external actors undermines the *bazaaris'* sense that their fate is inextricably tied to the bazaar. Foucault has argued that space is a reflection of the process of power; and the transfiguration of the relational aspects of the Tehran bazaar's space reflects the new logic of state power that has reworked the capillaries of power and publicity in the bazaar.

No place for mobilization under the Islamic Republic⁶¹

Not surprisingly, the bazaar's spatial transformations have undermined *bazaaris'* capacity to sustain social mobilization. Since the initial revolutionary era, antistate mobilization by *bazaaris* has been rare, and the mobilization that has occurred has not been national or sustained. Clashes between merchants have erupted from time to time, and have sometimes turned violent.⁶² In Isfahan, for example, the bazaar closed down for a day to protest "unfair" and increasing taxes.⁶³ Protests have also at times been triggered by local political disputes.⁶⁴ But these and other instances of public dissent were short-lived, limited to a single city, and very infrequent. Moreover, on the rare occasions when closures and demonstrations have taken place in the last few years, the action was limited to a select few guilds. Notably protests seem to be common to sectors such as the carpet and jewelry bazaars, which, due to their trade in goods that are characteristic of nonstandard commodities, have relatively dense and long-term social relations.⁶⁵ For instance, in October 1994 more than 300 jewelers in the Tehran bazaar went on strike for two days to protest the hundred-fold increase in taxes on gold.⁶⁶ A news report claimed that the protest was the first to be organized by a guild since the Revolution. In July 1996, in response to allegedly exorbitant taxes, hand-woven carpet dealers in the Tehran bazaar went on strike and gathered in the Azeri mosque.⁶⁷ The Azari mosque, officially called the Shaykh Abd al-Hosayn

Mosque, is significant because it is located in the heart of the carpet bazaar in Tehran, and as the name implies, its congregation is predominately Turkish-speaking Azeris, who constitute a very significant portion of the carpet traders in Tehran.

The relative quiescence of the bazaar is not a result of its concession to the regime. On the contrary, *bazaaris* have frequently voiced their dissatisfaction with government policies. The official guild magazine, *Asnāf* [Guilds], devoted a special issue to listing the challenges facing the service and commercial sectors due to recent government policies.⁶⁸ *Bazaaris* have also increasingly shunned the calls of the hard-line Islamic associations, neither participating in their events nor voting for conservative candidates.⁶⁹ In fact, during the 2001 presidential elections, many publicly expressed their support for the reformist candidate Mohammad Khatami, while flyers and posters for more so-called traditional candidates were a rare sight. Several caravansaries hung large pictures of the incumbent president, who is typically associated with the urban middle class, youth, women, and prodemocracy circles. Some storeowners placed signs bearing the slogans of the reformist party; one well known tea merchant placed a large handwritten statement on his desk declaring that he will vote for Khatami on election day. Thus, public and private spaces in the bazaar were used to exhibit political sensibilities associated with reform.

With a decline in shared social space and an increasingly heterogeneous and delocalized set of commercial networks, it is not surprising that collective action and mobilization against the state has been fleeting and uncoordinated, resulting in isolated and typically unsuccessful actions. That protests have been limited to individual cities is reflective of the fragmented nature of value chains. The upshot of such relocation has been a general decline in the *bazaaris'* sense of place and the ability of space to engender group trust that is critical for social mobilization.

Conclusions

The Tehran bazaar remains in the shadow of the old clock tower, the Shams al-'Amareh. Yet the postrevolutionary state casts new shadows, shadows that have allowed certain members of the bazaar to work directly

through state institutions, while others have created new sets of commercial and personal relations transcending the bazaar's former boundaries. Changes in the bazaar's location in the political economy and in the use of the space have caused the web of interpersonal relations to give way to greater social distance, despite physical proximity. With the remaking of the bazaar as a place and a network, its publicness—including the penchant for engagement with other publics and social movements—has atrophied, replaced with secrecy and withdrawal from politics. Place, networks, and publicity are necessarily related to each other; if they are separated they are misunderstood.

The metaphor of the shadow is used in this chapter to imply darkness, obscurity, invisibility, and even domination by the public authority. But it is possible to imagine another interpretation of this metaphor, one that reflects Arendt and Habermas's normative theory of the public sphere as a site of congregation and communication. That is, in order to arrive at consensus via democratic participation, the shadow needs to be transformed into "shade" which can provide protection from the "elements." This is the dilemma facing the bazaar and Iranian politics in general. Many reformists and independent intellectual voices in Iran have begun to call for constitutional and institutional reforms to create a state which is accountable, in that it allows private citizens to access and participate in deliberations over the common good, yet preserves a sphere for individual privacy, even secrecy. Like many early twentieth century social thinkers, Simmel believed that this process was the natural outgrowth of modernity. "In the nineteenth century," he writes,

publicity invaded the affairs of state to such an extent that by now, governments officially publish facts without whose secrecy, prior to the nineteenth century, no regime seemed even possible. Politics, administration, and jurisdiction thus have lost their secrecy and inaccessibility in the same measure in which the individual has gained the possibility of ever more complete withdrawal, and in the same measure in which modern life has developed, in the midst of metropolitan crowdedness, a technique for making and keeping private matters secret, such as earlier could be attained only by means of spatial isolation.⁷⁰

While this chapter suggests that *bazaaris* have been keeping private matters more secret than in the past, they have not been able to make state administration more public. Unlike earlier episodes where their actions helped shape public opinion, they have neither joined, nor been invited to join, the new publics of journalists, bloggers, dissident intellectuals, and student and women's groups that are struggling to make authority open, accessible, and public.

Notes

1. The author would like to thank Narges Erami, Michael Gasper, Setrag Manoukian, Karuna Mantena and Seteney Shami for their helpful and generous comments on earlier drafts of this essay and conversations about the themes discussed in it.
2. This essay is based on field research in Iran during several research visits, primarily May–August 1999 and August 2000–August 2001.
3. The tripartite notion of place—locale, sense of place, and location—used in this paper is borrowed from John A. Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987). For a comprehensive review of the concept of place, see Thomas F. Gieryn, “A Space for Place in Sociology,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 463–496.
4. The literature on Iranian bazaars acknowledges the spatial attributes of Iranian bazaars. Most definitions of the bazaar begin with the built environment (e.g., Michael Bonine, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, s.v. “Bāzār,” 20). Geographers have paid attention to the bazaar’s location and relationship to the hinterland in terms of measurable and quantifiable indicators of economic activity and exchange. Using economic factors, such as land values, functional roles, and logistical factors, geographers have used central place theory to explain the bazaar’s distribution of stores, position in the commercial hierarchy and regional economic geography. See Michael Edward Bonine, “Yazd and Its Hinterland: A Central Place System of Dominance in the Central Iranian Plateau,” *Marburger Geographische Schriften* 83 (1980); Paul Ward English, *City and Village in Iran: Settlement and Economy in the Kirman Basin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966); Martin Seger, *Teheran: Eine Stadtgeographische Studie* (New York: Springer-Verlag Wien, 1978). Similarly, researchers who have discussed bazaars’ economic organization as a reflection of information scarcity and asymmetry view spatial cohesion as a response to these problems. See Clifford Geertz, “Suq: The Bazaar Economy in Sefrou,” in *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society*, edited by Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz and Lawrence Rosen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and Frank Fanselow, “The Bazaar Economy or How Bizarre is the Bazaar Really?” *Man* 25 (June 1990): 250–265. In short, these approaches have interpreted space as both descriptively and analytically important.

5. For a general statement, see M. Gottdiener, *The Social Production of Urban Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); for the case of Iran, see Kaveh Ehsani, "Municipal Matters: The Urbanization of Consciousness and Political Change in Tehran," *Middle East Report* 209 (Fall 1999): 22–27.
6. The political role of the bazaar and *bazaaris'* participation in social movements is well entrenched in the historiographic literature. For instance, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); and Nikki R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).
7. The conceptualization of bazaars as networks and their application to the study of Tehran is developed and elaborated in Arang Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran: the Politics of the Tehran Marketplace* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
8. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989 [1962]).
9. Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine, eds., *Religion, Social Practice, and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public in Muslim Majority Societies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
10. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 181–188.
11. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 360. Emphasis added.
12. Habermas describes the realm of commodity exchange and social labor as part of the "civil society" that, along with the family, makes up the private sphere. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.
13. Setrag Manoukian, "Power, Religion, and the Effects of Publicness in 20th-century Shiraz," in *Religion, Social Practice, and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public in Muslim Majority Societies*, edited by Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
14. Manoukian, "Power, Religion, and the Effects of Publicness," 59.
15. Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 439.

16. Kurt H. Wolff, ed., *The Sociology of Simmel* (New York: The Free Press, 1950), 330–331.
17. Wolff, *Sociology of Simmel*, 312–314.
18. Wolff, *Sociology of Simmel*, 334–335.
19. Seger, *Teheran*.
20. *Āthār*, no. 2–4 (1359): 22, 25; Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 92.
21. Geertz, “Suq: The Bazaar Economy in Sefrou”; see also Fanselow, “The Bazaar Economy or How Bizarre is the Bazaar Really?”
22. Hooman Aryan, “Analysis and Future Proposal for Bazaar of Tehran, Iran,” MA thesis, architecture, Iowa State University, 1979, 44.
23. Roy Mottahedeh and Kristen Stilt, “Public and Private as Viewed through the Work of the *Muhasib*,” *Social Research* 70, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 735–738.
24. Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People’s Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 15–19.
25. Michael Taylor, *Community, Anarchy, and Liberty* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Michael Taylor, “Good Government: On Hierarchy, Social Capital, and the Limitations of Rational Choice Theory,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 4 (1996): 1–28; Arendt, *Human Condition*, 182–184.
26. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1993 [1961]).
27. Gustav Thaïss, “Religious Symbolism and Social Change: The Drama Husain,” PhD dissertation, Washington University, 1973, 20.
28. Another important spatial distinction is between the bazaar and the *maydan*, or the produce market. Commercial institutions and practices and cultural organization are quite different in these spaces due to differences in commodity type. In Tehran, *bazaaris* distinguish themselves from *meydānī*.
29. Thaïss, “Religious Symbolism and Social Change: The Drama Husain,” 24–25.
30. David Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Social Change* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 35.
31. Yet in effect, these and other policies did not result in impoverishing *bazaaris*. See Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, “The Political Economy of the Credit Subsidy in Iran, 1973–1978,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21 (1989): 359–379; and Maryam Ghadessi, “An Integrative Approach to Finance in Developing Countries: Case of Iran,” PhD dissertation, University of Utah, 1996.

32. Thaïss, "Religious Symbolism and Social Change: The Drama Husain," 25.
33. Ahmad Ashraf, "Nezām-e Senfī va Jāme'eh-ye Madanī," *Irannameh* 14 (Winter 1374). See Akbar Ladjevardian, interview by Habib Ladjevardi, tape recording no. 1, Houston, Texas, 11 October 1982, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University; Ghassem Ladjevardi, interview by Habib Ladjevardi, tape recording no. 1, Los Angeles, California, 29 January 1983, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University; and Mehdi Motameni, interview by Habib Ladjevardi, tape recordings no. 1–2, St. Martin, Netherlands, 30 April 1986, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University.
34. On the primacy of Tehran, see Ebrahim Razzaqi, *Āshnā'ī bā Eqtesād-e Irān* (Tehran: Nashr-e Nay, 1376 [1997]), 55; Ali Asghar Mousavi 'Abadi, *Shahrdārān-e Tehrān az 'Asr-e Nāserī tā dawlat-e Khātāmī* (Qom: Nashr-e Khorram, 1378 [1999]), 105. On similar processes in Europe and the United States, see Geoffrey Crossick and Heiz-Gerhard Haupt, *The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe 1780–1914* (London: Routledge, 1995); and Paul Krugman, "History and Industry Location: The Case of the Manufacturing Belt," *The American Economic Review* 81 (May 1991): 80–83.
35. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56–80.
36. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 61.
37. Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, chapter 6.
38. William H. Sewell, "Space in Contentious Politics," in Ronald R. Aminzade et al., *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
39. Abol Ghassem Lebaschi, interview by Habib Ladjevardi, tape recording no. 1, Paris, France, 28 February 1983, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, 9.
40. Mina Jabari, *Hamīsheh Bāzār* (Tehran: Agah, 1379), 136–137; and *New York Times*, 9 and 11 October 1953.
41. Lebaschi, tape recording no. 1, 20; and *New York Times*, 15 November 1953.
42. Mehdi Bazargan, *Enqelāb-e Irān dar dow harekat* (Tehran, 1363 [1984]), 45.
43. Misagh Parsa, "Conflict and Collective Action in the Iranian Revolution: A Quantitative Analysis," *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis* 20 (November 2004), 39–57.
44. Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), 112–123.

45. Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, "The State, Classes and Modes of Mobilization in the Iranian Revolution," *State, Culture & Society* 1 (Spring 1985): 25.
46. Lebaschi, tape recording no. 3, 5–6.
47. Davoud Ghandchi-Tehrani, "Bazaaris and Clergy: Socioeconomic Origins of Radicalism and Revolution in Iran," PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 1982, 103. Several informants also mentioned that the SAVAK had difficulty penetrating the bazaar.
48. Lebaschi, tape recording no. 2, 19.
49. *New York Times*, 2 February 1979.
50. David Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity*; Waleed Hazbun, "Globalization, Reterritorialization and the Political Economy of the Tourism Development in the Middle East," *Geopolitics* 9, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 310–341.
51. Al Asghar Mousavi 'Abadi, *Shahrdārān-e Tehrān az 'Asr-e Nāseri tā dowlat-e Khātami* (Qom: Nashr-e Khorram, 1378), 105.
52. This move has an added advantage for merchants since they pay far lower rents and insurance premiums; some also suggested that it is easier to avoid tax collectors when they are on the periphery of the city.
53. *Asnāf* year 9, Special Issue (Esfand 1379 [February–March 2001]): 21.
54. A'zam Khatam, "Bāzār va Markaziyyat-e Shahr," *Goft-o-Gu* 41 (Bahman 1383): 127–141.
55. "Shebeh Qāchāq," *Eqtesād-e Irān* 360 (Bahman 1380 [January–February 2002]): 12. On migration to Bandar Abbas, see Bernard Hourcade, Hubert Mazurek, Mohammad-Hosseyn Papoli-Yazdi and Mahmoud Taleghani, *Atlas d'Iran* (Montpellier and Paris: RECLUS-La Documentation Française, 1998), 52.
56. *Bonyān*, 25 (Bahman 1380 [15 February 2001]). This phenomenon was described by my interviewees too.
57. Ali Parsa and Ramin Keivani, "The Hormuz Corridor: Building a Cross-border Region between Iran and the UAE," in *Global Networks, Linked Cities*, edited by Saskia Sassen (London: Routledge, 2002), 194.
58. Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (May 1973): 1360–1380.
59. Ali Al-e Dawud, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Coffeehouse," 4.
60. Abdolmohammad Kazemipur and Ali Rezaei, "Religious Life under Theocracy: The case of Iran," *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 42

- (September 2003): 347–361; Fariba Adelkhah, *Being Modern in Iran*, trans. Jonathan Derrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 113.
61. This essay was researched and written prior to the 2009 presidential election and ensuing protests. Thus, it does not reference this recent political unrest, although the analysis is supported by the *bazaaris'* non-participation in these protests.
 62. William Samii, "Bazaar Unhappy, but is it Unstable?" *RFE/RL Iran Report* 3, no. 32 (August 2000).
 63. Agence France Presse, 10 September 1998.
 64. William Samii, "Renewed Unrest over Khorasan Split," *RFE/RL Iran Report* 5, no. 5 (11 February 2002).
 65. See Fanselow, "The Bazaar Economy"; and Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, chapter 5.
 66. Agence France Presse, 13 October 1994.
 67. Xinhua News Agency, 24 July 1996; and Associated Press, 24 July 1996.
 68. *Asnāf*, no. 90 (Aban 1379 [October–November 2000]).
 69. Agence France Presse, 14 February 2000.
 70. Wolff, *Sociology of Simmel*, 336–337.

Mediated Publics

The “Voice of the People” [*lisān al-sha‘b*]: The Press and the Public Sphere in Revolutionary Palestine

Michelle U. Campos

We said in our last article that it is required of every free Ottoman to show his ignorant brother the benefits of the constitution ... and that will not (come about) except through speech and meeting. The best speakers in these days are the newspapers, and the newspapers are the ears of [our] needs and necessities after the constitution.

It is true that the establishment of the newspapers was one of the most important of that work which is required of us after the constitution, but which newspapers do I want? Free newspapers whose aims are the reform of the self ... The newspaper is the mouthpiece of the people [*lisān al-sha‘b*]—its rights, duties, demands, aims, happiness and anger all are published. The newspaper enlightens and elevates the nations by what it prints in its articles and what it recommends of financial, political, scientific, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and cultural reforms. And in another respect it informs the people about the political situation in foreign lands, and their relations with the state and the government, and their contacts ...

al-Ittihad al-‘Uthmani (1, no. 37),
“What Is Required of Us After the Constitution”

In this defining article, the Beirut-based newspaper *al-Ittihad al-‘Uthmani* [*Ottoman Union*] outlined the leading role it saw the press taking in the

critical period after the 1908 Ottoman revolution.¹ At the same time that it saw itself as the voice *of* the people, reflecting their “authentic” wishes and desires, it took it upon itself to be a voice *to* the people, educating and enlightening them to the requirements of a changing world. The press would serve as the handmaiden of the revolution, carrying out its aims of reforming and reviving the Ottoman Empire by showing its readers—the Ottoman public—what it meant to “be Ottoman,” in a period when this was an unfamiliar identifier and a time of rapidly changing political and social realities.

As a result, the multilingual press in the Ottoman Empire became a central site for an emergent revolutionary public sphere whose central task was the deeply public process of endowing Ottomanness with meaning. First and foremost, the press consciously took upon itself the task of promoting Ottoman unity and citizenship practices across ethnic, religious, and linguistic boundaries. As *al-Ittihad al-‘Uthmani* characterized it, “the Ottoman state is comprised of many groups [*‘anāṣir*]² and it is upon us to strive to publish newspapers composed of the elite of the *‘anāṣir* present in the Ottoman lands until true synthesis [*al-ta’līf al-ḥaqīqī*] and true devotion are attained and until the editors will possess the trust of the people and its consent.”³

At the same time, however, the multilingual press would also cater to and presume to speak for particularistic (linguistic, religious, ethnic, local) interests and groups. These communal-sectarian publics were thus produced alongside—and sometimes in opposition to—the imperial public, so that the “true synthesis” that *al-Ittihad al-‘Uthmani* proposed was both a highly desired yet deeply contested aim.

This article explores the role of the multilingual press as an important actor in the creation and contestation of imperial, local, and confessional publics in late Ottoman Palestine. Rather than simply transmitting information and knowledge, newspapers played a much more productive role in constituting and articulating the public self. The dialectical tensions between the aspiration to constitute a trans-communal Ottoman imperial public on the one hand, and the politicization of ethno-religious publics on the other, manifest as debates among readers, between newspapers, and across languages, were central to the creative process of “becoming” Ottoman.

Approaching multiple public spheres

Both the challenge of studying an empire that spanned multiple regions, religions, and languages as well as the hegemony of regional nationalisms have led some scholars to conclude that Ottoman society was characterized by separate and distinct publics divided along confessional or ethnic (for some, proto-national) lines. Indeed, earlier understandings of the Ottoman *millet* system took the autonomy of religious communities as self-evident. Likewise, there has been a tendency by scholars to adopt a static understanding of ethnicity, where “ethnic groups” are not only assumed to be fixed and unchanging, but are also invested with political salience.⁴ Throughout the twentieth century, studies of the former provinces of the Ottoman Empire have been written in this vein, guided by the dictates of Turkish, Balkan, and Arab nationalisms.⁵

Ottoman studies has advanced beyond this essentialist interpretation in recent years, due in no small part to the influence of postcolonial studies, which has forced scholars in the field to reexamine the dynamic relationship between metropole and periphery as well as the state/society nexus more broadly.⁶ Specifically, while both Arab and Turkish nationalisms based on ethno-linguistic considerations found expression and some institutionalization in the last decade of Ottoman rule, neither had a significant following, appeal, or even audience until after the breakup of the empire. Furthermore, even the most important movements in the Arab provinces such as the Beirut Reform Committee and the Decentralization Party [Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya] did not seek complete autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, but rather aimed for extended cultural rights and privileges within the imperial setting.

And yet, despite recognition of the limited appeal of local ethnic nationalisms, scholarly treatment of Ottoman society as a *public* remains somewhat underdeveloped, largely fragmented by the various languages in use.⁷ Newspapers appeared in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Greek, Armenian, Ladino, Bulgarian, and Hebrew, to name just a few. Each of these publics has been studied to a greater or lesser degree, but the general bonds across them remain largely unaddressed. A Syrian Christian might have read the Ottoman Turkish, Greek, and Arabic press, for example, or a Sephardi Jew in Palestine the Ladino, Arabic, and Hebrew press, but

what were the implications of multilingualism for constructing publicness? How did these papers situate themselves vis-à-vis their respective audiences? How did their readers envision themselves as part of the public, at once imperial *but also* confessional, regional, or ethnic?

The relationship between these “multiple publics” is relevant not only for the Ottoman Empire; it also lies at the heart of understandings of the public sphere itself. Scholars such as Geoff Eley have argued for the existence, indeed the centrality, of fragmentation, characterizing the public sphere as a “field of conflict, contested meanings, and exclusion.”⁸ Indeed, whereas Nancy Fraser identified two models of public sphere, stratified (characterized as “counterdiscourses” of subordinated groups that “formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs”) and egalitarian (where “members of . . . more limited publics talk across lines of cultural diversity”), for Fraser, the egalitarian public sphere remained an ideal type.⁹

Others such as Harold Mah have sought to retain the Habermasian vision of a unitary, neutral public sphere, arguing that the fragmentist camp neglects “how the public sphere constructs itself as a unitary entity and in doing so mysteriously changes forms.”¹⁰ That is, the public sphere as a free space of contestation is only a preliminary condition before its necessary transformation into a collective subject. For Mah, the universality of the public sphere requires “abstract individualism,” that is, the stripping of all social characteristics from people as the cost of entry into the modern public sphere. Mah sees the persistence of corporate identities of difference (what Fraser sees as a “counterpublic”) as evidence of premodern forms of publicness squarely outside the (one, indivisible) modern public.

While Mah is certainly correct in identifying the need to further interrogate the role of groups and groupness within the public sphere, the strict Habermasian reading he argues for is, to my mind, overly deterministic. Instead of simply reifying hegemonic universality, we must consider that the constitution and articulation of particularistic groups takes place in parallel to as well as against more universalizing discourses, and thus the very publicness of this process is central. Craig Calhoun has argued that the relationship between various clusters and the broader public sphere was not proscriptive but rather variable, precisely in “how

it is internally organized, how it maintains its boundaries and relatively greater internal cohesion in relation to the larger public, and whether its separate existence reflects merely sectional interests, some functional division of labor, or a felt need for bulwarks against the hegemony of a dominant ideology.”¹¹ This is the kind of analysis that can help clarify the scope, size, dynamics, and interaction of multiple publics.¹²

The press in late Ottoman Palestine is a microcosm for exploring the creative and conflictual process of articulating various complementary and competing public selves: Ottoman, Palestinian, Arab, Jewish, Christian, Muslim. As a result, the press was significant not only because of the content in its pages, but also for the way in which it became a vital actor in the public arena at a moment when the first-person plural—“we”—was undergoing dramatic expression and transformation.

The post-revolutionary Ottoman public sphere was built on the axis between the civic (universal) and the communal¹³—and the relationship between the two was essentially “overlapping and interwoven.”¹⁴ To a certain extent, the tension between the two was a creative one, part of the dialectic that is unarticulated and unexplored in Fraser and Eley’s conflictual model, and rendered fleeting in Mah’s view. On one level, the late Ottoman public sphere aspired to be an Ottomanist and Ottomanizing public sphere¹⁵ which accommodated overlapping membership based on religious, ethnic, and regional differences. In turn, these particularistic publics recognized the hegemony of the civic Ottomanist public sphere in the very act of constructing themselves.

Part of the dynamism of this process of constructing the “we” was due to the fact that in the late Ottoman Empire, “communal” delineations were themselves heterogenous, porous, contextual constructions. People could participate in more than one public and their membership in various publics could overlap, recalling Partha Chatterjee’s formulation of “fuzzy communities.” According to Chatterjee, the fuzziness marked “the sense that, first, a community did not claim to represent or exhaust all the layers of selfhood of its members...” so that “one could, obviously and without any contradiction, belong to several... not simultaneously but contextually.”¹⁶

As one example of this contextual identification of groupness and we-ness, the Jerusalem-based Sephardi Hebrew newspaper *ha-Herut* used

the Hebrew word *umah* to refer alternately to a number of overlapping groups: the ethno-linguistic (Sephardim), ethno-religious (Jews locally and/or globally), civic/regional (people of Palestine), and civic/imperial (Ottoman nation). Similarly, in Ladino the words *nacion* and *pueblo* modified various communities, and in Arabic *umma* and *waṭan* were at various times local and imperial, confessional or communal.

The “voice of the people” in reality reflected many voices. There was no inherent conflict between the Ottomanizing impulse of the press and its particularistic thrust, and indeed, the Ottomanist public sphere was dependent on the concession of the empire’s various publics to its existence and hegemony. While it would be tempting to simplify the late Ottoman situation by arguing that the multiple publics (confessional, ethnic, proto-national) succeeded in drowning out the Ottomanist one, indicating its failure, my intention is to focus on the process rather than on the outcome, to illustrate the importance of the coexistence and coproduction of both Ottomanist and particularist public spheres to the dynamic process of publicness on the eve of the end of empire.

The press and its public

The late nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a public sphere throughout various centers in the Ottoman Empire, thanks in large part to the rise in education, the (semi)-independent press, and the role of the city in creating an urban citizenry.¹⁷ To be sure, before the 1908 revolution Palestinians had an arena of public interaction: official information and public discourse was transmitted via mosque, synagogue and church, postings on the city walls,¹⁸ public criers,¹⁹ and informal networks such as schools, markets, and social gatherings.²⁰ And yet, due to the strict limitations of the Hamidian regime²¹ on public life (censorship, gatherings, organization), as well as the political impotence of the average Ottoman subject, the Palestinian public sphere—as an autonomous arena of debate and action—was highly constricted before 1908.

In turn-of-the-century Palestine, only one newspaper existed to serve its majority Arabic-speaking population: the official monthly organ of the Jerusalem provincial government, *al-Quds al-Sharif/Kudüs Şerif*,

which appeared in Arabic and Turkish. As a result the Arab literate classes in Palestine relied on the Egyptian press that they received uncensored via the foreign post, or the highly regulated papers of Damascus, Beirut, and Istanbul. The situation among Palestine's Jewish residents was not much better, despite the benign neglect with which the government treated the issue of non-Muslim printing. A handful of Hebrew newspapers were produced in Palestine, while Judeo-Spanish, Hebrew, Arabic and other newspapers were imported from the region or beyond. With the revolution of 1908 and the subsequent announcement of the restoration of the constitution and abrogation of the strict censorship laws, the local press in Palestine—as elsewhere in the empire—exploded.²² In Palestine, in the half-year following the revolution, at least sixteen new Arabic-language newspapers were established; between 1909 and 1914, another eighteen Arabic newspapers emerged.²³ In addition to this booming Arabic press, several new Hebrew, Judeo-Spanish, and Greek newspapers also appeared in Jerusalem and Jaffa.

The impact of these new papers was astounding. It helped to occasion an unprecedented transformation of the late Ottoman Palestinian public sphere, by expanding both the “public” and its “sphere” of activity. First, whereas before 1908 the “literate consumers” of Palestine were numbered and fairly homogeneous, the explosion of newspapers after the revolution further expanded and democratized the reading public.²⁴ The new local press emerged out of and addressed itself to the new *effendiyya* strata—those Muslims, Christians, and Jews who had been educated in the preceding decades under new conditions, were attuned to the changes taking place throughout the empire, and were hungry for new outlets of information and expression. The annual subscription rates of the press were certainly within the means of the salaried and independent middle classes.²⁵

Furthermore, as the historians Ami Ayalon and Rashid Khalidi have pointed out, newspapers were often read out loud and passed from hand to hand. “One educated person equipped with a single newspaper copy could transmit its contents to many others, amplifying its impact manifold.”²⁶ In Palestine, there is evidence of this, most sharply in the form of editorials denouncing the local practice of “recycling” newspapers among friends, depriving the press of valuable revenue, if not readers. Other

steps were taken in an effort to engage people of modest financial means as well as nonurban and nonliterate groups. For example, a proposal was recorded in the fall of 1908 to establish regular institutionalized reading nights, where an “educated Arab” would read the newspaper in a central location, for the benefit of the masses that could not read.²⁷ Furthermore, the newspaper *Falastin* sent copies of its paper to each village in the region with a population over one hundred, with the aim to “open the paper before the fellahin [peasants] first of all to provide information about what was happening in the empire, secondly to inform them of their rights.”²⁸

Making Ottoman citizens

Thus, with a conscious awareness that their readership was both changing and expanding, these pioneering newspapers went about shaping Ottoman citizens. The Ottoman citizenship project was twofold: defining who was an “Ottoman,” and both implicitly and explicitly educating these new Ottomans on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The multilingual Palestinian press weighed in on the revolution and its immediate effects (the constitution, parliamentary elections) as well as the longer-term meanings and impact of Ottoman citizenship: equality between the empire’s religious and ethnic groups, relations between the governing class and the governed, changes such as universal military conscription, and the role of a reformed Ottoman Empire in the world. Furthermore, as we shall see, citizenship practices were daily inscribed on the pages of the press.

The fact that most of the newspapers owed their existence to the favorable political conditions set in place by the Young Turk revolution was duly acknowledged by the conscious adoption of pro-Ottomanism espoused by the young newspapers. Many of the new papers declared their affiliation with the revolution and its values by their carefully chosen names: *Progress*, *Equity*, *Liberty*, *Constitution*, *The Voice of Ottomanism*, *Freedom*. Other papers opened with a declaration of intent from the editor, expressing to their readers their commitment to contributing to the efflorescence of a civic identity in the empire that would embrace the principles of the revolution on the one hand, and push the empire forward towards a glorious future, on the other. In this, they were both echoing the

popular excitement in the aftermath of the revolution, as well as placing themselves at the forefront of the Ottomanist and Ottomanizing program.

One contemporary observer, the Jewish journalist Nissim Malul, noted that in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the Arab press uniformly expressed the belief that the revolution brought “redemption [ge’ulah] to the Ottoman people [‘am] in the Ottoman lands, without difference to religion and nationality [le’om].”²⁹ Indeed, the press served an important function in defining and promoting a nascent Ottoman nationalism based on equality among religious and ethnic groups, seen as vital to reforming the empire. For Jurji Habib Hanania, editor and publisher of *al-Quds [Jerusalem]*, the Ottomanist project was at the front and center of his newspaper’s objectives: “Circumstances require the establishment of a press that will plant the seeds of brotherhood and work all together for equality whose aims are service to the homeland, not to take advantage of the differences of one another.”³⁰

Other newspapers established immediately after the revolution also committed themselves to this project. *Al-Taraqqi [Progress]*, established in Jaffa in September 1908, informed its readers that it aimed to serve the homeland [waṭan] and humanity; enlighten minds; prepare the people for economic changes while limiting the negative effects of those changes; and support the principles of brotherhood, justice, and equality.³¹

Lest there be any doubt about who the public was, and more importantly, what the public’s relationship was to itself and to the state, the Palestinian press consistently attempted to create and reinforce the “Ottoman nation/people” [*al-umma al-‘uthmāniyya*]. The Ottoman nation was much more than the sum of its parts; it was an entirely new entity molded by the constitution and the new era. As the Jerusalem-based lawyer Ragheb al-Imam declared:

The Ottoman elements who were of different peoples entered through the melting pot of the constitution [*būdaqat al-dustūr*] and came out as one bullion of pure gold which is Ottomanism, which unites the hearts of the nation [*umma*] and brings together their souls.³²

In the first dizzying months of the revolution, the newspapers faithfully recorded the numerous demonstrations, speeches, and ceremonies

that took place in their province as well as in other important centers of the empire. After events began to settle down into a new political order, the revolutionary calendar provided the opportunity to reiterate (and evaluate) the revolution's aims, successes, and shortcomings. Events such as the July anniversary celebrations of the revolution, farewell ceremonies for the departure of local parliamentarians, sendoffs of local conscripted soldiers, and the arrival of new provincial governors were all regular opportunities for the press's pedagogical voice.

For example, on the first anniversary of the revolution, an "Ottoman Hebrew" encouraged his fellow readers to participate actively in the upcoming public celebrations. "This Ottoman anniversary is not a private party celebration, not Christian, not Jewish, and also not Muslim, but a general Ottoman one ... Come all of you for a general brotherly gathering and enjoy yourselves at this time, in these moments, as brothers. Brothers from birth and belly, connect yourselves on this holy day in a brotherly connection, clean, pure, and swear vows of faith to the constitution."³³ Soon after the celebrations had passed, the newspaper *al-Quds* transmitted the universalizing message of the events to its readers, seeking to reinforce their sentiments with this image: "Oh what a happy hour if you had seen the youth of the one homeland who are in the different [confessional] schools standing side by side next to each other, happy in the holiday of their nation [*umma*] and reciting the constitutional anthem."³⁴

These accounts in the press served not only as historical testimonies of what happened, but also served to further the scope and reach of the revolution, both for those who had not been physically present as well as those who perhaps had not grasped the significance of the events. With this aim the press regularly published articles, reports, and special booklets, particularly on the revolution, on the history of the Hamidian period, and on the history of the Osman dynasty. For example, one Judeo-Spanish newspaper, *El Liberal*, outlined a history of the Ottoman reform movement (the Tanzimat, 1839–1876), offering definitions, synonyms, and simple explanations about the reforms and the constitution.

In other initiatives, the multilingual press translated the constitution and important new laws (such as the Basic Law, election laws, and compulsory universal military service); reported on the parliamentary sessions and political developments in the capital; transmitted directives

from the central and local governments; informed citizens how to carry out normal business with government offices; and reported on the functioning of the various regional and local councils.³⁵ The press's role as the provider of several new types of information had the effect of creating and strengthening horizontal ties across city, homeland, and empire as well as serving as a bridge between languages, communities, and reading publics. The press allowed readers to cross geographic and mental divides between cities, villages, and regional and international borders.

Often through regular columns, the press took it upon itself to relay news from other cities in Palestine, neighboring provinces in the empire, the capital in Istanbul, and even (via wire reports as well as letters from readers) from around the world. A regular column like "From the Capital" was a staple of local newspaper coverage, and important Ottoman cities merited regular coverage, as did events in faraway corners of the Ottoman world. For example, there were prominent reports of famine in Anatolia, Bedouin revolts in Kerak, updates on secret societies in Crete, Albania, the Hawran, and Yemen, massacres of Armenians, and of course the wars in Tripoli (1911) and the Balkans (1912–13). Thanks to the modern wire services, the Palestinian press and public were literally tapped into major occurrences around the world, and Palestinians were able to thus envision their future in the empire in "real time" conjunction with the empire's changing contours. In addition, almost all of the newspapers used correspondents in various cities of Palestine, from Gaza in the south to Acre in the north. *Falastin*, for example, had a regular column on Palestinian local news [*al-akhbār al-maḥalliyya*], as did the Hebrew newspaper *ha-Herut* [*Freedom*]. *Al-Munadi* [*The Crier*] newspaper, based in Jerusalem, regularly carried news from southern Palestinian cities like Lydda, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Gaza.

Importantly, local newspapers published not only information that they thought would be of interest or use to their readers, but also news that they perceived as vital to the new citizen's exercise of his rights. While feature articles on other cities or villages in Palestine aimed to teach readers about a little known part of the country, they also sought to ensure that readers shared a common base of knowledge and indeed, that they began to "imagine" a shared set of spaces and identify with shared concerns. Comparisons were made, differences were pointed out, and lessons were

drawn from others. For example, readers in Jaffa and Jerusalem turned their attention to the other provincial capitals in the empire, demanding a local health council [*majlis al-sihha*] “like in other cities.” Thus the unfamiliar was rendered familiar and possible, and knowledge of precedent elsewhere empowered locals.

It was this sense of empowerment—of the press, at least, if not always of its actual readers—that lay at the heart of the citizenship project in late Ottoman Palestine. One of the most important tools that the press used to “practice citizenship” was the “Open Letter” [*kitāb maftūh*, Arabic; *mikhtav patuah*, Hebrew] as a device of “speaking to” local officials³⁶ as well as to one’s compatriots.³⁷ These open letters appealed to their readers’ sense of reform and critique, and in this way became important political actors in their own right.³⁸ The Jerusalem City Council, in particular, bore the brunt of a great deal of press scrutiny, criticism, and recommendations.³⁹ Furthermore, its elections and proceedings were for the first time made fairly transparent to the public eye.⁴⁰

The press as a barometer of the limits of Ottomanism

This function of the press as the “eyes and ears” as well as interlocutor of various government bodies and officials had not been possible before 1908 and the advent of a relatively free and vibrant public sphere. However these same values of unity, transparency, advocacy, and active citizenship that were central to “making Ottomans” would also be central in highlighting the divisions between them. Newspapers translated reports and editorials from other languages as a way of monitoring the goings-on of other groups and communities, promoting and contesting a particular vision of Ottomanness, and legitimately policing those boundaries.

Only weeks after the revolution, the Ladino- and Hebrew-language journalist Avraham Elmaliach published an homage to the revolution while at the same time indicating that the new freedom of the press would serve as a yardstick to measure the renaissance of the Ottoman Empire. As he wrote in “Rebirth of Our Empire”:

Our homeland has returned to rebirth . . . Freedom is the dearest thing to mankind, and therefore our brothers *‘am Israel* [the

Jewish people], settlers of Turkey [*sic*], will endeavor through the freedoms given to us to bring closer all that is good and useful for our homeland... [Thanks to the freedom of the press,] we will demand our rights from their hands and they will know that there is an eye that sees and an ear that hears.⁴¹

Indeed, subsequent “violations” or shortcomings of reform were depicted in the press, usually followed by calls for mobilization to the powers that be, whether the Ottoman local officials or the imperial government via the Istanbul-based Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum. The persistence of the Red Note,⁴² unconstitutional bans on Ottoman Jews’ purchase of land, and other issues were denounced in the Jewish press as evidence of the shortcomings of Ottomanism. Within a few months of the revolution, the press was documenting abuses and persistent elements of the *ancien régime*.

In the fall of 1909, a stinging critique was published in *ha-Herut*, entitled “Such is Brotherhood and Equality,” complaining about elements of discrimination against Jews as well as demanding full equality as promised by the new order:

Everyone says to give it time and our situation will improve. Enough! A year and a half have passed from the giving of equality to all the peoples without difference in religion or race. Fifteen months since the words freedom, equality and brotherhood had high hopes, but every good change passes us by...our situation gets worse by the day, just because we are ‘Jews.’ Jewish honor is defiled by the Red Note. Muslims take revenge on Jews by saying they insulted the Islamic religion. Jews cannot climb up the stairs to the Cave of the Patriarchs. Jews are beaten every day by the public and police... Why don’t we raise our voices and demand a lawsuit? If we are good enough to pay taxes and burdens, go to the army and spill our blood for our homeland, then we should also enjoy the rights of the government. Then the police will have to defend our lives and property like that of the other citizens without difference to religion and race. We must stand against the masses that harm and accuse us. Jews beaten in jail—we should press charges.

Ha-Herut's anger had been cumulative; yet it also reflected a broader dissatisfaction with the post-Hamidian order that had fallen far short of expectations in numerous ways. Furthermore, the general overturning of social hierarchy (from the previous "institutionalized difference" to mandated equality) in the constitutional period had turned out to be problematic. In one writer's words: "When the constitution was proclaimed in Turkey (*sic*) and the word *hurriyya* rang out, our joy was great, very great, thinking that we would finally...be able to breathe a pure and free air...[and yet] our situation has gotten worse. Yes! Worse!"⁴³

As the Jewish community was not alone in its complaints about the shortcomings of the new era, the press offers us a window onto the development and expression of growing inter-communal rivalry. Rather than expressing ahistorical religious hatred or economic competition, the inter-communal rivalry of the constitutional period was cast through an Ottomanist lens. Tensions between communities found their expression in the pages of their newspapers, particularly around the new rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the persistent privileges of non-Ottoman individuals or communities. The language of a shared citizenship and nationhood was juxtaposed next to the much more complicated reality, where both Muslims and non-Muslims alike resented their own forced contribution to changing the status quo while questioning their neighbors' unwillingness to do so.

A perfect illustration of this is the case of universal military conscription. In 1909 the Ottoman parliament declared conscription universal for all Ottomans, reversing the past exemption of non-Muslims from the Ottoman military. In the prevailing euphoria, the Ottoman military was praised for its role in the revolution and in bringing *hurriyya*, while the Ottoman public was eager to participate in the benefits as well as responsibilities of citizenship. Universal conscription was talked about as a tool of social engineering, a universalizing experience that would Ottomanize the empire's polyglot communities. Public discourse embraced universal conscription as sharing the burdens of defending the empire from internal and external threats as well as—importantly—providing an end to the myriad privileges (and subsequent marginalization) experienced by the non-Muslim communities of the empire.

For many non-Muslims, and particularly for the Ottoman Jewish communities, support for universal conscription became a measure of support for Ottomanism, for the empire, and for the responsible participation of non-Muslims in the new Ottoman body politic. It was considered an honorable contribution to the Ottoman nation, not only a duty but a privilege for all Ottoman citizens. In short order, however, military service became another yardstick by which to measure the relative Ottomanist contribution of each ethno-religious community; in many respects military conscription was less a means of integration than a new source of inter-communal rivalry.

In part because of the ambivalent policy in Istanbul,⁴⁴ the conscription issue was the source of much confusion and misinformation and as a result the local press became an important intermediary for the people. The Jewish press published numerous articles and notices about the new law and exemption regulations, dates of medical exams, call-up notices, and procedures. In order to preempt any inter-communal conflicts, the government established local induction and appeals committees consisting of the governor, local military commander, head of military conscription, census clerks, and religious heads and lay leaders, placed there “so that no injustice is done and all is carried out according to law.” Nevertheless, the conscription process was messy and inefficient, and led to frequent public complaints of unfairness, inefficiency, and exploitation.

While at first loudly declaring Jewish excitement at serving the homeland, once the romantic heroism of the Ottoman military wore off, many non-Muslim youth were unwilling to join an institution that posed certain health and financial risks, whether through being shipped off to quell domestic unrest in Adana, the Hawran, or the Arabian peninsula (1909–11), or to defend the empire from foreign attackers in 1911–13. In this instance the press applied a dual strategy: it offered a platform for promoting military service as a duty of citizenship and trumpeting the community’s loyalty to the Empire, while simultaneously pleading with Jewish youth not to emigrate or otherwise escape military service (thereby revealing the limits of that loyalty).

As one Judeo-Spanish newspaper put it, “All Ottomans, Muslims and non-Muslims, should enter under the Ottoman flag.”⁴⁵ In May 1909, *ha-Herut* trumpeted that “we the Jews were always loyal to our homeland

[*eretz moladetenu*] and to our enlightened government, and it is incumbent upon us to fulfill our holy duty especially according to the laws." Although new beginnings are difficult, the paper continued, particularly since the majority of Jewish young men did not know Arabic and Turkish, it was incumbent upon Jews to "give the last drop of their blood for the good of the homeland." The Jewish press explicitly reinforced the link between the Ottoman citizenship project and the duty to serve in the military. On the eve of the first conscriptions the press exhorted young men to think of the Ottoman patria and Ottoman *umma*: "Brothers! Don't be lazy, it is incumbent upon us to carry weapons and fight with our bodies for our dear homeland, because its peace is also peace for us."⁴⁶ Patriotic articles were published, praising Jewish volunteers to the Ottoman army, Jewish war heroes from the spring 1909 counter coup, and even mobilized Jews worldwide.

With the passage of time, however, the Jewish press had to acknowledge the growing resistance on the part of Jewish youth throughout Palestine. Even while the first call-ups and inspections were taking place, an advertisement placed in a local newspaper urged all Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Maghrebi and Yemeni young men who stood to be drafted to go to the house of one Shlomo Eliach to get advice on what could be done to better "their depressing situation."⁴⁷ In fact, tens of Jewish and Christian youth were leaving Palestine weekly, hundreds leaving Greater Syria. The September 1909 rolls of eligible non-Muslim men in the Jerusalem area yielded 1953 names, which included almost 600 Jews. However, from the periodic reports in the press, we know that by the time the actual call-ups came around, a significant percentage of the summoned youth never showed up.⁴⁸

In February 1910, the first non-Muslims were finally conscripted into the army in Istanbul, and the Palestinian Jewish press had an opportunity to adopt the "Jewish pioneers" as an example to the local youth. As one newspaper remarked, the "capital was full of emotion" as people from all walks of life came to see the nearly one thousand non-Muslim conscripts performing their "duty for the homeland." Furthermore, through their induction, the Jewish and Christian youth fulfilled "equality" in deeds, not just in words. That Friday evening for the first time, Christian, Jewish and Muslim soldiers sat and ate together, the fulfillment of the revolution's

promises of brotherhood, equality, and a united Ottoman nation (though the paper did note that each ate from his own utensils, implying that the Jewish soldiers' dietary restrictions were not compromised).

In the same issue, however, *ha-Herut* published an article translated from the Jerusalem-based Christian newspaper *al-Insaf*, which accused the Jewish community of lying to the local medical inspection committee in order to win exemptions from military service. In response, the Ottoman Jewish community voiced outrage, citing the deep loyalty and commitment of the Jewish community to the empire and, significantly, relying on the newly granted laws and rights of the constitutionalist regime to redeem them. In an article published as a rejoinder, "Otomani" urged the Jewish community to sue the paper according to articles 17 and 19 of the new press laws. He wrote, "I call on every Jew who in his heart has feelings of nationalism and honor that it is a holy duty laid down upon them to prosecute the editor of this paper to either show the truth of his words or to punish according to the law for the honor of the Jews."⁴⁹ *Ha-Herut's* editor seconded his recommendation and dismissed the Arab editor who was, in his opinion, jealous of the Jewish community's advances in commerce, industry and education. "The government knows well its Jews because they are loyal to it, not less than the Christians and perhaps much more than them."

Mendel Kremer, the *mukhtār*⁵⁰ of the Ashkenazi community in Jerusalem, went to the head of the military inspection committee to complain; the official reportedly denied the Christian press's allegation of Jewish shirking. The editor of *ha-Herut* demanded that official steps be taken through the Society of Ottoman Jews to sue the editor for libel. In response, the editor apologized and promised to retract his statements in the next issue if the Jewish community did not prosecute him. Partially placated, the newspaper insisted that if the editor fulfilled his promise, they would forgive him; "if not, we will demand a lawsuit so that all our haters and enemies will hear, and know that there is an eye that sees and an ear that hears, and the Jews will go to court over everything."

Several days later, *ha-Herut* reported that *al-Insaf* had retracted its former accusations, simply noting, "by the way, the notice we published that some Jewish youth put tobacco in their eyes to fool the doctors is a falsehood."⁵¹ In response, the Jewish newspaper editors wrote that while

they were uncertain whether the editor had “seen the truth” or simply feared the punishment, they were pleased that he had considered their demand for a retraction.

In addition to its formal retraction, *al-Insaf* published a leading article praising the Jewish population of the empire, sections of which were translated by *ha-Herut* for its readers. If the article struck the Jewish editors as insincere or sarcastic they did not let on:

All the peoples in the great Ottoman Empire received the constitution like a man thirsty for water and on the faces of all we saw the joy and brotherhood and equality. But more than all the people of Turkey [*sic*] the Israelite *umma* excelled in its amazing celebrations, and more than once we saw our Jewish brothers in the markets and streets with the flag of freedom in their hands, and their homes decorated with lights and lamps, at the gate of each Jewish house and window decorated wonderfully, and the joy on their faces called for equality and brotherhood. But that was not enough for them and when the non-Muslim youth were called to inspection before the military committee, they marched young and old to the military fortress with joy and excitement to the tents due to the constitution that made them equal to the rest of their brothers in the empire. And it is a miracle that all of the Jewish youth who at the first inspection said they were sick were indeed proven in front of the doctors that they were sick and they were exempted. And the Jews like the rest of their brothers prayed to God for creating them Ottomans.

By the time the first Jewish and Christian youth from Jerusalem were conscripted in the fall of 1910, the difficulties between them were temporarily put to rest. The induction of the seventeen Christian and eleven Jewish youth was depicted as the ideal Ottomanist moment—three thousand Jerusalemites went to the train station for their departure, the military commander gave a speech about their “duty to the homeland,” the military band played patriotic songs, and the cries of the parents, brothers, and children of the departing soldiers rose up to the heavens as one. “And you, dear soldiers! Be strong and courageous and be as soldiers

loyal sons to our land and our dear homeland, bring your powers for the good of the state in peace because her peace is also peace for you. Be loyal to our religion and our holy Torah and be with your Ottoman brothers in brotherhood and friendship so that your names will be blessed and Jerusalem will boast about you!”⁵²

Soon after, however, against the backdrop of the broader imperial tensions among the empire’s constituent groups and the very real strains under which the Ottomanist project was suffering, an unnamed Christian newspaper defamed a Jewish doctor in Jaffa who had volunteered to serve as a military doctor, saying that he had volunteered purely for personal financial gain. In his defense, “Ottoman Jew” from Jaffa blamed “the usual Christian jealousy,” claiming that the Christians had done this “at a time when their doctors are fleeing to Egypt.”⁵³

The uneasy hybridity of the Ottomanizing public sphere illustrated in the conscription case was repeated throughout the four-year period from 1910–14 as dozens of mutual recriminations among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim writers, editors, and citizens accused the press of libel or defamation on the individual, communal, and religious level. Jews, Muslims and Christians used the Ottoman court system and censor as an arbitrator, seeking group legitimacy from the government that their activities were, unlike their opponents’ activities, compatible with Ottomanism. The legal proceedings against the Palestinian press (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim newspapers) often centered on this discourse of the public good and unity of the nation. *Falastin* was shut down several times, once due to the governor’s opinion that it “sows discord among the elements of the country.”⁵⁴ On another occasion, in April 1913, the government shut down the paper for “dividing between the races.”⁵⁵

One Jewish newspaper in Palestine lodged such a complaint against the Haifa-based newspaper *al-Karmil*, but instead *al-Karmil* came back with its own accusation of anti-Ottomanism. According to *al-Karmil*, their paper was founded to protect human rights and Ottoman unity, foster assimilation of its peoples, and warn the government of the ambitions of foreign residents. The aims of the Jews, according to *al-Karmil*, can only damage the advancement of the Ottoman Empire and its success.⁵⁶ Angered by this depiction, *ha-Herut* declared, “Enough! Enough of your publishing such news that brings bad tidings to the *umah* and the state!”⁵⁷

Rather than reflecting everyday inter-communal tensions that might emerge as easily as class conflicts, the development of sectarian strife in Palestine in the late Ottoman period was instead the product of new power dynamics and a changing imperial landscape. To a certain degree, the press was used as a tool by both Jews and Christians to divide the other from their Muslim compatriots. *Ha-Herut* complained that *Falastin* had published “another lie” that local Jews were agitating against the Muslim Rumelian refugees in the aftermath of the wars in the Balkans (1912–13). “Our Muslims here should think about the aim of these lies,” the paper warned.⁵⁸ In many other ways the process of reshaping communal boundaries conflicted with imperial ones, and numerous examples from the late Ottoman period indicate this tension. Parliamentary elections, wars with Christian Italy and Greece, and the growth of the Zionist movement within Palestine itself all reflected the imperfect juxtaposition of universal and communal commitments—indeed, the limits of Ottomanism itself.

Nevertheless, an important revolution had taken place: in the reach of the press, in the scope of its coverage, and in its own professed aims. The press was a tool for promoting, defining, and implementing a civic Ottomanism. Yet it was also a forum for religious, linguistic, and ethnic communities to promote their own communal imaginings while projecting their community on the imperial civic stage. In the final analysis, the press offered a powerful voice and platform for the numerous challenges—ideological, social, and political—that civic Ottomanism faced.

Notes

1. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Fifth Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting at the European University Institute (2004) and the SSRC Beirut Conference on Public Spheres (2004). The author would like to thank the organizers and participants of these workshops for their probing comments, in particular Seteney Shami, Fawwaz Traboulsi, Zeynep Gambetti, Sune Haugbolle and Srirupa Roy. Tamir Sorek also provided useful feedback.
2. 'Unşur/'anāşir (pl.) can be translated as either "element/component" or as "race/stock/descent." In the context of the late Ottoman Empire the meaning is somewhere between the two; group distinctions were made based on shifting sociological factors rather than solely essentializing characteristic attributes.
3. "What Is Required of Us After the Constitution," *al-Ittihad al-'Uthmani* 1, no. 37.
4. Rogers Brubaker refers to this malady as "Groupism," which he describes as "the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis." Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity without Groups," *Archives européennes de sociologie* XLIII, vol. 2 (2002), 164.
5. See the introductions of James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–18* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) for particularly lucid critiques of the nationalist literature. See also Maurus Reinkowski, "Late Ottoman Rule over Palestine: Its Evaluation in Arab, Turkish and Israeli Histories, 1970–90," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35 (1999) for a critique of the Turkish, Arab and Zionist-tinged histories of Palestine.
6. Among others, see Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp and Stefan Weber, eds., *Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Beirut: Orient Institut der Deutschen

- Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, 2002).
7. To date, much of the historical literature of the Arab press in the Middle East focuses on the press as a documentary source of nascent Arab or local nationalisms. See Samir Seikaly, "Damascene Intellectual Life in the Opening Years of the 20th Century: Muhammad Kurd 'Ali and *al-Muqtabas*," in *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890–1939*, edited by Marwan R. Buheiry (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1981); Samir Seikaly, "Christian Contributions to the Nahda in Palestine Prior to World War I," *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 2, no. 2 (Autumn 2000); Rashid Khalidi, "The Press As a Source for Modern Arab Political History: 'Abd al-Ghani al-'Uraisi and al-Mufid," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1981); Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Eliezer Tauber, "The Press and the Journalist As a Vehicle in Spreading National Ideas in Syria in the Late Ottoman Period," *Die Welt des Islams* 30 (1990); and James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). While this (proto-)nationalist element is undoubtedly present, the late imperial context cannot be solely reduced to the nationalisms that would become dominant in the post-WWI period. Interesting works on the Ottoman public include Elizabeth Brown Frierson, "Unimagined Communities: State, Press, and Gender in the Hamidian Era," PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1996; Palmira Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–1911* (Albany: State University of New York, 2000); Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Keith Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Reşat Kasaba, "Economic Foundations of a Civil Society: Greeks in the Trade of Western Anatolia, 1840–1876," in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1999).
 8. Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by

- Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 307.
9. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 123, 126.
 10. Harold Mah, "Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians," *Journal of Modern History* 72 (March 2000).
 11. Craig Calhoun, "Introduction," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 38.
 12. See Mustafa Emirbayer and Mimi Sheller, "Publics in History," *Theory and Society* 28 (1999): 156.
 13. Here I mean communal to signify local groups, which often perceived their boundaries to be static and fixed, whether religious, ethnic or territorial.
 14. Following James A. Reilly, "Elites, Notables and Social Networks of Eighteenth-Century Hama," in *Islamic Urbanism in Human History: Political Power and Social Networks*, edited by Sato Tsugitaka (London and New York: Keagan Paul International, 1997), 220.
 15. Here Ottomanist refers to the adoption of the ideology of Ottomanism, whereas Ottomanizing refers to the proselytizing tendencies of the press to bring readers on board the imperial project.
 16. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 221–223.
 17. See Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*; Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press*; Frierson, "Unimagined Communities"; Ariel Salzmann, "Citizens in Search of a State: The Limits of Political Participation in the Late Ottoman Empire," in *Extending Citizenship, Reconfiguring States*, edited by Michael Hanagan and Charles Tilly (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); and Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).
 18. *El Paradizo*, 2 April 1909.
 19. *Ha-Herut*, 12 July 1909.
 20. See Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*.
 21. Referring to the rule of sultan Abdülhamit II (1876–1909), which began with the shutting down of the first Ottoman parliament and the abrogation of the Ottoman constitution in 1876–1878 and was popularly characterized as a period of "tyranny" [*istibdād*].
 22. Over two hundred new publications appeared in Istanbul in the year after

- the revolution, according to Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press*, 25. Yehoshu'a writes of a similar response in Mesopotamia: from the official bilingual government organs that appeared in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul on the eve of the revolution, after the revolution there were seventy political, literary and caricature newspapers. Ya'akov Yehoshu'a, "Al-Jara'id al-'Arabiyya allati Sudirat fi Falastin: 1908–1918," *al-Sharq* 2, no. 8 (February 1972), 19.
23. Most of these known Arabic newspapers that appeared in Palestine in this period have been lost, with the exception of *al-Karmil*, *Falastin*, and *al-Munadi*, as well as scattered issues of other papers. For information on the papers, see Yusuf Khoury, *al-Sihafa al-'Arabiyya fi Falastin, 1876–1948* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1986).
 24. As Khalidi cautions, it is difficult to quantify the reach of the press, but we do have information on subscription rates from the period, which ranged from 300–500 for smaller newspapers to up to 2,000 for the more popular newspapers. As an example of scope (rather than a precise figure), the German Consulate listed the subscription of *al-Quds*, a Christian-edited paper, at 300 (220 in the country, 80 to America); *ha-Herut*, a Sephardi Jewish organ, at 800 (300 in the country and 500 in Turkey [*sic*]). Israel State Archives [ISA], 67/peh457:482. A different consular report cited *Falastin's* subscription as 1600 (465 in Jaffa; 1200 in Turkey [*sic*]); *al-Akhhbār's* circulation of 600 reportedly included 50 subscribers in Egypt, Sudan, and America. ISA, 67/peh533:1493. Undoubtedly the papers themselves sought to convince readers of their desirability; *ha-Herut* claimed it sold out of the 1200 copies of its first issue, in no. 2, 14 May 1909. Avraham Elmaliach, its one-time editor, claims they had 1500–2000 subscribers and at their high point sold 3000 newspapers. Oral History Project, Institute for Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Interview #2 with Avraham Elmaliach.
 25. Membership rates were three bishliks per month (approximately 9 qurush), whereas the average annual subscription to a single newspaper was around 70 qurush. ISA, 67/peh533:1491. Still, considering the fact that the average day laborer earned at most 8 qurush per day, it is unlikely that many workers could afford newspapers on more than a sporadic basis. For information on the cost of basic commodities, wages and currency, see Avraham Moshe Luntz, *Eretz Yisrael Almanac* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1909), 76. We also have a record of a "Readers' Library" [Maktabat al-Mutāllī], where readers

- could pay a small fee for access to the latest news.
26. See Ami Ayalon, "Political Journalism and Its Audience in Egypt, 1875–1914," *Culture and History* 16 (1995): 116.
 27. *Ha-Zvi*, 17 November 1908.
 28. Ya'akov Yehoshu'a, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-'Arabiyya fi Falastin fi al-'Ahd al-'Uthmani, 1908–1918* (Jerusalem: Matb'at al-ma'arif, 1978), 18–19.
 29. Nissim Malul, "ha-'Itanut ha-'Aravit," *ha-Shiloach* 31 (1913).
 30. *Al-Quds* 1, no. 1, 18 September 1908, quoted in Yehoshu'a, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-'Arabiyya fi Falastin*, 10. The newspaper's masthead illustrated its embrace of the revolutionary principles of "liberty, equality, fraternity" (*hurriyya, musāwā, ikhā*).
 31. Ya'akov Yehoshu'a, "Sahifat *al-Taraqqi wa- Falastin*," *al-Sharq* 3, no. 8 (1973).
 32. *Al-Quds*, 11 May 1909.
 33. *Ha-Herut*, 19 July 1909.
 34. *Al-Quds*, 23 July 1909.
 35. The sessions of *al-majlis al-'umūmī* were published in the newspaper *al-Quds al-Sharif*.
 36. See *al-Munadi* for numerous examples, namely: "To the *Mutasarrif*," 9 Tammuz 1912; "Open Letter to the *Mutasarrif*," 1, no. 28; "To the Next *Mutasarrif*," 14 January 1913; "To the New *Mutasarrif*," 13 Adar 1913. *Al-Munadi* also published open letters to the general prosecutors in Hebron and Gaza, to the police chief and to the Jerusalem representatives to parliament.
 37. See *al-Munadi*, "To the People of Jerusalem," 2 Tammuz 1912; "To the Palestinians," 24 Nissan 1913.
 38. For similar political functions of the press, see Ayalon, "Political Journalism and Its Audience in Egypt"; and Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press*.
 39. See Ya'akov Yehoshu'a, *Yerushalayim Tmol Shilshom*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1981); and Ya'akov Yehoshu'a, *Yerushalayim tmol shilshom*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1979).
 40. *Al-Munadi* attacked the city council's corruption and ineffectiveness on a regular basis.
 41. *Ha-Hashkafah*, 7 August 1908.
 42. The Red Note referred to the pink slip given to European Jews when entering Palestine in exchange for their passport. This was essentially a three-month visa that sought to ensure the Jews would not illegally settle in Palestine; however, many (1,000–2,000 Jewish immigrants per month)

simply kept the pink slip and never retrieved their passports.

43. *El Liberal*, 5 November 1909.
44. On the one hand, Ottomanist principles demanded an end to the non-Muslims' exemption from military service, but practical considerations such as the lost revenue of the military exemption tax [*bedel-i askeri*] as well as concerns about what such social mixing might mean in reality led to foot-dragging and endless debates in the Ottoman parliament and cabinet.
45. *El Liberal*, 6 August 1909.
46. *Ha-Herut*, 29 September 1909.
47. *Ha-Herut*, 22 December 1909. Evasion became so pervasive that it would eventually necessitate strong punitive measures by the imperial and local governments, particularly against people who (like Eliach) helped conscripted men flee their duty.
48. In Jaffa, for example, only three of the seventeen youth called to the *mu'āyana* showed up. *Ha-Herut*, 18 February 1910.
49. *Ha-Herut*, 9 March 1910.
50. Designated head of a village, neighborhood, confessional or subconfessional ethnic group. The main responsibilities of *makhātīr* included keeping detailed lists of citizens under their charge for tax payment and census purposes.
51. *Ha-Herut*, 14 March 1910.
52. *Ha-Herut*, 21 September 1910.
53. "Jews in the Army! Jews in the War!" *ha-Herut*, 1 November 1912.
54. From 'Uziel to Haim Nahum, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People [CAHJP], HM2/9071.1.
55. Ya'akov Roi, "Nisyonoteihem shel ha-Mosdot ha-Tziyonim le-Hashpi'a 'al ha-'Ittonut he-'Aravit be-Eretz Yisrael ba-Shanim 1908–1914," *Tziyon* 3–4 (1967): 209.
56. *Ha-Herut*, 25 May 1910.
57. *Ha-Herut*, 16 August 1911.
58. *Ha-Herut*, 31 December 1912.

Seeking Liberty and Constructing Identities: Algerian Publics and Satellite Television

Ratiba Hadj-Moussa

Questions and contexts

After three decades of “monumental history” in Algeria, during which dissension was concealed and silenced by the signs of the unanimous republican brotherhood of “specific socialism,”¹ Algerians have become conscious of social divisions and of the powerlessness of the rentier state.² They have lost their fa(r)ther orientation and do not know whether to mourn or celebrate the loss of a far-reaching vision of a paternalistic state. For a long time, television played the role of reinforcing an ideological discourse stressing unanimity. It was an easy task as long as no competing structures existed. However, state television has become more and more inept at ensuring hegemony. Satellite television made its appearance in the 1980s during a wave of economic liberalization measures prior to significant budget cuts imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund during the 1990s. This research project, which I began in the mid-1990s in Algeria, was generated by a desire to understand how satellite television served as a means of resistance to both the dictates of the Islamists and the authoritarianism of the state. Algeria was in the middle of a bloody civil war. I was awed by the quiet courage of people who faced death at any moment, who were terrified but continued to live, and to watch satellite television.³ To me, however naïve it might sound, this act seemed to represent the idea that life continues, no matter what

the circumstances. This idea was very quickly followed by other questions about the nature of the relationship between state and society which, in that period, seemed to me misunderstood.⁴ It was difficult to recognize that something so socially and politically significant could be generated by ordinary people doing ordinary things.

This research project consists of a series of interviews that I conducted between 1994 and 2001 in Algeria, mainly in its northeastern and central regions. I interviewed 69 participants from various socio-professional backgrounds, thirty-seven men and thirty-two women. I also conducted three focus groups for participants who requested them or when it was difficult to meet individually with participants. I have since expanded my research to Morocco and Tunisia, where I conducted fieldwork between 2003 and 2006. Notwithstanding the differences that separate them at the level of political governance, these three countries of the Maghrib are close not only geographically, but also historically and anthropologically. The Maghrib should not be confused with Middle Eastern countries. Not only is the region physically and socially distinct, but its colonial history, its large Berber population (especially in Morocco and Algeria), and more importantly, its critical distance from the Middle East make it distinct on many levels. Thus, while it is relatively easy to refer to the Maghrib as a socio-geographic entity, it is difficult to consider it part of the Middle East, although there are many Maghribians who feel “Arab” or “Muslim.” Identifications and definitions have been displaced during the present decade, during which new forms of “Arabness” and “Muslimness” have developed due to the emergence of a politicized movement and new communication technologies, yet it is still true that Moroccans will feel they have more in common with Tunisians than with Egyptians.

In the three North African countries of the Maghrib, a number of paradoxes crop up in the broadcasting sector. Tunisia and Morocco have private television networks even though the official records claim the existence of a state monopoly. Inversely, there is *de jure* recognition but actual absence of private ownership in Algeria. Mostefaoui, among others, refers to a process of de-monopolization.⁵ The process unfolds differently in each situation. When the French television channel Antenne 2 in Tunisia began to irritate the powers that be with its prime-time terrestrial transmissions, the broadcaster was cut off. In Algeria, on the other hand, the

appearance of mini-cable networks allowed the population to access satellite channels and defy existing laws. A number of political factors, notably a favorable conjugation of forces for “democratic openness,” have contributed to a laissez-faire approach that has proven beneficial for viewers. Even though the three countries that make up the Maghrib offer a very good common site to understand the political stakes generated by the advent of satellite television, in this chapter I will concentrate exclusively on the Algerian experience. This example shows how a new medium has become the crystallization point around which political and normative orientations of Algerian society cohere. Paradoxically, the country’s civil war has made the struggle among stakeholders more visible. Although the civil war has not simplified the political processes in play, it has certainly rendered them more apparent.

In Algeria, *de facto* access to satellite television was first orchestrated in the mid-1980s by the military *nomenclatura*, who developed the commercial complex Ryad el Feth in a neighborhood of eastern Algiers. The development enshrined the history of the Algerian revolution, most notably with the Moudjahid [Fighter] Museum and the Maqam al-Shahid, or Monument to the Martyrs, created in 1984. Because this development took place during the move toward regime liberalization, begun under President Chadli (1979–1992), satellite dishes were introduced along with the commercial complex, which although intended to cater to the well-off, was adjacent to a lower-class neighborhood. Satellite dishes were later adopted by the middle class located in towns and in semi-rural regions. The prohibitive prices of the first “parabolas,” as Algerians call the satellite dishes, created a new phenomenon, whereby interested parties collectively financed the installation of the devices. Although by the end of the 1990s satellite dishes were increasingly purchased on an individual basis, the collective viewing was an important one that needs to be documented. Indeed, there were a significant number of “subscribers,” and collective ownership and management of dishes was seminal and massive.

Let us pause and contend that the recourse to history is not sufficient to identify the ways in which political regimes reacted to or used satellite television. Instead we should consider this in anthropological terms, to focus on what constitutes meaning for those involved—meaning that makes Algerian satellite TV viewers receptive and helps them to see

themselves as they are. To achieve this, we have to be aware of the complexity of articulations, including contradictory ones that shed light on actors' paradoxical practices, as well as those that challenge the theoretical presuppositions that guide us. This approach explains how public space is shaped and reshaped phenomenologically, and helps rethink theory.

The emergence of satellite television in Algeria raises several questions: What type of modernity does it produce? What are its effects on public space? What connections does it create between interior and exterior spaces? How does it affect relations between the sexes? And how does it inscribe viewer identification and identities? I intend to approach these questions by analyzing the ways satellite television impinges on shared spaces such as the neighborhood, and through a consideration of its varied impacts on gendered actors in order to understand the effect of viewing practices on the meaning of the political in a society that has no tradition of a democratic past. The work of Hann and Dunn on civil society in nonoccidental contexts provides an inspiring model; they show that the notion of civil society needs to be rethought in light of local realities, such as religion, that displace received notions of the political.⁶ According to Buchowski, anthropologists have contributed to the enlargement of the notion of civil society, which now rests on considerations of groups that are not "necessarily overtly political."⁷ Another evocative current flows from research on what Lucas calls "citizenship from below."⁸ This research was conducted in the context of democratic societies (notably France). However, it was centered on the practices of marginalized actors such as workers, the unemployed or immigrants. How is the political expressed in contexts of *loss of voice*, "when it is deployed outside the moments and instances and modalities considered as political [...]?"⁹ Lucas extends this thinking further, claiming that "there is no longer *any* civil society, there are civil stakes" and that stakeholders mediate between society and political society. These areas of research and lines of questioning contribute an alternative perspective that challenges the vertical aspect of structures often assigned to the political. If the state is an important figure of the political, it is not the only one, nor is it the "only source of rights."¹⁰

These examples are relevant here in that the Algerian political system is often depicted as an authoritarian patrimonial system that has inserted its tentacles so deeply into society one is led to wonder if there is

indeed such a thing as Algerian society, or if there is nothing left but the state, at once benefactor and destroyer of a society that has ceased to exist. The argument can be carried further. If the state is located in opposition to society, then to divorce the two would mean they have no bearing on one another. By divesting the analysis of the burden of the “ghost of the state”¹¹ we can think of the political in new ways. We can conceive of daily practices as springboards that also lead to the political. Feminist theory for quite some time has cast a critical eye on the divisions between public and private space and has demonstrated that these divisions are creations of bourgeois regimes that have been reproduced in theories of public space, as in Habermas, among others.¹² Although these feminist theories do recognize the validity of the concept of a normative dimension in regards to public space, as Habermas suggested, they underscore the exclusion of women from public spaces as a constituent of bourgeois public space. This means that the space for intellectual exchange and deliberation is constructed by way of a space made absent; but it is certainly not made to disappear.

Moreover, what is one to do with the case of the private sphere engendered by television or of the public spaces it may generate? A number of authors address the difficulty of maintaining these separations, not only because television has been at the forefront of creating a sense of belonging and national cohesion,¹³ but also because the private sphere is restructured by the advent of television. Does this mean that “home” is no longer a private space? By virtue of the introduction of a public instrument, does the domestic sphere come to occupy a place no longer in parallel with the “outside” but a place articulated in relation to the outside that is connected to it in various fashions? In particular, does “mediated publicness” in the context of nondemocratic situations create not so much the “almost publics”¹⁴ of television audiences as publics that are poised for potential action? Only partial and open-ended answers can be given to these questions. The first reason for this is that television is not the only territory through which publicness materializes; the second is that the response from actors is not a *political* response in the sense of a considered set of demands aimed at the transformation of institutions.

What Lucas and Neveu note in the case of citizenship, Querrien notes in “Un art des centres et des banlieues”: that public space is not a given and that “community does not prefigure public space and does

not presuppose agreement as implied by theories of representation, community proposes such an agreement [...] Public space is a practice consciously selected, a matter of options. It is a practice of self-recognition and affirmation in the context of a field of possibilities where the guidelines are not yet established but will begin to be marked.”¹⁵ For Querrien, the Soviet queue lines represent a “minimal public space” because of the different actions that emerge from them over the course of time (mutual aid, collective decision making, surveillance). This type of approach, which anchors public space less in deliberation and more in action, allows us to consider the introduction of satellite television in Algeria as a moment where a small public space came to be and out of which emerge constitutive moments.

The stakes of public space

I have shown elsewhere that Algerians experienced a dramatic expansion of satellite television since its introduction at the beginning of the 1980s. I have also described how entire neighborhoods have become “dished [*parabolés*]” due to the organizing efforts of viewers grouped as informal “collectives.”¹⁶ Indeed, from the late 1980s until the late 1990s, the majority of Algerian viewers gathered in small groups and organized themselves to acquire a satellite dish, which at that time was only available on the black market or had to be imported. They also selected the “cable networks” and had to discuss the practicalities of purchasing the dish and seeing to its upkeep. These collectives did not exist either in Morocco or Tunisia. In the latter countries the state surveyed and controlled everything related to international programming, and, in particular, international news.

Many observers have noted Algerians’ rush to participate in these collectives, all the while appearing indifferent to the problems in their immediate surroundings.¹⁷ Of course, one can see a consumer phenomenon here; but it is accompanied by a desire for change. This desire is evident in the debates and discussions that lead up to the decision to hook up a satellite dish. The decision is influenced by differences in cultural capital, most notably access to education, as well as relations between the sexes and the rural versus urban roots of the viewers. To the extent that the

cities and neighborhoods are composed of individuals with differing class belonging, the spirited debates over the installation of satellite dishes, not to mention the choice of which stations to view, in a sense refigure the diversity of social ties. This is what Djamel, a 51-year-old male respondent who traveled throughout Algeria in the 1990s and now lives in downtown Algiers, tried to convey when he told me:

In the beginning it was very difficult because there were people for and against. In the city we are experienced, we know Europe, we have traveled. I regularly visit a friend who is a teacher living in the small town of El Kolea. There the problem is very serious. It is a town where bureaucrats, teachers, workers and farmers live side by side. When they came together to elect six representatives of which one was the treasurer—these are informal neighborhood associations—some of them were in opposition. They held that there were depictions that should not be viewed in a family setting. Later, the representatives of various buildings came together to discuss the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the subscribers... Those that had been opposed came around to asking to be hooked up. One of the organizers, an ex-mujahid, rather excitedly told them a few home truths: “When we asked you to participate, you refused saying that it was *ḥarām* [forbidden], not to be done, that we would be viewing obscene depictions. And now, like us you want to hook up but you want it before any other building! You’re not even men! You are pushed by your wives. Your wives have seen what is happening elsewhere and they pushed you to hook up...” Where I live, in the city, it is not the same. We are better organized. There are more intellectually minded people, more people with jobs.

In other words, even if everyone has access to satellite television, that access is organized along different lines. Viewing practices depend on social position and they serve to distinguish members of the television audience from one another. When viewers intent on increasing their choices—and intent on entertainment (I will return to this theme)—bring their organizing efforts to bear on the acquisition and management of

a satellite dish, even without a predetermined *political* will to organize themselves collectively, they create new spaces and opportunities to reinterpret and to critique everyday practices and the political system. The success of satellite television at its inception in the mid-1980s was based on the repudiation of national television, which was deemed “obsolete” and was perceived as the house organ of the ruling class. This is true all over the Maghrib. In organizing themselves collectively, viewers create a small public space that becomes a vital venture for revealing social forces and for the capture of physical spaces.

Thus, thanks to satellite television in the mid-1980s, Algerians saw members of the political opposition living in Europe as well as the leaders of the *Front Islamique du Salut* [FIS, or Islamic Front of Salvation]. The FIS, which already had a popular power base, was denied access to national television after October 1988,¹⁸ and was thus pushed toward the use of satellite television. However, in and of itself the broadcasting of these oppositional voices would be politically insignificant if other means of communication did not support and reinforce these moves. I here limit my remarks to the FIS. Other opposition parties at the time had hardly any grassroots support. In this battle over public space the FIS had access to neither television nor radio. It turned its efforts toward mosques and partially toward schools. The FIS used means already in place, such as the amplified loudspeakers installed in the mosques during the period of “specific socialism.” These devices had already reshaped the physical boundaries of neighborhoods and had shifted focus to other places, such as homes. The official imams’ preaching increasingly became linked to the views of the FIS. At times they were even appropriated by the imams whose theology was close to the FIS. During Friday afternoon prayer services, sermons could be heard everywhere; they reached into even the tiniest corners of cities and villages, and inside houses. Audio cassettes also played an important role in the propagation of FIS ideology. These cassette tapes, distributed by authorized dealers on market days, contained prayers and sermons that came mostly from Egypt. The FIS also derived a great deal of its support from charitable work that often operated out of mosques. This appropriation of the technical apparatus of communication which, in the past, had been the prerogative of the governing powers and which constituted a means of “effecting the materialization of the power

of the mosques on the population” became a key tactic of the FIS.¹⁹ When it was granted legal party status, the FIS was critical of what it deemed the “unacceptable” imitations of French society offered by Radio Chaîne III (the only network broadcasting in French) and cast doubt on the Algerian pedigree of its announcers, but was not critical of satellite television.²⁰

A certain qualitative transformation occurred between the period when satellite television was utilized (though critiqued) and the moment when it came to represent nothing but the Other, the incommensurably different. This passage from the “justification of ends” [*rationalité par finalité*] to the “justification of values” was especially notable in February 1992 after the suspension of elections that were predicted to result in a FIS victory.²¹ With the decimation of the ranks of the Islamists, the restriction of speech and the changing tone of international media undermining their ideological position, the Islamist groups and their supporters transformed themselves into ardent defenders of morality, challenging the “*ṭāghūt*” (i.e., the satellite dishes). *Ṭāghūt* is an Arabic term that has recently surfaced in the discourse, designating the idols that must be attacked according to traditional interpretations of the Qur’an. The more fervent protesters tried to convince the population that the satellite dishes were a satanic technology because they incited splits in the Algerian family. Satellite dishes were seen as vehicles for immorality and the corruption of youth. Youth gangs who identified themselves with the FIS intimidated “subscribers” to try to convince them to divest themselves of their dishes. Slim, a father of four, described his experience to me. He lives with his family in a housing project on the outskirts of a small city that was intensely damaged during the civil war.²² In his city the seeming normality and quiet of the day is replaced by fear brought on by the uncertainties of the night and its darkness, the moment when everyone has to be home to comply with the curfew imposed by the state of siege:

Slim: In 1993, “they” took away the dish [*ḥabassūhalna*]. The emir was passing through. He found the leader and told him “we give you two or three days to make the dish disappear.” “Their”²³ emir himself, who is well-known in the neighborhood, came. Sometimes “they” send their soldiers, who then say, “Remove the dish. We have been sent.”

Ratiba: Do they come armed?

Slim: Yes, they come armed, but they address you very politely [*bila kuliyya*]. They do not show their weapons. They hide them but you can still see them. They say to you, "Remove the dish. Our leader asks you to do so. But this order does not come from us. It comes from God." Which is to say that religion does not tolerate this depravity [*fasād*]. This is their perception [of the dish]. You have to follow their orders... If you dare to oppose them, they come back and they kill you.

Why this prohibition? Is it to justify the reproduction of an Islamic morality or is it aimed at the appropriation of public space, that is, control of a political discourse? To answer the question we must consider the two, political discourse and public space, as indissoluble. Several authors have already noted that the political program of the FIS was defined by morals and essentially inflected toward questions of morality. The eminently political interpretations of some of this study's participants offer some tentative responses. I want to show that something has shifted, that something is germinating. We need to understand this shift and this germinating seed in order not to fall back upon the negative and the disappointing. A negative interpretation only sees the "people as hostage,"²⁴ hears only silence, perceives only resignation and notices only the obstacles to thinking if not the very impossibility of imagining an alternative. This critical imagining is that of "ordinary" people, like Hayet, a factory worker, who vividly and analytically examined the attempts of the Islamist armed groups and the FIS to forbid satellite television viewing:

I, myself, believe that the dish bothers them [the Islamists] not only because there are films that we should not view in a family context but also because they do not want us to know what is happening elsewhere. Everyone knows that our television supports the state, supports the government. It bothers them but less [than the satellite dish]. But when there are assassination attempts, the foreign media such as MBC [Middle East Broadcasting Center] or other networks show us what is really happening. Now [1996] France is anti-FIS and anti-terrorist, so now is the moment they prohibit satellite television. We are

not supposed to see that France has captured certain people [terrorists and their supporters]. They want us blind and deaf, they want us to seal our borders. ... But they have [video] cassettes.

Another participant explained to me that “the current system put in place by the governing powers is so absurd, so immoral, so boring” that it did not represent a serious contender for the Islamists. Once the governing powers, lacking any credibility, are eliminated, there remain two types of social directions, says Omar, a young economist:

Either the direction of the Islamists—and they were spreading propaganda in the mosques, in the neighborhoods, where they organized everything—or it is the direction of Western culture which comes to Algerians via satellite dishes. Thus, if you wish, in parentheses, the number one enemy to defeat is the satellite dish. Which amounts to cutting off entire sections of Algerian society [from Western influence]. It is above all youth [who are targeted by this strategy]. They are not interested by my mother nor me for that matter. It is mainly the age group of 18-to-25-year-olds who are hesitating between embracing the culture of the Islamists or that served up by television on a daily basis. It is truly a war and the stakes are very important to the Islamists. They needed to cut that line. Obviously they need to demonize the dish.

From the moment that it was authorized, satellite television became the technological medium at the center of the struggles between the state and the Islamists, with the viewers in the middle. However, the vast majority of Algerian viewers understood it as a means to escape both *la langue de bois*²⁵ of the regime and the authoritarianism of the Islamists. Satellite television permitted Algerians to negotiate their modernity. This *fait accompli*—the de facto access to international television programs—and the even greater capacity for Algerians to distance themselves from the dominant discourses, leads not only to the possibility of redefining the public sphere, but also to the interrogation of the notion of the political f/act.

Resistance and retorts

Aware that they were poorly informed and indoctrinated day-in and day-out, Algerian viewers turned en masse toward satellite television. This entails a dual-purpose move: a turning away both from national television and from Islamist prohibitions, literally boycotting Algerian television. They do so not only because it is less fascinating but also because they do not perceive it to be a “public good.” They say, “It belongs to four or five people,” and by that they mean it is in the hands of a clique. In other words, Algerian television does not offer them representations of themselves nor does it take into account their “culture.” I was reminded of this by four young participants who were educated in Arabic but who mastered the French language, as is the case with most middle-class children:

Réda: All day our [national] television network broadcasts Egyptian films and shows that . . .

Rafik: They want to push Algerian culture [Réda: No, hold on], they want to replace our culture by another so-called culture, they want our culture to incorporate other ideas.

Réda: That is our television that wants to impose upon us here in Algeria an Arabo-islamism . . . Television is mobilized to erase all traces of Algerian culture! However normally its role is not to transform us into [copies of the] French or others, but to make us Algerians.

Ratiba: Which means?

Réda: Our culture, our traditions, our arts and our music.

This erasure of the quotidian is also experienced as a forgetting. It is as if people's lives did not count for much in the face of state security—or simply in the face of a tradition of secret-keeping, which has a long history in Algeria. In 1996, a bomb exploded in a small town where I was conducting research. The explosion left several dead and wounded. Everyone was waiting for the local television news station to run a story. There was general disappointment that the news was not reported on national television, but that TF1, Antenne 2, Canal Plus and MBC each devoted airtime to the

event.²⁶ A few days after the bombing, I met Adel, a young unemployed man who was still shocked and totally disillusioned by the national news:

Normally in other countries, a newscast is used to show what is happening in that country. But not in Algeria. The bomb, for example. There should have been human interest stories, accounts of the casualties, if only to provide some comfort to the relatives and [they] should not have waited for two days before printing a story.

In the face of such an information blockade, satellite television becomes fundamental, especially when the state television network tries to shield the populace from the Islamist influence by co-opting it for itself. Algerian television begins and ends its programming day with the national anthem, followed by a recitation of a passage from the Qur'an. On Fridays, national television broadcasts the sermons associated with mid-afternoon prayers. Although this does not perturb viewer sensibilities, it is nevertheless perceived as an instrumentalization of Islam by the state, as noted by 26-year-old Youcef, a laboratory technician I met in one of the eastern Algiers suburbs:

Before, ENTV [*Entreprise nationale de la télévision*] used to run the religious program at a specific time, that is at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Now, in the middle of a program, they switch to the call to prayer. Even in the midst of a sports broadcast, just as one team is scoring!

As indicated above, satellite dishes were prohibited by the FIS in a number of neighborhoods in several cities, and the prohibition was often supported by the force of arms. At the height of the prohibition between 1993 and 1995, certain subscribers had to dismantle the dishes very often because there was no counter-force, such as the police, the army or the *gendarmerie*, whose presence would have discouraged incursions by armed groups. At first, the satellite collectives obeyed the commands to dismantle the devices, but as time wore on they invented resistance tactics. For people who individually owned a satellite dish the response was less direct, as in the case of Hammoud, a professional who lived in a village in which armed groups were very present:

A section of the FIS had already threatened us. We had to remove the dishes. Personally, I hid mine. I moved it from the top terrace and placed it on the bottom terrace. They are treacherous. They wait to kill you until you are leaving work or they surprise you right at work. You have to play the game. They cannot impose the prohibition unless this country adopts a totalitarian regime like that of Iran. And even then, there are ways.

For those that collectively own and manage a dish, the tactics vary. Bakir, a young unemployed man who observed the “waves” brought by satellite television, explains:

Let me tell you about what happened in neighborhood X.²⁷ The residents had set up a satellite dish. The FIS came and took it away. For a period of eight months, they had no dish. Can you imagine?! As you know, satellite dishes have become necessary in Algeria. The residents of that town were afraid but at the end of a few months they were disgusted [*dégoutés*], so they reinstalled the dish. Each person took up a piece. One picked up the receiving head, another the scoop [laughter]. I swear, I’m not exaggerating. What that meant was, we are all linked to the installation. Just think, if I install a satellite dish they will come directly [*direct* (Fr.)] to beat me or kill me. But with 100 or 300 people each holding some part? If they come back and ask who installed the dish, we can say that half or even the whole neighborhood [*cités*] had a hand in it. Those gentlemen will not kill us all.

Can one call such actions practices of resistance? Yes, if we adopt the point of view of the actors. According to them, if satellite television were to be regulated by the authorities, or simply prohibited either by the authorities or by the Islamists, the actors would “one way or another” react together, collectively. Furthermore, it is not only the young who are ready to defend this communications option. The not-so-young are also adamant. They too declare that they will fight and demonstrate. According to Réda, if such a situation is “possible” it cannot come about without struggle: “We would have to be already dead, because I for one would not let them remove the dish and subject me to their will [*me mettre à la*

barbe] . . .” Rafik: “Me, I would burn down the mosque. I tell you if they took away the dish I would go to the mosque and burn it down!”

Difficult borders

A war of signs exists and the contours of its profile are not clearly identified (we will come back to this). However, there are very discernible attempts on both sides to mark space. As a physical object, the satellite dish also occupies a certain space and its quite visible presence plays a role in collective and individual affirmation. Indeed, the struggle over satellite dishes is at once concrete and symbolic; this struggle sometimes, as we have seen, places the mosque and the satellite dish in very violent opposition. This confrontation is paradoxical and is played out over a significant range of multiple dimensions.

The family and the neighborhood represent the theater where affiliations and disaffiliations are produced and at times this entails the rejection of “strangers” and “nonconformists.” The forms of affiliation offered by the neighborhood or the *hūmma* constitute the site par excellence for the acting out of masculinity, in particular for the unemployed, who develop a sense of owning the neighborhood—not only its roadways but also its persons, notably young women. At the same time, the *hūmma* is an urban space that absorbs the rural aspects of its inhabitants. It reshapes and reinvents itself in newer and larger ensembles that include populations with different origins and different familial allegiances. Already during the 1960s, Bourdieu and Sayad spoke of uprooting in reference to the Algerian family.²⁸ Now, the tragic breakdown of the Algerian family has transformed and weakened its character and its boundaries. A similar phenomenon is applicable in the case of the *hūmma*. It is no longer the simple reconstitution of village space or of the extended family. The *hūmma* also mobilizes heterogeneous practices notable for their mercantile and individualistic aspects. The spirit of solidarity that apparently existed once upon a time in the *hūmma* and knitted together its members is now denigrated by the implacable rule of cash transactions: one no longer helps those who are less wealthy to get connected, and signal pirating is discouraged. Satellite television has also spawned a host of new practices. It has

become a source of knowledge and a site of social interaction. However, it is also an attraction for young people in the cultural desert of daily life, an attraction that turns young men away from the *hūmma*. Although the *hūmma* remains an important support in the lives of the television viewers, its contours are reshaped by television viewing. Television is a source of fascination: "There are some in the neighborhood who no longer go out! At home twenty-four hours a day! They come up for air and plunge back into watching television. Twenty-four hours! Especially at the beginning." When one is "disgusted" by the *hūmma*, one abandons it for television and vice versa. However the *hūmma* maintains its function. As an intermediary space, it favors exchange. It is the place where, as one of my participants puts it, one "talks about all sorts of things, trades anecdotes, discusses sporting events and current affairs, . . . talks about what is happening elsewhere and what is being hidden from us here."

In determining the nature of the link between *hūmma* and television, the family also plays a central role. This is notably due to the role of women as intermediaries. The link between the *hūmma*, the family and television can also be seen in the attraction that satellite television exercises on men. However significant and meaningful the return of men to the domestic sphere may be (notwithstanding the degree to which this return is still highly codified and only partial), it has not been provoked by satellite television alone. This phenomenon is an adjustment to a new reality that seems to derive from fundamental and structural changes in the Algerian family. These changes herald new questions relating to the neo-patrimonial state and the nature of tradition, constructions typically associated with family in the Maghrib. It is my hypothesis that the family, just like the *hūmma*, constitutes a locus of sociality, and it is through this sociological and anthropological reality that public space comes to be. Researchers who focus on the neo-patrimonial state with its closed networks of patrons and clients do take into account the elites and their already constituted intermediaries. These researchers tend to lose sight, however, of the informal networks in which the family plays a welfare function. The family as relay or point of mediation plays a central role in the translation work between neighborhood, city and household. Since satellite television makes its entrée through the household, there is a price to pay both by and to the family.

Cohen and Arato maintain that the inclusion of the family in discourse on civil society is fundamental. However, they associate its inclusion with a condition that can vitiate the thrust of their proposal. According to them, the family serves civil society and contributes ultimately to "the development of civic virtue and responsibility with respect to the polity." Furthermore, the family must be grounded in "egalitarian terms."²⁹ For Cohen and Arato, the family plays an important role in instructing its members to be good citizens. But it is a limited political entity, in their view, for it cannot truly maintain equality among all members. Although cast in a priori terms, this proposition can be useful in drawing attention to the importance of the links between the family and other social groupings and does so without situating the family in a space either before or after, but in between.

The second problem comes about with the connotations and implicit meanings that attend the Algerian (and Maghribian) family when dressed up with the adjective *traditional*. This is a move that engages the larger debate surrounding the pairing of tradition and modernity. In a recent study on nuptial arrangements, Kateb observes "the slow and inevitable evolution toward a matrimonial system based on the free choice of partners encountered by chance," although one's family of origin remains the determining factor in strategies for family building.³⁰ When one considers the profound upheaval that the Maghribian family, and in particular the Algerian family, has experienced from colonialism and the direct-action programs of the independent states, one is led to ask, just where is this *traditional family*?³¹ It seems more important to pay attention to the complexity of actual practices than to question whether a practice's status is traditional or whether it conforms to norms of modernity, norms that are themselves complex and fluid.

This longish digression sets the stage for a consideration of the possible conditions that have favored the adoption of satellite television by the redefined family unit. As we have seen, one of the most important changes has been the retreat of men into the household. It is worth noting that this return is inflected by strategies that can appear to be quite disorienting in all senses of the term for the foreign observer. Upon initial consideration, it appears that the men's retreat is a breach of custom; such is the strength of the gendered division of space. Numerous arrangements are set up

to make this apparent breach of custom palatable. These arrangements between the gendered parties at times require consensus and at other times the submission of one or the other party. The common vision and familial perspective are codified by what the parties themselves call “custom and tradition” that prescribe, for mixed sex groupings and for cross-generational groupings including groupings of the same sex, a certain propriety in what is shown and seen. For those who are well-off and possess the necessary space, the solution appears to be the purchase of several television sets, one for viewing national programming, the other for satellite transmissions. In certain cases, men and women can view the same shows (including variety shows) but do so separately, in order to avoid the unexpected appearance on screen of a naked body or an embarrassing scene. One also finds improvised arrangements such as “turnovers,” where one group watches while the other sleeps (an arrangement found even among brothers of the same generation), or simply frenzied zapping. There are also the borderline cases where women are ejected from the room where the television viewing takes place (or they leave of their own accord). “I have a cousin on my mother’s side who was with ‘them’ [the FIS] and he owned a satellite dish. He watches sporting events all by himself. Certainly not with his daughters! He closes the door” (Naima, 23 years old). But the force of numbers affects the balance of power and leads to situations of “applied cleverness.” “At my grandmother’s there have to be three or four women in the room where the television is. My cousin tells me that when she is alone, he [her brother] has the upper hand. However, just before he arrives home, she calls us, my sister, a neighbor and myself, to come over so that he leaves when he sees us all there” (Naima). But the matter is not so simple. This play of permission and prohibition, this staging of modesty and propriety, this performance violating women’s space, is counterbalanced by a new type of relation that is based on knowing the unacceptable. The covertness—or rather, elusiveness—of this knowing is key, providing passing indications of how father-son and mother-son relations have been dislocated by the actualization of the unacceptable (such as viewing pornographic films at home) and especially by the tolerance demonstrated toward the actualization of the unacceptable. Such practices assert male power at the same time they render intergenerational relations brittle by undermining the sacredness of the home.

Several authors have discussed the adjustments required of the family that are provoked by national and satellite television.³² I will not dwell on their findings. I want to concentrate here on certain aspects of these adjustments which lead to the following questions: How are the politics of language reflected in television viewing? How are these politics translated in a gendered context? And how is such a translation expressed in [the construction of] public space?

Gender or language?

To explain the civil war (1992–99) and the predicament of the Algerian political system, many invoke the polarization of Algerian citizens into two camps: those favoring Arabic acculturation, neglected by a system that has failed to integrate them; and those favoring French acculturation, whom the system has continued to serve and benefit.³³ (Indeed, it is claimed that this is one of the reasons why proponents of Arabic acculturation have embraced Islam.) The standard explanation for the polarization of the two camps is the language of schooling, which since the 1970s has been in Arabic. In fact, the real explanation lies in Algerian perceptions of gender differences. This is evident in the satellite television viewing habits of Algerians.

When asked about the satellite television viewing habits of men and women, the majority of men interviewed³⁴ clearly indicated that they preferred for women—especially their sisters—to watch national television or the other Arab networks (MBC, which is owned by Saudi interests and broadcasts out of London, and ART [Arab Radio & Television]). The main reason given for limiting the feminine sex to these choices is that unlike the foreign networks, the Arab networks respect decency and decorum. MBC appears to attract only a small number of men, including those whose educational background is Arabic. Apart from its news- and sports-casting, MBC is ranked with the national network:

Yes, I know that Algerian women just love Egyptian movies, but me, I don't like them. Always the same storylines of rich business men and their lovers. That is all there is on MBC.

What's its merit? Nothing. Women like it because there is fashion news and Egyptian movies. There are about two movies a day and the rest is Syrian music. It is just like our [national] television except that the newscasts are better. (Tarek, 20-year-old student)

No doubt, for Algerian women³⁵ MBC's appeal stems in part in from the romantic ideology displayed in the endless Middle Eastern soap operas it broadcasts; but it also reflects what Bourdieu calls the "paradox of the doxa," which consists of neither defying nor questioning the status quo.³⁶ This "paradoxical submission" is not always expressed in forms that are easily objectified or open to objectification (and hence critique). It is incorporated in such a fashion that it becomes natural for both men and women. It comes to belong to the order of nature. I have cited Bourdieu not because I totally agree with the framework of his analysis of masculine domination, which seems to me to be entirely situated in the realm of substantial and formal domination and leaves no room for opposition, subterfuge and novel practices; rather, his framework allows us to understand how micropractices stemming from everyday life can be read in the greater context of social structure and how actors justify what is imposed on them (in the case of Algerian women)³⁷ and what they impose on others (in the case of Algerian men).

Let us begin by stressing that women not only watch MBC, but that it is *expected* that they do so. Female viewers report a preference for this network in the context of the real and possible "danger" presented by images broadcast by Western networks. After all, and despite everything, my female respondents say "we are [at heart] Arab" or "we are Muslim" and cannot be exposed to situations that will "corrupt our soul." Alongside these controls exists another kind of generalized appropriation by the men of the television sets linked to satellite dishes. As discussed above, as soon as the men come home, people either watch national television as a mixed group or women are asked to leave. "I have a nephew. He's twenty years old. At nine o'clock he settles in and asks us to leave" (Djohra, 44 years old). This selective appropriation of the object is not solely focused on preventing women from viewing the prohibited (which, in a kind of understatement, is referred to as "scenes") but also by preventing them from being exposed to the conductors of knowledge—in the

form of documentaries and game shows—that operate *through the French language*. All things considered, satellite television has filled the vacuum left by the shortcomings and deficiencies of the school system, as Hafid, a twenty-year-old student in computer programming, expresses:

You were asking me questions about satellite television. Well. It teaches us French. [Through it] we learn French. I swear, I sometimes watch a movie with a dictionary beside me. If a word is used, let us say *avare*, I immediately look up its meaning and learn that it is a *mismār* [a nail in Algerian Arabic] or in classical Arabic, *al-bakhīl*. We are learning the language! There was a show the other day called *La route de la fortune*, it was a language-focused show. We learn a lot that way. And when the show is boring or uninteresting, we still learn French!

Hafid, who was educated in Arabic, would never want his sisters exposed to satellite television, however. For women, satellite television is not an opportunity to learn French but a danger to traditional behavior. Good Muslim women should observe their duty (*farḍ*) by wearing the hijab and avoiding the immorality of satellite television.

Satellite television is thus perceived as essentially men's television, especially in regards to Euro-programming. It is conspicuously open to the Other, the foreign. It is certainly a conduit for images of naked bodies but also of debate, polemic, critique, or, simply put, "democratic modernity." Women are mainly confined to the déjà-vu of the Arab networks. Women maintain the "umbilical cord" to Arabness, to Islam and to Algerian values. In this first instance of interpretation, the introduction of satellite television reveals an explicitly dominant configuration in political discourse in which women are the very incarnation of Arab and Muslim values in Algeria.

The advent of the satellite dish in the space of the household, like the emergence of the factory into Algerian space in the 1970s, is greeted with a sense that it should not affect the established order, by which is meant the prohibition against women occupying public space and having a voice. In a sense, this prohibition allows male viewers, whether French or Arabic speakers, to situate themselves near the center of Islamist

discourse. The practices of satellite television viewing thus enter into a serial relationship with practices emanating from other public sites of expression, and abet the production of a discourse that regards women as having very little to contribute. It is less a question of [Arabic or French] language than of the formation of a hegemonic and uniform discourse in public space. As evidence of the stakes involved, let us take the case of al-Jazeera.³⁸ Broadcasting from Qatar since 1996, al-Jazeera has distinguished itself through its coverage of political events, which has provoked the ire of more than one Arab regime.³⁹ Ever since the second Palestinian uprising in October, 2000, al-Jazeera's audience has grown throughout the Arab world, capturing the loyalty of numerous Algerian male viewers in particular because of its news reports. Unlike the viewing of Western networks, al-Jazeera's viewers often watch in public. For example, in the summer of 2001 in Algeria, I found myself in a household appliance store. A television set tuned to a show on al-Jazeera showed an ex-officer of the Algerian secret service now living in Europe being interviewed. Since the September 11 attacks against the World Trade Center in New York, the phenomenon has only been accentuated. Thus it is along *political* lines that the divide between men and women is established.

I concede that to fully develop this interpretation, the dynamic nature of these practices should be highlighted to show the nuanced structure of domination, so that the analysis could account for the singularity of an emerging voice (albeit a voice that is for the moment merely murmuring). Have women, especially the cohorts who were educated in Arabic, again been overlooked? Will women be able to break away from the "symbolic violence"⁴⁰ imposed on them by the brotherhood (it is very often brothers who impose interdictions) and affirm their own voices? My response to these questions will entertain two types of argument that show the complexity of the distinctions invoked to separate men and women. The first relates to the question of "modernity" that coincides with viewing practices, and the second to television genres. The two arguments are inseparable.

Several female scholars conducting research in the field have demonstrated that television is an instrument of modernity to which women easily subscribe.⁴¹ Abu-Lughod thus criticizes the Egyptian novelist N. Mahfouz who grows nostalgic observing the waning of café gatherings

as they are replaced by television. In particular, she notes that he “forgets that this older form of entertainment, with the imaginary nonlocal worlds it conjured up, was only available to men... Television gives women, the young, and the rural as much access as urban men to stories of other worlds.”⁴² Television allows women (especially those that do not work outside the home) to link up with public space, and it opens new horizons. “We have seen,” says Hakima, a courageous medical doctor working in a small public clinic 85 kilometers from Algiers, “women who sell their jewelry in order to acquire a satellite dish. They were ready. Because with television one can escape the gloominess of the everyday; so when they turn it on, they see things, they see people thinking.” The examples presented by satellite television “force national television to broach taboo questions such as AIDS” and women are discovering the existence of a *self*; or at least, like this young woman, dare to name the existence of such a self. In a statement that was probably intended to express a will for individuation, she said: “You know, there was a woman psychologist on MBC who said that we Arabs do not feel it when our psyche, *al-nafs*, is not well. We are only concerned by our physical organs.” The Brazilian, Mexican and even Arab soap operas that are broadcast on satellite and national television reveal hidden realities that are censored in everyday life, realities such as incest, amorous liaisons, marriages based on love and “strong women that prod men into conformance” (Abla, 38 years old).

In order to determine the extent of these disturbances, we need to consider the term “diversion” in both the sense of entertaining distraction and in the sense of detour, deviation and variation. Indeed, it is not men alone who seek diversion and who take up critical positions vis-à-vis national television. In fact, if women prefer Egyptian to Algerian films, “it is not because of the content but how it is shown, with what setting, with what clothes, with what manner of speaking. Women can go to Egypt without any problem. They know the language. You know women love what is *maḍmūm* [concise, precise and condensed]” (Naima, 23 years old).⁴³ Foreign soap operas give access to the different, access that women will manipulate, embroider and integrate into their daily lives.

If it is undeniable that political reporting occupies a prominent place in viewing habits, especially the habits of men, pure entertainment

is also highly valued, especially since television is for all practical purposes the only cultural space available. The civil war is not the only cause of this void. It began with the implementation of policies that favored the profit motive to the detriment of social and cultural wealth. But is entertainment to be considered solely as an outlet for the multiple frustrations induced by daily life? Recent studies question the under-theorized dichotomy between information and entertainment, especially if the dichotomy is considered from the perspective of the construction of meaning by viewers and the fusion of traditional genres into what is now referred to as “infotainment.”⁴⁴ Genres that were once considered minor, such as the talk show, are now at the center of lively discussion. Several authors consider the talk show a particular form of counter-discourse that is part of public life.⁴⁵ Morley writes:

One can argue that the rise of the talk show, with its carnivalesque and dialogic qualities, in which a range of voices clamours for expression . . . , has rather to be seen as part of the long-term process in which the voices of those who were historically drowned out by the patriarchal and imperialist meta-narratives of modernism are finally allowed to speak in public.⁴⁶

Identity

Identity is without doubt one of the clearest lenses through which to view the complexity of shifting alliances introduced by satellite television, since it reveals the status of the public space in question. What does satellite television bring to the issue of identity? Certainly it is not in and of itself a totalizing apparatus that automatically acquires people’s allegiance. As we saw, satellite television is instrumentalized and repositioned by various individual players and political factions. It is difficult in the case of Algeria to circumvent the issue of how its history has become colonized by a single dominant memory—the historic role of the FLN [National Liberation Front]—through a process of mythologizing verging on fossilization. This process has largely depended on national television. It is because of that

history that viewers seek diversion. They long to turn away from that history because it neither represents “the truth” nor does it represent what participants refer to as “Algerian culture”:

Before then [1988], it was the government’s newspaper, it was the newspaper that worked for the ruling power, *El Moudjahid*. Television was the FLN television and it was indoctrination, from sun-up to sundown. [But] they didn’t succeed! (Mourad, 46 years old)

There is too much censoring on our [national] television, which is itself too pro-FLN... I’m telling you the truth; I myself do not watch it not even for newscasts. We have had enough. We know they will begin with the president and his entourage, his *smala*. Twenty-five minutes of that! (Hayet, 36 years old)

Monumental history, ossified history, no longer seems to have a grip on the public imagination. Emerging and parallel histories are giving everyone the right to examine history. “There is a nationalist sentiment. It is innate. It is not the FLN that fostered it. It is a sentiment that is ingrained in every Algerian. No matter how very, very happy they (emigrants) are in France, when summer comes, they know that it [Algeria] is their country” (Kamel, 44 years old).

What is the basis of belonging to “Algerian culture”? In a country where the history of the quotidian does not weigh to the same extent as the grandiose past and present of the FLN, “Algerian culture” is provided in the examples national television offers of the “daily life of the people,” with “their dress, their songs, their art”; this identification is with a reality that is tied to a given territory. This is not to say that it is no longer a “kaleidoscope of unstable identities and transpositions”⁴⁷; but there is a correlation to place and territory. However, this correlation, as many authors have indicated, should not be essentialized. If, as Massey maintains, “the definition of the specificity of the local place cannot be made through counterposition against what lies outside; rather it must be precisely made through the particularity of the interrelations with the outside,” then the relationship between identity and territory should be

thought of through “an extroverted notion of identity of place.”⁴⁸ The processes of identification are also inflected by the Other, the external world. This is clearly the case with language. In order to come to terms with colonialism, the Arab language became the national language “against others”; French, Algerian, Arabic and Berber languages were banished once again from the nation.⁴⁹

The participants in my study do not challenge the status of the Arab language. They say, “We need a language,” and “We cannot allow speakers on television to say *el vilou* instead of bicycle or *el cartable* [satchel] or *l'icoole* [school].” They do think, however, that the official language should not be the only one to rule the airwaves. Paradoxically, they are seeking less to boost the vernacular than to encourage education reform (even among Kabyle participants and despite the Kabyle crisis⁵⁰). Their view is that “the Arab language is not a scientific language” nor is it “a technical language”; it is not a language opening on to the world. The satellite dish compensates for this lack and brings Algerians closer to France, their “neighbor.” An essential ambivalence, even a “kaleidoscope of unstable identities” appears vis-à-vis France, the Other par excellence, the Other that is not solely an insurmountable difference, but also an alter ego. This is not a case of “partial identities” that surface when a framework for social organization is absent or inadequate, be it the state, the family or the clan.⁵¹ Rather, it is an ambivalence that is rooted in a strong and dual sense of belonging, even if Algeria through its direct-action programs has relegated the French language to the margins. France too has played a significant role in the Algerian turn toward Arabicization and Islamist currents. This is true for Djamel:

It is the visa that botched it for people in Algeria... In imposing the visa, [in 1988] France pushed Algerians to go elsewhere... the Europeans perforce outlined new directions. Young people fell back upon the Middle East, Syria, Egypt, the Sudan... “They” brought us customs from Afghanistan, from the Sudan. We were not used to these customs.

France is thus an alter ego, a mirror for Algerians who almost obsessively ask themselves “how [France] is speaking about us, how it sees us,” while “we know about every political event that takes place in France”

(Fatiha, 28 years old). This mirror function not only operates at the level of comparisons between France and Algeria; it is also concerned with the international visibility of the Algerian drama. It is through the mediation of images disseminated *from* France that Algeria becomes visible. But it is a problematic visibility since the gaze from France is judged negatively. France “knows nothing about Algeria” (Djamel) and its claims are vain (Hammoud):

I was telling you earlier that they [the French media] indulge from time to time in spreading disinformation. We have been enemies for 130 years. That cannot be erased simply in a week or in a few years. Time needs to run its course. It's normal! They will visit a polling station where there are only two chaps but will not go to the one with 10,000 people.

Satellite television offers viewers the opportunity to gain critical distance, to compare their lived experience with that of other populations, to reimagine alternative histories. Participants point to “that other great repressed thought of the 20th century in France... which is that of colonialism and notably the war in Algeria.”⁵² The “deep connection” linking Algeria to France, as Grandguillaume argues, corresponds to a long-buried memory and a long-suppressed perspective on the course of events. However, the lengthy and difficult process of imbuing material traces with meaning has begun with the emerging discussions in France around the issue of torture. The Algerian press has commented on it and it has been widely picked up by the French networks. Opening up the issue assisted Algerians tortured under Le Pen during the war in coming forward to bear witness and to respond to the images coming from elsewhere, and has allowed the French to avoid falling for the line set by the FLN.⁵³

France, “our *saboteur*,”⁵⁴ is also a model. Despite “the gaps in its memory... its unhealthy connection to the [dark] zones of its past”⁵⁵ and despite the “presentness of its past,”⁵⁶ France is the example through which a political identification is possible. Whereas cultural identification is ambiguous and oscillates between the poles of repulsion and attraction, political identification is most often chosen. I have discussed elsewhere the possibilities created by satellite television and have insisted on the opportunities it presents for political education as well as the openings it

creates in the national public space by linking this space with other secular public spaces. To watch satellite television is to project other people's experiences onto one's own. France is like the thread leading out of the labyrinth; it represents the possibility of imagining a democratic future, a future that Algerians glimpsed in a flash between 1988 and 1992.

I see France. It is an exemplary country for me. It is a country that has strengthened itself through its democratic traditions. It is a country where laws exist and no one—not even a general or a president—can escape the law. We saw [on TV] ministers placed in prison, we saw the police take a CEO into detention. That doesn't happen in our country. Here it is might over right. So France is a model in this domain. The law applies to all equally. ... Presently, the presidential advisor is the son of a *flen*.⁵⁷ The minute those guys graduate from the ENA [*Ecole nationale d'administration*] they are automatically sent abroad as ambassadors whereas the sons of the losers who first of all face a challenge to get into the ENA find themselves paper pushers, in some corner of a regional bureaucracy, in a *daira* or a *wilāya*. And the son of Ali Kafi is a government advisor!⁵⁸ What a wretched individual, straight out of university, first degree in hand, all shiny and new, without any background, without any experience, and lo, he becomes advisor to the prime minister. The [Algerian] media picked up the story. We found out thanks to the media, thanks to *Liberté* in particular. (Hammoud)

Conclusion

The massive adoption of satellite television in Algeria⁵⁹ corresponds to what Bayet, in his study of social change movements in the Middle East, calls the “quiet encroachment of the ordinary,” a movement that he believes has a significant impact on the possibilities for social change: “This quiet activism challenges many fundamental state prerogatives, including the meaning of ‘order,’ control of public space, and the meaning

of 'urban.'"⁶⁰ Satellite television favors the production of knowledge other than the hegemonic distillations offered by national television. It also plays a fundamental role in the emergence of subject positions and individuality, if only by the choices it encourages. Of course, satellite television does not represent the totality of public space; its "relay components" rely on various modes of expression, such as the press, which despite all its shortcomings plays an essential role in the opening of public space in Algeria.⁶¹ The press is one of "those rare successes derived from the democratization of the regime."⁶² It too is grounded in civil society⁶³ and in the multiple transformations of the family: the renewed relations between men and women, or the redefinition of common spaces such as the household and spaces previously marked as male domains (the street, the *hūmma*). Fundamental questions remain, however, with the emergence of satellite television: is it fruitful to think in the case of a constrained political space such as Algeria's that any instance where there is an attempt at singular and novel expression is either insignificant or a mark of political disorder because this novel expression is not formally mediated through a classical mode of political representation?

Notes

1. On “monumental history,” see Fethi Benslama, “La cause identitaire,” *Intersignes* 10 (1995). “Specific socialism” is the ideology that held that the Algerian regime between 1965 and 1978 was socialist and Muslim.
2. This chapter draws on an earlier chapter that appeared as “Drifted Liberties and Diffracted Identities? Algerian Audiences and the Parabola,” in *Globalization, Cultural Identities, and Media Representations*, edited by Natascha Gentz and Stefan Kramer (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 180–206.
3. One of the participants in this research used a proverb to suggest an analogy between the “parabola,” as Algerians call the satellite dish, and travel: “Li majel mayahrafech ergiel” [Without travel there is no knowing of people]. I am grateful to the men and women who trusted me and granted me these interviews during difficult times (particularly 1994 to 1996) when, as they report, “We trust[ed] no one.”
4. Since then, numerous works have been published on the specificities of civil societies and public spheres in this region. See, for example, Olivier Fillieule and Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi, eds., *Résistances et protestations dans les sociétés musulmanes* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2002); and Hannah Davis Taïeb, Rabia Bekkar and Jean-Claude David, eds., *Espaces publics, paroles publiques au Maghreb et au Machreb* (Lyon, France: Maison de l’Orient Méditerranéen, 1997).
5. Belkacem Mostefaoui, *La télévision française au Maghreb: Structures, stratégies et enjeux* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1995), 42.
6. Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 6.
7. Michal Buchowski, “The Shifting Meanings of Civil and Civic Society in Poland,” in *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, edited by Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 81.
8. Philippe Lucas, “Citoyens d’en bas: Contribution à une anthropologie de la contemporanéité,” *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* L XXXV (1989): 276–299. See also Catherine Neveu, ed., *Espace public et engagement politique: Enjeux et logiques de la citoyenneté locale* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999).
9. Catherine Neveu, “L’anthropologue, le citoyen et l’habitant: Le rapport au politique dans une ville du Nord,” *Ethnologie française* 4 (1999): 559–567 (564).

10. Philippe Lucas, "Après la citoyenneté les multi-citoyennetés," *Cahiers internationaux de Sociologie* LXXIX (1985): 251, 249.
11. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques: sur la théorie d'action* (Paris: Seuil, 1994).
12. See, for example, Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); and Joan B. Landes, "The Public and the Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration," in *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*, edited by J. Meehan (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 91–116.
13. See Jesús Martin-Barbero, *Communication, Culture and Hegemony* (London: Sage, 1993); and David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 107.
14. Daniel Dayan, "The Peculiar Public of Television," *Media, Culture and Society* 23 (2001): 743–765.
15. Anne Querrien, "Un art des centres et des banlieues," *Hermès* 10 (1991): 85–93.
16. See Ratiba Hadj-Moussa, "New Media, Community, and Politics in Algeria," *Media, Culture and Society* 25 (2003): 451–468; and Ratiba Hadj-Moussa, "Les antennes célestes, les généraux-apparatchiks, les émirs et le peuple: l'espace public en question," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 20, no. 2 (1996): 129–155.
17. See, for example, Djamel Cheridi, "Les espaces urbains de sociabilité," doctoral thesis, Université de Paris VII, 1995; Lofti Madani, "Modalités et usages de la réception télévisée par satellite en Algérie," *NAQD [Critiques]* 8/9 (1995): 31–51; and Mostefaoui, *La télévision française*.
18. October 1988 is a key moment in Algerian political life. Massive riots protesting against a two-tiered society, injustice and growing poverty were followed by a new constitution (1989) that established the freedom of association and allowed multiparty activity.
19. Mohamed Hocine Benkheira, "Ivrognerie, religiosité et sport dans une ville algérienne (Oran), 1962–1983," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 59 no. 1 (1985): 131–151 (144).
20. See Mustafa al-Ahnaf, Bernard Botiveau and Franck Frégosi, *L'Algérie par ses Islamistes* (Paris: Karthala, 1991), 237. The FIS was uncritical because of the formidable reach of satellite. In the 1980s, the Internet was marginal

- (and still is). Satellite television did not require viewers to be literate. This explains the success of satellite television as a popular medium.
21. Severine Labat, "Islamismes et islamistes en Algérie: Un nouveau militantisme," in *Exils et Royaumes: Les appartenances au monde arabo-musulman aujourd'hui*, edited by Gilles Kepel (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1994), 66.
 22. "Housing project" has no pejorative connotation in Algeria. Big housing projects were one of the solutions implemented to solve the chronic housing crisis.
 23. The possessive pronoun is often used to mark a distance between the speaker and armed groups, the Islamists and/or the state.
 24. The expression is part of the title of a book on Algeria by Reporters sans Frontières: *Le drame algérien: Un peuple en otage* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995).
 25. "Wooden tongue," a French expression meaning "rigid talk," here used in a political setting.
 26. TF1 (Télévision Française 1) and Antenne 2 are national (public) French television stations. Canal Plus is a private French television station. MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Center) is an Arabic-language satellite television network.
 27. X is a new neighborhood in an area with a number of villages in close proximity to urban development. This neighborhood in a little town on the outskirts of Algiers was well known as existing practically out of the control of state authorities because armed groups (associated with FIS members) ruled. These armed groups prohibited satellite dishes and forced adolescent women to wear the hijab, under the threat of executing their fathers.
 28. Pierre Bourdieu and A. Sayad, *Le déracinement: La crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1964). See also Mohamed Kerrou and Mostafa Kharoufi, "Maghreb: familles, valeurs et changements sociaux," *Monde Arabe Maghreb-Machrek* 144 (1994): 26–39.
 29. Quoted in Mustafa Emirbayer and Mimi Sheller, "Publics in History," *Theory and Society* 28 (1999): 145–197 (186).
 30. Kamel Kateb, *La fin du mariage traditionnel en Algérie? (1876–1998) Une exigence d'égalité des sexes* (Paris: Bouchène, 2001), 89.
 31. See Bourdieu and Sayad, *Le déracinement*; and Kerrou and Kharoufi, "Maghreb."
 32. See, for example, Rabia Bekkar, "Écoute et regard: La télévision et les transformations spatiales en Algérie," *Miroirs maghrébins: Itinéraires de soi et*

- paysages de rencontre*, Paris, CNRS (1998): 177–185; Mostefaoui, *La télévision française*; Madani, “Modalités et usages.”
33. René Gallissot, *Le Maghreb de traverse* (Paris: Bouchène 2000), 100. See also Séverine Labat, *Les islamistes algériens: Entre les urnes et le maquis* (Paris: Seuil, 1995).
 34. All the young men who were interviewed were educated in Arabic. A number of them hardly speak French, though they do understand it well.
 35. It is evident that this is a generalization. There are women who do not like MBC, even among those that do not work outside the home. However, most women who do not like this network were educated in French.
 36. Pierre Bourdieu, *La domination masculine* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), 7.
 37. It does happen that women will quite consciously impose rules or restrictions upon themselves. One participant indicated that after inadvertently viewing a risqué scene she cleansed herself with ritual ablutions.
 38. The Qatar-based network al-Jazeera positioned itself from the outset (1996) as a rival to MBC especially in terms of political reporting. Because of its links with the ultra-conservative power base of Ryad, MBC has been shaken by the irreverent and critical tone of al-Jazeera. As a number of opposition parties from different Arab countries have found a voice through al-Jazeera, the network's broadcasts have become a reference point for viewers in Arab countries and viewers throughout the Arab diaspora. It became famous during the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 1998 when it covered “Operation Desert Storm” and its reputation was affirmed when during the second Palestinian uprising al-Jazeera filled the void left by CNN's refusal to cover the Intifada. Its reputation was again boosted recently with its coverage of the U.S. war against Afghanistan.
 39. According to David Hirst, writing in *Le Monde diplomatique* (“Al Jazira, une chaîne libre au Proche-Orient: La télévision arabe qui dérange,” August 2000), the network has received more than 400 official complaints from Arab regimes; while the U.S., through former Secretary of State Colin Powell, asked Sheik Hamad ben Klifa el Thani to put pressure on the network's journalists (see “Critiques d'al Jazira: La liberté d'expression menacée,” trans. Pierre Vanrie, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 11 October 2001).
 40. Bourdieu, *La domination masculine*.
 41. Lila Abu-Lughod, “The Objects of Soap Opera: Egyptian Television and the Cultural Politics of Modernity,” in *Worlds Apart: Modernity through*

- the Prism of the Local*, edited by Daniel Miller (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Purnima Mankekar, *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).
42. Abu-Lughod, "The Objects of Soap Opera: Egyptian Television and the Cultural Politics of Modernity," 191.
 43. This emphasis on the form of presentation echoes Mankekar's work on Indian television and the interpretative position of women who simultaneously identify with characters (even though such identification requires an emotion, "*baav*," that everyone can claim to possess) and critique the programs. Mankekar further indicates that "Neither they nor I saw a counteraction between these two divergent modes of viewing." Mankekar, *Screening Culture*, 26.
 44. See Peter Dahlgren, "Introduction," in *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age*, edited by Peter Dahlgren and Colin Parks (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 18–19; and Bernard Miège, "L'espace public: Au-delà de la sphère politique," *Hermès* 17–18 (1995): 49–61.
 45. See, for example, Jane M. Shattuc, "The Oprahfication of America: Talk Shows and the Public Sphere," in *Television, History, and American Culture: Feminist Critical Essays*, edited by Mary Beth Haralovich and Lauren Rabinovitz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 168–180.
 46. Morley, *Home Territories*, 117.
 47. Morley, *Home Territories*, 10.
 48. Doreen Massey, "Double Articulation: A Place in the World," in *Displacements. Cultural Identities in Question*, edited by Angelika Bammer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 117. See also Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Culture, Power, Place: Ethnography at the End of an Era," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, edited by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); and Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24–44.
 49. Mohamed Benrabah, *Langue et pouvoir en Algérie: histoire d'un traumatisme linguistique* (Paris: Séguier, 1999), 101.

50. The Kabyle crisis began in April 2001 following public celebrations of the "Berber Spring" of 1980, when the Berber Cultural Movement first came to public attention and was brutally repressed by the police. A gendarme killed a young college student, which provoked a long confrontation between the political regime and the population of Kabylia.
51. See Jacky Dahomay, "Identité culturelle et identité politique: Le cas antillais," in *Comprendre les identités culturelles*, edited by Will Kymlicka and Sylvie Mesure (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2000), 103.
52. "Le Pen et l'Algérie," editorial, *Le Monde Interactif*, 4 June 2002, www.lemonde.fr.
53. Florence Beaugé, "Quatre nouveau témoins accusent Jean-Marie Le Pen de torture," *Le Monde Interactif*, 4 June 2002, www.lemonde.fr. See also Gilbert Grandguillaume, "Être algérien chez soi et hors de soi," *Intersignes* 10 (1995): 79–88.
54. It is in such terms that one of the participants relates her experience of French television: "I like French newscasts because they refer to us. When my brother is watching the newscasts, I ask him to call me if they are talking about Algeria. But we know that when something is happening in Algeria, 'they' always open with it. We are being sabotaged [by French television]." (Abla, 38 years old)
55. Beaugé, "Quatre temoins."
56. Rosoux Valérie, *Poids et usages du passé dans les relations franco-algériennes* (L'Annuaire français des relations internationales II, 2001), 451–465.
57. A *flen* is an Algerian term referring to a person with power and ranking over others.
58. Ali Kafi was the president of the powerful National Organization of Mujahidin [fighters]. Following the assassination of President Boudiaf in June 1992, he became the President of the High State Commission.
59. In 1999, 80 percent of households with television sets had access to satellite transmissions, the highest degree of saturation in North Africa and the Middle East. In Western Europe the rate is 48.5 percent. See Naomi Sakr, *Satellite Realms: Transnational Television, Globalization and the Middle East* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 114.
60. Asef Bayat, "Activism and Social Development in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002): 1–28.

61. On “relay components,” see Querrien, “Un art des centres et des banlieues.”
62. Gilles Kraemer, “Presses francophone et arabophone en Algérie,” *Monde Arabe Maghreb-Machrek* 173 (2001): 73–83 (83).
63. It may seem problematic to speak of civil society in the case of Algeria. According to authors who insist on the iron grip of the regime, civil society is merely a shadow; its existence depends on the state and its infrastructure. Other authors, in contradistinction, recognize the existence of civil society despite its being fresh and weak. See Yahia Zoubir and Youcef Bouandel, “The Question of Human Rights in Algeria: An Analytical Approach,” *The Journal of Algerian Studies* 3 (1998): 1–18 (18).

Moral Citizenship in Morocco's Technogenic Public Sphere

Bahíyyih Maroon

Allah gives us technology to help the people. If you make something with what God gives you, then God gives another thing to help people. Little by little it goes this way until technology grows up to be like it is now. Before the people couldn't believe that there's an airplane flying and now look. What do you have? You have people flying all the time every day. Same with cars and other things. Now the people, they get used to technological things. And it's God who gives it.

Hajj 'Abd el- Khabir, 2002

We must enable our country with the capacity to operate with new technologies, which can be utilized in an optimal manner to open up the vast possibilities of success that they offer. This will assure our great people the capacity to develop and to integrate with a global market, which will provide Maroc with the means to occupy its place in a world that is being transformed by the "digital revolution."

King Mohammad VI,
public speech, 2002

Over the last fifteen years, Morocco's government has been steadily attempting to reshape the Muslim African nation as an "information

society” on the order of a twenty-first century modern state. As a national project, Morocco’s information society has carried out massive bureaucratic overhauls and attracted a mild scale of new financial investment. The project has also spurred the growth of a satellite-connected public sphere in the country.¹ This chapter examines how the effects of such a national project are experienced on the ground in the localities of everyday life. I argue that while the production of social space is affected by emergent technologies, the “situated moral understandings” of Muslim Morocco also impact how new technologies are understood.² We will examine how the institutionalization of new information and communication technologies at once impacts and is impacted by moral assumptions, which guide the rules and norms of social practices in the public sphere. Based on interviews, participant observation and document research, this chapter describes what I call the “technogenic” turn in Morocco. In what follows, I analyze public opinion toward new technologies in Morocco and describe the government’s efforts to develop an information and communication technology (ICT) industry. After contextualizing the conditions in which the ICT industry is growing, I offer a detailed account of how communication tools, including the World Wide Web, instant messaging and chat rooms, are employed in social practices at the local level by examining the growing presence of cybercafés in Morocco’s economic capital, Casablanca. The chapter then compares social practices in cybercafés to practices common in older café forms in Morocco. The distinctions between the older and newer types of public space articulate the technogenic quality of urban Morocco’s contemporary public sphere. As we will see, current perspectives toward technology inform the ways in which new technology tools are received and situated by social actors in the public sphere.

Toward a situated understanding of the public sphere

The public sphere, while universal in theory, is embroiled in the everyday functions of community life. Individual subjects necessarily mediate between the formation and reification of particularized social values and the experiences of cultural identity at work. The work of Seyla Benhabib

builds on the Habermasian model but produces a critical intervention by arguing for a “historically situated morality [*Sittlichkeit*] against an abstract universal morality [*Moral*].”³ Habermas cites this stance as an interpretive error. Yet it is precisely Benhabib’s insistence on the situated nature of public spheres that gives us the analytical compass necessary to engage meaningfully with the contemporary realities of modern Muslim publics. We must be able to understand the nuances, rationalizations and understandings that shape the differentiated identities of citizens who occupy the public sphere by focusing on the situated nature of everyday life. Emphasizing the civic body’s moral conscience, Benhabib argues that the negotiated sociality of the public sphere is situated in political and, as such, necessarily historic space whose form is characterized by practices and actions:

Between the basic institutions of a polity, embodying principles of the morally right, and the domain of moral interactions in the life world, in which virtue often comes to the fore, lie the civic practices and associations of a society in which individuals face one another ... as public agents in a political space.⁴

The emphasis in feminist critical theory on historically situated publics whose moral beliefs adhere differently in specific cultural and political contexts is mirrored in the interdisciplinary work of scholars concerned with modernization projects in whose realizations public spheres emerge. Scholars have argued that modernization is best understood as localized processes informed by discourses of power.⁵ This chapter adds to those studies while contributing to a growing body of work concerned with the experiential quality of the moral terrains on which Muslim social actors are affected by and inform national and local projects of social transformation.⁶

Citizens within the public sphere exist as bodies marked by categories of identification, including status, gender and class.⁷ We must consider how such marked bodies are granted or denied the right to speech and participation in the public. We are called to understand the degree to which everyday practices can be political actions, such that the production of the public sphere includes the direct pursuit of institutional

democracy as well as the development of an accessible and participatory ethos. It is this combination that precipitates the conditions of possibility for an egalitarian social body.⁸ Citizens must have not only the right to vote but also the right and the ability to participate in dialogues that create an “informed” public. Cybercafés, though they are still small in number relative to other types of public places, offer a critical new pathway for equal access to emergent modes of communication and open flows of information.

Public opinion and moral judgment of technology in Morocco

The speaker of this chapter’s first epigraph is a man named Hajj ‘Abd el-Khabir.⁹ A respected landowner and patriarch, Hajj was born in Agadir, south of Morocco, though he has lived in Casablanca for the past forty of his sixty-seven years. Since he has made the hajj to Mecca (twice no less), he is referred to by other men and appropriate family members as Hajj or Hajji.¹⁰ We met at a French-styled *salon de thé* that Hajj owns in the Maarif quarter of the city just two weeks before the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. In the year that followed, Hajj and I became friends, and I was often invited to take tea or have dinner with him surrounded by his wife, children and grandchildren in his home. Like many of the Moroccans I spoke with during that first year of what Americans now refer to as the “War on Terror,” Hajj was deeply concerned with how Morocco would be positioned globally as an African-Arab Muslim nation in a post-9/11 world. The issue of how to effectively compete in a global economy impacted by an American- and British-led war on Arab terrorists in particular was paramount. But this issue was inevitably framed by another pressing concern: how to maintain strong signs of a “Muslim Moroccan” identity while inviting modernity and economic growth.

Hajj’s perspective on technology is a succinct echo of a sentiment that I heard frequently from Moroccans. During the course of interviews with underemployed college graduates, stay-at-home mothers, esteemed professionals and uneducated members of the working poor, I was surprised by their common perspective on technological tools as moralized objects. In their view, technology is a transfer of knowledge from Allah to

humankind. When I returned to Morocco in the summer of 2007, I again heard such sentiments. At a rural wedding in the north of Morocco, for example, a group of three elders in their sixties spoke at length about the benefits of technology. As one man put it, "Technology helps us spread Islam, and the more we spread Islam with technology, the more inventions we will have for the future." What adheres in this sentiment is a moral framing of technology. The virtuous and thoughtful person is given a gift of insight to invent something; such an invention if used well and thoughtfully will yield the reward of additional inventions. Understood as the fruit of reason, technology is power for any thinking and, by implication, moral person. This is important because it means that the tools of invention can be claimed as "authentic" to Muslim Moroccan culture rather than foreign or alien. In Morocco immoral behaviors are considered to be foreign traits. In the current Moroccan milieu, individuals are not judged as cultural "traitors" for using new technologies.¹¹ Talking on a mobile phone or using a computer is not deemed "acting French" or "imitating Americans" in the way that eating *coq au vin* and wearing blue jeans are.

During the course of fieldwork in Casablanca, it became evident to me that technology is positioned in public opinion as a path to social and economic growth in Morocco. Indeed technology was a key component in people's narratives of their nation's future. As one interviewee put it: "In Morocco, we invite modernization. This is because we are not afraid of different ideas. We welcome invention. We welcome technology. We appreciate this kind of changing, but there are also limits, and we understand this as well."¹² The people I interviewed characterized technology as an industry through which Morocco could compete economically at a global scale while retaining its unique cultural identity. This perspective underscores the traction that the monarchy has gained in its project to advance the social and economic role of ICT in Morocco. While other reform projects that the Royaume has promoted have met with public resistance, the campaign to promote technology has met with no measurable opposition. In the past, public resistance has effectively stalled or radically diminished the scope of other national projects (such as the reform of the Family Law Act).¹³

Construction zone: Building a national ICT infrastructure

According to government literature and speeches, Morocco's shift to an information society is targeted for completion in the year 2010. Whether or not Morocco will hit its 2010 target of ten million "Internauts" is uncertain.¹⁴ It is clear, however, that the government has aggressively pursued the development of a durable ICT infrastructure through multiple platforms. Legislative reforms and the establishment of a regulatory agency have been key components of the national strategy. In 1997, after several years of debate, the landmark Post Office and Telecommunications Act (Law 24-96) was passed, effectively creating a legal framework for the liberalization and market growth of the telecommunications industry.¹⁵ Under the Act, the nation's impressive 100 percent digital network will continue to be improved. The Act also mandated the creation of a regulatory agency, the Agence Nationale de Règlements des Télécommunications (ANRT), which opened in March 1998. The Post and Telecommunications ministry was also restructured, creating the Secrétariat de la Poste des Télécommunications et des Technologies de l'Information (SEPTI).

The Moroccan government's intensive campaign to liberalize the telecommunications sector has meant transforming the previously state-run monopoly on communication utilities into a privatized competitive marketplace. In the mid-summer of 1999, hard work and fraught debate culminated in legislative change that brought Morocco its first successful licensing tender. Netting \$1.1 billion,¹⁶ the sale of a GSM¹⁷ operating license to the private consortium MediTelecom (Meditel) represented the most lucrative award for a GSM license ever in a developing nation. The success of the tender was indicated not only by the final bidding price but also by the transparent character of the selection process itself.¹⁸ As a multinational group, Meditel's receipt of the license was also an important signal to Moroccans regarding the nation-state's intentions to participate in a global economic framework on the road to privatization.

In 2000, the telecommunications industry in Morocco pushed further into the domain of privatization by selling 35 percent of the nationally held phone utility company. The sale of shares to Vivendi Universal netted the government over \$2.3 billion. Renamed Maroc Telecom, the

operator has become a potent symbol in the national rhetoric of successful market liberalization even as Vivendi's role in shaping the national market has become a point of contention.¹⁹ Adding to the sector's privatization process has been the growth of multinational ICT companies operating in Morocco, including Siemens, Hewlett Packard, Oracle, Dell and Microsoft. The successful privatization of the sector has required more than the cementing of lucrative monetary deals; it has also required effective and transparent oversight. To that effect the ANRT has been critical to the maintenance of reliability in the procedures for sales and licensing.²⁰

In sum, ICT developments in Morocco are due to four essential factors—democratization, market liberalization, strategic government planning and public opinion in support of development. Thus far, ICT in Morocco has been analyzed almost exclusively in relation to its role in raising the political and economic status of the country.²¹ Yet as much as forecasters and hopeful observers have wanted to emphasize ICT in Morocco as a tool for ballot box democracy or as a vehicle for economic growth, for the moment the fact is that its power rests elsewhere, on the moral terrain of daily life.

The government has made some effort to give national agencies an online presence and to provide citizens with the ability to navigate everyday bureaucratic procedures on the Internet. But it will clearly be a long time before Moroccans use the Internet to fill out government forms or to gather more than contact information on the numerous bureaucratic entities. People do use the Internet as a source of political information gathering, but its role in direct *legal* political action remains uncharted.²² Few political parties have up-to-date Web sites, and neither political speeches by independent parties nor information updates by the parties are readily accessible online. Even if these items *were* readily accessible in cyberspace, in reality there are only slightly more than four million users in a population of nearly thirty-three million people.

The primary obstacle to the use of new computer technologies in Morocco remains the high cost of owning computers and accessing the Internet, given the average household income of \$1,300 per year. Though the number of Internet users has grown from four hundred thousand in 2001 to over four million in 2007, this is still far from the goal of ten million Internauts. Mobile telephone use, meanwhile, has soared to over

twelve million people.²³ The relatively low cost of purchasing a mobile and buying phone minutes in the form of paper and plastic cards with scratch-offs for access numbers has made them exceedingly common objects in Moroccan cities. Overall, however, the country's technology sector has performed poorly, suffering harsh setbacks after the "dot-com crash" of 2001. As of this writing in 2007, overall market growth remains slow—reflecting also the global decline in the sector. Gains from the technology sector in Morocco continue to represent less than 4 percent of the annual GDP, making it a terrifically small component of the financial stability of the nation. The effects of the monarchy's attention to the development of the technology sector, however, are significant. And they are evident in very different ways than can be perceived solely by profit margins and purely quantitative measurements of political participation.

Café Casablanca: Les cybers

In his groundbreaking analysis of colonial North Africa, Franz Fanon argues that the modes and means by which people occupy space in the public sphere are prescient indicators of broader social change.²⁴ Fanon's work provides us with a history of the role played by cafés as meeting spaces and sites of cultural and political information exchange in colonial Algeria. Fanon's description of cafés as critical nodes of public social life resonates with Habermas's description of the historical role played by public cafés and salons as incubators of the eighteenth-century European bourgeois public sphere:

The predominance of the "town" was strengthened by new institutions [cafés] that, for all their variety... took over the same social functions: the coffeehouses in their golden age between 1680 and 1730 and the salons in the period between regency and revolution... were centers of criticism—literary at first, then also political.²⁵

In the Moroccan Muslim public of the twenty-first century, we find another example of cafés functioning as nodal points of social reconfiguration.²⁶ The cost of personal computers coupled with the high price of

dial-up connections (which incur phone charges as well) has precluded the building of an information nation connected from home. As sites of public leisure, *les cybers*, as the Moroccan cybercafés are called, are linked to the traditional cafés that preceded them on the city landscape.²⁷ Yet in terms of clientele, they are quite different from their predecessors. In cybercafés there is a roughly equal proportion of women to men during the daytime hours. In conventional cafés (glaciers, modern cafés, deco cafés), women make up less than 10 percent of the clientele; and in the literally thousands of cafés that fall into the category of *les cafés populaires* (traditional coffeehouses found throughout the city's neighborhoods) women are nowhere to be found. Before addressing the implications of such a radical distinction, it is important to provide an overview of the activities taking place in these Net-connected spaces. I will then discuss the ways in which cybercafés are situated in the larger network of Casablanca's older cafés and tea salons since the significance of practices like chatting, surfing and emailing can only be fully understood when placed in the context of a greater public sphere.

In the city of Casablanca, the tourist areas adjacent to the "old medina" and the commercial districts of Maarif and Gauthier have the highest density of cybercafés. The *quartiers populaires*,²⁸ home to the city's poorest residents, also house cybercafés within walking distance of markets and residential clusters. This is in contrast to upper-tier residential neighborhoods, like Polo and L'Oasis, where one likely needs to drive to find a cyber site. I would suggest that this is due to two factors. One, the mean income of residents in the upper tier allows inhabitants to afford both home computers and Internet dial-up service, thereby lessening the need for cybercafés. The second reason may be that the urban planning practices for these areas assume occupants are automobile owners, and therefore sites of public interest are more likely to be spread across greater (unwalkable) distances.

That cybercafés can be found throughout the city of Casablanca (though in greater or lesser densities, as discussed above) is indicative of their increasing presence in the public sphere. *Cybers* have been incorporated within the city's complex architectural heritage and are therefore located in a variety of building types. The most obvious cybercafé space to the pedestrian eye is in renovated former storefronts. Most of the city's

cybercafés, however, are located on the second or third floors of mixed-use residential-commercial buildings. These sites provide an interesting form of virtual domestic experience since the space is evocative of the interior structure of an apartment. While guidebooks may give tourists information on a few places to connect, residents are privy through word of mouth to the whereabouts of the numerous other *cybers* nestled into mixed-use buildings throughout the city's neighborhoods.

Cybercafés in Casablanca all share certain interior features, but the décor varies depending on the type of space in which they are located. Storefront *cybers* and those in renovated apartment units often have bright fluorescent lighting that conjures a sterilized environment similar to what one might find in a university computer lab. Other *cybers*, housed in re-outfitted underground garages or (more rare) standalone buildings, tend to have "mood" lighting, creating a lounge aura more akin to the mellow ambience of traditional coffeehouses.²⁹ Almost all cybercafés post signs to indicate their hours of operation and the price of services. This is also distinct from the norm in traditional coffeehouses, where hours of operation are rarely indicated.³⁰ By looking at a sign on the wall, an Internaut can learn the fee per half hour (5 dirham) or per hour (7–10 dh)³¹ and the price penalty for going five minutes past a half or full hour of use.

The furniture in *cybers* is typically reminiscent of business offices or professional school computer centers that have small cubicle partitions mounted on desktops. Chairs are notoriously uncomfortable, often lacking any semblance of a cushion. Aside from computers, desks and chairs, there is very little else in the way of furnishings. While *cybers* do not have staffed coffee bars, many do have soda machines, and some also have vending machines that dispense hot drinks like Nescafé cappuccinos and lattes into Styrofoam cups. None of the *cybers* I visited had any of the options for snacks or teas that one finds in traditional cafés.

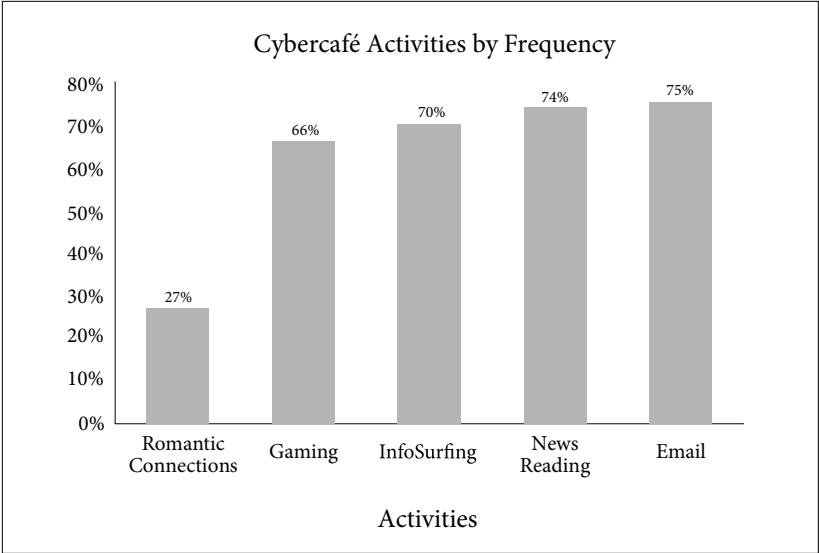
Despite this apparent sterility, however, the overall atmosphere of the *cybers* is made buoyant by the Internauts, who engage each other as much as they do the computers before them. Though visitors to *cybers* spend at least half their café time facing forward at computer screens, there is a great deal of socializing between visitors. Cybergoers often come to a café in pairs or groups. It is not uncommon to see two or three people

at one station accessing various programs and online experiences. In such instances, users interact a great deal with each other. When friends sit at separate terminals, there is somewhat less interaction, but frequent casual exchanges continue. Onsite users also interact to play online games and share information on how to use programs and software. Rather than rooms filled with silent screen-staring Internauts, *cybers* are alive with the sounds of conversation as animated users communicate either with their immediate neighbor or with remote friends with whom they are digitally linked.

In addition to recording the habits of users and conducting interviews with Internauts in Casablanca, I also conducted a public opinion survey. The survey was carried out with the gracious help of Casablancon research assistants and took place over a period of four months in 2001. Survey forms were offered to people at twelve designated locations in the city. Six of the sites were cybercafés located in socio-economically distinct quarters. The other six sites, selected by my research assistant Mohammad Igouch, were public sites without computers, including teleboutiques, hair salons and traditional cafés. Gathering survey results from both wired and “unwired” sites allowed the “public” to remain defined as Moroccan residents, rather than Moroccan Internauts. Overall, two hundred survey forms were filled out. Together with other forms of field data, the surveys provide us with a comprehensive portrait of activities occurring in *cybers*.

The majority of survey respondents who utilize the Internet at *cybers* do so for multiple purposes, including online chatting, email, dating, news reading, Web surfing and linked gaming.³² The typical Moroccan Internaut has learned to make use of extensive downtime, a result of tediously slow network connections. While a page loads its information, the user will revert to one of several other open pages on the desktop, whether other Internet pages or desktop programs, such as Microsoft Word and Excel (used by 71 percent and 58 percent of Internet and new media users respectively).³³ Multitasking allows Internauts to make full use of the connection minutes they pay for. One can find students doing homework in one window and chatting in another.

When Moroccan Internauts plug into the virtual realm, they engage in social exchanges at global, regional and local levels. The popularity of



reading open-access news reports on the Internet is but one indicator of ICT's ability to reconfigure the communicative flow of regional, national and global information into and out of a localized public sphere. Of those surveyed, 64 percent of Internauts spend time communicating with friends and family who live abroad. National statistics on the destination countries of Moroccan émigrés are mirrored in the numbers of Internauts who go online to connect with people in Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada, France and the United States. This is not only a means of staying in touch with those who have left Morocco but also a way to initiate or maintain relationships of business, friendship and courtship.

If the virtual realm fosters communication between actors located across the globe, it also lends itself well to unprecedented types of exchanges between social actors living within the same locale. In Casablanca, cybercafés have become sites in which people socialize in a variety of ways with other city dwellers. As mentioned above, Internauts often visit cybercafés with friends in tow. *Cybers* are also the meeting point for younger cybergoers in particular (aged 14–25). The city's upper-level primary students and college students increasingly use cybercafés as meeting sites for study groups. Often, in addition to socializing, students exchange skills during their visits, helping each other with everything from language translations to software applications.

Two other important socializing activities that result from onsite meet-ups warrant brief exploration: dating and gaming. A growing number of *cybers* offer dedicated stations for action games, and during my field research, it was becoming quite popular among young men to rendezvous in cybercafés for the purpose of competing in networked gaming. I had been in the field for a little over a month when I started to pay attention to this phenomenon. It was just a few days after 11 September 2001, and I was sitting at an individual terminal in a Casablancon *cyber* called Twin's Net sending email messages to friends and family in New York City. Suddenly, someone yelled, "Osama!!! Osama!!!" and imitated the sounds of a machine gun firing. The person yelling had just shot the terrorist in an online military style "shooter" game in which players start off with machine guns and acquire additional arms by killing terrorists at large, thereby gaining points to purchase more munitions and weaponry and to win the game. Because a hefty bounty had been placed on the head of Osama bin Laden in the wake of the 11 September attacks, the Moroccan gamers made a common joke of declaring they had killed the online "Osama" and that they deserved immediate payment of the reward money. This convergence of real world events with virtual play paints an unexpected scene of dissonance in which young Muslim males find amusement in posing as virtual American military men and killing onscreen Arab terrorists.

The gaming area is the only space in cybercafés where one finds gender segregation. In areas where the typical cubicles are located (without linked gaming capabilities), men and women can be seen sitting side by side, but the gaming area is exclusively male. During the mid-morning and late afternoon hours, however, when many of the young men who make up the gaming groups are at school, the gaming tables are used by both men and women for a different purpose: Internet telephone calls. The introduction of software like Skype has made it possible to call friends over the Internet at cybercafés. When I conducted fieldwork in 2001–2002, Skype was only installed at a few *cybers* (usually in the gaming area, which sometimes resulted in a battle for territory between gamers and callers). When I returned in the summer of 2007, however, virtually every cyber I visited had Skype activated on computer desktops and provided headsets for phone calls and multimedia use. Sometimes people use

Skype not for long distance but to call friends in the same city since it is much less expensive than mobile or fixed-line use.

Another form of this localized exchange is “onsite cyberdating.” The expression refers to a popular form of public dating in Casablanca whereby two people meet at a cybercafé for the purpose of seeing each other even though they do not sit next to each other. Instead they are located at different terminal points in the room. During such onsite dates, a couple is free to express their most intimate feelings through computer-aided chat rooms. The rapid growth of the Moroccan population has produced a demographic in which over 65 percent of the population is under the age of 35. This fact, coupled with widespread unemployment and underemployment, has created a new generation of men and women who find themselves unable to afford moving into marital apartments or homes—a prerequisite for marriage, particularly in urban Morocco. The average age of marriage since 1980 has risen from 17 to 24 for women, and among men it is not uncommon to find bachelors well into their thirties. As a result, an unprecedented number of adult men and women find themselves unmarried in a culture that recognizes only two legitimate conditions of sexuality—virgin status and marital status. Dating as a social practice among men and women remains an illegitimate form of sociality. In a public where the sight of “boyfriends and girlfriends” holding hands while out on a date is anathema to normal standards of social practice, onsite dating practices in *cybers* provide a valuable space of privacy enacted in a public setting.³⁴

From this brief exploration of social practices in cybercafés, from gaming and casual conversations between people at terminals to onsite cyberdating, it is apparent that they provide the public with unprecedented means of socializing and gathering information. In such practices physical disembodiment is only part of the innovated social experience occurring in the technogenic moment. Cybergoers do use digital channels to expand their social networks and participate in information flows in a global arena. At the same time, rich forms of social exchange between *embodied* actors on the ground are an integral feature of sociality in *cybers*. The kinds of localized social exchanges taking place in ICT access sites suggest that the abstract notion of an “information society” manifests itself in situated social practices.

Comparing social spaces in the public sphere

Cybercafés are contemporary additions to an existing network of thousands of traditional public cafés, which occupy a central place in the biography of Morocco. The first rudimentary cafés arrived in the North African country shortly after the introduction of Arab and Persian purveyors of Islam in the seventh century. With the spread of Islam and the growth of trade routes from the Sahara to the heart of the Middle East, coffee stalls became dependable areas of respite during the journey. From there, cafés spread into towns and rural outposts. In the late nineteenth century, when European immigration to Morocco began to increase dramatically, another style of café was introduced to the country. The institutionalization of French rule in 1912 saw yet another wave of historic transformation in the role and uses of Moroccan cafés. Like the growth of cafés in previous periods, the spread of cybercafés in the twenty-first century is symptomatic of historic transformations afoot in the public sphere. These changes are thrown into relief by comparing *cybers* to conventional cafés in Casablanca.

The vast majority of Casablanca's traditional cafés can be separated into two genres, *les cafés populaires* and thematic cafés. Thematic cafés range from *glaciers*—ice-cream cafés—and high modern espresso salons to French Baroque spaces. What distinguishes the *cafés populaires* from thematic cafés is in part the stylized atmospheres of the latter. *Cafés populaires* heavily outnumber all types of thematic cafés and are by far the most common form of coffeehouse in Moroccan cities. When viewed from the street, thematic cafés appear to be populated almost exclusively by men; though if one enters and goes up to the second floor or to the back, it is possible to see a few young women either in groups or with a male companion. Women's place in thematic cafés is literally relegated to small corners and is also, as we will see, highly contested. In the *cafés populaires*, there simply are no women. These sites maintain a "traditional" moral order by enforcing gender segregation.³⁵ Here one will always find a steady stream of conversation, a waiter ready to take your order, a droning television and a cluster of clientele—made up of men only.

Cafés populaires essentially function as privatized domains of masculinity within the public sphere. They are imbued with the colloquial

comfort of domesticity, acting as a peculiar kind of living room in which the gender heterogeneity of domestic spaces is usurped by the male's right to socialize publicly. Men *and* women I interviewed said that women who visited coffeehouses risked social stigmatization. When pressed for an explanation, a common response was that women in conventional cafés were assumed to be prostitutes. Men in particular justified this perception by their assertion that none of the activities in a café could be of interest to a woman and therefore her purpose could only be suspect. Abdellah Kacemi, a 36-year-old engineer, put it this way:

There is no other reason for [women] to be [in the coffee-house]. When you see them you know that they are just coming [to the coffeehouse] to find a man to pay them money. For men, we have a reason to be here. We are talking with our friends, seeing the sports matches. A lot of times we are making honest business. But the women are just coming here because they are looking for men to pay them something.³⁶

This succinct explanation is thick with meaning. The speaker describes several usual activities, including social conversations, making deals and watching sports. Other essential café activities are reading the newspaper, watching the news on satellite-broadcast-linked televisions, debating political issues and networking with friends, family members and coworkers. The essential element is what makes these activities meaningful to men, and that is the atmosphere of camaraderie found in Casablanca's traditional cafés. Women who choose to enter an atmosphere of camaraderie among men risk permanently damaging their reputations.

The women in my study negotiated the risk of demeaned social status either by refraining from visiting traditional cafés altogether or limiting themselves to the occasional rendezvous at thematic cafés in neighborhoods far from their own to diminish the chances of being "caught" or "discovered" in the apparently shameful act of *leisuring* in the public sphere. In the past two decades numerous legislative changes have enabled Moroccan women to gain equal access to education and participate in increasing numbers in the workforce. Yet the role of women as public actors remains controversial and beholden to moralized beliefs. In practice this means that women can be seen walking through the streets

of Casablanca on their way to or from somewhere, but one does not find many women *leisureing* in the public sphere. Certain public spaces, such as hair salons and restaurants, are endorsed as long as women are behind screens or darkened windows. Women are certainly found walking through the streets, but stopping is not an option. For example, while it is usual to see any number of men along pedestrian routes who have stopped to smoke a cigarette or converse with friends, the same cannot be said of women. While women can be seen streaming in and out of the schools, businesses, shops and government buildings adjacent to the Parc de la Ligue Arabe, for instance, it is for the most part only men who stop to linger in the sprawling park itself.³⁷

In a context where types of public spaces are limited and those that exist are subject to gendered boundaries of participation, emergent sites of sociability with an alternative logic of access, such as cybercafés, take on magnified importance. *Cybers* provide women with unprecedented equal access to new and autonomous modes of communication. The masculine hegemony of Muslim Casablanca's public face, so starkly evident in the dominant traditional cafés, is overridden in the gender dynamics of *cybers*, where women represent between 30 and 53 percent of consumers at any given time.³⁸ It is clear that the customary moral judgment of women's presence in cafés is suspended.

There are, however, limits to this suspension. When night swallows the city shortly before the last call to prayer, segregation is reinforced. By the late-night hours of 9:30–11 p.m. (11 p.m. being when *cybers* generally close), the predominantly male constitution of the traditional cafés is in full force at *cybers* as well. The actualization of an egalitarian space during the day and its disappearance at night shows us in practical terms how the moral terrain of urban Morocco expands and contracts its normative textures when threads of the information age are woven into the public. I suggest that it is the presence of technology, marking *cybers* as sites of potential knowledge-building, that enables women to access them without the stigma that comes from accessing sites deemed as solely public leisure spaces. While females continue to struggle for entry into public sites of leisure, their presence in institutions of learning is roughly equal to that of males. A space then that is understood as a site in which one can acquire additional skills and knowledge becomes open—to a degree—to

occupation by women. This is true even though much of what occurs in *cybers* is specifically social leisure. Just as the streets of Casablanca that are filled with women during the day (on their way to and from places) become absolutely devoid of women after dark, so too do cybercafés lose the presence of women at night. The perception of *cybers* as sites of knowledge building is not enough to overwhelm the existing unwritten prohibition on the presence of women outside in the city after nightfall.

In this chapter we have seen that infusing an existing space (the traditional café) with the tools of new technologies and creating a hybrid space (the cybercafé) alters the texture of the public sphere's rules of participation. In and of themselves the spaces created by ICT do not threaten any normatively held values. On the contrary, the flourishing of cybercafés coincides with popular beliefs and moralized perspectives on technology. It is precisely the nature of technology's consistency with existing moral beliefs that establishes an opening through which the rules of participation are expanded and the moral terrain of public life becomes slightly altered in an irrevocable manner.

Afterword

On 11 March 2007, the stakes involved in the access to information and communication flows in Morocco were declared in a deeply saddening and unexpected manner. A young Moroccan man was asked to leave a cybercafé because he was using his computer to access *jihādī* Web sites. The man had in fact been attempting to use the Internet to confirm the details necessary to carry out suicide bombings on sites in Casablanca. A skirmish ensued between the café owner, the young man and three other men accompanying him. The backpack detonated, killing the young man and wounding four others in the process.

This event calls to the foreground the issue of democratic participation, which is challenged when "open access" is utilized for violent subversion. Further, it indicates the divergent forms of information and communication for which technologies are put to use. We have seen that Internauts use ICT tools to expand social networks locally and globally, read news, chat and play games. Most of the activities engaged in by men

and women in *cybers* open up the mainstream public sphere and expand the conditions of possibility for the formation of civil society. *Cybers* gently push the limits of the moral terrain of society by creating spaces of desegregated sociability and by generally expanding the types of information and modes of communication available to Moroccans. At the same time, they are sites in which socially subversive forms of exchange can take place. The cybercafé, as a theoretically autonomous space of open access, is subject to practices that do not just push boundaries but rather directly cut against the normative texture of the public sphere. While *jihādī* activities are not perceptibly widespread among Moroccan Internauts, they nonetheless gesture to the complex obstacles facing the formation of a uniquely Moroccan public sphere defined by rights of access and participation that are mediated by social understandings of a moral public.

Notes

1. To contextualize the etymology and use of the term “Muslim public sphere,” see in particular Mehdi Abedi and Michael Fischer, “Etymologies,” *Public Culture* 1 (1993): 219–233; Jon Anderson and Dale Eickelman, “Media Convergence and Its Consequences,” *Middle East Insight* 2 (1999): 59–61; and Farah Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).
2. Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992).
3. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 253.
4. Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, 110.
5. John P. Entelis, ed., *Islam, Democracy, and the State in North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Akbar Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* (New York: Penguin, 1992).
6. Michael M. J. Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Amyn Sajoo, *Muslim Ethics: Emerging Vistas* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Saba Mahmood, “Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt,” *Social Research* 70, no. 3, Special Issue on Islam: The Public and Private Spheres (Fall 2003): 837–866; Susan Ossman, *Picturing Casablanca: Portraits of Power in a Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (London: KPI Publishing, 1997).
7. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 109–142; James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

8. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997); Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion* (London: Routledge, 1995); Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).
9. As an American researcher working in the field during the first year of the American-led “global war on terror,” a necessary component of gaining people’s trust was to guarantee their anonymity in published articles. All names in this article have therefore been changed.
10. It is incumbent upon every Muslim with physical and financial capacity to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at some point in their lifetime. This pilgrimage is called the hajj. Completing the journey to Mecca and the performance of rituals during the hajj warrants the bestowal of Hajj on participants upon their return home.
11. I would argue that the perception of technology in contemporary Morocco has its roots in the role that the modern reform movement, which began in the late nineteenth century, played in the country’s indigenous political and religious landscape throughout French occupation and into the first decade of postcolonialism. The father of the reform movement, Egyptian-born Mohammad ‘Abduh, characterized invention as part of science, declaring that “God’s wisdom may be fulfilled and the order of the human world preserved; and to prove that, seen in this light, religion must be accounted a friend to science, pushing man to investigate the secrets of existence summoning him to respect established truths and to depend on them in his moral life and conduct.” Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), 308.
12. This quote is taken from one of several interviews with a friend and informant, Mahjoud Khachai, an unemployed journalist in his forties. While some interviews were conducted in Dreeja (Moroccan Arabic) and French, this particular quote was offered in English by Mahjoud, who speaks five different languages in all.
13. Shortly after the introduction of the Family Law Reform Act in 2000, a piece of legislation spearheaded by Mohammad VI, there was a small march in Rabat by 20,000 supporters of the bill. In Casablanca, however, over 200,000 Moroccan men and women filled the streets with signs and shouts of protest against the bill. The legislation—in a severely

modified form—was finally passed in 2004. For further discussion of public perceptions of new technologies in Morocco, see Bahíyyih Maroon, “Mobile Sociality in Morocco,” in *The Cell Phone Reader: Essays in Social Transformation*, edited by A. P. Kavoori and N. Arceneaux (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006). As the focus of this article is on practical uses, I have limited my discussion of public opinion.

14. “Internaut” is the term commonly applied in Morocco to people who use the Internet. It sometimes also refers to people who simply use computers. The government and media use this term just as average citizens do. In newspapers, including *al-Ittihad al-Ishtiraki*, *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* and *L’Opinion*, as well as magazines, such as *Tel Quel* and *Jeune Afrique*, one finds frequent references to Internauts. The title of a 2002 government-sponsored conference on promoting Internet use was “10 Million Internauts in 2010: How?” I follow this tendency by employing the term “Internaut” throughout this essay.
15. The Act clarifies the procedures for privatization of the sector by carefully detailing the requirements for licensing telecommunications operators. Under the Act, operators seeking to offer services in Morocco must participate in fair market practices and transparent operating procedures. Further, operators are obligated to maintain the technological standards in existence.
16. All financial figures in this text are in USD unless otherwise indicated.
17. GSM is short for Global System for Mobile Communication.
18. International Telecommunication Union, “Effective Regulation Case Study: Morocco,” 2001, http://www.itu.int/itudoc/gs/promo/bdt/cast_reg/79125.pdf (accessed August 2004).
19. When the second line license was held back in 2001, critics pointed to the role of the chief officer of the government agency SEPTI, Nassr Hajji, who also sits on the board of Maroc Telecom. Since Maroc Telecom’s primary stock holder, Vivendi Universal, was reeling from falling stock prices at that time, many suggested that the withdrawal of the second tender was in part due to its potential inability to weather the entrance of a direct competitor. By the time the tender was launched again, the telecommunications market had suffered dramatic losses globally, and the possibility of a successful sale was essentially closed out.
20. While ANRT officials are prohibited from owning interest in the telecom corporations, members of Morocco’s SEPTI are active shareholders in the

- industry. The conflict of interest among SEPTI officials has resulted in an ongoing controversy and a great deal of animosity between the two oversight bodies. International and national opinions on the matter generally recognize the greater contribution of ANRT to Morocco's success.
21. Reports on the development of ITC in Morocco include the International Telecommunication Union Report (2001); Mohammed Ibrahine, "Toward a National Telecommunication Strategy in Morocco," *First Monday* 1 (2003), http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue9_1/ibahrine/index.html (accessed August 2004); Mohammed El-Mandjra, *Dialog of Intercommunication: Towards a Just Information Society* (Casablanca: al-Najah al-Jadida, 2001); and Agence Nationale de Réglementation des Télécommunications (ANRT), *The Moroccan Telecommunications Sector: Key Indicators* (Rabat: ANRT, 2004), <http://www.anrt.ma> (accessed May 2005).
 22. The use of the Internet to organize terrorist actions in the city of Casablanca came to the fore on 11 March 2007, when a suicide bomber detonated explosives in a cybercafé after using a computer in the café to gain details and instructions over the Internet for bombings to be carried out in the city.
 23. International Telecommunication Union Report 2001, 2007.
 24. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1965).
 25. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 33.
 26. There are several studies that complement or extend the work of Jürgen Habermas in detailing the role of cafés in cultural transformations. Among these are Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985); Andre Levy, "Playing for Control of Distance: Card Games between Jews and Muslims on a Casablancon Beach," *American Ethnologist* 3 (2000): 632–653; and William Roseberry, "The Rise of Yuppie Coffees and the Reimagination of Class in the United States," *American Anthropologist* 4 (1997): 762–775.
 27. Throughout this essay I use the terms "cyber" and "cybercafé" interchangeably to refer to Internet-connected cafés with computer terminals for rent by the hour. It should be pointed out as well that as public spaces for private communication practices, cybercafés are linked to another type of space found throughout Moroccan cities, the *téléboutique*. Though increasingly

struggling to stay in business amidst the rise of mobile telephony, *téléboutiques* were until recently popular sites for people to place private phone calls outside the home. I offer this bit of information to suggest that overlaps with adaptive procedures are evident in previous cycles of innovation in communication technologies.

28. *Les quartiers populaires*—the popular quarters—is a term applied to the lower class and impoverished neighborhoods within Moroccan cities.
29. While the city's traditional coffeehouses are decidedly not smoke-free environments, some cybercafés have designated smoke-free rooms, and a few prohibit smoking altogether.
30. I suggest that this differential is indicative of a complex resituating of time, from the "moral time" of the movement of the sun, which signifies the call to prayer, to "postindustrial time," during which minutes are monetarily monitored.
31. At the time of research, these prices were comparable to \$0.70–\$1. Prices are averages based on observation in Casablancon cafés and reconfirmed by statistics in the 2002 ANRT survey.
32. One notable contrast between the survey results I collected in Casablanca and those gathered by ANRT's countrywide survey is in terms of Web research. In ANRT's study only 4 percent of end-users used the Internet for Web-based research. By contrast over 70 percent of Internet users responding to my survey said they engage in Web research or "infosurfing" when they go online.
33. ANRT 2002 survey findings.
34. Disapproval of public affection holds generally true across class boundaries, but there is much greater flexibility among upper class and elite Moroccans regarding boundaries of sexuality and sexual expression. The greater latitude accorded to upper class women among their peers to dress in form-fitting clothing or to go out to nightclubs, for example, is condemned by middle and lower classes as acting "French" or "European." What makes the *cyber* a critical site of individual agency is that it provides a public space in which lower class women can and do participate in activities normally reserved (in the public imaginary) for their upper class counterparts.
35. My use of the word "tradition" is by no means intended to present Moroccan Islam as a historically closed canon but rather to indicate a practiced tradition of gender segregation. To qualify the term I turn to Albert

Hourani, preeminent historian of Muslim cultures, who writes that “what is called tradition [in Islam] ... was not unchanging; it was following its own path at its own pace.” Hourani, *A History of The Arab Peoples*, 311. Indeed, history reveals a persistent interrogation of the meaning of tradition in Muslim cultures. The questioning of tradition emerges forcefully and is the very agent that unsettles submission to one specific definition of Muslim society. There is no paradox in the recognition that tradition constitutes an unfixed site of multiple significations with often conflicting interpretations of meaning. See also Lawrence Rosen, *The Culture of Islam: Changing Aspects of Contemporary Muslim Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (London and New York: KPI Publishing, 1997).

36. Quoted from an interview with a 36-year-old professional Casablančan. Interview conducted in French, February 2002. Author's translation.
37. Class plays a central role in defining women's place in the public sphere. It is not uncommon to see small clusters of destitute women sitting on curbsides in shopping districts begging for money or offering services as day maids. The presence of these impoverished women adds further to the stigma against public loitering for women of other classes to the degree that those women who beg money and attempt to gain work by barraging passersby with queries are looked down upon by other tiers of society. Although these women are not *leisuring*, the stigma attached to their presence is applied likewise to those women who would seek to *leisure* in parks or café terraces for example.
38. This statistic is based on 300 hours of observation of spatial behaviors in cybercafés throughout the city. Observation logs were maintained on fourteen cybercafés in different neighborhoods. The general makeup of the public in these cybercafés was recorded, such as gender, collective or individual arrivals, meeting practices upon arrival and so forth. Although other studies of Moroccan cybercafés have asserted that men utilize the sites more than women, this is not borne out by the data I collected. The number of women in *cybers* does tend to decrease during the lunch hour and late at night (between 8:30 and 11:30 p.m.); during other hours of observation, however, there appeared to be equitable gender representation. Studies reliant solely on survey data without observation components may employ methodological procedures that undermine comprehensive results.

Weblogistan: The Emergence of a New Public Sphere in Iran

Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi

Every day, Internet users around the world challenge, question and even dismantle different types of authorities, institutions and beliefs.¹ Virtual actions can thus have an important impact in the physical world and are particularly significant in countries where people are living under political, religious, or socio-cultural constraints and repression. In democratic societies, people have almost the same rights of expression in virtual spaces as they do in physical spaces; thus, filtering and censorship by governments are generally not practiced, although there are always limits regarding issues deemed highly controversial and/or illegal, such as child pornography, criminality or terrorism. In countries where public spaces are controlled and monitored by conservative and restrictive cultural and/or political forces, cyberspace provides a means to circumvent the restrictions imposed on these spaces and may in turn become more “real” for users than physical public spaces. Due to the absence of the body and of face-to-face relationships, as well as the possibility of hiding one’s real identity, cyberspace becomes in many of these countries an important space for self-expression, communication and information—three aspects of life that are limited and monitored under authoritarian states. Of course, cyberspace—like physical space—can also be limited by governments or by customs, traditions and religion; but this censorship and control is neither absolute nor exhaustive because of the nature of the technology, the technological competence of youth, and the diverse possibilities specific to the Internet.

In Iran, after the Iranian Revolution and the official project of the Islamization of society, people (especially women and youth) had to adapt their presence and their public representations according to the “must” and “must not” of the controlling Islamic forces. At the same time, intellectuals, journalists, and artists had to practice stronger self-censorship, especially until 1997, when the reformist president Mohammad Khatami came to power. With the arrival of the Internet in the lives of the urban middle class in the late 1990s, and particularly with its expansion after 2001 when the Unicode system made typing in Persian possible, these individuals could compensate for some of their privations, needs and aspirations in the “free” space of the Internet. In early 2000, the first Iranian news Web sites were created to circumvent state controls over traditional media sources, rendering the Internet an important information resource in Iran.² For young people, their initial attraction to the Internet was to overcome the restrictions on cross-gender interactions in physical public spaces. Online, they could interact and find new friends and communities through emails, instant messaging, chatrooms, and forums.

Over time, the Internet became cheaper and easier to use, making it more popular and accessible for different strata of urban middle-class Iranians. With 32 million Internet users and 48 percent penetration as of September 2009, Iran constitutes 56 percent of all Internet users in the Middle East and has the fastest-growing concentration of Internet users in the region.³ Today, one of the most important environments in Iranian cyberspace (politically, socially, culturally and personally) is the Iranian blogosphere known as Weblogestan. The first Persian-language weblog was created in September 2001 by Salman Jariri.⁴ Two months later, with the arrival of the Unicode system, Hossein Derakhshan,⁵ a young Iranian journalist, published the first online weblog guide in Persian, which motivated other Iranians to blog. In less than a year, weblog writing exploded in Iran; in 2003, Persian was the fourth most used language in the world’s blogosphere after English, French and Portuguese.⁶ With the expansion of weblog writing throughout the globe, Persian today no longer has the same rank in the world blogosphere. However, despite the Iranian government’s significant filtering, the Iranian blogosphere remains one of the most important public spheres and popular environments in Iranian cyberspace; people can express themselves, interact, exchange opinions,

and even sometimes create new social movements that can have significant consequences in the physical world.

Internet and weblog writing became a tool of empowerment for youth and women, as well as for intellectuals, journalists, artists, ex-politicians and other marginalized social groups. For youth, this empowerment begins with a redefinition of the self through the consolidation of new identities and the exercise of self-expression because many of them believe that their “real/true” identities have been “lost/repressed/hidden” in Iran’s public spaces. Women use weblogs to voice their frustrations, needs and interests on a personal and social level. Intellectuals, journalists and artists see the opportunity to create a new public sphere where they express themselves, interacting and exchanging their points of view with their publics inside and outside Iran. These new bodiless selves form new communities and contribute to the emergence of a new public sphere that had been absent in Iranian physical spaces.

Appearance and performance in post-revolutionary Iran

Until recently, self-narration in public (such as autobiography) was unheard of in Iranian culture. According to Michael Craig Hillman, “in 1980, the novelist and literary critic Reza Barahani reacted to a biographical sketch of himself by worrying that its review of political issues in his life might jeopardize his academic career, if not his political freedom... In other words, specifically Iranian concerns about the reaction of family, friends, neighbors, and society at large play a not insignificant role in the attitude of writers when it comes to telling the story of a writer’s life.”⁷ This concern is especially acute for women, who have almost always been subject to the observation and judgment of others about their decency and their reputation. For centuries, women have hidden their lives and their inner selves [*Bāten*] behind walls, veils, appearances [*Zāher*] and performances to stay safe according to ‘urf [conventions] and to shari’a [religious law].⁸ After the Islamic Revolution it was no longer sufficient to hide the “inner self”; people also had to learn how to perform their public selves in different situations and spaces according to newly imposed norms. Particularly during the first two decades of the Islamic republic

(before Khatami came to power), in reaction to the Western and modern culture promulgated under the Shah, public spaces were highly desexualized, de-Westernized, and regulated by religious and revolutionary norms.

At first, in the summer of 1980, the hijab was made obligatory only in government and public offices; then, three years later, in April 1983, veiling became compulsory for all women, including for non-Muslims, foreigners and tourists. Along with the mandatory hijab, a complex set of Islamic performances and new patterns of predetermined social roles based on Islamic and “traditional” values in terms of body language, speech, and codes of interaction, especially in relations with members of the opposite sex, were implemented by the moral police.⁹ Interactions with government institutions necessitated a specific model of self-presentation. Men were required to wear three-day facial stubble and long-sleeved shirts buttoned to the neck. Women had to appear without any makeup in a black *chādor* or dark-colored *manteau* [long coat] and *maqna’eh* [a headscarf] that covers the neck and shoulders.¹⁰ The newly-formed moral police appropriated patriarchal authority and became the guardians of the morality of Iranian families and especially of women and youth.

Despite all these impositions, Iranian women and youth have been able to introduce major and irreversible changes in their situation, by affecting small and seemingly unimportant, yet continuous changes in their appearance, demeanor, and social presence. These changes have ultimately changed dominant models of self-presentation and led to new and spontaneous forms. In the early 1990s after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, different kinds of hijab gradually appeared, changing the dark image of urban public spaces. Although the chador remained the “better hijab” [*hejāb-e bartar*] for most traditional, religious or government employees, other women opted for more colorful and relaxed scarves and the *manteau*. The presence of this new kind of hijab along with the traditional ones became a kind of social distinction and public expression for Iranian women from different milieus.

Nilüfer Göle, discussing the new trend of veiling among young Turkish girls, notes how the Islamic dress code can influence the way that the body occupies space:

The veiling is not only just covering the head; it indicates a way of behavior, which is called to be more modest, more pure—Puritan maybe—which means you limit your presence in public life. For instance, the way you look at people. You have to cast down the eyes. The way your body occupies the space in public. That means you shouldn't be too loud—laughing, for instance. So it means a way of behaving, more modest behavior. It comes from *hija*, meaning being more cautious, being more modest. So I think it's not only just a kind of dress code, but a dress code which indicates a set of manners, bodily manners, in relation to the other sex, but in relation also to public behavior.¹¹

To move more freely in post-revolutionary Iran, youth and women have learned how to negotiate appropriate appearance and conduct in diverse public and private settings through the use of multiple behavioral strategies.

New forms of expression have emerged alongside these strategies of appearance, and women and youth have become more outspoken in public spaces. Paradoxically, the desexualization of public spaces has liberated many women from the prohibitions imposed by their families and provided them with the opportunity to enter public spaces, university or work. Azadeh Kian-Thiébaud argues that the emergence of a new form of individualization among women and youth, their resistance to forced Islamization, their aspiration to modernity and their demands for social, political and cultural rights may indicate the weakening of patriarchal order in both public and private spheres.¹²

At the same time, the need to use a set of complex and multiple performance strategies to move freely in post-revolutionary Iran has provoked a gradual identity crisis, especially among Iranian youth. Furthermore, middle class youth in the mid-1990s had access to opportunities for wider contact with the world, especially through satellite TV and then the Internet. Through these new technologies, and broader relationships with the world (through the Iranian diaspora in contact with family in Iran), new models of self-presentation were created that were in complete contradiction with the Islamic and docile models presented by the Islamic republic.

In light of these contradictions, for many youth the main questions became: Who am I? What do I want? If I were somewhere else, how would I live? How would I dress? With whom would I associate? In the spaces of my daily life, to what extent am I “myself”?

The permanence of a “transient” public space and the emergence of Iranian cyberspace

The election of the reformist president Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005) occurred almost simultaneously with the arrival of the new technology into the lives of Iranians. Both events provided new horizons for an emerging civil society that surfaced gradually after the Iran-Iraq war with the creation of new public spaces and public spheres.

The political dictatorship of the Shah before the Islamic Revolution, and the monitored public spaces after the revolution, did not allow for the emergence of a permanent public sphere in Iran. Furthermore, under both regimes, radio, television, and the leading newspapers were under the complete control of the state. During the Shah’s rule, religious and traditional networks and “small media,” such as photocopied leaflets and audiocassettes of the Ayatollah Khomeini’s speeches played a role in popular mobilization.¹³ After the revolution, and especially during the Iran-Iraq war, religious networks lost their “democratic” characteristics and became part of the voice of the revolutionary authority. Many public spaces, including cinemas, theaters, cafés and restaurants, and art galleries, were closed down. Public life, leisure and cultural activities were transferred into the private spaces of homes.¹⁴

With the end of the Iran-Iraq war, and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the situation has changed slightly. The arrival of Hashemi-Rafsanjani to power and especially the new socio-cultural and urban policies of the mayor of Tehran, Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi (1990–1998), encouraged citizens to come out from behind closed doors. The most important goals of the new municipal leadership were, first, to bring people back into public spaces, making them more visible and controllable, and second, to diminish the socio-cultural and urban gap between the North (rich and modern) and South (poor and traditional), despite widening

economic inequality between rich and poor. An activist socio-cultural and physical policy was thus implemented to homogenize the capital, with significant investment in the construction of new highways, urban infrastructure, cultural centers, parks and other public spaces, especially in southern and central Tehran (Amir-Ebrahimi 2004). From these new public spaces/public spheres, new social actors gradually emerged who would later become the main agents of change in the political sphere, stimulating the reform movement that culminated in Khatami's presidency in 1997.

Furthermore, the open policy of Mohammad Khatami as Minister of Guidance (1989–1992) allowed the publication of several alternative and critical newspapers and magazines, such as *Salam*, *Hamshahri*, *Kian* or *Gardoon*, some of which became the most important platforms for critics and later came into conflict with the state. By 1992, the number of Iranian newspapers had risen by about fifty percent, reaching 274.¹⁵

Even though these new public spheres and spaces remained transient due to the political pressure and limitations of conservative forces, it seems that the experience of “homeopathic” doses of relative freedom could not be eradicated from the everyday life of people who found new ways of expression and interactions.

With the election of Mohammad Khatami to the presidency in 1997, public spaces became more stable. Tensions visibly decreased, and the moral police relaxed their control of streets and public spaces. Cultural and artistic centers became important places for gathering and discussing many issues. Critical reformist newspapers emerged by the hundreds; and if conservatives found a pretext one day to ban some of them, they were republished the next day under a different name. NGOs also emerged during this period, which represented a time of new and exciting possibilities for forming a public sphere where different groups could express their opinions. None of these spaces and groups could last long, as they were constantly threatened and confined by conservatives and Islamist forces, but they did not disappear from the public scene, and they constantly reemerged at new opportunities. As Hossein Shahidi writes:

Iran's history has been characterized by repeated political convulsions that have led to the creation of a “short-term society,” without the opportunity to accumulate sufficient material and moral wealth for the well-being of all its citizens. As far as

journalism is concerned, the past quarter century could at first sight be seen as a continuation of the same pattern, with two short periods of rapid growth, in 1979–1980 and 1997–2000, each described as a “Spring of Freedom,” and each followed by the closure of large numbers of newspapers by the state ... Quantitatively, by the end of 2004, Iran had more than 1200 newspapers and more than 5000 men and women working as professional journalists.¹⁶

Even the “Spring of Freedom” under Khatami did not allow for the emergence of a real and permanent public sphere in Iran. Yet this period was long enough to give Iranians the taste of freedom of expression: some political borders were trespassed and taboos on criticism of presidents and other politicians (but still not religious authorities) were broken. Today, despite new types of repression and the support that Ahmadinejad receives from the Supreme Leader, he is the most criticized president in recent Iranian history.

Indeed, despite greater control and heavier newspaper censorship, the expansion of satellite TV and new media technology has meant that this censorship has not had the same effect as it did during the first years of the revolution or even during the period when reformists were in power. In fact, opposition inside the Islamic Republic is much stronger. For instance, one of the most critical newspapers in Iran today, *’Etimād*, belonged to reformists and supporters of Khatami; *’Etimād-e Mellī* belonged to the Ayatollah Karubi, Ahmadinejad’s rival for the presidency in 2005¹⁷; the news Web site *Tābnāk* (formerly *Bāztab*) belongs to Mohsen Rezaei,¹⁸ the former commander of the army. And recently, the news Web site “Alef,” which belongs to a fundamentalist deputy in the Eighth Parliament, Ahmad Tavakoli, was the first to denounce Interior Minister Ali Kordan’s fake academic degree.¹⁹

In 2006, the Web site *Bāztab*, which belongs to the former commander of the Guardian Islamic Revolution’s Army (*Sepāh-e Pāsdārān-e Enqelāb-e Eslāmī*) and is critical of Ahmadinejad’s policies, was blocked, but later it was republished under the new name *Tābnāk* due to Rezaei’s influence and also to the solidarity displayed by some Iranian Web sites and weblogs, which do not miss any opportunity to protest state filtering of cyberspace.

The public sphere in Iran is therefore expanding in a non-Habermasian way, within a controlling Islamic state, in physical and virtual spaces. Public space in Iran is transient; or a “short-term society,” in Shahidi’s words. The new public sphere in Iran could be described as what Negt and Kluge call “new public spheres”; decentralized and multiple, they open “a path of critique and possibly a new politics.”²⁰ Nilüfer Göle’s definition of the non-Western public sphere offers another approach. Arguing that public spheres are altered by the cultural meanings and social practices in each culture, Göle suggests that we analyze the “public sphere as a social imaginary” to illustrate the circulation of a universal code of modernity as well as particular cultural significations and practices:

The public sphere in a non-Western context is neither identical with its counterparts in the West nor totally different, but manifests asymmetrical differences as it is continuously altered by a field of cultural meanings and social practices ... Social imaginaries are embedded in the habitus of a population or carried in implicit understandings that underlie and make possible common practices ... As a social imaginary, the public sphere works in a social field and penetrates and blends into cultural significations.²¹

Drawing on Mark Poster, who argues that “the age of the public sphere as face-to-face talk is clearly over,”²² I argue that Weblogistan offers a new social imaginary that allows for the formation of a virtual public sphere. This virtual connectedness enables new networks and communities where people with common socio-cultural tastes, interests and backgrounds can gather, talk, and act together. As the next section demonstrates, these new communities can become even more powerful than traditional ones.²³ Today, three decades after the revolution, “small media” such as weblogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube again play an important role in the lives of middle class Iranians and social changes on the horizon.²⁴

Weblogistan: Virtual new networks of Iranian community

The Iranian blogosphere is a fast-growing public sphere formed by individuals and different networks and communities. It is almost impossible to give exact figures for the population in Weblogistan or to estimate, for instance, the percentage of women versus men (because many use pseudonyms), average age, social class or level of education of bloggers. The only information we have comes from case study surveys and documented observations. According to studies presented in the seminar "Internet and Women in the Third Millenium," held in Tehran in 2006, women constitute about 47 percent of Internet users in Iran,²⁵ while according to Jordan Halevi's 2006 study based on a sample of 325 blogs, 33.5 percent of bloggers are women.²⁶ This information changes constantly depending on the case study, as well as with the entrance of new bloggers into Weblogistan. In my focus groups, many participants said that it "is easy to guess the gender of bloggers, especially when you are used to reading different blogs every day. You can distinguish easily who is a woman and who is a man." In general, women write more about personal and social issues, while men have more specific blogs about politics, technology, journalism, religion and so on.

In Iran, as elsewhere, the first bloggers were mostly youth; today, however, many middle-aged bloggers are part of the mainstream Iranian blogosphere. According to Halevi's survey, 90 percent of Iranian bloggers were between 20 and 32 years old, but this percentage can change with different networks, where sometimes the average age is higher. In fact, it was not long before many journalists, intellectuals (writers, philosophers, university professors, and artists), social activists (feminists, environmentalists, NGO workers), former politicians (especially reformists and Khatami's colleagues, such as his adviser, Mohammad Ali Abtahi)²⁷ and religious and conservative personalities joined Weblogistan and created their own networks in the blogosphere. Student populations, too, are diverse, including many female and male students of theology known as Talabeh bloggers.²⁸

Weblogistan is vitally diverse, not only in terms of the social position of members, but also their geographic location: hundreds of thousands of Iranian bloggers are scattered throughout many cities in Iran or countries throughout the world. The Iranian blogger diaspora resides

in the U.S., Canada, France, England, Japan, Holland, Germany and Australia. Many of these bloggers play an important role in demystifying the “West” and life outside Iran for Iranians inside the country.

Together and the birth of a new social movement

The interconnectedness of bloggers from around the world and from different social positions can have an important impact on events in the physical world. On several occasions, Iranian bloggers have shown solidarity and acted together to influence events on the national or international scene.

Of course, with the immense variety in Weblogistan this togetherness happens only in some networks, but depending on the issue it can become more resonant in the corpus of the blogosphere. Perhaps the most widespread and permanent actions of bloggers have been undertaken against filtering and censorship. In Iran, censorship in cyberspace is very much like that of general media regulation: it is based on religion, morals, libel, national security, and anti-revolutionary activity.²⁹

In 2006, the Ahmadinejad government ordered bloggers to register their blogs. Two months later, after the deadline, only about one hundred bloggers had registered. Most did not pay any attention to the order; some even posted a banner on their blog that read, “I Will Not Register My Website.” Faced with obvious failure, the government abandoned the project. Bloggers claimed cyberspace as their own, and demanded the freedom to write whatever they want. Although this “freedom” is not transparent in Iran and continually requires a degree of self-censorship, in the virtual world, censorship is much more difficult. Following the example of the “Spring of Freedom” and the publication of newspapers, a weblog that is blocked is soon replaced by another with a different address, which with the help of other bloggers is introduced to Weblogistan. Creating blog-mirrors (where the same text is copied onto several blogs with different addresses) is another way to escape filtering. A third way to circumvent filtering is to use anonymizers and anti-filtering software, which are exchanged among Internet users by email or are published on weblogs that specialize in Internet software. Even though every day many of

these anti-filters are blocked, it seems to be a never-ending confrontation between Internet users and the government.

Despite the absence of economic and social criteria such as wealth and social position in cyberspace, criteria of distinction are still effective, though in a milder way. For instance, when bloggers are known by their real names and have a high social rank (politician, university professor, well-known author or journalist), and when they are known as an authority in Weblogistan, interactions are generally more respectful, according to the norms of Iranian society, although there is more familiarity than in physical space. However, the real authority in Weblogistan is wielded according to different criteria than those used in physical space. In cyberspace, the length of time the blog has been published matters more than the age of the blogger. Factors such as discipline, content, style, length, originality of writing, regularity of posting, technical knowledge, and the aesthetic of the Web page are of considerable importance, as is the quality and extent of interaction with other bloggers, the number of links to the site, sincerity and courage toward and respect for other bloggers; these factors all define the social position of bloggers in cyberspace more than their “real” social status. A blogger could write under a pseudonym and reveal little about his/her personal life (profession, age, location) and become an important authority, while a well-known professor or politician who is arrogant, distant, writes only periodically, or is not acquainted with weblog writing style can simply be ignored. This reconception of authority allows some young bloggers to mobilize, organize a protest, or gather bloggers for a humanitarian issue in Weblogistan and through the international media to influence events in the physical world.

One example is the Web site “Change for Equality” launched by feminist activists in 2006.³⁰ “Change for Equality” is related to the successful campaign, “One million signatures demanding changes to discriminatory law” in the physical world, where Iranian activists are collecting signatures door to door to later present to Parliament. “Women’s Field” is another Web site launched by feminist activists to promote the campaign, “Stop Stoning Forever,” and there is a campaign to allow women to attend public sports events.³¹ All these Web sites have been filtered by the government several times, and were later republished with a new address; they also send information about new issues by email to interested readers.

There are other cases in which the actions of activist bloggers have had important impacts on events in the real world. Perhaps the most important was the protest organized against the sentencing of women condemned to death by Islamic law, often because they have killed their aggressors or rapists. In Weblogistan bloggers copied a logo and information about these women onto their blog and organized petitions to send to international organizations. This common action raised national and international attention and pressure, helping some of these women escape the death penalty and secure freedom.³² The first petition organized by Weblogistan that had a positive impact in the physical world was for the freedom of Sina Motalebi, whose weblog was banned in 2002. He was the first blogger and journalist to be arrested.³³ Many bloggers added a logo to their weblog, asking for his freedom, and organized a petition that was signed by many Internet users and bloggers. Following these actions, Sina Motalebi was freed and then migrated to Europe. Later, many petitions were signed for the freedom of Ahmad Batebi, and his picture was used as a logo in many weblogs; he became the symbol of jailed students under the Islamic Republic.³⁴ In February and March 2007, some feminist bloggers and activists were arrested by the government because of their activity; many bloggers put a logo or their picture in their blog asking for their freedom, and published the latest information about them on their blogs each day. The majority of these activists were released after a few days, some on a high bail paid by their families.

Another form of collective action by bloggers is humanitarian assistance. Charity associations and activities are part of social life in Iran; these activities also have become popular in Weblogistan, where people act together to collect money or to find aid for people in need. On some occasions bloggers have even gathered in physical spaces to provide help. For instance, in March 2003, a charity was organized by bloggers simultaneously in Tehran, Shiraz and Mashhad to assist orphanages by collecting money and spending time with the children. One of the most impressive acts of charity in Weblogistan was organizing help for the victims of the earthquake in Bam, in southeastern Iran, in January 2004. Bloggers organized diverse networks of assistance: some went directly to Bam and some collected goods and money. In this way, many bloggers from outside Iran participated and gathered a significant sum.

Another massive protest by bloggers was against *National Geographic* magazine. In its November 2004 issue, the magazine published a map using the term “Arabian Gulf” instead of “Persian Gulf.” A group of Internet users and bloggers began a protest movement, organizing a petition that was signed by tens of thousands of people. This protest was extensively reported on by Iranian newspapers, and ultimately forced the Iranian Parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and government spokespeople to protest publicly. In a related protest, the Iranian blogger and illustrator Pendar Yousefi created a “Google bomb”: typing the words “Arabian Gulf” into Google’s search engine elicited a spoof message: “The Gulf you are looking for does not exist. Try Persian Gulf.”³⁵

Bloggers also show their concern for and solidarity with Weblogistan members and their personal problems. The case of *Nūshi va Jūjehāsh* [Nooshi and her chicks] is an instance of bloggers showing support for a non-political cause. “Nooshi” (a pseudonym) started her weblog to bring attention to her problem: as a divorced woman, she is not allowed to have custody of her children under Islamic law. This was one of the first Iranian “baby blogs” (also called “mother blogs”); there are now many others. Sometimes Nooshi wrote about her problems with her ex-husband and the Islamic judiciary, asking for legal advice and help from other bloggers. Her problem became poignant when the husband took her children and did not bring them back. This occurred simultaneously with a hunger strike by Akbar Ganji, a famous dissident journalist in Evin prison.³⁶ Many political bloggers have organized national and international protests to save his life. But the attention that Nooshi received in non-political networks of Weblogistan was also very important. A few months later, in a telephone interview, Nooshi talked about this event and its impact on her life:

Many political bloggers have protested, “Why, when Mr. Ganji is dying, are people in Weblogistan talking about this woman whose problem is so similar to that of any other woman in Iran?” I don’t know, maybe we are afraid to be involved in political issues. Mr. Ganji is a big name, a famous name in the political arena of Iran. Taking his defense was maybe dangerous for many bloggers. But I am nobody, I do not even have a real name here, just a pseudonym, but my problem is known by many others. Many other Iranian women have the same

problem. You should see how many emails I have received, offering me help: legal, financial or personal help. Many attorneys offered to take my defense free of charge. And of course I also received many insults, attacks and violent comments! But to explain everything to you, I can tell you about an email that said: “You are just like our neighbor, a poor woman who has the same problem as you have. I don’t care much about her, because I don’t know her. But I lived with you and your children for three years in Weblogistan; I know many things about you and your children. Now they are not just your children, but they are also ours, they are the children of Weblogistan, so we should help you.” (Nooshi va Joojehash—telephone interview 2005, <http://www.nooshi.ir/>)

Some months later, Nooshi had to stop blogging, because her blog was used against her in court. She has claimed that one day she will restart it, because weblog writing has changed her life.

Communal life in Weblogistan, like real life, is sometimes full of animosity, hostility, violence, or the revelation of private information that could be harmful and destructive. Yet nine years of living and acting together has also brought about ethical norms, a higher level of tolerance, and new kinds of “red lines” that must not be transgressed. According to my interviews and focus groups, many bloggers thought that when they started to write their blog, it would be a personal experience, like a diary. But as soon as they were discovered and their link was added to other blogs, and they began to have their own readers and to receive comments and emails, they could experience a new kind of presence in the virtual world, one that was related to the presence of the “others.” For many of them it was also a process of disclosure of the self in front of others. This experience brought about new consciousness about the self and more tolerance toward others.

Who’s behind the blog?

A weblog begins with a name and an address, sometimes based on the real name of the blogger and sometimes using a pseudonym. This name and

address usually form the main identity of the blogger in the virtual space with which they are named, connected, referred, and linked. In many non-Iranian weblogs, bloggers introduce themselves with their real identity. Their weblog is part of their social, cultural and even economic capital.

In Iran, because of both the political situation and certain conventions and beliefs, there is an abundance of pseudonyms and fake identities, especially among women, youth and political and social bloggers. Therefore, for many Iranian bloggers, weblog writing is not part of their cultural capital in the real world. In spite of this, some weblogs with fake identities and pseudonyms attain authority in the blogosphere. For instance, bloggers who in their real lives are ordinary employees, students, housewives, artists or journalists can become “famous” online, with many regular readers and links. The example of Zeitun (Olive) is relevant here. Zeitun, who has been writing her blog since 2002, is a presumably young woman living in a suburb of Tehran.³⁷ She has a personal style of writing known in Weblogistan as the “Zeitun style” and consisting of multi-part posts written in a casual but correct language. Despite the filtering of her blog in Iran, it has been classified among the top forty best Iranian blogs for years.³⁸ Nevertheless, she is one of the most “virtual” identities in Weblogistan, and has never agreed to participate in a focus group or even in a telephone interview. In one of my own focus groups, discussing the virtual identity of bloggers, I asked participants to provide their opinions about these unknown yet famous bloggers like Zeitun. The general feeling was more or less suspicious because none of these bloggers has even seen or talked to her. “She chats and sends email, she says that she was at this or that gathering, but nobody has ever heard her voice or seen her, so you don’t know who she is. Is she real? Is she a 25–26-year-old girl or a 40-year-old man? Nobody knows about her” (Feminist-Activist bloggers in Focus Group 2005).

Despite this doubt cast on her identity, she remains one of the most serious and famous “authorities” of Weblogistan, with over a thousand readers per day. Typically, the identity of bloggers who use pseudonyms is not revealed publicly by others, as part of an accepted online ethic and due to the socio-cultural and political limitations in the Iranian blogosphere. Thus, the pseudonym is generally accepted as an identity in Weblogistan and this is not by itself a source of mistrust, as long as there

is some coherence in the blog and the constructed identity. However, over the past seven years of Weblogistan's existence, the use of pseudonyms is rapidly decreasing, especially among some sociopolitical bloggers who seek to have more impact in the real world. But the trend of fake identities and pseudonyms remains, especially among youth and women who are writing about their personal life.

The construction of self in the Iranian blogosphere

In the process of the construction of the self in Weblogistan, three factors play an important role: daily writings, the existence of an archive, and permanent exposure to others' opinions through the comment section. These three factors can not only give individuals a broader conception of self but can also allow for the emergence of an entirely new self-narrative. The Italian writer Erri de Luca in his novel "Rez-de-Chaussée" gives an interesting perspective on the importance of writing in general and the process of self-discovery in particular:

Every one of us has hidden multitudes within ourselves, even though, with the passage of time, we are drawn to transforming this multiplicity into a groundless individual. We are forced to remain individuals and have only one name to which we are accountable. Therefore, we have habituated the diverse personalities within ourselves to silence. Writing helps us to rediscover them.³⁹

This insight can be usefully applied to bloggers who are writing regularly. Through these daily and ongoing narratives, bloggers discover new angles of their lives and personalities that had been unknown even to themselves. Shabah (Specter) is a middle-aged educated male whose frequent and active presence in virtual space has garnered him a wide readership, especially among young bloggers. Even though given his gender and age, Shabah can enjoy more freedoms than women and more stability than youth, he believes that blogging has changed him and that continuous interaction with his readers has released an inner "me" of which he was previously unaware:

Virtual life is not entirely fulfilling but it is an enjoyable life. Part of the personality is given a chance to appear without the presence of the body ... even though, ultimately, a big part of the self comes out through writings and thoughts. With the passage of time, the virtual personality conforms to the real personality. This virtual life has had a spectacular effect on my real life. In fact, this real "me" is no longer the same real "me" as before. I am pleased with this virtual "me" and with the effect it has had on the real "me," and I have all of you to thank. I want to say that the opportunity to reveal this virtual personality was made possible by this space. I have learned and grown a great deal in these past two years. ... I sometimes don't recognize myself. ... It's as if somebody else was breathing inside me. The one who was imprisoned in this body for years has now, because of your kind sting, been released. (Spectral narcissism, 24 January 2004, <http://www.shabah.ir/archives/000985.php>)

This trend of discovering new layers of self is especially important for Iranian women. Sayeh, "Shadow," (a 32-year-old woman) considers that four years of writing in virtual space has helped her to discover the hidden and repressed parts of herself and to reveal them in physical space:

My weblog has changed as I have changed. Some bloggers know from their first post what they want to do with their blog, but I did not know. I entered into this unknown world without knowing where I was going. Under a fake identity, I showed in my weblog the parts of me which I would not reveal in public, the parts which were nostalgic, frank and emotional. Then I discovered that I like very much this part of me and I decided to develop it in myself. This part becomes then all of me, I don't hide it anymore, and now everybody knows that Sayeh is Katy, even if the consequences are not always easy for me. Being a woman blogger in Iran disturbs many people and writing about what is not considered decent in the common sense is even more disturbing. (www.sayeh.nevesht.com)

The continual availability and access to written records and archives gives the blogger an awareness of the fact that whatever one writes in one's weblog can be referenced by others. The archives contain the whole history of the weblog, posts and comments. This new narration can provide a new social context for the blogger that is different from that of "real" life. Through this archive, bloggers have the possibility of recording the history of their presence and their interaction with others in the blogosphere and to review it when necessary. This capability provides the new generation with the possibility of auto-revision and the chance to have a common and written history.

The archive also helps the blogger to crystallize a new persona. In fact, to maintain consistency and coherence of character, the blogger must have more vigorous discipline of thought and articulation than is required in real spaces. Sometimes the virtual persona becomes so acknowledged, powerful and famous in the blogosphere that it gradually affects the "offline" life of the blogger. Osyan "Rebellion," a young male blogger writing since 2002, said in one of my focus groups:

At first, you build a weblog, but then it is the weblog which manipulates you. Sometimes I think that I must stick to the personality that I am showing in my weblog. Not that I should maintain appearances, but that I must make it consistent. For example if I make a claim in my weblog to feminism, then I must live up to it in my real life. (Focus Group 2003)

Finally, the comments section also plays an important role in the construction of self for the blogger. This is the space of "others," where readers can enter and interact with the blogger and his or her writings. These comments show the reflection of the self in the other's opinion and establish the position of the blogger in the blogosphere. Allowing others to express themselves in a space that is considered personal and private, reading and refusing to delete their opinions, critiques and reactions, all produce a new kind of social negotiation that can empower bloggers to see different facets of themselves through the opinions and interactions of others.

My focus groups included a word association test. For bloggers who participated, the idea of the weblog was most often associated with the

word “mirror.” For many of them the weblog was a mirror into their souls, a place where they could represent and define themselves according to their preferences and desires. But it was also a mirror in which they could see how others perceived them. This mirror has a double and contradictory effect on bloggers: it can increase their self-confidence or become very critical and disturbing. For women who in Islamic society have to conceal themselves and perform identities constantly, this virtual self-representation takes on added significance. Their weblog becomes a mirror in which they can reveal their “inner selves,” the part of their personality that they always hide in a moralistic Iranian society:

Sometimes I forget who I am. Then I read my weblog and find myself there, it calms me and I feel better. (Sara dar Ayeneh—Sara in the Mirror—female blogger, <http://www.ayene.org/>, 2003)

For men the meaning of “mirror” is different. As discussed above, Iranians in general do not reveal their private and personal lives in public, and after the revolution they also learned to perform certain roles according to the situation. But in general, Iranian men do not have to perform as much as women in the Islamic context of decency; they have many rights that women do not have. Still, in their blogs they too can discover facets that have been hidden:

For me “mirror” is the best description of the weblog. Because there, we look at our “self,” as we look in a mirror, seeing different angles, we can mime or perform as we want, we can see facets that we are not used to seeing. (Alpar—male blogger, <http://alpr.30mogh.org/>, Focus Group 2003)

Here lies the main difference between Iranian female and male bloggers. In the majority of interviews, male bloggers believed that the self-image presented in their weblogs was very similar to that of their real selves because they are less obliged to play predetermined roles in real life. For women, their virtual image is closer to their “inner self,” hidden mostly in public life under the pressure of Islamic conventions. The absence of the body and of face-to-face contact allows women more freedom to express themselves in virtual space, especially when they remain

unknown and anonymous using a pseudonym. However, even writing with a pseudonym does not mean total freedom from the constraints of the judgment of a moral society. Sometimes the blogger's identity is revealed publicly or among family, friends or colleagues. This can produce new sources of self-censorship and limitations that parallel the limitations of real physical space.

Censorship and self-censorship in weblogs: A gender perspective

Millions of people now disclose aspects of themselves, their personal lives and their intimate details in front of others each day via blogging, Facebook or YouTube. Iranians are not exempt from this trend. Cyberspace has diminished the oddity of personal narration in public, and people are now more used to reading about the lives of individuals in cyberspace, with all their transgressions from conventional images in Iran. This is why many young female bloggers, despite diverse attacks and pressure in both virtual and physical space from government, other bloggers, family or colleagues, choose to talk about themselves with greater transparency and to discuss controversial issues, such as sexuality, that are still considered taboo in Iranian society. After the years of Weblogistan's existence, these revelations have brought about more tolerance online regarding female bloggers. However, this is not the same in "offline" society. To live safely in virtual and physical spaces in Iran and to be at the same time visible and outspoken, to dare to speak about their personal experiences, their sexual lives, or simply about their everyday lives as women in Iranian society, female bloggers must write indirectly and give little personal information that could be used against them, which allows them to trespass some of the moral boundaries of Iranian society.⁴⁰

Emshaspandān (Farnaz Seifi—<http://farnaaz.org/>) is a young feminist activist who has blogged since 2003 under her real name. She refuses to write anonymously because she believes that writing under a pseudonym adds another layer to her personality. She also believes that Iranian women should write more about themselves, arguing that virtual space is the only place where women can break down taboos and talk about their

desires, their body and their femininity. However, even if this position is accepted as a new social trend in cyberspace, it can become very disturbing on a personal level:

For me the weblog was a place to search for my “inner woman.” In Iran you should have many layers, just like an onion. I needed to rediscover what is inside me. I began my blog under my real name. At that time I had few readers and I could say what I wanted to say. Then when my readers increased and my blog became famous, it became difficult to talk about everything, especially because everybody at the office and in my family knew my weblog and read it regularly. Thus I had to stop talking about my personal life, and to eliminate an important part of “me” from my weblog. Since then my weblog has become more social and less personal. My “inner woman” became silenced again, a little bit like my “outer woman,” prisoner of rules and gossip in society. Now I have to choose between a pseudonym and rebellion. My choice would be the second one. I don’t want to censor myself anymore. (<http://farnaaz.org/>, Focus Group 2005)

For Farnaz, her family and colleagues represent an intrusion into her virtual life, because she considers this a unilateral relationship: they learn information about her and use it in their relationships with her. She does not harbor these feelings toward other bloggers with whom she shares her secrets or toward other online readers who she does not know or see in everyday life. In Iran, the absence of body and identity are not sufficient to completely avoid self-censorship. In fact, the spirit of gossip (what “others” can say) has a very powerful impact on the lives of Iranians. Many bloggers (male and female) who participated in this study recognized this as one of the most disturbing issues in cyberspace. For women, the permanent worry about what others can think or say, of how their public image as decent women could be destroyed in physical space because of their writing, appearances or behaviors online, keep women from freely expressing themselves. For Sayeh, this was a cause of self-censorship in her blog:

When you know that other bloggers are reading your weblog, that's fine, but when other people, for instance your colleagues or even your boss, read your weblog this is different. Because then the whole company knows everything about you and they comment on that. That's an unfair situation and it is really unfortunate. I have learned also that my aunts are reading my weblog, just to know more about me and what I am doing. Then they started to comment to others about my private life. So after a while I chose to exclude important parts of my personal life from my weblog and to write mostly about social and public issues. (Sayeh—<http://sayeh.nevesht.org/>, Focus Group 2005)

Danah Boyd argues that physical reality always affects the digital environment, even in democratic countries: "Cyberspace is not our utopian fantasy; many of the social constraints that frame physical reality are quickly seeping into the digital realm."⁴¹ In Iran, ultimately, cultural, conventional and political repression produces almost the same type of limitations in virtual space. People are forced to respect political and conventional rules in cyberspace, especially when they are writing with their real names. In fact, there is an important cultural and gender bias in terms of what individuals can write in their blog that duplicates more or less the conventional redlines and the political ones. For instance, male bloggers tend to practice self-censorship in political matters, while women apply self-censorship in the areas of sex and sexuality (and even some social conventions) as well as in political matters. Since women are under more pressure to fulfill their social roles in physical public spaces, in virtual space they are also more self-conscious about their roles as women than as citizens. Thus, they tend to remain anonymous in order to freely express themselves. The ones who use their real names must accept some risks or contend with almost the same type of limitations and restrictions that they face in everyday real life. This situation is somewhat different in the Iranian diaspora, where female bloggers feel more freedom to express themselves without censorship and conventional limitations.

For many female bloggers, the possibility of free expression is invaluable, and they are unwilling to abandon it easily. Honesty with oneself is an irreversible experience, even if there is a heavy price to pay. For

some female bloggers who have experienced free expression and interaction, a return to the limitations of the real world is far more difficult than accepting the consequences of “being oneself” in virtual space. Confronted with the pressures of family, colleagues or the government, some female bloggers have to abandon their primary weblog and start a new one with a pseudonym or a new address. Others accept the situation and consequences of their blogging and continue to write as before, because their experience in virtual space is too important to let it go.

This weblog was supposed to be a window for unspoken words, for those things that I couldn't or wouldn't say, to write those unspoken words that can't be uttered in front of “elders” because they judge against their own standards. Initially, when the writer of *Carpe Diem* was just a name, everything was really good. However, it gradually became more difficult. The temptation to see the rest of the names resulted in Ayda's name slowly acquiring a particular face. . . . For a while, I didn't like this. I didn't want to have to censor myself in my own little world. However, I slowly got used to it. Not to censorship, no. But to being myself and to not think of people who judge me based on my writings when I write. (carpe diem—Ayda, 24 February 2004, translated by www.Badjens.com. This weblog does not exist anymore.)

This was the last post by Ayda, one of the editors of the book, *Weblogistan: The Crystal City*, and a participant in my focus groups. After this post, written a year after the focus group, she closed down her blog. I have heard she now has another blog, with another pseudonym and new readers. She still writes about “freedom”; but after her previous experience, she has chosen to no longer reveal her identity on her blog.

Conclusion

With the end of the Iran–Iraq war in 1988, a transient public sphere has gradually emerged in Iran, which has paradoxically become permanent in its provisory aspect. This new public sphere that emerged with the new

wave of newspaper publication and the expansion of new public spaces has been constantly subject to cycles of disappearance and reappearance due to the permanent confrontation between civil society and the Islamic state. Over the years, Iranians have learned how to live with this provisory situation. Since 2001, this transient public sphere has been partly transferred to and partly duplicated by cyberspace. Weblogistan has become a new public space for a middle-class urban population to practice self-expression, to discuss issues and to form new ideas with a higher level of tolerance. In the virtual space of Weblogistan, new identities are formed, sometimes anonymously and sometimes under real names, creating new and diverse networks and communities. From these networks social actions have taken place that have had impacts on physical space.

In the context of a fast-growing network in Weblogistan, which attracts new members from diverse backgrounds and situations daily, the Iranian government has increased its control and applies more and more sophisticated filtering to limit the expansion and power of Iranian cyberspace. Despite this control, cyberspace remains much less controllable than physical space. In Weblogistan, the government is challenged every day by talented youth and Internet users whose authority is maintained by their vast technological knowledge. Iranian youth have shown that they can defend themselves in this arena better than the government.

After the contested reelection of Mahmood Ahmadinejad, despite very powerful filtering and censorship, and in the absence of independent journalists, Iranian protesters organized themselves for rallies through diverse virtual networks and through Weblogistan via anonymizers and anti-filters. They immediately posted their videos on the Internet and news for the world to see. The number of Internet videos and news posts from the Iranian Green Movement made this movement one of the strongest virtual social movements in the world.⁴² The experience of many years of presence in cyberspace, blogging and finding new and diverse ways of self-expression, dialogue and constructing virtual communities, despite the state's heavy filtering, prepared Iranian youth to circumvent new limitations on the Internet and to construct a new public and political sphere where "each Iranian is a media / each Iranian is a leader,"⁴³ thinking about and deciding the future of the Green Movement.

In its short life, Weblogistan has acquired various functions for Iranians and become a useful tool in the process of self-expression, the rediscovery of self, interactions with others, and the formation of new identities, communities and new social movements. Weblogistan has become the voice of women, youth, homosexuals, marginalized intellectuals, journalists, artists, politicians and even the expression of a new form of religiosity among religious youth that is much more personal and different from the state religion. Weblogistan has offered them the best tools to question and to dismantle diverse political, religious and patriarchal authorities. Mild but permanent transgression of religious or socio-cultural boundaries in Iranian society has opened up new perspectives for bloggers who can now experience another aspect of their being.

Weblogistan is also one of the only public spaces in Iran where there is the possibility of hearing the discourses of women and youth, as well as cross-gender discussions. These narratives reveal aspects of a society that were until now hidden under conventional appearances and revolutionary images and performances. Finally, Weblogistan is also a mirror for Iranian middle-class society to see itself in a “freer” public space, where diverse individuals, networks and communities can coexist, express themselves, debate and challenge diverse authorities. In Weblogistan, as in Iran, the majority of the population is under 30 years old. But in Weblogistan, younger bloggers can challenge their professors, parents, clerics and society; politicians and intellectuals are in direct contact with their public; educated women can work hard not only to change discriminatory Islamic laws, but also to challenge the patriarchal spirit and patterns of behavior in conventional society. Weblogistan in Iran is a laboratory for practicing democracy and for one day creating a permanent public sphere.

Notes

1. This study was part of a larger research project, "Authority and Public Spaces in Iran," supported by the International Collaborative Research Grants Program (ICRG) of the Social Science Research Council's Program on the Middle East and North Africa (2002–2004). Other members of the project working on different topics were: Guity Etemad (Iran), Azam Khatam (Iran), Modjtaba Sadria (Japan), and Uğur Komecoğlu (Turkey).

My study on Iranian cyberspace is based on regular consultation of Iranian weblogs, personal interviews, and eight focus groups that I conducted with bloggers in Tehran between 2003 and 2006. Focus groups were conducted with different groups of youth between 20 and 30 years old. Two of the focus groups were preliminary; one was with editors and publishers of *Weblogistan, the Crystal City* (2003), which gathered posts from various weblogs; another focus group was organized with feminist bloggers; and four others were with ordinary bloggers. Focus groups were mostly organized around topics such as perception about self-expression, life in physical and virtual environments, questions of identity, interaction and relationship between two sexes, public and private lives, and freedom and censorship. This paper was initially written before the post-election events of 2009; therefore I did not refer to this very important period, which drastically changed the role of the Internet in Iran and made it much more political.

2. OpenNet Initiative, *Country Study: Internet Filtering in Iran 2004–2005*, 5, <http://opennetinitiative.net/studies/iran>.
3. Miniwatts Market Research, "Internet Usage in the Middle East," <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm> (accessed 15 February 2010); Ministry of I.C.T. (Information and Communications Technology), Iran, 86, *Sālī por dastāvard* [2007/08: A year full of benefits], <http://ict.gov.ir/newsdetail-fa-2536.html> (accessed 15 November 2008).
4. See Salman's Weblog, <http://www.globalpersian.com/salman/weblog.html>.
5. See http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.hoder.com.
6. See "Performance in Everyday Life and the Rediscovery of the 'Self' in Iranian Weblogs," *Bad Jens* 7 (September 2004), <http://www.badjens.com/rediscovery.html>. Also published in *Medien & Zeit, Kommunikation in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Jahrgang 21, Vienna 4 (2006): 23–31.

7. Michael Craig Hillman, "An Autobiographical Voice: Forugh Farrokhzad," in *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran*, edited by Afsaneh Najmabadi (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 33–34.
8. See Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi, "Transgression in Narration, the lives of Iranian women in cyberspace," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies (JMEWS)* 4, no. 3, Special Issue, edited by Nikki R. Keddie (Fall 2008): 89–118.
9. In the first decades following the Islamic Revolution, the primary monitors of public spaces were the Islamic Guard Corps [*Sepāh-e Pāsdārān-e Enqilāb-e Eslāmī*]. The youth branch of the Pasdaran [*Basij*] and their hard-liner arms, such as *Ansār-e Sārollāh*, also may intervene in public spaces. During the years of Khatami's presidency (1997–2005), Pasdaran were combined with the police; and women entered the police corps in 1998. During this period, the street controls were reduced to a minimum. However, with the election of the conservative president Mahmood Ahmadinejad to power (2005), Islamic regulation and street control have been widely reinstated, with a new name: "Guidance Patrol." Nonetheless, today they have to bring the nature of their interventions up to date with youth's and women's new appearances and behavior in public spaces, which remain much more relaxed than they were at the beginning of the revolution.
10. *Chādor* is a long outer garment, open down the front, draped over a woman's head and extending to her feet. The loose fabric is folded so as to conceal the woman's body while keeping her face and hands exposed. *Manteau* is a loose-fitting coat varying in length and thickness. *Maqnaeh* is a fabric that is worn over a woman's head to conceal her hair and that extends to her chest. Fitted around the hairline to frame the face, the fabric falls loosely from beneath the chin to the chest for the concealment of the neck and chest as well.
11. Frontline, "Muslims, Women and Islam: An Interview with Nilüfer Göle," Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), original airdate 9 May 2002, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/interviews/gole.html>. See also Nilüfer Göle, "Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 173–190.
12. Azadeh Kian-Thiébaud, "From Motherhood to Equal Rights Advocates: The Weakening of Patriarchal Order," *Iranian Studies* 38, no. 1 (March 2005): 46; and Jaleh Shaditalab, "Iranian Women: Rising Expectations," *Critique, Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 35–55.

13. Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi, *Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture and the Iranian Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
14. Amir-Ebrahimi "Conquering Enclosed Public Spaces," *Cities: the International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning* 23, no. 6 (2006): 455–461.
15. Shahidi Hossein, "From Mission to Profession: Journalism in Iran, 1979–2004," *Iranian Studies* 39, no. 1 (March 2006): 3–4.
16. Ibid.
17. *'Etemād-e Mellī* and then *Etemaad*, like many other critical newspapers, were shut down one after the other following the contested reelection of Mahmood Ahmadinejad.
18. Mohsen Rezai, Ayatollah Mehdi Karubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi were rivals of Ahmadinejad in the 2009 presidential election.
19. Ali Kordan, Ahmadinejad's Interior Minister, pretended to have an honorary doctorate from the University of Oxford. Further investigations have shown that he did not even have a bachelor's degree. Ahmadinejad resisted discharging him until, finally, Kordan was impeached by Parliament in November 2008. See also Ramin Mostaghim and Borzou Daraghi, "Iran Interior Minister Ousted," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 November 2008, <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran5-2008nov05,0,1268397.story>.
20. See Mark Poster, "CyberDemocracy: Internet and the Public Sphere," unpublished, 1995, www.humanities.uci.edu/mposter/writings/democ.html.
21. Göle, "Islam in Public," 176.
22. Poster, "CyberDemocracy."
23. See Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), www.rheingold.com/vc/book/intro.html.
24. In the post-election events of 2009, virtual communities, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, weblogs, and email list servers, have played a very important role in informing, gathering and organizing protesters inside and outside Iran. Additionally, in the absence of independent or foreign journalists, young protesters posted hundreds of thousands of films and information sources on the Internet, creating what is known today as the Citizen-journalist.

25. See <http://www.iritn.com/?action=show&type=news&id=12187> or <http://www.wit.ir/hamayesh/detailnews.asp?id=915>.
26. Jordan Halevi (pen name), "The Iranian Weblog Research Project: Survey Results," unpublished, 2006. See Farid Pouya, "Interview with Jordan Halvei, a Canadian Researcher on Iranian Blogs," *Global Voices*, 7 November 2006, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2006/11/07/interview-with-jordan-halevi-a-canadian-researcher-on-iranian-blogs>.
27. Hojjat ol Eslam Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Khatami's vice president, has been blogging since 2003. He is known as one of the first clerics and politicians to enter this sphere. Since that time, he has become one of the most famous and serious bloggers in Weblogistan. His blog is at www.webneveshteha.com.
28. See Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi, "Blogging from Qom, behind walls and veils," *The Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 28 (2008): 235–249.
29. OpenNet Initiative, *Internet Filtering in Iran*, 6.
30. See Change for Equality, <http://we-change.org>. Also see Feminist School [*madreseh-ye femenisti*], <http://www.femschool.net/>.
31. See Women's Field, <http://www.meydaan.com/>.
32. For example, Afsaneh Norouzi, Kobra Rahmanpour and Nazanine Fathi were accused of the murder of their rapists, and a young, mentally retarded girl, Leila Nekai, the victim of several rapes since she was eight years old, was arrested and condemned to death for prostitution. All these sentences have been suspended, and the women have been released. Nazanine Fathi was assisted by Nazanin Afshar Jam (Miss World Canada 2003, a woman of Iranian origin), who collected, with the aid of Weblogistan, 350,000 signatures to call for her release.
33. Sina Motalebi's blog "Webgard" was erased after his arrest.
34. Ahmad Batebi (born 1977 in Shiraz, Iran) is an Iranian student who has been imprisoned since the Iranian student rally in July 1999. During the protests in the areas surrounding Tehran University, Batebi held up a bloodied shirt belonging to a fellow student who had been beaten by the Basij paramilitaries. The image spread quickly and ended up on the cover of *The Economist* magazine. After the publication in *The Economist*, Batebi was detained and sentenced to death on charges relating to "endangering national security" following a closed-door trial by a Revolutionary Court in Tehran. His death sentence was later commuted to a fifteen-year prison

- term by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. In 2007, while temporarily released from prison to receive medical attention, Batebi escaped and fled Iran for the United States where he was granted asylum. Arash Ashoorinia, "Photography 15 April 2007," <http://www.kosoof.com/archive/363.php>; and Wikipedia, "Ahmad Batebi," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmad_Batebi.
35. To read more see: <http://www.legofish.com/google/003945.html>.
 36. Akbar Ganji was a revolutionary guard at the beginning of the Islamic revolution, and later he became an eminent pro-democracy journalist. He was jailed from 2001 to 2006 after publishing a series of articles and books on the murders of dissident authors, known as the Chain Murders of Iran. In 2005 he started a forty-day hunger strike, seeking unconditional release—a call backed by the U.S., the European Union and international human rights organizations. He was released from prison in March 2006 and now lives in the U.S. (For more information, see Pen American Center, "Akbar Ganji," <http://www.pen.org/page.php/prmID/423>; Wikipedia, "Akbar Ganji," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akbar_Ganji; and BBC News, "Profile: Akbar Ganji," 18 March 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4715439.stm.)
 37. <http://z8un.com/>.
 38. Motigo Webstats, "Iran," <http://webstats.motigo.com/catalogue/top1000?id=3789665&country=IR>. (According to this Web site, on 25 November 2008, Zeitun was in 38th place among personal Web sites and weblogs.)
 39. Erri de Luca, *Rez de chaussée* (1996)—Quoted in Dariush Shayegan, *Ex Occidente lux*, F. Valiani (Persian trans.) (Tehran: Farzan, 2001), 133 [English translation by *Bad Jens: The Iranian Feminist Newsletter*, <http://www.badjens.com>].
 40. Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi, "Transgression in Narration, the Lives of Iranian Women in Cyberspace," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies (JMEWS)* 4, no. 3, Special Issue, edited by Nikki R. Keddie (Fall 2008): 89–118.
 41. Danah Boyd, "Faceted Id/entity: Managing Representation in a Digital World," MA thesis, MIT, 2002, <http://www.danah.org/papers/Thesis.FacetedIdentity.pdf>.
 42. Just a few weeks after these contestations began, BBC Persian and VOA Persian reported that they received over one million videos from rallies.
 43. Mir Hossein Moussavi's slogan for his campaign.

Resisting Publics

Students on Soapboxes: The Metropole in Anticolonial Nationalist Activity

Noor-Aiman Khan

In 1911, almost thirty years after the British occupied Egypt, the Office of the Secretary of State in London requested a list of Egyptian students studying in Britain from the Consul-General in Egypt. Despite his title, Consul-General Kitchener was hardly an ambassador between two sovereign states; in reality, he ran the Occupation Government of Egypt and thus was closer to viceroy than a diplomat. The information Secretary Grey requested was to be shared not only with Scotland Yard but also with local police forces in the university towns that housed such students. The immediate cause of this sudden need to keep track of Egyptian students was the recent assassination of the British-supported Prime Minister of Egypt, Boutros Ghali, by a young man who had studied in Europe.¹ However, the larger concern was based on Britons' realization of something that nationalists in Egypt and other colonies already knew: that the most fertile and free arena in which to organize a cadre of strong and committed nationalist activists was actually in the imperial metropolises, where an entire generation of ambitious young "colonials" were being sent to study.

These young colonials discovered as much about themselves and each other as they discovered about Europe, and they would become the backbone of the nationalist movements throughout the British colonies. Many were the children of the elite of their colonies, but a large number were also from middle-class families that had envisioned their sons

manning the native posts of the Empire, not plotting to destroy it. While most did return well equipped to become the doctors, lawyers, engineers, and civil servants of the colony, they also knew how to organize secret societies, set up printing presses, and write the sort of articles that could land them in jail. Many of these men would directly challenge the imperial order during and after the future Great War, and several were mentors to the next generation of colonial leaders.

In examining the role of these young expatriates in sustaining the nationalist movements of their native colonies, we can see that the use of European space, both physically and conceptually, was crucial to the political development of anti-imperial movements. It was in Europe that nationalists from across the British Empire met and then collaborated for the first decades of the twentieth century. These connections were maintained even after the individuals involved returned to their homes, either through personal communication or through the living network of people and publications that was woven from the geographical base of the metropolises. This network played an important part in the growth, intellectually and in numbers, of the nationalist movements.

It was also through this network that an “imagined community” was created, one that included multiple nationalisms. Together the expatriates imagined a world in which “nations” would be the primary unit of political organization and empires would be not merely defunct but unacceptable.² Thus, the Habermasian “public space” provided by the metropolises was not just one of noncoercive democratic discourse among individuals, but an arena in which nationalisms could define themselves horizontally among each other, as opposed to vertically against the colonial Great Powers, and posit an alternative future. This future, however, required that the public space be used in ways that undermined the power of the societies that were physically hosting it.

Habermas abroad

Habermas’s own work concerns the public sphere and civil society that originally developed in Europe during the eighteenth century as a result of the rise of bourgeois society. Habermas argues that this class of citizens

was and is crucial to the development and maintenance of modern representative democracy. However, he has never addressed the effects of such a public sphere and resulting social discourse on much of the rest of the world. Habermas himself acknowledges this gap in the *New Left Review*, admitting that he has little to say about “anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles in the Third World,” although he is “aware of the fact that this is a eurocentrically limited view.”³ Critics of Habermas such as Edward Said and Jean-François Lyotard point out that this lack of engagement is problematic, not only in terms of recent attempts to apply Habermas’s claims in a cosmopolitan or transnational context, but also—and especially—when juxtaposed with Habermas’s “continuing commitment to what he calls the project of modernity, and thus to the Enlightenment goal of political emancipation upon the basis of knowledge claims that are, in some sense, objectively defensible.”⁴ Said is perhaps the most directly critical, calling Habermas “today’s leading Frankfurt theorist” and saying that “Frankfurt School critical theory, despite its seminal insights into the relationship between domination, modern society, and the opportunities for redemption through art as critique, is stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperialist resistance, and oppositional practice in the empire.”⁵

This chapter represents an attempt to apply some of Habermas’s formulations to such an anti-imperialist and cosmopolitan context, in order not only to examine the effects of the yet-adolescent European public sphere on other societies *at that time*, but also to suggest avenues for further study, both historical and contemporary, in the nonhegemonic contexts in which the majority of the world’s population lives. The study below demonstrates both the usefulness and some of the limitations of Habermas’s formulation of a public discursive arena in relation to marginalized and expatriate communities. It also sheds light on the effect of the existence of the European public sphere on other parts of the world, and the dangers such a discursive space posed for European political and cultural dominance during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even while it strengthened European representative governance and social cohesion.⁶ Presumably, other historical examples will further clarify the relative appropriateness of Habermas’s formulation of public spheres in these contexts.

Nationalism and assassination

The murder of Prime Minister Boutros Ghali Pasha in Cairo on 20 February 1910 shocked a country that had not seen a political assassination in generations, despite the living memory of an armed revolution.⁷ Egyptians had only recently begun discussing political issues publicly after two decades of relative silence following the exile of many of the popular leaders following the British occupation of the country in 1882. The first political parties had just been formed in 1907 and public opinion was still divided over what attitude to take towards the occupying power that claimed to have brought economic and social prosperity to the masses through efficient and uncorrupt governance. Many of the middle and upper classes recalled that Britain had claimed the occupation would be temporary when they marched into the country a generation ago, and the Dinshaway incident of 1906 had legitimized many nationalist complaints about the British.⁸ Furthermore, the relatively young khedive [viceroy] was anxious to expand his power and autonomy over what was legally his own kingdom. In his ambitions, however, he was engaged in a love-hate relationship with the nationalist movement, which also wished to see British control over the country terminated but which called for a constitution and a form of representative government that would result in a limited monarchy.

In the midst of this, Boutros Ghali, an elder statesman who had survived the vagaries of Egyptian politics for decades, was chosen as a compromise candidate to serve as prime minister and mediate between the Khedive and the British Consul. Ghali had alienated many young nationalists by accepting the portfolio of Prime Minister under the extreme limitations imposed upon Parliament. Further, as one of three judges, he voted for the harsh punishments meted out during the Dinshaway trials. When he argued for the unpopular extension of the Suez Canal concession, the Nationalist (Watani) Party's papers were extremely critical of not just the concession but the Prime Minister himself. The fact that he was a Copt [Egyptian Christian] also played a part in popular resentment, as many Muslims felt that the British authorities favored Christians in government appointments. When Ghali was shot by a Muslim Watanist, many interpreted the motive as religious hatred as well as nationalist fervor, despite the complete lack of evidence of religious bigotry.

Ghali's 25-year-old shooter, Ibrahim Nassif al-Wardani, was the son of a minor notable who had been sent for study abroad in 1908 after the death of his father. The young man had become committed to the Egyptian nationalist movement while studying in London, Paris, and Lausanne. During his stay there, Wardani had become close to Watani Party President Muhammad Farid.⁹ Wardani had remained active in the Watani Party upon returning to Egypt in 1909 and shot the Prime Minister a year later. At his trial, Wardani declared that what he had done was his patriotic duty and went to the gallows insisting that he had killed a traitor who served the British and not the Egyptians. British authorities in Cairo and in London followed the trial and execution closely, and many noted that several of Egypt's most extreme young nationalists were actually graduates of European universities. This is what prompted the request for a head count by Secretary of State Edward Grey in 1911.

The government authorities thus were alarmed to discover that Wardani belonged to a cell within the Watani party, the Society of Fraternal Solidarity [al-Tadamun al-Akhawi], which communicated in ciphers and seemed to be researching means of gaining arms or bombs. The authorities noted that most of the members of the Society were students, although there were a few recent graduates in government employment.¹⁰ Much to their chagrin, the police were unable to prosecute these men as there was no law in Egypt outlawing such secret clubs. They did, however, manage to get most of the students expelled from their schools, a tactic that backfired in a few notable cases because it sent the young men abroad to complete their education at a remove from British oversight.¹¹ Between France, Switzerland, and the United States, there was no shortage of universities willing to take tuition-paying students and little desire to police activity that was not directed against the host country. In Germany and the Ottoman Empire, in fact, such students were recruited and often even monetarily supported in the years leading up to the Great War.

The Egyptian newspapers made much of Wardani's nationalist activity and foreign education, implying that these two elements might explain how the son of a respectable family could become a murderer. In fact, the usually anti-British paper *al-Mu'ayyid* claimed Wardani's willingness to commit political violence was a direct result of his Western education.¹² Similarly, the Occupation-sympathetic newspaper *al-Muqattam* had noted the previous year that far too many students sent to study abroad

became involved in nationalist activities.¹³ Three years later, the British Consul-General to Egypt, Lord Kitchener, in responding to Sir Edward Grey's aforementioned request, also noted that "all these students ... have a tendency to devote themselves to politics, often of a dangerous and subversive character, and they attend meetings where they openly advocate a revolution in this country ... Unless some check is put on these proceedings, I greatly fear that ... they may easily become a menace to the maintenance of tranquility and order in this country."¹⁴

The official organ of the British Occupation, the *Egyptian Gazette*, implied that Wardani's act was directly inspired by an Indian assassin of a British official in London the previous year.¹⁵ While we can not connect Wardani's actions directly to Madanlal Dhingra, the Indian assassin, there is considerable evidence that Wardani had met and worked with some of Dhingra's "radical nationalist" friends while in Europe. British Criminal Intelligence even belatedly discovered that there had been a secret Indo-Egyptian Association during the tenures of both assassins in London, although they could not conclusively establish that either had belonged to it.¹⁶ According to Ahmad Fouad Nassar, a founding member of the Egyptian Society in Lausanne, however, Wardani and Dhingra actually had met when Wardani was in London in 1908.¹⁷

Certainly Wardani had been well aware of Dhingra's crime and his declared motives, as the Watani party had followed Dhingra's case closely. In fact, in the days following the assassination of Curzon-Wylie, the discussion of Madanlal Dhingra's nationalist motives was far more openly discussed in the newspapers of Egypt than they were in India. Everyone in Egypt knew that an Indian youth had shot a British official in the crowded vestibule of London's Imperial Institute and declared his crime to be a patriotic act in defense of his country. Dhingra maintained the stance that he acted with moral justification as his victim was part of a system that "enslaved" millions of Indians. He was hanged on 17 August 1909, and the Watani Party paper, *al-Liwa'*, ran afoul of the newly reinstated Egyptian Press Law on that day for publishing a poem calling the executed assassin a hero.¹⁸ Given that the controversial editor of the paper was one of Wardani's good friends, it is hard to imagine that Wardani was not conscious of the parallels between Dhingra's actions and those he himself would take a few months later. Boutros Ghali himself had expressed

concern at the time that that “some overstrung student, ignorant peasant or bemused *hashāsh* [would] emulate the Indian assassin [Dhingra] at the expense of some Egyptian official, conceivably himself.”¹⁹ Thus, the British editors of the *Egyptian Gazette* were perhaps closer to the truth than they realized when they called the nationalists “Students of Dhingra.”²⁰

Organizing sedition in Europe

It was easy for impressionable young men to be caught up in nationalist activities while in Europe, where societies of expatriate students were springing up in every major city. Wardani had become involved through an Egyptian student club, one of many that were directly affiliated with the Watani Party. In fact, even before the Society of Brotherly Solidarity was discovered and broken up in Cairo, the by-laws defining a quorum had had to be reinterpreted to require that only half of the members be *currently present in Egypt*, because so many of them were abroad.²¹ Muhammad Farid’s memoirs are full of references to the various student groups with which he worked all over Europe from the time he became president of the Party in 1908. These students became even more important after 1912, when all of Farid’s activities had to be carried out from abroad due to his self-imposed exile from Egypt.

It is also in Europe that concrete alliances were being built between Egyptian nationalists and their counterparts from other colonies. Among the most obvious of these is Muhammad Farid’s friendship with Madame Bhikaji Cama, an Indian also based in Paris whom he mentions warmly in his memoirs.²² Both Farid and British Criminal Intelligence noted that Cama’s home was a gathering place for activists from India, Egypt, Ireland, and Africa as well as members of the early Socialist movement.²³ In addition to Farid, Cama’s many regular visitors included the French socialist Jean Longuet,²⁴ the Indian activist Shyamaji Krishnavarma,²⁵ and the MP of the Socialist Party in Britain, James Keir Hardie.²⁶ The leaders of colonial and European radicals would meet students who gathered in Cama’s home and elsewhere to discuss politics and policies, and the education the young men received in these informal seminars was no less crucial to their futures than their formal coursework. It was perhaps due

to the connections forged in Cama's salon that "Young Egypt" and "Young Ireland" were usually mentioned along with "Young India" in Lounguet's *L'Humanité*, which saw all of them as allied with Socialism against the common enemy, imperialism.

Paris had become the center of anti-British nationalist activism for the Indians after the Curzon-Wylie assassination, since the headquarters of the "extremists" among the Indian expatriate community, Krishnavarma's India House, had been closed by the authorities. Most of its denizens left England altogether when it became clear during the investigation that not only had Dhingra lived there while planning the assassination but that he had received, at the very least, moral support for his plan in that setting. This move had made the Indians even closer to the Egyptians, as many more Egyptian students were studying in France than in Britain. It is ironic that Madame Cama brought together various sorts of "radicals" *against* European governments in the same type of salon that initially attracted Habermas's interest in the constructive aspects of public discursive space.²⁷

Spreading the word: Congresses and newspapers

More than one nationalist paper was the beneficiary of Cama's organizational ability. The Watani Party paper in Egypt, *al-Liwa'*, and its European-language versions, *The Egyptian Standard* and *L'Étandard Egyptienne*, often carried articles from Cama's own *Bande Mataram* and Krishnavarma's *Indian Sociologist*, both banned Indian nationalist journals.²⁸ It also carried notes from the British socialist paper *Justice* and the New York-based *Gaelic American*. A second Cama-financed paper, *Talvar* [Sword], was based in Berlin and edited by Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, a personal friend of both Madanlal Dhingra and Muhammad Farid.²⁹ With the exception of *Justice*, all of these papers had to be printed outside of the reach of British authorities in Geneva or other European cities, and all—including *Justice*—were proscribed in India. Nonetheless, copies were regularly found being smuggled into the colonies and *al-Liwa'* and her sister publications could be counted on to quote from them regularly.

In these papers we see an excellent example of Benedict Anderson's imagined communities through print, as these papers not only shared

articles but clearly stated goals. While the intended audience or specific subject matter differed from newspaper to newspaper, each one ultimately wanted to end British imperialism and saw itself as allied with the others. Indeed, it might be argued that one of the reasons for the existence of the sister publications of *al-Liwa'* was to communicate with sympathizers from the other movements. The journals would even share personnel, as they were dependent on volunteers to operate. Thus Mansour Rifaat, one of the Egyptian students in Paris, helped edit *Bande Mataram* while Chattopadhyaya, Dhingra's friend, worked with his Egyptian colleagues on editing their articles and speeches in English.³⁰ Furthermore, the papers would cooperate in getting through colonial customs and past censors. For example, the *Gaelic American* was discovered in French India (Pondicherry) with *Indian Sociologist* and *Bande Mataram* wrapped inside it.³¹ Here we see an alliance in nationalist printing, if not print capitalism, that reflects the shared agenda.³²

Congresses were another example of the expatriate experience of European public spheres. In 1909, for example, the Egyptian Watanists set up an annual meeting called the Egyptian Youth Congress in Geneva which drew students from all over Europe, including Wardani. The second gathering of this congress, in September 1910, was described by its secretary as having been organized in Madame Cama's home.³³ The conference was supposed to have been held in Paris, but the French authorities, acting "entirely on its own initiative because it did not desire that Paris should become the center of an anti-British crusade," decided to ban it.³⁴ At the last minute the venue was changed to Brussels, where Labour M.P. Keir Hardie gave a speech in which he warned the delegates about the dangers of Britain's policy of dividing religious and ethnic communities in their colonies, referring to both the Indian and Egyptian situations. *Bande Mataram's* editor Lala Har Dayal also spoke, and is recorded by British Intelligence as "causing a stir (by) rising and calling upon all Egyptians to refuse to enter the Egyptian Army."³⁵ This suggestion led to a second directly out of British nightmares when "(a)n Irish delegate proposed the formation of an Egyptian, Indian and Irish Congress so as to unite in one gathering the victims of English domination."³⁶ Since both Egyptian and Indian nationalists at this point had gathered guns and bombs in their home countries, the Criminal Intelligence Reports demonstrate the real concern with which the authorities greeted such ideas.

Krishnavarma also created some consternation when he sent a cable to the conference offering a prize in the name of “the martyr Wardani” for an essay on the best means to achieve home rule in the colonies. Since the Ghali assassination had already split the Watani Party in Egypt, Muhammad Farid was put in an awkward position, as the activists present in Brussels had no major objections to the idea. Since the “moderate” base in Egypt disapproved of illegal or violent acts, Farid, to allay their concerns, claimed the idea was against the principles of the Watani Party. It may have been, technically; but an observer might be forgiven for not realizing that. Despite the Party’s insistence that it disapproved of Wardani’s act, he was defended in court by the Party’s vice-president and the current president Farid’s ex-legal partner.³⁷ Although they failed, and Wardani was hanged on 28 June 1910, the *Egyptian Gazette* claimed the Party had formed a fund to help his mother.³⁸ While a number of the older members of the Party’s governing board had expressed concern about the increasing radicalization of the youth, Farid himself hardly seemed opposed to political violence. The young men who were studying abroad were certainly not afraid to discuss it, whether in his presence, in print, or in their meetings.

The metropole

As we can see, the European metropolises played a defining role in nationalist awakening through the students who began or sharpened their political activism there. This is an aspect of the metropole that has not been sufficiently addressed, despite a number of very insightful works on the role of the metropole in imperial and colonial identity. While the work of such theorists as Wallerstein has addressed the economic and the sociological role of the metropolises (the heart of the *core*), his macrosystem approach does not—perhaps *can not*—reflect the very real influences of individuals and small groups on societies.³⁹ On the other hand, Benedict Anderson’s seminal work on the subject, *Imagined Communities*, does address the role of individuals and small groups, and is far more sensitive to that ephemeral entity, “culture.”⁴⁰ In particular, Anderson’s conception of the role of the metropole in the education of

upper and middle class Creoles and the circular “pilgrimages” toward the metropole undertaken by the Creole/colonial bureaucrat is similar to the phenomenon being described here. However, Anderson’s discussion of the metropole is largely restricted to its effect on Creole nationalism, a quite different animal than the type of anti-colonialism being forged in Africa and Asia. Also, Anderson’s discussion of the psychological impact of the metropole on nationalism is—in complete contrast to Wallerstein—on the scale of the individual. The group identity formed as a result of this impact is presented as one in which the group does share a set of experiences, but these are not forged *through shared deliberations* on those experiences. Anderson’s nationalists come together through alienation from the metropole; the nationalists in this story seek each other *in and through* the metropole, and across national/ethnic boundaries. The metropole for them is a multidimensional, and often positive and positivist, experience.

In the metropolises, these budding nationalists not only found avenues in which to express and organize their programs but also allies to help develop them. Europe provided a meeting place for activists of various persuasions and even opposing viewpoints, who together were engaged in imagining a new world order. This conglomeration of individuals could *only* meet in a metropole and indeed could only communicate in a metropolitan language, an aspect of transnationalism that deserves further study. Not only did the metropolises gather together nationalists across divides that might be insurmountable in their homelands, but the laws of Europe also provided a safe haven to dissidents who could not be prosecuted in the same way in England or France as they could be in the colonies. Note, for example, that attempts by the British authorities to ban the 1910 Egyptian Youth Conference, while successful in France, were unsuccessful in Belgium. As Belgian law would not allow the banning of any open meeting that did not advocate the overthrow of the Belgian monarch, British Intelligence had to settle for sending their own informants to monitor the activities. Similarly, access to funding could not be limited in the same way in the metropolises as in the colonies; not only was the economy far more diffuse than the semi-oligarchical economies of many colonies, but the laws protecting private property and personal use of wealth were far more stringent.

Finally, the freedoms of speech and assembly so dear to the hearts of the “civilized races” could hardly be suspended in the streets of Europe when a colonial walked on them. Thus, the nationalists were free to disseminate their propaganda to foreign sympathizers, other colonial expatriates, and even back to the colony by dodging the censors. The many papers started in Europe were able to print texts that were impossible to circulate within the colony; even calls for the elimination of colonial officials could not be stopped if printed in Berlin or Geneva. Financed by older established figures but manned by the young colonials who put together the articles in addition to (and sometimes at the expense of) their studies, these papers were zealously distributed and smuggled into the colonies or paraphrased by other papers to the same effect.

In response to Ashis Nandy’s argument about the ambivalence of the colonial encounter, I would argue that a reverse effect was also in motion. Even as the elites of the colonial world became more “English” or “French” they were also simultaneously becoming more “native.” This observation is not to deny Nandy’s claim that colonialism included the transformation of “the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category ... (embedding it) in structures and in minds.”⁴¹ Rather, the effort of the colonized to define themselves by the internalized values of the colonizer existed *along with* a paradoxical desire to differentiate themselves from the same. Thus, even as the Indians we have met here were emphasizing the “martial” or “virile” aspects of classical Hindu mythology against the British image of their “effeminacy,” they were celebrating their “spirituality” in opposition to Western “materialism.” Though the colonials accepted many of the dichotomies defined by their colonial masters, they also questioned the value ascribed to each element of the dichotomies.

In a concrete sense, living in the metropole affected the colonials in completely different ways than did contact with the colonizer or with one another in the colony. The very act of leaving home made these young men more aware of their nationality, just as the role of minority or even second-class citizen opened them up to perceiving inequities that might naturally be accepted in their home countries. The relationship between colonial and colonizer was also very different in the metropole not only because the colonial was now in the minority, but also because

the self-definition of the metropolitan—the greengrocer, the bus-driver, or the laundress—was hardly the same as that of someone who had chosen to travel to the colony, for whatever reason. To use Lyotard's term, the metanarrative that governed day-to-day life in the metropole, while certainly colored by the colonial experience, was not defined by it as it was in the colony, particularly for an educated middle-class colonial.

Thus a certain sense of solidarity was fostered, not only between students from the same colony, but also with students from different colonies but very similar political and social concerns. The era was one of colonial self-evaluation and personal, as well as national, redefinition. Such a process requires support and feedback, which was welcomed more from sympathizers than from "overlords." Furthermore, it requires, as Dana Villa explains, a "specifically political space distinct from the state and the economy, an institutionally bounded discursive arena that is home to citizen debate, deliberation, agreement, and action."⁴² Villa's elaboration of Habermas's and Hannah Arendt's public sphere is also a useful description of what sort of discursive arena was needed for the colonials to become trans/nationalist activists. While the institutional boundaries of this discourse were defined by the colonizer, there was a real—if shifting—space which the otherwise disenfranchised colonials could access in the metropole.

This is not to claim for a moment that Europe provided an "ideal speech situation," in that it was hardly free from internal or external coercion. Externally, the coercive limits placed on speech were obvious, not only in terms of policing by governments but also by the powerful limitations of public perception: as second-class guests in their host countries, the students had to be very careful to not attract too much public notice or provoke hostility. It was clear to everyone, for example, that the dissolution of India House was due more to the attention of the press than to any government plan. Internally, the most obvious limitation placed on participation was simply one of access: only members of certain classes would be able to study in the metropolises and join in the discourse. There were other limitations as well. It was possible to be ostracized from the group for certain behavior, from disagreement on methods or suspicion of spying for the authorities to personality conflicts. There was also the problem of funding: enough of the nationalists in the metropolises were

living on the largesse of the others, or on money raised by an organized party, that consensus could—at least theoretically—be bought or extorted.

Furthermore, as Lyotard has pointed out, the need for consensus reinforces a “metanarrative,” a way of knowing that is totalizing in scope—in this case not the one of the imperial power but of the nationalist activists.⁴³ The set of shared assumptions that Habermas requires for a public sphere to develop is the same set of shared assumptions that defines the limits of knowledge and truth in Lyotard’s narratives. The Egyptian Watanists’ original narrative included a special place for the Ottoman and Islamic legacy on Egyptian identity; questioning this aspect of the Egyptian Nationalist program was akin to questioning the anti-imperial movement *in toto* for many of the young men involved. Thus, the argument among Egyptians about the role of the Khedive in their movement split the group more than once. During World War I, a similar controversy over the role of Ottomanism in Egyptian nationalism would destroy many of the alliances forged in this pre-War era. Also, some competing strands of nationalism were so secularist that the Watani Party remained distant from them even during the interwar period, when their goals were compatible with the Watanists’ on many other points. It was the narrative of the secularists of the interwar era that became the template for the metanarrative of Egyptian nationalism that exists even today.

Another obvious class excluded from the expatriate nationalist discourse, as it was from much of the hegemonic narrative as well, was that of women. More than one European woman was involved in these student-cum-nationalist groups, often through a romantic relationship; but women from the colonies were largely absent. Not only was it rare for females from colonial societies to be sent abroad to study, but those that were abroad were usually subject to strict supervision. Thus, the only “native” women to appear at the nationalist conferences were sisters, daughters, or wives of a student activist.⁴⁴ Madame Cama lamented this fact during her speech at the 1910 Egyptian Congress, pointing out that she saw no Egyptian women in the assembly. She also complained that many of the talented sons of the colonies were marrying foreigners while abroad and not returning to the women of their homeland.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, the experience in Europe also gave these students an opportunity to bridge differences within their communities and with

other nationalist movements, as the commonality of colonial status outweighed the differences when the expatriates were a small minority in an alien, dominant, and often threatening society. Not a few of the alliances described above seemed based on personal friendships no doubt more easily developed among “fellow colonials” abroad than between a native and a foreigner within any colony. Thus, we find Chattopadhyaya moving into the same building as Farid in Paris when his own flat was being remodeled,⁴⁶ while another Indian activist stopped in Egypt on the way back from completing his degree in order to visit an Egyptian friend who was a noted “extreme Egyptian nationalist.”⁴⁷ That these students became friends while abroad is hardly noteworthy. However, that national activists from different colonies did so at the same time as they were organizing their separate programs against British imperialism cannot be overlooked. Friendship or conspiracy; even today it is hard to tell where one ended and the other began. For the Empires’ young expatriates in the early 1900s, their time in Europe allowed them to develop both.

Violence and enlightenment

It is telling that the metropole provides a connection between the two murders mentioned here. That political violence and targeted assassination seem to be the first obvious modern political imports from Europe (or India) to Egypt is also revealing. It was precisely the issue of political violence that was under discussion in the expatriate salons and congresses of the metropolises. The students who gathered in the colonial metropolises discussed Russian revolutionaries and Mazzini’s writings; Gandhi was a minor lawyer in South Africa and the concept of passive resistance had not yet entered the political lexicon. While Wardani claimed he was not acting on behalf of the Nationalist Party in assassinating Ghali, he *was* acting in character with the milieu to which he had been exposed and the ideals that he had developed through his association with anti-imperialists in Europe, not Egypt—however fervent the nationalist zeal in the homeland.

Not enough attention has been given to the very real commitment Wardani evidenced toward the Enlightenment ideals so beloved of his

executioners—and indeed, of Habermas himself. By any rational measure, Wardani's ideals and motivations were far more the product of European liberalism than they were of any religious or "native" commitment. The widespread and abiding belief that Wardani's act was based on religious hatred was particularly ironic given that even the British Consul wrote that "the motives of the crime were purely political. The murderer had no personal grudge against the victim, *and was not attacking under the influence of religious fanaticism, and in defence of his deed merely repeated the accusations which have, in season and out of season, been alleged against Butrous Pasha, in violent and threatening language in the columns of the Nationalist Press.*"⁴⁸ Wardani himself never used religiously derogatory language concerning his victim; throughout his trial he referred only to his nationalist motivations.

His actions in prison were also in keeping with those of a devout Muslim committed to the ideal of Enlightenment-style nationalism and liberty. He spent a great deal of time working on a project to write a Constitution for a Muslim government, using his shoelaces since he was not allowed a pen. Indeed, he had been one of the members of the Egyptian Society in Europe that openly disavowed the Khedive's patronage when Abbas Hilmi refused to honor their 1908 request for a Constitution.⁴⁹ Furthermore, his reading list in prison consisted of "*The English Constitution* by Walter Bagehot; a French political history of contemporary Europe; Rousseau's *Contrat Social*; a volume of Arabic poetry and the Koran."⁵⁰ Clearly, Wardani not only participated in the expatriate nationalist discourse but was also committed to importing the public sphere, as well as the civil and government institutions that created it, home to Egypt.

Unfortunately for the Watani Party, the popular belief was that Wardani's motive was based on Ghali's status as a Copt, and this soon overshadowed the nonsectarian nationalist interpretation in the popular consciousness. Thus the immediate result of Wardani's crime was not to raise nationalist spirits as much as to exacerbate communal tensions. Furthermore, the difference between the "extreme" Watanists and the "moderates" became clear to all Egyptians; while moderates condemned any sort of political violence, the debate within the extreme Watani group was not on the issue of violence but rather on the role of the Khedive

and other power centers within Egyptian nationalism. Certainly within Egypt itself, the violence associated with “foreign” movements, such as the Indian or the Russian, was far more openly condemned than praised; and Egyptian nationalist papers tried to distance themselves from the political fallout of Wardani’s act. Meanwhile, the expatriate Indian nationalist journals celebrated him. Krishnavarma wrote, “There is surely something sublime in the indifference to the terrors of imminent death displayed by this brave Egyptian martyr, who in his last moments on earth could, like the Indian martyr Dhingra, turn his thoughts solely upon the grand destiny of his country and remain indifferent to the cruel fate impending over him.”⁵¹

Conclusion

Historians have often echoed the claim of many a British official that it was only the effect of Western education or exposure to the “free air of Europe” that inspired nationalist aspirations in the colonies. That most certainly is not the point of this article. Nor is it to argue that Habermas’s public sphere did not or could not provide the “non-coercively unifying, consensus building force of a discourse in which participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favor of a rationally motivated agreement.”⁵² Rather, this paper seeks to demonstrate that there are at once real advantages and severe limitations to Habermas’s formulation as applied to a particular nonhegemonic example, and that this information may be useful for other applications.

The role of students in Europe was crucial to the development and the organization of the nascent national movements for both psychological and pragmatic reasons tied directly to the existence of a public sphere that existed in Europe but not in the colonies. Pragmatically, locations in Europe gave these men freedom to move, associate, organize, publish, and protest in ways that were completely unimaginable in their own lands. We have seen how the laws of press freedom created a constant headache for British customs and censors, as subversive literature had to be stopped at point of entry to the colonies rather than at their source. Similarly, guarantees of freedom of association and of *habeas corpus* in Europe made it

possible for students to work diligently against the authorities in broad daylight, as long as they did not get caught assisting actual physical revolt; to call for revolt was not illegal in Europe as it was in the colonies. Thus, the public sphere cultivated in Europe and protected by its own society's shared assumptions was a direct threat to the political, economic, and cultural dominance of that society globally.⁵³

We can also see how important Europe was for the development of Benedict Anderson's imagined community, an important part of modern understandings of nationalism. Although the vehicle for this community is not Anderson's print capitalism, it nonetheless can be called a print community. Indeed, these papers were an important part of the creation and presentation of a community of shared ideals and goals across time and space; British intelligence records confirm that they were widely disseminated in the colonies despite strong efforts to stop them. The fact that nationalists from other colonies, including not just India but Ireland and Russia, shared in the production and consumption of the Egyptian nationalist papers is significant in demonstrating a shared community and an anticipated new world order, no doubt very similar to that described in President Wilson's ill-fated Fourteen Points after the Great War. That the ideal was not realized does not negate the clear evidence of its existence, and the power it had to move these men.

Psychologically, these raw and idealistic young men were far from their usual support systems and relied closely on one another as an alien and often despised minority, creating a sense of solidarity and mission that was sustained at least partially by the liberal and humanistic principles lauded among the educated of Europe. These young men had to be quite aware that these principles were not put into practice in their home countries. But in addition to lessons on the unevenly realized visions of European humanistic liberalism, they were exposed to the natives of other colonies who were experiencing the same revelations. In European universities, these colonials from across the empires discovered something in common with one another that led to an international and historical consciousness, one that helped give their respective nationalist movements both more breadth and more depth than could be fashioned by calls to narrower local causes infused with quotes from Voltaire and Rousseau. In fact, it is possible that the Socialists failed in many of their recruitment

goals among these students not just because of their bourgeois backgrounds but because of the presence of other options in resisting their colonial status. During the interwar era, expatriate colonials felt there were only two choices before them: the status quo or Socialism. For these young men, before World War I, there were still other games in town. Thus the public sphere of Europe was an instrumental cause of, and not just the inspiration for, the demand for similar space in the colonies.

Many recent discussions of the public sphere address contemporary postcolonial societies and the various relationships between the public sphere, civil society, government structures and international institutions. Still more are concerned with the role of new media, most immediately the Internet, in expanding or modifying such spheres; and, of course, the idea that a truly *global* public sphere is being created has profound implications and has attracted an understandable amount of attention. To date, however, there have been few studies of the public sphere and civil society in the colonial context and how these institutions have shaped the character of postcolonial societies. This information can help us understand the challenges these societies face today in the development of a public sphere, and indeed, whether or not promoting such a sphere is necessarily the best route to stronger civil society or democracy in these situations. The more fundamental issues still being debated among Habermas's commentators—for example, whether consensus is or should be the purpose driving public discourse—may also become clearer with a more sophisticated grasp of how such discourses have been conducted in other contexts.

Notes

1. Boutros Ghali (1846–1910) was the first native-born Egyptian to serve as prime minister. Shortly before his assassination, Ghali had argued for the extension of the Suez Canal Company's concession, a highly unpopular proposal among ordinary Egyptians. These and other "treasonous" acts by Ghali were cited as reasons for his murder.
2. The term "imagined community" is taken from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
3. Jürgen Habermas, *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews*, edited by Peter Dews (London: Verso, 1986), 187.
4. *The Literary Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Jürgen Habermas" (by Edgar Andrew, 30 March 2001), <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&uid=1925>.
5. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 278.
6. Indeed, the author would argue that it is precisely this sort of situation which demonstrates the inherent paradox of the European Enlightenment, whose epistemological relationship to imperialism and modern colonialism has been discussed extensively by Said. The basic weakness of a theorized set of shared assumptions has been elucidated by Jean-François Lyotard, who has claimed that a "metanarrative" will impose coercive limitations in any discourse that seeks to create a large consensus. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report of Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), particularly sections IV, IX and X.
7. The 'Urabi Revolution had been the trigger for the British Occupation of Egypt in 1882. I deliberately use "revolution" rather than "rebellion" or "mutiny" as there was an effort to change the structure of the government and society and not merely replace certain parties in positions of power.
8. Dinshaway was a village in the Delta where a group of British officers had gotten into a confrontation with the local peasants while pigeon-shooting. Although the only shots fired were by the officers, there was a fatality when one soldier died of heat stroke after running away. The Occupation authorities, however, reacted to the incident with a hastily organized special tribunal in which 52 villagers were tried for murder and a number of draconian punishments were handed down, including hard labor, flogging, and four hangings. Dinshaway soon became a rallying cry, and even a number of English observers protested.

9. Muhammad Farid (1868–1919) was a successful lawyer who devoted his energies and personal fortune to the Nationalist Party formed by Mustafa Kamil in 1899. He funded the founding of the party's journal, *al-Liwa'*, and took over leadership of the Party upon Kamil's unexpected demise in 1908. He left Egypt forever in 1912 after a conviction *in absentia* for seditious articles, and spent the rest of his life in Geneva and Berlin. He died in Berlin in 1919 while a popular revolution was taking place against the Occupation in Egypt under the leadership of a newly formed party, the Wafd.
10. Public Records Office in Kew, UK (henceforth PRO): FO 141/802, 7.
11. Among these expelled students was Shafiq Mansour, one of the men who would return from studying law in France to kill Sir Lee Stack, the British Commander of the Anglo-Egyptian Army, almost fifteen years later. Another, Ahmad Fouad, would finish his medical studies in Istanbul and remain there to support the Ottoman Empire against the British during the First World War.
12. Quoted in Samir Seikely, "Prime Minister and Assassin: Boutros Ghali and Wardani," *Middle East Studies XIII* (1977): 123.
13. *Al-Muqattam*, 25 September 1909.
14. PRO: FO 371/1363, Kitchener to Grey, 93. According to Kitchener, there were 260 Egyptians studying in England: sixty on government scholarships, and two hundred at the expense of their families.
15. *Egyptian Gazette*, 21 February 1910, 3. Madanlal Dhingra had also killed a man he felt was an enemy of his nation in front of many witnesses at London's Imperial Institute. His victim, Sir William Curzon-Wylie, was political aide-de-camp to the Secretary of State for India and had served in India itself for many years. Dhingra also claimed that his execution would inspire the nation to act against the British occupation, an idea Wardani expressed as well in PRO: FO 141/802, 4.
16. National Archives of India, Foreign Department (henceforth NAI-FD): External B; Jan 1911 #549, 17–18.
17. Ahmad Fouad Nassar, *Kul Shay' wa-l-'Alam*, 8 March 1930 (Issue 226). Wardani, along with Mahmoud Azmi and 'Abd al-Hamid Sa'id, had just set up a Young Egypt branch in Paris and was apparently traveling around Europe on this mission. In London, Dhingra and other "Indian revolutionaries" had met with their Egyptian friends at the home of Ibrahim Ramzi to discuss the Suez Canal concession. Nassar misidentifies Dhingra as the assassin of "Curzon, ruler of India."

18. Abdal Aziz Jawish (1872–1929), the editor of *al-Liwa'*, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for the articles on Dhingra and for an earlier article on the anniversary of Dinshaway, the site of a British atrocity four years earlier, in which he had excoriated not just the Occupation but the Egyptians who had been complicit in it, most particularly Boutros Ghali. For examples of the authorities' concerns, see PRO: FO 371/660, letter no. 98, 20 August 1909.
19. PRO: FO 371/660, letter no. 98, 20 August 1909. A *hashāsh* is someone addicted to hashish.
20. *Egyptian Gazette*, 21 February 1910, 3.
21. Malak Badrawi, *Political Violence in Egypt 1910–1925: Secret Societies, Plots, and Assassinations* (London: Curzon, 2000), 65.
22. Bhikaji Rustom Cama (1861–1936) was posthumously named the “mother of the Indian revolution.” Born to a wealthy Parsi family, she spent most of her life in European capitals working on behalf of Indian independence. She is perhaps best remembered for unfurling a flag designed for a “free India” at the International Socialist Conference in Stuttgart in 1907. In addition to her financial support of Indian nationalist papers, she traveled extensively to lecture about India. Forced by Switzerland to curtail her activism during the War, she remained an eloquent, if disappointed, spokesperson for Indian independence until her death.
23. Muhammad Farid, *Awraq Muhammad Farid: Mudhakkirati ba'd al-Hijra 1904–1914* (Cairo: al-Haya al-Misriyya al-'Amma li-l-Kitab, 1978), 210–212.
24. Jean Longuet (1876–1938) was a leading French Socialist. A grandson of Karl Marx, he headed the SFIO (French Section of the International Socialist Bureau) and edited the Party's paper, *L'Humanité*.
25. Shyamaji Krishnavarma (1857–1930) was a major figure in the “extremist” Indian movement. He established a boarding house called the India House which became a nationalist organizing center and where the assassin Dhingra lived. He also started a monthly journal, *Indian Sociologist*, to be the organ of the Indian Home Rule Society. The *Sociologist* continued even when Krishnavarma relocated to Paris. He lost his influence in the decade before World War I, not least because of the closing of India House after the Curzon-Wylie assassination.
26. James Keir Hardie (1856–1915) was instrumental in the founding of the first British independent labor party in 1882. In 1892 he was elected

- Britain's first Labor MP, entering Parliament in miner's cap and tweed suit. In 1914, at the outset of World War I, he was chairman of the British section of the International Socialist Bureau.
27. Habermas's 1962 *Transformation of the Public Sphere* traced the original "public spheres" to eighteenth-century salons.
 28. Actually, Cama had established *Bande Mataram* (Hail! Motherland) after her salon was flooded by young men leaving Britain after the fallout of the Dhingra case in 1909; it ran from September 1909 to 1914. The original *Bande Mataram* had been founded in 1905 in Calcutta by Bipin Chandra Pal, who had been jailed for nationalist activities.
 29. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (1880–1937?) was the son of a famous Bengali family which included a sister who became president of the Indian National Congress. He went to London to study law in 1903 and became involved with the India House group. Charismatic and cultured, he is mentioned admiringly by Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography and shows up regularly in CID Reports before and during World War I. He remained active in anti-imperial organizations until 1938, when he "disappeared" in Russia during the Stalinist purges.
 30. Farid, 378.
 31. National Archives of India, Home Department (henceforth NAI-Home): Political B, November 1910, #17–24, Weekly Report of the Director of Criminal Intelligence (henceforth CID Weekly Report), 11 October 1910, 10.
 32. Although these papers were not capitalist, in that they were not meant to turn a profit, there is a common element of creating a shared imagined community through the medium of popular/mass print. Thus, I use the term "nationalist printing" in place of Anderson's "print capitalism."
 33. Muhammad L. Jumah, *Shahid 'ala al-'Asr, Mudhakkirat Muhammad Lutfi Jumah* (Cairo: al-Haya al-Misriyya al-'Ammah li-l-Kitab, 2000), 147. The Congress was to have been held in Paris; but the meeting was moved at the last minute to Brussels as the French authorities decided not to allow Paris to be used as a staging ground for anti-imperial activity, even if the Empire in question was not their own.
 34. PRO: FO 371/1364, Kitchener to Grey, 27 October 1912, no.117.
 35. NAI-Home: Political B, November 1910, #17–24, CID Weekly Report, 18 October 1910, 17–19.
 36. Ibid.

37. *Al-Liwa'*, 22 February 1910; PRO: FO 141/802, 6.
38. *Egyptian Gazette*, 17 May 1910.
39. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. 3, *The Second Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730–1840s* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1989).
40. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
41. Ashis Nandy. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).
42. Dana R. Villa, "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere," *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 3 (September 1992): 712.
43. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report of Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
44. Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949), for example, attended the 1910 conference with her brother, Chattopadhyaya. Quite on her own, however, she became President of the Indian National Congress in 1925 and attended the Round Table Conference with Gandhi in 1931. She would become the first woman Lieutenant Governor of a state, Uttar Pradesh, in independent India.
45. NAI-Home: Political B, November 1910, #17–24, CID Weekly Report, 18 October 1910, 17.
46. NAI-Home: Political B, June 1912, #37–40, 12.
47. NAI-Home: Political B, October 1910, #1–8, CID Weekly Report, 6 September 1910.
48. PRO: FO 371/111, EGYPT No.1 (1910), Sir Eldon Gorst on the dangerous influence of press campaigns in Egypt, 528. Emphasis Gorst's.
49. *Al-Liwa'*, 18 June 1908. See also Ahmad Fouad Nassar, "Kayf Ussisat al-Jama'iyaa al-Misriyya bi-urubba," *kul shay' wa-l-'Alam*, 9 February 1930 (Issue 222).
50. PRO: FO 141/802, note from Ronald Graham to Gorst, 30 June 1910, "Imprisonment and execution of Ibrahim Nassif al-Wardany," 2.
51. *Indian Sociologist*, 7 August 1910.
52. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. T. Burger and F. Lawrence (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1989), 315.
53. The relevance of this observation to the present world needs no explanation.

The Historical Genesis of the Public Sphere in Iraq, 1900–1963: Implications for Building Democracy in the Post-Ba‘thist Era

Eric Davis

Recent interest in applying the concept of the “public sphere” to the Middle East reflects increased concern with the lack of democratization in the region. In the West, the concept has had an enormous impact, especially following the publication of Jürgen Habermas’s *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. As is well known, Habermas’s volume laments the decline of a space that he calls the bourgeois public sphere, a process that, in his view, has undermined democracy in Europe. Habermas did not intend his concept to speak to the political traditions of non-Western societies.¹ Nevertheless, the theoretical underpinnings of the concept would seem to possess a generality that transcends any specific geographical region. While the public sphere in its most democratic form may have emerged in early modern Europe, there seems no logical reason why a space in which citizens engage in reasoned discourse, and which is not under the control of the state, should not be able to develop and function in a wide variety of social contexts. This chapter poses the following questions: What does it mean to apply the concept of the public sphere to Iraqi politics and society? What analytic traction do we derive from such an application? Can the concept help us better understand current efforts to bring about a democratic transition in Iraq? Or does the pervasive violence that has characterized post-Ba‘thist Iraq vitiate the concept’s significance?

The concept of an Arab public sphere

Prior to discussing Iraq, we need to recognize that the concept of the public sphere is relatively new to Arab analytic and political discourse. On the one hand, the concept offers the possibility of promoting a better comprehension of the possibilities of democratic change and greater individual freedoms in the Arab world. It raises important questions about the determinants of political participation, cultural tolerance, individual rights and the rule of law. These issues are of particular concern in Iraq and the Arab world where violence, political instability, authoritarian rule and the lack of movement towards democratic governance are far too prevalent.

Raising the issue of the public sphere in Arab Iraq draws attention to the question of the public sphere in Iraqi Kurdistan, Iraq's three northern Kurdish provinces. Much has been made of the development of civil society building in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially since it was able to achieve autonomy from the south following the February–March 1991 Intifada, and the subsequent imposition of a “no-fly zone” by the United States following the uprising. By extension, the literature on post-1991 Kurdistan implies a dramatic growth in the Kurdish public sphere as well.

While this essay does not devote as significant attention to the development of a Kurdish public sphere as it does to the Arab public sphere, many analysts now recognize that the optimism expressed after 1991 that Kurdistan would become a truly democratic region of Iraq was misplaced. The two main Kurdish political parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) continue to maintain a tight hold on the reins of power. Access to positions of political influence and economic power are still determined by family and personal ties to the leadership of the KDP and PUK. Civil society organizations that operate in an official capacity require government licenses. The independent media, e.g., the newspapers *Awene* and *Hawalati*, are frequently subjected to threats for articles critical of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Critics of the KRG have been sentenced to jail terms for criticizing members of the Barzani family, which controls the KDP and the KRG. Human Rights Watch has documented human rights abuses in state-run prisons.² Corruption is widespread as it is in the south. While the Kurdish public sphere will be addressed in greater detail below, the

example of Iraqi Kurdistan suggests that we think carefully about the relationship between civil society and democratization and, by extension, the relationship between the notion of the public sphere and its implications for democratization as well.³

The problems that the KRG has experienced since 1991 resulted in the creation in 2009 of a new political movement, known as Gorran [Change]. In the July 2009 KRG Regional Parliament elections, Gorran organized a vigorous campaign, despite extensive government intimidation and the firing of its candidates from government employment. Nevertheless, Gorran won 25 of the 110 seats in the KRG regional parliament. Along with the 15 seats won by a fellow opposition coalition, the Reform and Services List, the two movements were able to garner 40 seats in the parliament. In the March 2010 national parliament elections, Gorran was able to win 8 seats. These developments point to the deep dissatisfaction that large numbers of Kurds feel with the KRG political elite and to a strong desire for democratic change.

The notion of the public sphere has not been conceptually visible because most analyses of Iraqi politics have focused on the behavior of political elites. The lack of focus on nonelite dimensions of Iraqi politics and society has not only had the effect of representing political processes as venal and corrupt, but has obscured the civil society building and democratic impulses that characterized much of early and mid-twentieth-century Iraqi politics. It has also tended to obscure the efforts to reconstitute a functioning civil society following the collapse of Saddam Husayn's Ba'thist regime in 2003.

Epistemological and methodological concerns

Its conceptual utility notwithstanding, deploying the concept of the public sphere in the Arab and Iraqi context raises two sets of concerns, one epistemological and the other theoretical and normative. From an epistemological perspective, the concept's Western origins open its application and usage to the criticism of ethnocentrism. Put differently, does a concept derived from the Western historical experience enhance our ability to understand Arab politics and society? Is the use of the public

sphere in the context of Arab politics and society an example of applying an “imported” concept? Further, deploying the concept to Arab societies raises questions from an “ordinary language” philosophy perspective. Because the concept does not enjoy widespread currency in the Arab world, the lack of socially agreed-upon rules or criteria for its application, either by Arab or Western scholars, runs the risk of creating an analytic discourse that can be accessed by only a small circle of academics and intellectuals. How can a concept, whose Arabic equivalent—*al-majāllāt al-‘amma*—resonates minimally with Arab intellectuals and the educated Arab public, be of use in analyzing Iraqi and Arab politics, disseminating the results of that analysis and influencing politics in any meaningful manner?⁴

The second set of concerns is theoretical and relates to the larger framework within which to contextualize the concept of the public sphere in Iraq. What is the nature of the Iraqi public sphere? When did it make its historical appearance and in what form? What are the historical referents, specifically institutions and processes, that would allow us to speak of a public sphere in Iraq? What were the factors that promoted its development, particularly at a certain historical juncture? Is the public sphere limited to particular locales and social strata of Iraqi society? What contributions has the public sphere in Iraq made to social and political life? Answers to these questions will allow us to delineate more precisely what we mean by an Iraqi public sphere as well as to assess its impact. As I will argue, the rise of the public sphere cannot be divorced from the political economy of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iraqi society and the manner in which tribe, ethnicity and social class interacted to produce the Iraqi nationalist movement. In other words, the concept must be historically contextualized if the dynamics that determined its development, structure and impact are to be adequately understood.

If we can speak of an “Iraqi public sphere” from the early part of the twentieth century, and I will argue that we can, what are the normative implications of this analysis? Does the concept’s application to Iraq enhance our understanding of the possibilities of reestablishing civil society and promoting democracy in the post-Ba’thist era? What are the concept’s implications for those seeking to create a more participatory and tolerant Iraq? While the intention of applying concepts that

promote understandings of the development or lack of development of democratization in the Arab world is laudable, the issue of cross-cultural knowledge and the problem of a “private language” need to be addressed if we are to make sense of how the concept of the public sphere might enhance our understanding of ways to promote greater political freedom and tolerance in the Arab world. If the concept of the “public sphere” as applied to the Arab world lacks a praxis dimension, because a wide range of intellectual and political actors are unable to incorporate it in their political discourse, can the concept have a significant political and social impact?⁵

In addressing these epistemological concerns, a counterargument can be made that the problems associated with applying Western concepts in non-Western contexts are often exaggerated. In this view, inserting Western concepts into non-Western analytic and political discourse does not necessarily result in ethnocentrism. For example, a concept closely related to the public sphere, that of “civil society” [*al-mujtama‘ al-madani*], faced similar problems when it began to be used by Arab scholars such as Dr. Sa‘d al-Din Ibrahim, founder and former director of the Cairo-based Ibn Khaldun Center, who emphasized projects built around this concept.⁶ Initially, the concept was not well known or widely used in Arab political discourse and had a distinctive Western stamp. Nevertheless, the concept of civil society has achieved widespread currency in Arab political and academic circles and is now an integral part of the region’s intellectual discourse.⁷ A number of Iraqi newspapers that appeared after the Ba‘thist regime’s collapse in 2003, such as *al-Sabah* and *al-Mada*, contain specific sections devoted to civil society in their daily editions.⁸

From a different perspective, the literature on democratic transitions provides another example of the danger of overemphasizing the problems associated with applying Western concepts in non-Western contexts. The notion of the “prerequisites of democracy” that preoccupied much of the modernization literature of the late 1950s and early 1960s ultimately proved to be a poor predictor of the development of democracies in non-Western societies.⁹ The spread of democratic governance to many areas of the non-Western world during the 1990s, following the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, points to the problematic character of much of the prior theorizing on “democratic

transitions,” which argued that a nation-state needs to reach a certain level of economic development before democratic governance can take hold. The fact that many poorer countries such as Mali, Benin, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal and Bangladesh have, in recent years, been able to establish and sustain democratic polities, at least in the sense of participatory elections, suggests that, in certain instances, concepts may travel across cultural boundaries with fewer problems than might, at first glance, seem possible.

Civil society and the public sphere

An examination of the intellectual trajectory of the concept of civil society may help to better situate its (as yet) less established intellectual cousin, the public sphere, in the Arab and Iraqi context. The growth of interest in the concept of civil society in the Arab world reflects a reaction to at least three political developments during the late 1980s and 1990s. The first was the exhaustion of the ideology of pan-Arabism following the 1967 Arab–Israeli War. Instead of achieving its three promised goals, unity, freedom, and socialism [*al-waḥda*, *al-hurriya*, *al-ishtirākiyya*], pan-Arabism brought instead greater authoritarianism, intensified struggle among the most powerful Arab states over who would lead the new unified “Arab nation,” and the spread of corruption as pan-Arabist political elites exploited the state public sector for nepotistic gain after nationalizing foreign capital.

The second factor influencing the spread of the idea of civil society was the rise of Islamist political movements during the 1970s and the successful creation of an Islamic republic in Iran following the overthrow of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi’s regime in 1978–1979. Although many Arabs initially saw the Iranian revolution as anti-imperialist and a precursor of greater social and economic freedoms, the intensification of authoritarian rule and human rights abuses under the Khomeini regime undermined the idea—prevalent among pan-Arabists as well as pan-Islamists prior to the Iranian Revolution—that revolutionary change would, ipso facto, bring about the hoped for political, social and economic reforms sought by many Arab intellectuals and political organizations.

Third, the collapse of the Soviet Union and its East bloc allies in 1991 not only deprived many authoritarian pan-Arab regimes of financial and military support, but also underscored the contrast between the new democratic freedoms many former communist states came to enjoy and the lack of such freedoms in the Arab world. This concern was intensified by the spread of democracy to most non-Western regions but not to the Arab world, producing the idea of an "Arab democracy deficit." Although the importation of Western parliamentary forms of government under British and French colonial rule between World War I and World War II proved largely to be a failed experiment that discredited Western liberalism, Arab intellectuals began to reexamine Western liberal thought during the 1990s to enhance protection of the individual whose interests had been completely subordinated to the corporatism that informed regimes inspired by the two ideologies of pan-Arabism and radical Islam.

The recent Arab interest in the concept of the public sphere, a domain in which reasoned discourse can occur and which is open to large numbers of civic-minded citizens, reflects the influence of the same socio-political forces that earlier promoted the concept of civil society. In this sense, the public sphere can be seen as an extension of the concept of civil society. In large measure, interest in both concepts reflects a rejection of the rigid corporatism inherent in both pan-Arab and Islamist thinking that makes no room for individual rights or political and cultural pluralism. Increasingly, many Arab scholars, including many Iraqi intellectuals who were in the forefront of such thinking following the disastrous 1991 Gulf War and subsequent failed Intifada, have realized the extent to which the corporatist structure inherent in both ideologies has facilitated the suppression of cultural tolerance and political participation as well as the spread of human rights abuses.¹⁰

Both the concepts of civil society and the public sphere can be seen as part of a process of reexamination of Western liberal political thought which is being rehabilitated in certain Arab intellectual circles.¹¹ What implications does this process have for the possible analytic utility of the concept of the public sphere? Whether derived from the writings of Tocqueville, Mill, or Habermas, the notion is deeply embedded in the Western historical experience.¹² The emergence of individual rights, and liberal political thought more broadly defined, has not only given the

notion of public sphere a distinctive Western stamp, but has configured it as a category that has been criticized as excluding certain groups and the interests that they represent. Women, gays, people of color, and religious and ethnic groups are “undertheorized” in the liberal discourse of the public sphere.¹³ One could argue that notions of economic inequality are likewise ignored due to the failure of liberal thought, generally, to systematically theorize the concept of social class and distributive justice. The issue of historical contextualization raises the question of whether the concept of the public sphere can be “broadened” to incorporate a larger conceptual universe. This is particularly important in the Iraqi context where what we can call the public sphere has always been linked to populist [*al-shaʿbī*] political and social impulses as well as questions of social justice [*al-ʿadāla al-ijtimāʿiyya*]. A further examination of Habermas’s formulation of the public sphere might be instructive in addressing the concept’s historical and sociological specificity.

Habermas and the concept of the public sphere

In interrogating the concept of the public sphere, we find that one problem with Habermas’s original formulation is his lack of clarity on the actual dynamics of its genesis. Given this shortcoming, Habermas’s assertion that the public sphere’s conceptual utility is limited to a particular social historical experience is open to question. Habermas is clear in linking the emergence of the public sphere to the rise of capitalism and the spread of markets during the Industrial Revolution. The political changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, which led to the development of representative institutions and the notion of individual rights, were associated with the rise of a particular social stratum, namely the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, whose increased political influence was, according to Habermas, facilitated by the development of the public sphere. However, the spread of capitalism and the development of markets, the core processes of the Industrial Revolution, have not been limited to Western societies. While the democratic impulses generated by capitalism’s spread may not have been as developed in non-Western societies as those that emerged in parts of Western Europe, particularly England,

these impulses can in fact be found, suggesting the development of local public spheres outside the West.

The development of capitalist relations of production and attendant markets on a global scale would seem to indicate that the necessary conditions for the rise of the public sphere are not limited to the European experience. Contra Habermas, I argue that it is not especially useful to consider the public sphere as a “Western” concept. Rather, we should explore whether the conditions for its application exist in Iraq and, if they do, we must examine the public sphere’s functional equivalents in Iraqi society and their impact on the political process.

Applying the concept of the public sphere to Iraq necessitates constructing it in a logical and systematic manner. The logical antecedents for the rise of the public sphere, in whatever geographical locale, require significant changes in social and political *consciousness*. Creating a public sphere logically requires not only prior changes in consciousness, but a particular form of consciousness, one that embodies *discontent* with the existing political order. Further, the notion of the public sphere implies the development of a *critical sociopolitical mass*. In other words, there must be growth in the number of members of the discontented social strata who are willing to transform their feelings of discontent into forms of behavior that seek to change understandings of political authority and the structure and practices of existing political institutions. Only when a certain numerical threshold has been reached, and the discontent of particular social strata crystallizes into oppositional ideologies, such as occurred among Habermas’s entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, can one begin to envision the necessary conditions for the emergence of the public sphere. Beyond these developments, there are other logical antecedents to the rise of the public sphere. One of the most important is the commitment to the idea of *nationhood* and an emergent notion of *citizenship* by those social strata interested in bringing about political change. Thus, the notion of the public sphere is intimately bound up with changes in *political identity*.

In sum, the concept of the public sphere must be historically and socially contextualized and be seen as part of a process that is brought about by significant economic and social transformation. Because the public sphere requires changes in the world views of those who seek to construct and use it, the public sphere cannot be considered merely as a

physical locale or space, but must also be viewed as part of a *participatory process*. If we are to deploy the concept to better understand efforts, both historical and contemporary, to develop civil society and democracy in Iraq, then we need to examine both the institutional manifestations of the public sphere and the forms of political discourse that have occurred within its structural parameters. Further, we need to differentiate this discourse in terms of the impact of the historical-social processes that influenced its specific forms. All of the preconditions just delineated for the emergence of the public sphere were met, I would argue, in Iraq during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁴ As I will document, the type of critical discourse that Habermas associates with the public sphere began to appear in Iraq in the late 1800s. However, this emerging discourse would not have been possible had it not been for the profound social and economic changes that occurred in Iraqi society during the nineteenth century. Set in motion by Iraq's integration into the world market, these changes caused the transformation of the Iraqi economy from being largely subsistence in nature and, to the extent that trade existed, regionally focused, to one that was tied to European markets, particularly the British economy. This integration process was accompanied by the social transformation of the countryside. As land values increased over the nineteenth century, and the Ottomans exerted vigorous efforts to sedentize Iraqi tribes, many tribesmen were transformed into peasants. Reacting to what often became repressive agrarian conditions, many peasants abandoned the land for urban areas. This shift of the population from the countryside to urban areas had important social and cultural ramifications by disrupting traditional patterns of ethnic consciousness and values. With the growth of an Arabic education system, urban areas came to provide the critical mass of intellectuals and political activists that was instrumental in creating the Iraqi public sphere.

Contextualizing the public sphere in Iraq

An assumption that informs this chapter is that the notion of the public sphere must first be recast to correspond to the political and social realities of those societies to which it is applied. If the public sphere represents

a discursive space in which reasoned discourse can occur, and a participatory space open to all segments of society, then it can direct us to a better understanding of the possible origins of processes in Arab society that can promote ideas and institutions that underscore tolerance and dialogue, core values that underlie all forms of democratic governance. The significance of the public sphere (and civil society), beyond providing a political and social space for the individual citizen, is the manner in which it helps provide a solid foundation for processes of *democratization*.

Arab notions of democracy often diverge from those in the West. This is especially true when comparing Arab and late industrializing countries. In the latter, hegemonic notions of the market, especially after the collapse of communism, have marginalized the idea of social democracy, such as practiced through the American New Deal policies of the 1930s, for example, and instead focused on a narrow and formalistic definition of democracy organized around the notion of competitive elections and the circulation of elites.¹⁵ Throughout the twentieth century, Iraqi notions of democracy consistently placed emphasis on freedom from foreign domination [*al-istiqlāl al-tāmm*] and social justice, usually referred to by the nationalist movement as “the social question” [*al-qadīyya al-ijtimā'iyya*]. This understanding of democracy signifies that, in the modern period, the majority of Iraqis have not viewed political freedoms exercised in a context devoid of national independence and economic security as meaningful.¹⁶ These concerns suggest a contradiction between the political discourse of the Iraqi public and the emphasis on laissez-faire economics and state withdrawal from the market that is so central to much Western theorizing of democratic processes and transitions. Indeed, the failure of the rigid market-oriented “neoconservative” vision of democracy and its lack of resonance with Iraqi society was evident in the incredible failure of United States policy in Iraq under the Bush administration beginning in 2003.¹⁷

Institutional manifestations of the Iraqi public sphere

Historically, the public sphere manifested itself in Iraq in a multiplicity of sites and venues. The first site entailed the rise of poetic expression in the late nineteenth century. Whereas poetry had traditionally been largely

expressed in classical genres and in apolitical terms, or had been used to extol the virtues of the Ottoman viceroy [*wālī*] in Iraq, as European states increasingly encroached on the Empire's territory, many Arab inhabitants began to criticize the Ottomans for their inefficacy in staving off European colonialism. Poetic expression became one of the most visible examples of the anger felt by the empire's Arab subjects. However, this poetry was only the explicit expression of a process that had begun much earlier among Arab inhabitants of the decaying Ottoman Empire who were engaged in a complex and extensive discussion over the future direction of their society.¹⁸

A second site for the rise of an Iraqi public sphere was the development of an Iraqi press. This development was especially evident after the so-called Young Turk Revolt of 1908. The emphasis on the notions of progress and reform advocated by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which led the revolt, had a salutary impact on the small and largely secular Iraqi intelligentsia, which founded a large number of newspapers after 1908. Beyond reporting the news of the day, these newspapers also established a forum in which the emerging idea of Iraq as a unified political and socio-cultural entity could be addressed.¹⁹ Often, newspapers were affiliated with political or reform-minded organizations that were part of the growing Iraqi nationalist movement, indicating that they reflected only the apex of a much larger infrastructure linked to the emerging public sphere.

The third site for the development of the public sphere was the emergence of physical spaces in which nationalist and oppositional discourse could occur. Coffeehouses, social clubs associated with newly formed professional organizations, and literary and artists' salons [*majālis al-adab*] were the most prominent institutional components of the Iraqi public sphere.²⁰ The most established and widespread of these spaces, discussed in greater detail below, was the coffeehouse [*al-maqhā*].²¹

Conceptualizing the public sphere

What follows is a conceptual framework in which to situate, historically and socio-politically, the concept of the public sphere in Iraq. This framework is derived from four empirical characteristics of the pre-1963 Iraqi nationalist

movement that were fundamental to the development of an Iraqi public sphere: cross-ethnic cooperation; the commitment to associational behavior; national forms of political communication; and artistic innovation that both valorized local culture and challenged political authority.

Cross-ethnic cooperation

The political praxis of Iraqis from the early twentieth century onward underscores, over and over again, a commitment to *cross-ethnic cooperation*. The numerous empirical examples of such political and social cooperation belie the essentialist notion of Iraq as an “artificial” nation-state torn by ethnic and confessional divisions.²² Iraqi nationalist discourse assumed an inclusive quality from its inception, from efforts by Sunni and Shi’i notables in Baghdad to develop an Arabic language education system after the turn of the twentieth century, to the unified chorus of Sunni and Shi’i poets in their criticism of the Ottomans for their inability to stop European encroachment on the Empire’s Arab provinces.

During World War I, Iraq’s Shi’a population bore the brunt of the British invasion of the country, which began in Basra in the south. Issuing religious decrees [fatwas] condemning the British invasion, Shi’i clerics [*al-mujtahidūn*] were careful to emphasize that they represented all of Iraq and not just its Shi’i population, indicating a desire for cross-ethnic cooperation. It is important to note that the religious decrees were intended to defend not some vaguely defined Islamic community [*al-umma al-islāmiyya*], but rather the notion of Iraq as a nation-state with geographically defined boundaries, an inherently modern concept. The self-rule that the shrine city of al-Najaf enjoyed once the Ottomans had withdrawn between 1916 and 1918 was characterized by a tolerance reflected in the promulgation of a proto-constitution that established the rights of the inhabitants of the cities’ different quarters.²³ Similar tolerance characterized the neighboring shrine city of Karbala’ as well.

Those who initiated the June–October 1920 Revolution—what Iraqis call “the Great Iraqi Revolution” [*al-thawra al-‘irāqiyya al-kubrā*—self-consciously organized nationalist demonstrations that included all Iraq’s ethnic groups, even going to the homes of Jews and Christians and asking them to join, asserting that they were full Iraqi citizens. Sunnis

and Shi'a prayed in their respective mosques, celebrated their respective holidays and rituals, and competed over which sect could produce the most effective nationalist poetry. The central role of poetry in Iraqi nationalist discourse not only reflected the influence of the oral tradition in Arab culture, but also the mobilization of the most prominent form of expression in Iraqi society. Poetry became an important vehicle for linking urban nationalists and rural villages and tribes. In a syncretic fashion, cross-regional and cross-ethnic communication was encouraged through building on a cultural heritage shared by all groups in Iraqi society.²⁴

In 1928, the Minister of Education, who traditionally held the one Shi'i portfolio in the government, tried to dismiss a Syrian secondary school teacher, Anis al-Nusuli, who had written a history of the 'Umayyad Empire that some Shi'i clerics found offensive. This effort led to extensive street demonstrations by Iraqi students of all ethnic backgrounds who invoked the idea of freedom of expression in demanding that al-Nusuli be reinstated. The significance of the "al-Nusuli affair" was that it demonstrated the constructed nature of sectarianism in Iraq. It also demonstrated its generational component. While Sunni and Shi'i Arabs (and other ethnic groups) in Iraq's various ministries had an incentive to stress sectarianism as a mechanism for enhancing their political influence, sectarianism was of little interest to those outside government, such as students, who lacked a stake in the dominant Iraqi political economy. Younger Iraqis, who were socialized through the nationalist movement, rejected a political community defined in ethnic or confessional terms which they saw as part of an outdated and corrupt political system, and a colonial strategy of "divide and conquer" designed to set one ethnic group against another.

During the 1930s, Iraqis of all ethnic groups joined the General Strike of 1931 in response to British efforts to dramatically increase municipal electricity rates [*rusūm al-baladiyyāt*]. Faced with national opposition that crossed ethnic lines, the British ultimately backed down and rescinded the proposed increases. What was particularly striking about the General Strike was the cooperation between Iraq's traditional artisan sector, recently united in a national organization, the Association of Artisans [*Jam'iyyat Ashab al-Sana'i'i*], and the nascent labor movement that had begun to organize unions during the late 1920s, especially in the

Iraq State Railways, among the port workers of Basra, and in the oil sector. Indeed, it was the Association of Artisans and the new labor unions that played the central role in organizing opposition to the British. Once again, cross-ethnic cooperation was critical to the strike's success.²⁵

Many other examples can be given to demonstrate cross-ethnic cooperation, such as strikes against British and Iraqi-owned firms that refused to give workers decent salaries and working conditions. What was notable about many of these strikes was the workers' refusal to return to work until imprisoned strike leaders were returned to their jobs, especially when this refusal came even after offers of increased salaries or better working conditions. The solidarity manifested by workers from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds was indicative of the lack of penetration of sectarian consciousness among large segments of Iraq's lower classes. After the July 1958 revolution, there was a veritable outburst of labor union activity and organization. By the summer of 1959, over 200 labor unions were registered with the Iraqi government.²⁶

The post-World War II nationalist uprisings, such as the Wathba [Great Leap] of 1948, the Intifada of 1952, and the demonstrations and riots of 1955 and 1956 against the Baghdad Pact and the Tripartite invasion of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel respectively, were hallmarks of cross-ethnic solidarity. The June 1954 elections, the most open in Iraqi history prior to those held in 2005, underscored not only the ability of Sunni and Shi'i Arabs to work together to win seats in the Iraqi parliament but to unite political parties of different ideologies.²⁷ Despite efforts by the newly formed Arab Socialist Ba'th Party to disrupt the National Electoral Front [al-Jabha al-Intikhabiyya al-Wataniyya], formed in 1952 between Iraqist, or local nationalists, and moderate Arab nationalists, i.e., the Independence Party [Hizb al-Istiqlal], the parties in the Front never wavered in their solidarity.

Commitment to associational behavior

The second conceptual component that underscores the existence of a public sphere in Iraq is a *commitment to associational behavior*. From the onset of the nationalist movement, Iraqis have been joiners and began developing a network of civic, commercial, intellectual and political

organizations. This was especially true after the Young Turk Revolt, which emphasized the Turkish character of the Ottoman Empire and constitutional rule. The example of Turks organizing to bring about political change, the inability of the Ottomans to protect Iraq and the Empire's other Arab provinces from European colonial encroachment, the CUP's "Turkification" of the Empire, and the growth of Iraqi urban areas and concomitant expansion of the press and education systems, set the stage for Iraqis to organize in the context of a growing sense of national identity.

Many of the early (pre-1914) organizations were not exclusively Iraqi, but rather Arab organizations formed in Istanbul or Cairo that had considerable Iraqi membership. Al-'Ahd [Covenant], an organization of Arab, primarily Iraqi, officers within the Ottoman army, was probably the most prominent of these early efforts at political organization. Mention may also be made of the Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood Society [Jam'iyat al-Ikha' al-'Uthmani-al-'Arabi], the Literary Assembly [al-Muntada al-Adabi], the Ottoman Administrative Decentralization Party [Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya al-Idariyya al-'Uthmani], the Reform Society [Jam'iyat al-Islah], the National Scientific Society [al-Nadi al-Watani al-'Ilmi], the Mosul Literary Club [al-Nadi al-Adabi], the Mosul Scientific Club [al-Nadi al-'Ilmi], and the Islamic Renaissance Society of al-Najaf [Jam'iyat al-Nahda al-Islamiyya fi al-Najaf].²⁸ These are just some of the many examples of Iraqi political, cultural and social organizations that were formed well before the actual founding of the modern state under the Hashimite monarchy in 1921.

These organizations were followed by many others after the war's end and once Iraq was placed under a League of Nations Mandate given to Great Britain in 1920, especially political parties. The Haras al-Istiqlal [Guardians of Independence], a civic and political organization largely composed of ex-Ottoman civil servants, became powerful and highly respected. In addition to political parties and labor unions, professional organizations, such as the Lawyers Association [Jam'iyyat al-Muhamin], were formed during the late 1920s, later followed by the teachers', journalists' and engineers' associations.

To the list of political organizations, professional associations and labor unions can be added the large number of literary and artistic organizations that began to develop during the 1930s and especially after the

end of World War II. These included the artists who formed the Pioneers [al-Ruwwad], the Society for Modern Art (or Baghdad Group for Modern Art), the Iraqi Writers Association, the sizeable group of intellectuals associated with the journal, *New Culture* [al-Thaqafa al-Jadida], which appeared in 1953 and was subsequently closed by the government, and poets who organized the highly innovative Free Verse Movement.²⁹

National forms of political communication

A third characteristic of the nationalist movement was embodied in the spread of *national forms of political communication* that were cross-regional and cross-ethnic in orientation. The Young Turk Revolt, the British invasion of Iraq, the 1920 Revolution, and the placing of Iraq under a League of Nations Mandate encouraged the expansion of the Iraqi press, which increased dramatically after 1908. Iraqi newspapers not only became fora for criticism of British colonial influence in Iraq and the demand for complete independence [al-istiqlāl al-tamm], but a space in which poets, writers and critics could disseminate their artistic creation. Some of Iraq's most important writers and poets, such as Mahmud Ahmad al-Sayyid, Anwar Shawwal (Ibn Suma'il) and Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, were also journalists, indicating that many Iraqi intellectuals assumed multiple roles.³⁰ While the Hashimite monarchy and the British frequently closed newspapers and publications critical of the government, the groups that published these newspapers quickly reopened them under new names. The tenacity with which newspaper publishers circumvented the state's efforts to suppress them was a strong indicator of the desire of Iraqis to communicate with one another and represents a critical component of the public sphere.

Another important indicator of the desire to communicate across regions and ethnic groups was the growth and politicization of coffeehouses in urban areas. Some of the most prominent coffeehouses in Baghdad were historically associated either with prominent merchant families and located near major markets, or were venues for traditional intellectuals [al-udabā'] to meet. This was true, for example, of the series of four coffeehouses in the Hamada Market run by the 'Ukayl tribe that was known for its involvement in foreign trade.³¹ With the rise of the

nationalist movement during the late nineteenth century, many coffeehouses began to supplement their more traditional functions. Rather than just providing a venue for relaxation and the sharing of information, whether commercial or social, or as a meeting place of men of literature, coffeehouses began to assume an increasingly political character.

As an old and well established institution, the coffeehouse's venerable status as a popular [*sha'bi*] venue made it an ideal space for an emerging nationalist political discourse. With the expansion of commerce in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new clerical middle class [*al-effendiyya*] emerged that was linked to employment in the expanding economy and in the state bureaucracy. Despite constituting a small social stratum, this new middle class used the coffeehouse as a space in which to discuss and crystallize their thoughts on political, cultural and social affairs.

Members of the middle class did not have the material wherewithal with which to create private literary salons. Not possessing large homes in which to meet, these *effendiyya* instead increasingly frequented the coffeehouse. As nationalist sentiment increased, particularly as the Ottoman Empire was unable to prevent the expansion of European colonialism into its former territories, and especially after the 1908 Young Turk Revolt sought to impose a more Turkish identity on the Empire's remaining provinces, the coffeehouse became a space associated with a discourse of political opposition.³²

Thus, the growth of the coffeehouse reflected the impact of social class, namely the expansion of the clerical middle classes and their desire for a public space in which to share political, social and cultural information. Put differently, the coffeehouse, as the reflection of an expanding public sphere, demonstrated the inability of traditional forms of discourse, such as the literary salon [*majlis al-adab*], to accommodate the needs and desires of a new social stratum. Gradually, specific coffeehouses became identified with particular political tendencies. That Iraqi nationalists would often return to one or another coffeehouse after a political protest was evidence of the political significance of these spaces.³³

It was the internal dynamics of the coffeehouse that were most interesting. Here the poor, who were either illiterate or unable to purchase daily newspapers, could hear the news read and discussed. Here

also, nationalist poets read their verses to the crowd. Because the government frequently sent informers to nationalistically oriented coffeehouses, poets were forced to hide their thoughts in allusion and double-entendre, thereby educating the audience in the processes of decoding the subtleties of political critique inherent in the poetry being read. In this manner, the coffeehouse became an institution that encouraged the development of a sophisticated political discourse in which nuance and subtlety became the watchwords of communication. A “traditional” institution came to be transformed not just into an important instrument of the nationalist movement, but as a space in which Iraqis were socialized into the important political tendencies of the day. Through their transformation into an institution with a national, rather than a local or urban district focus, certain coffeehouses became famous in nationalist circles and thus attracted some of Iraq’s most prominent political activists and intellectuals.

With the maturation of a new generation of nationalist youth in the late 1920s and 1930s, many existing coffeehouses acquired a more politically oriented clientele, and new politically oriented coffeehouses continued to open. During the early 1930s, the ‘Arif Agha coffeehouse became a meeting place for teachers who had been purged from government service and for opposition journalists. Other coffeehouses, such as the al-Rusafi and al-Jawahiri coffeehouses, named after some of Iraq’s most famous poets, also were noted meeting places for intellectuals and activists.³⁴

Considering the growth in programmatic political parties, the rise of the press, the expansion of coffeehouses and their restructuring along more explicitly political lines, and the development of a network of social clubs [*al-andiyya*], which represented the interests of professionals, charitable and religious groups, and sports groups, we see that Iraqis had developed an extensive network of communication by the end of the 1930s, indicating a national consciousness and a desire to communicate across ethnic and regional barriers.

Artistic innovation

All of the aforementioned processes contributed to and were reinforced by the artistic activity that was stimulated in large measure by the nationalist movement. A fourth factor contributing to the growth of a public sphere

was artistic innovation that expanded the boundaries of political discourse. One of the most important literary phenomena was the development of the Iraqi short story. The short story was especially well suited to being published or serialized in daily newspapers, especially given the lack of printing presses and the high cost of publishing a full-length novel. Iraqi short story writers, such as Mahmud Ahmad al-Sayyid, 'Abd al-Malik Nuri, Gha'ib Tu'ma Farman, Edmund Sabri, Shakir Khusbak, and others, became famous not just in Iraq but throughout the Arab world from the 1930s through the early 1960s. In chronicling, among other themes, the socio-cultural and psychological disruption caused by the breakdown of the rural economy, the migration of large numbers of Iraqis to urban areas, and the political corruption of the Hashimite monarchy under British colonial domination, short story writers were able to convey to the populace at large a strong sense of what was wrong with Iraqi society and the need for political action to bring about social justice and democratic rule, along with independence from foreign rule.³⁵

Perhaps the most impressive of the artistic developments of the pre-1963 era was the Free Verse Movement, which resulted in an innovative and radical change in Arab poetry. Under the stimulus of the poetic innovations of Nazik al-Mala'ika, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, and 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayati in particular, Iraqi poetry not only broke with the classic *qaṣīda* form in poetic expression, but used poetry to challenge tradition in daring ways. Drawing heavily on symbolism from Iraq's ancient civilizations and its Arabo-Islamic past, Iraqi poetry during the 1950s used tradition both to reinterpret the past and push the boundaries of cultural and political expression in radical directions. While much artistic expression of the 1950s lacked an explicit political component, and frequently was very pessimistic about the future, the sum total of work produced was radical in nature in encouraging the Iraqi citizenry to challenge political and cultural authority, rather than to uncritically subscribe to views fostered by the state or traditional authority, e.g., religious authority.

In the plastic arts, the Baghdad Group for Modern Art, led by the Iraqi sculptor and painter Jawad Salim, combined an interest in Western sculpture and painting with a strong interest in the artistic accomplishments of Iraq's ancient civilizations as well as in Islamic civilization. As the artist Shakir Hasan noted at the time, the Baghdad Group sought

to achieve the same revolutionary developments in the realm of painting and sculpture that Iraqi poets had achieved in the realm of poetry.³⁶ What is notable is not only the symbiosis among the Iraqi intelligentsia of the period, but the challenging of hegemonic discourses of authority and tradition in literature and the arts, which implicitly challenged political and traditional authority. The impact of the rich artistic milieu of the late 1940s and 1950s was to promote a greater respect for ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as a critical building block and legacy for civil society and democratic governance.

Challenges to the public sphere

This brief overview of the public sphere's empirical manifestations within the context of the pre-1963 Iraqi nationalist movement demonstrates the necessity of contextualizing the concept in a larger structural nexus to fully understand its political impact. The political ramifications of the public sphere can most easily be demonstrated by comparing the few nationalist groups that did adhere to a sectarian definition of Iraqi political community and those that promoted a more tolerant understanding of political community. In discussing sectarian identities, we need to distinguish between Iraqist, or local nationalism [*al-waṭaniyya al-ʿirāqīyya*], and pan-Arab nationalism [*al-qawmiyya al-ʿarabiyya*] in Iraq. While accepting and respecting Iraq's predominant Arab culture, Iraqist nationalists argued that creating a democratic state based on social justice and tolerance for ethnic diversity took precedence over creating a pan-Arab nation. Pan-Arabists countered by arguing that only through joining a pan-Arab state [*al-waṭan al-ʿarabi*] could Iraq hope to confront Western colonial domination and achieve the historical greatness it had enjoyed under the Arabo-Islamic empires, particularly the 'Abbasid Empire, centered in Iraq.³⁷ Sectarian nationalist organizations were invariably pan-Arabist in ideological orientation and largely grounded in the (rural and tribal) Sunni Arab community.

Almost all groups that emphasized sectarian identities and political community were Sunni Arab and drawn from the military. As noted above, one of the earliest of such groups, *al-Ahd*, was comprised

of Ottoman army officers primarily from Iraq. Already prior to World War I, *al-Ahd* developed hostility to the antisectarian *Haras al-Istiqlal* [Guardians of Independence], which drew upon former Ottoman civil servants and intellectuals and emphasized the open (multi-ethnic) nature of its membership. Many of the politicians who dominated the state under the Hashimite monarchy were former members of *al-Ahd* and Sunni Arabs as well. Indeed, it was not until 1947 that Iraq had its first Shi'i prime minister, Salih Jabr. I would argue that Sunni Arab sectarianism was grounded in the privileges they derived from their ties to the state, both under the Ottomans, and later under the Hashimite monarchy. Members of *al-Ahd* saw, in the development of a multi-ethnic nationalist movement, a threat to these ties if Iraq's definition of political community were to include all the country's ethnic groups, particularly the majority Shi'a, as active players in politics. Indeed, one sees parallels between attitudes among members of the *Ahd* and ex-Ba'thists and radical Islamists after 2003 who support the ongoing insurgency in Iraq because, like their predecessors, they too refuse to accept an Iraq defined by political pluralism and cultural tolerance.

A second example of sectarian nationalism is the coterie of army officers that dominated Iraqi politics between 1937 and 1941. This group included political activists associated with the pro-fascist Nadi al-Muthanna [al-Muthanna Club] and the so-called "Four Colonels" (or "Golden Square") who provided the military support for the Axis-leaning government of Rashid 'Ali al-Gaylani, which challenged British rule in May 1941. While ideology certainly played a role in the sectarian outlook of army officers who supported pan-Arabist policies, it must be recognized that army officers feared that Iraqist nationalists, who derived much support from non-Sunni Arabs, would deprive them of their privileged ties to the state bureaucracy and the military. If Shi'a, Kurds and other ethnic groups obtained access to government positions irrespective of ethnic background, Sunni Arabs would lose much of their political and economic influence.

In explaining this sectarian orientation, social class played a critical role. Because many of the Sunni Arab army officers, members of the intelligence service, and government bureaucrats were drawn from the economically marginalized river towns of the so-called "Sunni Arab

triangle,” they viewed access to state employment as their main source of economic well-being. To be forced to compete with Shi’a, Kurds and other ethnic groups for positions within the state apparatus, especially in light of declining economic opportunities in the Sunni Arab river towns, inspired strong feelings of hostility towards non-Sunni Arabs. In short, while pan-Arabists drew upon a relatively small sector of society with privileged access to the state, namely rural and tribally based Sunni Arabs, the larger Iraqist component of the nationalist movement predominated and offered a “big tent,” namely a political movement that was open to members of all Iraq’s ethnic groups, and one that stressed the need to link political freedoms to social justice.³⁸

The public sphere, political instability and violence in post-Ba’thist Iraq

In light of the violence that has characterized Iraqi politics and society since 2003, what relevance does the concept of the public sphere have for post-Ba’thist Iraq? Can it not be argued that the complete destruction of civil society by Saddam Husayn’s Ba’thist regime between 1968 and 2003, two major wars resulting from Iraq’s invasion of Iran in 1980 and its seizure of Kuwait in 1990, the brutal repression of the 1991 Intifada, and the harsh United Nations sanctions regime between 1991 and 2003, destroyed all of the public sphere’s positive residues?

Apart from the positive role that the historical memory of civil society building and the expansion of the public sphere can have on contemporary Iraqi society, a factor discussed below, the impact of the public sphere can still be seen in some of the dominant forms that Iraqi politics has assumed since 2003. Perhaps this impact can best be understood by asking the following question: why have sectarian militias and insurgent organizations devoted so much time and so many resources in an effort to eradicate Iraq’s professional classes? Why has so much violence, in the form of assassinations, physical intimidation, and kidnapping, been directed at professionals, particularly university academics, journalists, physicians, artists, prominent sports figures and entertainers? The professional classes do not control any militias, or significant amounts of

economic resources; why, then, are these groups the subject of attacks? Why are professionals viewed as such a threat, and by whom?³⁹

Answers to these questions are important because they reflect the power of ideas, particularly in historical memory, to influence and shape contemporary Iraqi politics. As numerous public opinion polls since 2003 have indicated, Iraqis continue to identify themselves as Iraqi, rejecting the division of the country along sectarian lines. Representing the most educated sectors of society, Iraq's threatened and dwindling professional classes constitute the most visible example of the antisectarian tradition of Iraqi society. Because the professional classes are highly respected by large segments of Iraqi society, their views are still heavily influential.

However, ideas of cross-sectarian tolerance and cooperation threaten the political and economic agendas of sectarian militias, death squads, insurgent groups and criminal organizations. These groups increasingly filled the post-2003 political and economic vacuum that resulted from a weak and faction-ridden central state, a moribund economy, the lack of social services and the near collapse of the education system during the 1990s. These groups intimidated local populations to assert their control over them, often by using physical violence to force Iraqis to think in terms of vertically defined political identities, namely according to which ethnic group and religious sect they belong, rather than in national and cross-ethnic terms. Because Iraq's educated middle and especially professional classes still believe in an Iraq defined in Iraqi rather than sectarian terms, they have been, ipso facto, viewed as a serious threat by the radical organizations that have proliferated in post-Ba'thist Iraq.

The professional classes in Iraq maintain an important position of power precisely because they provide a model that corresponds to the sentiments of Iraqi public opinion and an alternative to the attempt by radical political organizations to impose sectarian politics on Iraqi society. Professionals in Iraq thus represent an intellectual elite that helps to keep alive the idea of a tolerant and nonsectarian politics in Iraq. The only weapon they possess is their *ideas*, which invariably are antisectarian and support the tradition of cross-ethnic cooperation that extends back to the twentieth-century nationalist movement. That these professionals, who reject sectarian values, remain high profile targets of Sunni insurgents and Shi'i militias, points to the overwhelming rejection by Iraqi society

as a whole of a sectarian model. Indeed, a BBC/ABC public opinion poll, conducted in April 2007, indicated that 94% of respondents indicated that they rejected dividing Iraq along sectarian lines.⁴⁰ In other words, sectarian forces view professional groups in Iraq as threatening due to their rejection of sectarianism and their ability to articulate the antisectarian sentiments of the populace at large. Their daily activities, e.g., the multi-ethnic composition of Iraqi sports teams, also belie sectarian identities. Athletes have been killed because they wear shorts or because they play sports that are considered “anti-Islamic.” Women entertainers and public employees who do not dress in ways considered appropriate by radical forces have also been subject to attack.

These considerations point to the power of ideas and the fact that the public sphere still resonates with contemporary Iraqi society, even if in ways that expose antisectarian Iraqis to physical threats and violence. The fact that university academics continue to teach and journalists continue to write articles that implicitly and explicitly attack sectarian politics indicates that a struggle continues within Iraqi society in the context of what Gramsci would call a “war of position.”⁴¹ Despite great danger to themselves, many professionals, through their behavior, pronouncements, and written texts, make daily statements supporting the idea of Iraq as a multi-ethnic and tolerant society. That many sectarian leaders, such as Muqtada al-Sadr, feel the need to frequently make reference to national unity and antisectarianism is yet another indicator of the power of these ideas. If sectarian ideas did in fact hold sway among large segments of the Iraqi populace, then sectarian groups would find little incentive to make reference to national unity and emphasize an Iraqi identity, rather than one based on one’s ethnic group or religious sect.

While conditions in Iraq do not point, in the near term, to the revival of the type of public sphere that existed during the late 1940s and 1950s, there is a “path dependency” that suggests the continuation of a historical memory of the pre-Ba’thist era that offers a vision of building an Iraqi civil society based on nonsectarian norms. The attack on the secondhand book market and the famous al-Shabandar Coffeehouse in Baghdad’s al-Mutannabi Street in March 2007 was an indicator of the continued hostility of sectarian groups toward a historical memory based in tolerance, diversity of knowledge, and cultural pluralism.⁴²

One way in which Iraqis have been able to circumvent physical violence is through the Internet. A dramatic expansion of the public sphere after 2003 can be found in the rise and spread of the blog. Of course, computer usage was severely restricted under the Baʿthist regime. However, once Iraqis, especially those living in urban areas, obtained access to the Internet, either through their own computers or through the large number of Internet cafés established after 2003, they began to create a wide range of blogs in both Arabic and English. Iraqi bloggers have become an important source of information about politics, government corruption, human rights (including women and children's rights as well as those of refugees and displaced persons), artistic trends, the United States occupation, and the abuses of Islam by radical Islamists. Although these blogs have generated anger in government and sectarian circles, they have been impossible to shut down.⁴³

The state and the public sphere

Despite the strides made in the development of an Iraqi public sphere and a larger civil society, stimulated by the pre-Baʿthist nationalist movement, neither a well developed civil society nor public sphere can by themselves assure the development of a tolerant, participatory and democratic society. This point underscores the problems inherent in a conceptual perspective that only focuses on one dimension of society, in this instance the public sphere and the closely related notion of civil society, without taking other components of the political system into account.

Politically, the core problem of modern Iraq has been the institutional weakness of the state. Consequently, the vibrant civil society and public sphere, which developed under the aegis of the Iraqi nationalist movement, have never benefitted from an institutional framework that would allow them to translate their contributions into sustainable political practices. The lack of institutional development has meant that the participatory and tolerant qualities that characterized politics at the mass level in Iraq have not engendered positive change at the level of the state. Instead the state has either been characterized by weak and venal elite coalitions that Iraqis referred to as the “merchants of politics” [*tujjār*

al-siyāsa], such as those under the Hashimite monarchy between 1921 and 1958; or by corporatist forms of political organization dominated by an authoritarian ruler, such as emerged under ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim (1958–1963), and subsequent Arab nationalist and Ba‘thist regimes. One of the main problems of Iraqi society has resided not only in the inability of Iraqis to agree upon a common definition of political community, but also in the continued disjuncture between a vibrant civil society and public sphere, on the one hand, and a weak and ineffectual state on the other.

The problem of the lack of state capacity and weak legitimacy came to a head after the overthrow of Saddam Husayn’s Ba‘thist regime in 2003. In the wake of the Ba‘thist regime’s fall, Iraq has experienced severe political instability, which has raised serious doubts about the possibility of creating a democratic polity. The violence plaguing Iraq since 2003 has been caused, in large measure, by the fear of different groups, defined not only ethnically but also in terms of social class, region, age and political background, that they will be denied access to political participation and economic opportunity in the “new Iraq.” This problem has been exacerbated by the self-conscious destruction of most aspects of civil society by the Ba‘thist regime during its rule between 1968 and 2003 and the lack of development of any political institutional infrastructure that would provide the framework for establishing a democratic polity. If to an ineffectual central state we add a dysfunctional economy with unemployment rates reaching 60 to 70 percent, especially among youth who constitute over 60 percent of the population under age 25; extensive corruption in the Iraqi government, particularly in the distribution of Iraq’s oil wealth; and the penetration of government ministries, such as the powerful Ministry of Interior, by sectarian forces, then it is not surprising that democracy has faced difficulties in finding fertile soil in post-Ba‘thist Iraq.

The public sphere and Islam as “invented tradition”

These considerations are especially important when we consider the distorted understandings of Islam that have been promoted by Sunni insurgent organizations and Shi‘i militias in Iraq. The ideas being disseminated

by radical groups in the name of Islam, whether Sunni or Shi'i, point to the efforts not only to intimidate and suppress antisectarian forces in Iraq, but to create a sectarian political culture that represents the antithesis of the public sphere. The argument by the late leader of al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers [al-Qa'ida fi Wadi al-Nahrayn], Abu al-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, that democracy is a form of political organization that the West is trying to impose on Iraq—one that is alien to Iraqi political culture—is just one example of the attempt of Islamist radicals to distort historical memory, much in the same way that Saddam Husayn and the Ba'th Party attempted to control understandings of the past through the Project for the Rewriting of History [Mashru' I'adat Kitabat al-Tarikh].⁴⁴

Because the national education system largely collapsed under the United Nations sanctions regime between 1991 and 2003, and is still dysfunctional in many areas of Iraq (even in the Kurdish north), young Iraqis often receive their knowledge of Islam from groups that seek to serve their own sectarian agendas. Even purported religious leaders often have only a superficial understanding of Islam. A good example is Muqtada al-Sadr, who received a poor education during the 1990s, and spent much of his time in political organizing. One of the critical processes for reconstituting the public sphere in post-Ba'thist Iraq is the need to reestablish the national education system and provide access to education to large numbers of Iraqi youth. However, there is little prospect for the education system to play a central role in the socialization of Iraqi youth until the problem of continued economic stagnation is addressed.

Reconstituting the public sphere in post-Ba'thist Iraq: The use of historical memory⁴⁵

As already noted, one objection to many of the arguments proffered in this essay is that the positive impact of the public sphere is vitiated by the violence that has plagued Iraq since 2003, (notwithstanding its relative decline beginning in the summer of 2007). In the remainder of this chapter I will focus on the manner in which historical memory [*al-dhā'ira al-tārīhiyya*] might be used to reconstitute the tradition of the vibrant public sphere and civil society in Iraq.

While the creation of a nascent civil society and public sphere in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is relatively easy to document, can this rich tradition be translated into a political praxis that can help offset the pernicious legacy of Saddam Husayn's Ba'thist regime, the impact of the largely incompetent United States occupation of Iraq, and the rise to power of sectarian political organizations? One tool that has not been theorized adequately, nor used as a form of public policy, is historical memory. Certainly Saddam and the Ba'th Party realized the power of historical memory as evidenced by the resources the regime devoted to its Project for the Rewriting of History, of which Saddam was the titular head. Saddam and the Ba'th sought to use historical memory to restructure the Iraqi citizenry's understandings of the past. While the results of the Ba'thist regime's efforts were uneven, the question is whether a different type of historical memory, one that promotes a growth of the public sphere and civil society and a transition to democracy, can be deployed for these desired ends.

The core of the ideas proposed here is for democratic practitioners, both inside and outside Iraq, to mobilize the progressive historical memory of the pre-1963 era to promote democratic change as part of a process of invigorating the public sphere. A key principle underlying these ideas is that the democratic transition should be derived from the Iraqi historical experience and not one imposed from without.⁴⁶ Another important component of political praxis is to link the development of the public sphere during the twentieth century to new forms of the public sphere in post-Ba'thist Iraq. Because many radical forces claim that there is no tradition in Iraqi political culture that valorizes democratic practices, and by extension the notions of a tolerant civil society and active public sphere, these groups argue that democracy is alien to Iraq and a tradition that the West, particularly the United States, is trying to impose on Iraq.

Media

One manner in which both progressive forces within the Iraqi government and those in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can help promote the public sphere's reconstitution is through the use of the media and the Internet to disseminate the accomplishments of the pre-Ba'thist

nationalist movement. Iraqi newspapers, for example, have played an important role since 2003 through the use of the Internet to distribute their editions when it is often not possible to sell a newspaper in a particular section of a city or in a town due to harassment by sectarian organizations. As noted above, blogs are also an important source of information for Iraqis about all aspects of their society.

One of the most successful ways in which the former Ba'athist regime curried favor with the urban middle classes was through promoting Iraqi folklore. The *Journal of Popular Culture* [*Majallat al-Turath al-Sha'bi*] was highly popular and its issues sold out quickly when they appeared in Baghdad kiosks. While the Ba'ath Party tried to insert political and social subtexts in its efforts to promote folklore, the regime of 'Abd al-Karim Qasim (1958–1963) provides a model in which folklore was likewise promoted, but to enhance, rather than divide, the Iraqi populace through stressing its unity in diversity.⁴⁷ The Iraqi government could follow the Qasim regime's lead by promoting folklore not just in the form of state-sponsored publications but more importantly in the visual media, namely television and film. Under the Ba'athist regime, for example, the television program, *Baghdadiyyat*, which explored aspects of Baghdad's folklore, such as folk poetry and the artisan production of particular quarters, attracted a large viewing audience. In light of the continued violence in Iraq, and the constraints that this violence places on the movement and activities of large numbers of Iraqis, the Iraqi government could take greater advantage of the media to disseminate the historical memory of a tolerant political culture. Promoting folklore in government sponsored publications, in the press, on television and in film, would resonate highly with Iraqis, many of whom still maintain rural roots and ties to rural social structure. Not only is folklore a subject of great interest to Iraqis, but one that emphasizes their cultural commonalities. As such it offers another means to overcome the distrust generated by the pernicious Ba'athist legacy.

The creation of an extensive number of Web sites could also provide Iraqi youth, many of whom have no memory of the pre-Ba'athist era, with valuable information about the basic social, cultural and economic prerequisites for building civil society and democracy. Using such Web sites to emphasize not only religious and ethnic tolerance, but gender equality,

and a respect for social difference generally, could help to offset the message of sectarian groups who seek to use xenophobic and particularistic identities to promote their political and economic agendas. Moderate clerics could provide explanations on Web sites and electronic bulletins of Islam and its relationship to questions that interest young Iraqis in particular, such as guidance on morals, gender relations, and marriage. Greater use of television and radio could likewise enhance this information campaign. Not only would such a campaign strengthen the national reconciliation process, but it would work to expand the public sphere.

Conferences of nationalist intellectuals

Innovative policies could also include organizing conferences of older Iraqi intellectuals that would draw attention to the accomplishments of the past. Many of these intellectuals are elderly and still reside in Iraq. At the conferences, which could be organized by sympathetic Iraqi government agencies, e.g., the Ministry of Culture, or NGOs, at relatively little cost, Iraqi intellectuals could discuss the relevance of their work to the current phase of Iraq's attempt to end sectarian violence and work to create a more tolerant society, critical prerequisites for any attempts to begin a meaningful transition to democracy. Subventions could be found to reissue earlier works published by democratically oriented nationalist intellectuals, as well as to solicit new reflections by older intellectuals. Creating a number of national conferences of historians, secondary school teachers and interested intellectuals that would be held in the Arab south as well as Kurdish north, even if held in Iraqi Kurdistan or outside Iraq, given the current security situation, could be used to highlight aspects of the pre-1963 legacy of civil society building and democratic practices which could provide the basis for illustrating concepts intended to promote a democratic political culture in Iraq.

Promoting the institutions of civil society and efforts to reconstitute the public sphere could also be accomplished by providing low cost loans for establishing coffeehouses organized by civic, intellectual and artistic groups. Since the fall of the Ba'thist regime, there has been a revival of intellectual and artistic life, despite efforts by insurgents, who seek to reimpose authoritarian rule, to assassinate Iraqi intellectuals, journalists,

artists, entertainers and sports figures.⁴⁸ Many of these organizations possess few resources. With small loans, they could organize coffeehouses that could both be used to expand their activities, or, in dangerous areas, to organize underground, and to attract a larger following. Indeed, a number of foreign organizations have been funding the underground activities of Iraqi NGOs engaged in a wide variety of projects from empowering women to teaching conflict resolution. This proposal reflects yet another relatively inexpensive strategy that could be used to encourage the rebuilding of civil society as part of a more long-term transition to democracy in Iraq.

Rewriting secondary school and university textbooks

These efforts at creating a new historical memory could also entail the rewriting of textbooks, both at the secondary school and university levels, which situate the concepts of civil society, tolerance, privacy, human rights and the rule of law in the Iraqi historical and cultural experience, rather than in abstract theoretical paradigms. While many youth no longer attend schools, they do watch state-run television channels, listen to state-run radio stations, or access the Internet where materials highlighting Iraq's past could be posted. For teachers and students, using the Iraqi experience as the dominant (but not exclusive) model for explicating concepts designed to promote greater appreciation for democratic practices would no doubt resonate more highly with Iraqi students than relying primarily on historical examples drawn from non-Iraqi settings.

A significant development that has received little attention is the extent to which many Arab Iraqis who have fled to Iraqi Kurdistan have been welcomed there. In light of the continuous efforts by successive Arab governments in Baghdad to militarily suppress the Kurds, even including the use of chemical weapons during the late 1980s, this reception of Arabs by Iraq's Kurds is quite remarkable. This reception has even gone so far as to include the development of an Arabic secondary school system for the children of Arab Iraqis who have moved to the north on the part of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Because the Kurdish region has yet to develop meaningful democratic governance, the move of many educated Arab Iraqis to Kurdistan provides the opportunity for

democratically minded Kurds and Arabs to join together to create truly autonomous organizations of civil society and a vigorous public sphere through challenging the KRG to live up to its own democratic discourse.

As ever larger numbers of Kurdish youth find political participation restricted and economic opportunity unavailable, Iraqi Kurdistan has begun to witness a process similar to the Arab south, namely the rise of political opposition that decries the nepotism and corruption of the two main Kurdish parties, the KDP and PUK. Here is an opportunity for Iraqis of Arab and Kurdish ethnicity to strive to build a nationalist movement with meaningful democratic foundations. Because many Arab entrepreneurs from the south have shifted their investments to the more stable north, resources potentially exist to fund activities designed to expand civil society and the public sphere. This is not to say that the KRG would welcome these activities, but it is also loath to undermine its support among Western governments and NGOs, and to create a hostile climate for Western investment, should it move to sharply curtail efforts to expand democracy in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Conclusion

It would be naïve and unrealistic to think that the historical memory of Iraq's accomplishments in developing a public sphere and nascent civil society prior to 1963 can by itself promote the democratization of Iraq. However, the historical memory of the pre-1963 nationalist movement can provide important building blocks for a democratic transition. One of the most important of these building blocks is to help instill in democratically minded Iraqis a sense of trust in the national body politic, namely that Iraqis can work in concert, and across ethnic lines, to promote a democratic political culture. The development of this sense of confidence—a critical form of social capital—is crucial to offsetting the efforts of sectarian organizations to impose a rigid and intolerant political culture on post-Ba'thist Iraq. As I have noted, numerous public opinion polls indicate that Iraqis reject dividing Iraq along sectarian lines while still adhering to an Iraqi sense of political identity.⁴⁹ Iraq's modern historical memory can thereby not only help Iraqis reestablish a sense of trust in

cross-ethnic cooperation but instill a sense of pride and self-confidence that is crucial to resisting efforts by authoritarian forces to return Iraq to the dark era of authoritarian rule.

The reconstitution of a political process that indicates the beginning of the building of a new sense of trust is already evident in Iraq. Despite all the prognostications that Iraq would be unable to engage in a democratic transition, three successful sets of elections were held between January 2009 and March 2010. The Arab provincial legislative elections that were conducted in January 2009 demonstrated a marked decrease in the power of sectarian political parties, especially the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (ISCI), and the participation of a raft of new candidates who were secular in orientation and concerned with the lack of services in their respective areas. In July 2009, the Kurdish political leadership suffered a major setback when the Gorran movement was able to mobilize a large number of votes from Kurds dissatisfied with corruption and nepotism within the KRG and with the lack of employment opportunities.

The March 2010 elections for the Iraqi national parliament [Majlis al-Nawwab] were held without significant violence, with security being provided by the Iraqi Army rather than American forces, and were judged by international observers to have been fair. Popular pressure to use an “open list” rather than a “closed list” system meant that voters knew which candidates they were voting for and thus were able to elect delegates based on merit rather than those chosen by party elites. The high turnout rate of 62.4%, the loss by 62% of former delegates of their seats and the fact that 22% of the new delegates were Iraqis under the age of 40 speaks to a significant renewal process in Iraqi politics. While political elites continue to try to thwart the will of the people, Iraqis will continue to press for the institutionalization of a new democratic politics in Iraq. Iraqi voters seek to ensure that there will be no return to the types of human rights abuses that they suffered under the Ba‘th and to press for improved government services and the ability to enjoy their newfound freedoms of expression and political participation.

Viewing the efforts to mobilize historical memory as part of a process that occurs in spaces that constitute the public sphere can provide Iraqis with another potent concept in moving their society toward greater political and cultural tolerance. The fact that the discourse of the public

sphere in Iraq (and elsewhere) is synthetic, in the sense that it combines discourses drawn from politics, literature and the arts, points to the benefits of incorporating it into the analysis of modern Iraqi politics and society. Rather than limiting our analysis to the realm of political elites and the exercise of political power, a focus on the public sphere draws us into an arena where a Gramscian war of position is constantly underway as counterhegemonic discourses are formed and contested. Much of the tension surrounding the idea of the public sphere as an imported concept dissolves when one realizes the length of time and extent to which processes associated with the functioning of the concept in the West have historically been operative in Iraq.

Notes

1. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), xvii. However, Habermas seems to contradict himself when he states, in discussing the development of civil society and the public sphere, “We are dealing with Greek categories transmitted to us bearing a Roman stamp,” 5. The revival of Roman law, the development of neo-Platonism and the revival of classical forms of art and architecture during the Italian Renaissance are other examples of the adaptation of civic discourses and aesthetic forms to new historical settings. See Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: New Left Books, 1974), 26–29, 148–149, 425; Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald T. Witt, *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); George Holmes, *Florence, Rome and the Origins of the Renaissance* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1986); and Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986) for additional examples of the revival and adaptation of conceptual frameworks and discourses from one historical epoch to another, in this case from antiquity to the Renaissance.
2. Human Rights Watch, *Caught in the Whirlwind: Torture and Denial of Due Process by the Kurdistan Security Forces* (New York: Human Rights Watch, July 2007). The *Human Rights Watch 2010 Report* indicates serious abuses of human rights in both the Kurdish and Arab areas of Iraq, <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/87714>, as does Amnesty International in *Iraq: Hope and Fear: Human Rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, February 2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/006/2009/en>; see also “Killing Taints Iraqi Kurdistan Image,” *New York Times*, 18 May 2010, which discusses the torture and killing of a 23-year-old Kurdish journalist, Zardasht Osman, for writing critical articles criticizing the KRG leadership.
3. I am well aware of the contradictions inherent in considering Iraq as an exclusively Arab society when its non-Arab Kurdish population comprises between 15 and 20 percent of the population. Nonetheless, the continuation of authoritarian forms or rule among the traditional Kurdish leadership, particularly the Barzani family/clan/tribe and, to a lesser extent, the

Talabani, suggests parallels between the Kurdish and Arab experiences. Still, I would argue for the need for a separate analysis of Iraqi Kurdish society. This analysis is especially important for the period after 1991, when Iraqi Kurdistan was able to break away from the Ba'athist controlled south, and significant advances were made in civil society building and democratization by the Kurds. However, many Kurds complained bitterly, during interviews I conducted in Arbil in the fall of 2008, about the lack of democracy in Iraq's Kurdish provinces and the restrictions placed on the independent (i.e., nonparty) Kurdish press and establishing civil society organizations. See my "Many Kurds Support Iraq, Not Independence," Newhouse News Service, 16 December 2008, fas-polisci.rutgers.edu/davis, and "The Puzzle of Federalism in Iraq," *Middle East Report*, 247 (Summer 2008): 42–47. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss this issue in detail, there has been, historically, significant and continuous cultural, economic and social interaction between Arabs and Kurds in Iraq. Perhaps the most recent indication of this interaction is the fact that the president of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, a Kurd and leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), memorized almost all of the poetry of Iraq's most famous 19th century Arab poet, Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawhiri. See *al-Hayat*, 27 April 2008.

4. It should be noted the Arabic term currently used to designate the public sphere, *al-majāllāt al-ʿamma*, is formulated in the plural, adding a further complication. Someone could raise the question as to why the term is singular in English (and German) while plural in Arabic.
5. This problem recalls the "private language" debate between ordinary language philosophy and logical positivism, best represented by Ludwig Wittgenstein and A.J. Ayer respectively. Wittgenstein argues that only concepts whose criteria for usage are socially grounded, i.e., understood by the society at large, possess meaning. Concepts whose criteria of application are limited to a small coterie of practitioners face the problem of not being understood outside the group for whom they constitute a "private language." See his *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1953); and *The Blue and the Brown Books* (New York: Harper, 1958). See also George Pitcher, ed., *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Doubleday, 1966), especially Rogers Albritton, "On Wittgenstein's Use of the Term 'Criterion,'" 231–250;

- A. J. Ayer, "Can There Be a Private Language?" 251–266; and Rush Rhees, "Can There Be a Private Language?" 267–285.
6. See, for example, Moheb Zaki, *Civil Society & Democratization in Egypt, 1981–1994* (Cairo: The Ibn Khaldun Center and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 1994).
 7. See Falih 'Abd al-Jabbar, *al-Dawla, al-Mujtama' al-Madani wa-Mustaqbal al-Dimuqratiyya fi al-'Iraq* [The State, Civil Society and the Democratic Transition in Iraq] (Cairo: Ibn Khaldun Center, 1995).
 8. For the online editions of *al-Sabah*, see <http://www.alsabaah.com>; for *al-Mada*, <http://www.almadapaper.com>.
 9. This literature was, of course, highly influenced by Seymour Martin Lipset's famous essay, "Economic Development and Democracy." See his *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday & Co, 1963 [1959]), 27–63. For a critique of this model, see Larry Diamond, "Universal Democracy?" *Policy Review* 119 (June 2003): 6.
 10. See, for example, 'Abd al-Karim al-Izri, *Mushkilat al-Hukm fi al-'Iraq: Tahlil li-l-'Awamil al-Ta'ifiyya wa-l-Sansur fi Ta'til al-Hukm al-Dimuqrati fi al-'Iraq wa-l-Hulul al-Dururiyya li-l-Taghallub 'alayha* [The Problem of Political Rule in Iraq: An Analysis of the Sectarian and Chauvinist Factors in Preventing Democracy in Iraq and the Necessary Solutions to Surmount Them] (London: n.p., 1991); Farhud Ibrahim, *al-Ta'ifiyya wa-l-Siyasa fi al-'Alam al-'Arabi: Namudhij al-Shi'a fi al-'Iraq - Ru'ya fi Mawdu' al-Din wa-l-Siyasa fi al-Mujtama' al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir* [Sectarianism and Politics in the Arab World: The Case of the Shi'a in Iraq, An Overview of Politics and Religion in Contemporary Arab Society] (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1996); and Hadi Hasan al-'Alawi, *Aswar al-Tin fi 'Uqdat al-Kuwayt wa Idiyulujiyyat al-Damm* [Mud Walls in the Kuwait Debacle and the Ideology of Expansionism] (Beirut: Dar al-Kunuz al-Adabiyya, 1995).
 11. For a discussion of this trend within the context of writers concerned with Arab-Islamic *turāth*, see Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
 12. For a discussion of the Western tradition of the public sphere, see Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), especially his "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," 1–50.
 13. See, for example, Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT

- Press, 1992), 109–142; and Michael Schudson, “Was There Ever a Public Sphere,” in the same volume, 143–163.
14. For an elaboration of these preconditions, see my *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2005), 29–108; for the development of similar preconditions in Egypt, see my *Challenging Colonialism: Bank Misr and Egyptian Industrialization, 1920–1941* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), especially 12–79.
 15. On the notion of democracy as the process of selecting between circulating elites, see Peter Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1967).
 16. Davis, *Memories of State*, 46, 52.
 17. For a discussion of the failures of Bush administration policies in Iraq, see my “Rebuilding a Non-Sectarian Iraq,” *Strategic Insights* 6, no. 6 (December 2007), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Dec/davisDec07.pdf>.
 18. Davis, *Memories of State*, 40–44, 47.
 19. For a listing of many of these newspapers, see Zahida Ibrahim, *Kashf al-Jara'id wa-l-Majallat al-'Iraqiyya* [Index of Iraqi Newspapers and Journals] (Baghdad: Ministry of Information, Dar al-Hurriyya li-l-Tiba'a, 1976).
 20. For a discussion of the literary salons in Baghdad, see Husayn Hatim al-Karkhi, *Majalis al-Adab fi Baghdad* [Baghdad's Literary Salons] (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 2003).
 21. On the Iraqi coffeehouse, see 'Abbas Baghdadi, *li-alla Nansa: Baghdad fi al-'Ishriniyyat* [So That We Do Not Forget: Baghdad in the 1920s] (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 1998), 119–130; see also Buland al-Haydari, “Baghdad Bayn Maqahi al-Ubada' wa-Udaba' al-Maqahi” [Baghdad Between the Coffeehouses of the Men of Letters and the Men of Letters of the Coffeehouses], *al-Majalla* 493 (24 July 1989): 50–53. I am grateful to the late Mai Ghassoub, former director of al-Saqi Books, for giving me this reference.
 22. Eric Davis, “The New Iraq: The Uses of Memory,” *Journal of Democracy* 16 no. 3 (July 2005): 55–57.
 23. Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 19–20.
 24. Davis, *Memories of State*, 47–49. This Muslim conception of the Christian and Jewish communities as integral parts of Iraqi society contrasts with the appellation given to Christians and Jews in Egypt who had often

- resided there for lengthy periods of time as “*al-mutamisriyyun*” (“would-be Egyptians”). Unlike in Iraq, non-Coptic Christians and Jews were often drawn from foreign communities resident in Egypt. On these groups, see my *Challenging Colonialism*, 93.
25. Kamal Mazhar Ahmad, *al-Tabaqa al-‘Amila al-‘Iraqiyya: al-Takawwun wa-Bidayat al-Taharruk* [The Iraqi Working Class: Its Formation and Early Activities] (Baghdad: Dar al-Rashid li-l-Nashr, 1981), 127–154.
 26. For more information on the Iraqi working class, see my “‘Utopia From Below’: The Inclusionary Discourse of the Iraqi Working Class,” Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis, 22 March 2000; and my “History for the Many or History for the Few? The Historiography of the Iraqi Working Class,” in *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies*, edited by Zachary Lockman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 271–301.
 27. For the best study on the June 1954 elections, see Ja‘far ‘Abbas Humaydi, *al-Tatawwurat wa-l-Ittijahat al-Siyasiyya al-Dakhiliyya fi al-‘Iraq, 1953–1958* [Developments and Internal Political Tendencies in Iraq, 1953–1958], 82–103.
 28. For a list of the political parties formed prior to and following the 1920 Revolt, see ‘Alaywi, *al-Ahزاب al-Siyasiyya fi al-‘Iraq al-Sirriyya wa-l-‘Alaniyya*, 53–82.
 29. Davis, *Memories of State*, 48, 50–51, 82, 92–93, 97–99.
 30. See, for example, Salim Taha al-Takriti, “al-Jawahiri Sahafiyan” [al-Jawahiri as Journalist], in *Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri: Critical Studies*, edited by Hadi al-‘Alaywi (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Andalus, 1969), 195–214; Davis, *Memories of State*, 49.
 31. Baghdadi, *li-alla Nansa: Baghdad fi al-‘Ishriniyyat*, 119.
 32. I am indebted to Dr. Riyad ‘Aziz Hadi, vice-president for academic affairs and former dean of the faculty of law and political science, Baghdad University, for much information on the history of the coffeehouse in Iraq. Written communication, “al-Maqahi,” 26 September 2007.
 33. Davis, *Memories of State*, 95.
 34. Baghdadi, *li-alla Nansa: Baghdad fi al-‘Ishriniyyat*, 124; Davis, *Memories of State*, 94–95.
 35. For a discussion of the Iraqi short story see Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi, “The Sociopolitical Context of the Iraqi Short Story, 1908–1968,” in *Statecraft*

- in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory and Popular Culture*, edited by Eric Davis and Nicolas Gavrielides (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1991), 202–227.
36. Buland al-Haidiri (al-Haydari), “Jawad Salim and Faiq Hassan and the Birth of Modern Art in Iraq,” *UR* 4 (1985): 19.
 37. Of course, there were many subtexts to the struggle between Iraqiist and Pan-Arab nationalists in Iraq. For a discussion of the formative components of these two ideological tendencies, see my *Memories of State*, 13–15.
 38. Eric Davis, “History Matters: Past as Prologue in Building Democracy in Iraq,” *Orbis* 49, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 232.
 39. For details on these attacks, see “Horror at Gruesome Murder of Two Iraqi Journalists,” *Reporters Without Borders*, 16 May 2005; Sophie Hebden and Wagdy Sawahel, “Iraqi Intellectuals Targeted by Assassins,” *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa), 4 July 2006; Abduhussein Ghazal, “Slated for Killing: More than 450 Iraqi Intellectuals Fear for Their Lives,” *Azzaman*, 8 May 2006.
 40. For results of the poll, see Global Policy Forum, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/resist/2007/0319iraqpoll.pdf>.
 41. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 229–235, 238–239.
 42. On efforts of sectarian forces to suppress coffeehouse culture, see “Book Market Fire Piles on the Misery for Broken Baghdad,” *The Independent*, 1 November 2003; Phillip Robertson, “The Death of al-Mutannabi Street,” *Salon.com*, 26 August 2005. For the history of the Shabandar coffeehouse, see Muhammad Ibrahim Muhammad, “Maqha al-Shabandar fi Baghdad” [The Shabandar Coffeehouse of Baghdad], *Majallat al-Turath al-Sha’bi* [The Journal of Popular Culture] 38, no. 2 (2007): 142–145; and “Baghdad Car Bomb Kills 20 on Bookseller’s Row,” *New York Times*, 6 March 2007.
 43. For some of the more important Iraqi blogs, see Dr. Toufic al-Tounji at <http://altonchi.blogspot.com/>; Jassim al-Rassif at <http://arraseef.blogspot.com/>; alressed at <http://alressed.maktoobblog.com/>; <http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/>, written by Riverbend, a young Baghdadi woman who wrote *Baghdad Burning*; last-of-iraqis.blogspot.com, written by Muhammad, a 25-year-old Iraqi dentist in Baghdad; livesstrong.blogspot.com, written by a 15-year-old Mosul girl; astarfrommosul.blogspot.com, written by “Aunt Najma,” a 19-year-old engineering student from Mosul; <http://iraqthemodel>.

- blogspot.com/, written by two young Iraqi men, Omar and Mohammed; and <http://hammorabi.blogspot.com/arabic/>, a Web site probably written by an Iraqi Shi'i hostile to U.S. occupation. For one of the best Iraqi blogs, see <http://shekomakoiniraq.blogspot.com/>, which has a very sophisticated set of articles on a wide variety of political, historical and cultural topics.
44. Saddam wrote extensively, whether by his own hand or with the help of ghost writers, on the topic of the rewriting of Iraqi history. See, for example, Saddam Husayn, *Hawla Kitabat al-Tarikh* [On the Writing of History] (Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriyya li-l-Tiba'a, 1979).
 45. The following section draws heavily on my *Strategies for Promoting Democracy in Iraq*, Special Report No 152 (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, October 2005); and "The New Iraq."
 46. One of the unfortunate aspects of postwar United States policy in Iraq, and of many well-meaning Western NGOs, is to try and encourage change solely through the use of concepts and strategies of democratization derived from either the West or from Western efforts at democratization in other countries, e.g., the Balkans. For a critique of United States foreign policy in Iraq, see my "Domino Democracy: Challenges to United States Foreign Policy in a Post-Saddam Middle East," in *Patriotism, Democracy and Common Sense: Restoring America's Promise at Home and Abroad*, edited by Fred R. Harris and Lynn A. Curtis (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 201–218; and "Prospects for Democracy in Iraq," E-Notes, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 30 June 2004.
 47. *The Journal of Popular Culture* began to be published again after 2003 with the same high quality that characterized its articles even under the Ba'hist regime.
 48. Jeffrey Gettleman, "Assassinations Tear Into Iraq's Educated Class," *New York Times*, 7 February 2004; Oliver Poole, "Killings Lead to Brain Drain from Iraq," *Daily Telegraph*, 4 April 2006; Bryan Bender and Farah Stockman, "Iraq's Violent 'Brain Drain' Called a Threat to Future: Killers Target Academics, Professionals," *Boston Globe*, 30 November 2006; Associated Press, "Judge Gunned Down in Baghdad," 14 January 2008.
 49. One of the most powerful demonstrations of Iraqi nationalism, one which included all Iraq's constituent ethnic groups, was the outpouring of support for the Iraqi national soccer team after it defeated Saudi Arabia and won the Asia Cup on 29 July 2007. Significantly, Kurds who flew the Iraqi

flag in Arbil were threatened with imprisonment if they did not immediately lower them. This information was derived from interviews that I conducted in Arbil, October and November 2007. See BBC News, "Iraq Celebrates Football Victory," 29 July 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6921078.stm; and Jorvan Vieira, "If Ever Anyone Needed a Win..." *Observer Sport Monthly*, 2 September 2007.

Conflict, Space and the Public Sphere: Renegotiating Rules of Coexistence in a Postwar Context

Marie Le Ray

The analysis of public spheres needs to be grounded in specific contexts and spaces, far beyond the institutions traditionally recognized as “legitimate” in democratic (or simulated democratic) societies: legislative, judiciary, scientific and media-related arenas. This chapter is, however, less concerned to locate public spheres in a specific community than to explore their conditions of emergence through various daily social experiences underlying spatial meaning-making processes. By spatial meaning-making, I mean all the operations through which individuals, collective actors or institutions ascribe meaning to space: from architecture and city planning to storytelling, poetry and songs conveying memories and images of surrounding spaces, but also circulation and daily uses of the material setting.¹ I will argue that spatial meaning-making, when exposed to others, and specifically to strangers,² constitutes a privileged way to generate both publicness—that is, a specific regime of social coexistence and interaction—and arenas of debates and controversies over the existing social and political order. This approach does not only ground public spheres in the practical social experiences of actors but also allows us to bring power back into the analysis: the social fabric of space is indeed a highly conflicted process. Physical space and, even more importantly, the meaning of space itself must be controlled in order to reproduce existing sociospatial relations of power.³ A spatial and daily-life-oriented prism is a privileged entry into understanding the conditions of emergence of

public spheres in a restrictive political context. Tunceli, the case study, is a mountainous Kurdish Alevi province in eastern Turkey.⁴ In the Turkish political imaginary, Tunceli is a subversive territory, successively stigmatized as heretical and a communist or Kurdish nationalist stronghold. Many years of war between the Turkish army and the Kurdish nationalist guerrilla of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) have turned the province into an overregulated space of surveillance where any appearance in public is under close watch and where attempts to contest the political order are more often than not forbidden or repressed. In this context, the reconstruction of space enables people, as we shall see, to practically renegotiate both the power balance, the rules of coexistence and social roles and categories.

As Craig Calhoun argues, "the term 'public sphere' ... is a spatial metaphor for an only partly spatial phenomenon. To be sure, public spaces from the Greek agora to early modern marketplaces, theatres, and parliaments all give support and setting to public life. But public events also transform spaces normally claimed for private transactions—parades transform streets."⁵ Consequently, the public sphere will not be considered here as a positive reality that can be located, but rather as a reality that *appears* through social practices. Following Louis Quéré, I will refer to the public sphere as *a phenomenon*, that is as *a form* and *an event*: "As a form, it structures coexistence, configures social relations and serves to apprehend events. As an event, it becomes visible through the practices and relations it structures and through the same events it serves to apprehend."⁶ The public sphere is thus a principle of social organization that produces behaviors and contributes to give shape to social interactions or copresence. It depends on these same behaviors and interactions to appear: "The public sphere is the product of the very practices it calls for, enables and conditions."⁷ In this perspective, a space is not public per se. It becomes public through the type of behaviors or interactions taking place, in accordance with specific codes and rituals, procedures and knowledge.

What kind of procedures and operations enable the emergence of the "ordered environment" that guides behaviors, discourses and actions and confers upon them a public character?⁸ Different currents of thought on this matter have already been explored in urban sociology. Erving Goffman in particular has observed how "civil inattention"—an elaborate

mode of acknowledging the other's presence while establishing some distance, not to show too much attention or curiosity—organizes copresence in urban environments.⁹ Others have insisted on the fact that urban space is not an empty setting: architectural devices, equipment (including light and sound equipment) and services provide city dwellers with landmarks to interact with and structure their behaviors. In French sociology, attention has notably been given to the diversity of “engagement regimes” and forms of argumentation with which actors produce and discuss public issues or justify themselves by referring to a “public good.”¹⁰ Since the beginning of the 1990s, extensive efforts have been made to go beyond the distinction generally established between urban and political (but also judicial, media or art-related) publicness.¹¹ Relieu and Terzi, in this way, try to bridge the most ordinary activities of city-dwellers on one hand and mainly discursive political controversies or public debates on the other. They indeed consider civil inattention (between pedestrians and car-drivers for example), participation in a police investigation as a witness (in relation to a car accident in this case) and collective action (calling for the improvement in traffic regulations) as many different ways to “engage” with a public space, all of which contribute to the production of urban publicness. More specifically, they argue that urban public experiences “embody and concretely constitute different modalities of living together,” which gives them a political dimension.¹² Methodical operations regulating activities in urban space are indeed inscribed in a system of normative mutual expectations: while following a procedure or mobilizing specific knowledge in this space, one expects that the other will be able to *act in an appropriate way*. If I am about to walk on a pedestrian crossing, I expect the car drivers to stop and let me cross. Likewise, if I run with my luggage in the direction of the train platform, I expect other people in the way to step aside to facilitate my run to catch the train. This practical knowledge makes us ordinary members of society, helps us to solve everyday practical issues and provides frameworks for behaving adequately. But these methodical operations and normative expectations also “create and maintain common ways of sensing, acting and judging ... They determine, in the same movement, the viewpoint from which a community can consider itself as unified and the relevant categories to behave and circulate within this community.” Because they contribute to defining and

embodying collective identities, as well as common ways of apprehending the environment, these normative expectations (and their associated practical knowledge) regulating ordinary urban activities also influence the wording and the understanding of “public issues,” and possibly the framing of political actions within the city.¹³

What if we bring power back into the discussion? This normative background and its associated procedures, while regulating social relations, participate in maintaining the stability of *a specific social order*. Those who comply in their discourses, practices and behaviors are categorized as respectable members of the concerned community and contribute to the reproduction of the system. Those who do not are disqualified/stigmatized and are likely to create at least disorientation or embarrassment, or to be exposed to “public” disapproval or even punishment.¹⁴ Examples might include tourists disrespecting a sacred site, drivers failing to yield the right of way, people not waiting their turn while in line; but also spectators talking loudly during a play, individuals disclosing their sexual identity through evocative attire or behavior in a conservative environment, or participants unable to reframe their private interests in more universal terms during a debate on the “public good.” Specific agents and devices of regulation may even prevent those unfamiliar with the required practical knowledge from accessing the public space in question. Each “engagement regime” in a public space is thus conditioned by compliance with specific procedures and knowledge, defining the borders of the group—providing categories to qualify it, regulate its actions and discourses, and differentiate it from the rest of the environment.¹⁵ In the same movement, by sharing these codes, the “public” emerges. Offering benchmarks to determine the degree of legitimacy and visibility of behaviors, discourses and actions in public, this “grammar of the public life” is not unchanging.¹⁶ It varies in time and space: each social organization, each cultural and political configuration is linked to a specific definition of what is allowable or not in public, delineating “proper” and “improper” behavior within a community. My argument is that public grammars evolve according to the state of power relations and their transformations. Through this grammar, the rules and norms of social and political organization are played out. Consequently, public grammar is constantly reasserted, but also renegotiated or challenged, whenever and wherever actors

organize to create breathing spaces, challenge the dominant normative system and subvert existing categories to produce new ones. What was formerly kept hidden or silent, or considered illegitimate in public, can force its way into the public sphere through these renegotiations of the grammar.

I will here consider that public spheres can emerge whenever rules governing coexistence and social interactions, definitions of social roles, and categories to apprehend the environment are renegotiated through spatial meaning-making processes. I focus specifically on the conflicting renegotiation of these rules between inhabitants of Tunceli and the most visible agents of regulation: local state agents in charge of surveillance and security (policemen and soldiers). One should not forget, however, that state is not homogeneous and that there is some diversity about how to respond to the state among Tunceli inhabitants as well.

The first part of this chapter examines the impact of war on the organization of local public life. The tightness of the spatial discipline demanded by state agents seems to allow little room for inhabitants to produce or even negotiate rules of coexistence and circulation. The second part, which considers a power configuration in transformation, observes how both state agents and people of Tunceli operate to reclaim space. The staging and performing of, respectively, national and local times and spaces, reveal a broader struggle over allegiances. But how does this production of conflicting spatial meanings, thus displaying diversity, concretely pave the way for renewed systems of mutual expectations and allow for the possibility of the emergence of arenas of debate and controversy? The last section of the chapter advances some tentative conclusions, by showing how the inhabitants of Tunceli, who engage, more or less intentionally, in struggles over “contested spaces,” challenge existing categories of identification and interpretation within the surrounding environment.¹⁷

A space kept silent?

In Tunceli, inhabitants have experienced long-term political violence and the consequent disruption of their daily lives. The PKK started its

armed struggle in 1984. In Tunceli, as in other eastern Kurdish provinces, this conflict reached its height in the mid-1990s, with widespread torture, disappearances and extralegal killings, forced evictions and the massive burning of Kurdish villages.¹⁸ Following the capture of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in February 1999, the PKK's decision to put an end to armed struggle in September of the same year (and, arguably, the influence of the European Union's integration perspective [the Helsinki Summit took place in December 1999]), has caused the intensity of this war to lessen somewhat. Tunceli was among the last Kurdish provinces where the state of emergency was officially lifted, in July of 2002. The state of emergency was an extraordinary legal arrangement that from July 1987 onward placed 13 provinces under the authority of a "super" governor with extensive powers, coupled with a strong process of militarization. Since 2002, however, there has not been a steady evolution toward peace and normalization. Setbacks were particularly obvious following the PKK's end to its unilateral cease-fire in June 2004. As for the AK Party's government, which initially displayed an EU-oriented reformist policy toward the Kurds, it generally chose to keep a low profile when faced with rising Turkish nationalism and the intransigence of the armed forces.

Today, fewer than 94,000 inhabitants live in Tunceli, 40,000 of them in villages.¹⁹ It is the Turkish province that has experienced the strongest waves of emigration since 1990. War and forced evictions have completely disorganized what used to be a traditional economy of stockbreeding and small-scale agriculture. Since few economic and social investments come from the state, Tunceli largely relies on remittances from migrants living in Turkish cities or foreign countries to cover everyday life expenses, basic services (machines for road construction and maintenance, or equipment for handicapped people, for example) or small-scale economic initiatives. Today, the province remains highly militarized and under strict security conditions. As a point of reference, in January 2006, of the 23,500 New Turkish Lira paid to public servants in Tunceli, 19,000 were devoted to military personnel, while investments for "economic" purposes counted for only 1,111 NTL.²⁰

An over-regulated public life

Long-term warfare between the Turkish army and the PKK has basically turned the province into an overregulated space of surveillance: multiple checkpoints, arbitrary identity controls and a strict curfew hindering daily circulation. Access to mountains and pastures was prevented. Police stations multiplied and military fortresses were built wherever the need was felt to regulate entry and circulation within the province: overhanging main cities but also punctuating roads between the different provincial districts as well as in the mountains. On the pretext of cutting off the guerrilla forces from local suppliers and backing, the 1993–94 military campaign of forced evictions emptied out and destroyed most of the villages of the province. An extraordinarily strict embargo on food was imposed in 1994 while forests were also massively burnt. Tunceli was, like much of the Kurdish region, isolated from the rest of the country. Information remained under strict control. No one (not even journalists, deputies, or NGO delegations) could enter the zone without military authorization. The sole local reporter was under strong pressure to “adequately” select information worth echoing while the two locally edited newspapers confined themselves to reproducing news extracted from major national dailies. Being in possession of a subversive newspaper or magazine, or even a satellite TV aerial, was heavily sanctioned.²¹ In fact, to secure its hegemony, the Turkish state not only needed to physically lock up the province but also to take control over any means of meaning-making. Consequently, in addition to the material reorganization of space through urban planning and specific security devices, any form of resistance through daily spatial practices—walking, naming or narrating the place—had to be crushed.²²

Appadurai has emphasized the necessity for nation-states to continuously engage in a process of “social and spatial standardization” in order to “incubate and reproduce compliant national citizens.”²³ But crises and wars add a whole other dimension to this process. By preventing inhabitants of Tunceli from walking along their streets, meeting on the front steps of their houses to recall memories or sitting in teahouses to discuss the news (all this possibly in Kurdish language); by keeping them from leading their flocks to the pastures or gathering on their sacred

sites, the Turkish state directly impeded inhabitants from producing their “own contexts of alterity,” and thus paved the way to the “regulated public life” needed to reinforce nationhood and silence any other allegiance.²⁴ Through these sociospatial daily experiences, the whole ordinary process of (re)production of rules and norms of coexistence was obstructed. The landmarks used by inhabitants to behave properly and to produce categories to understand their environment were silenced. State officials obviously intended to leave no room for conflicting spatial meaning-making. Anything displayed “in public” out of the national space and time—from the color of clothes and the amount of facial hair to the music listened to in the street, to locally rooted or religious commemorations—could be interpreted as subversive and lead to one’s identification as an enemy.²⁵ Even within what used to be more “intimate” circles, like the neighborhood or one’s house, transgressing the dominant norms (by speaking in Kurdish for example) could have dangerous consequences: wiretap and denouncements were quite frequent practices.

A challengeable public grammar?

National time and space was, in turn, extensively performed through various commemorations and ceremonies. The “Square of the Republic,” at the core of the main city of the province, functioned notably as the scene of the flag ceremony, occurring twice a week. Sixty-odd soldiers would perform the national anthem and every person passing the square at that time would have to stop, stand and pay respect. This performance, a display of power, also reminded inhabitants, through a strict discipline of bodies, of the “proper” loyalty. This staging device arguably produced its public, demanding compliance with the normative expectations entailed by the ceremony itself (silence or singing, standing still, eyes on the flag). It did not tolerate, in discourse or in attitude, any negotiation or contestation of the procedures or of the message conveyed: that of Turkish hegemony. On 30 June 1996, however, a young PKK sympathizer, wearing maternity clothes to dissimulate the bomb under her shirt, blew herself up in the middle of the ceremony. It was the first suicide bombing ever committed in the name of the PKK. Along with the activist seven soldiers were killed and thirty-three others injured. This put an end to the

ceremonies, and for years afterward soldiers were not allowed to circulate on their own within the city. This event crystallized the ability of the PKK to challenge the state's spatial production at the core of the city itself and marked a tremor in the power balance. It also strongly affected the regime of coexistence between inhabitants and state agents, towards more discipline, violence and segregation. The security forces and their families were now, more systematically than ever, living in segregated areas, protected by fencing and armed keepers. Among Tunceli inhabitants, pregnant women, young girls and children were, from that moment on, under specific suspicion and suffered more frequent identity controls and associated humiliations. During this war, inhabitants and state agents thus did not have many opportunities to practically define and adapt rules of coexistence. Former categories of identification became largely inoperative in a context where the grid "friend" versus "enemy" quashed all others, based on criteria and tests of loyalty that, moreover, never completely guaranteed that one would not quite arbitrarily shift from one category to the other.

Ironically enough, in December 1996 (five months after the suicide bombing), a statue commemorating human rights was inaugurated in front of the same square, in the presence of both the city mayor, the chief of security [*emniyet müdürü*] and the governor of the province [*vali*]. This statue, 2.5 metres high, represents a sitting woman, face and arms raised to the sky. From her hands, a dove takes flight. The statue, the display of which had been planned one year earlier by request of the mayor of Tunceli, Mazlum Arslan, to the then-President of the High Council for Human Rights, was supposed to commemorate the forty-eighth birthday of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This intention, however, was rapidly overwhelmed as the statue's meaning remained open to conflicting interpretations.²⁶ The chief of security and the governor, inaugurating the monument, wanted it to stand for the condemnation of "Kurdish terrorism" and, as such, symbolize the (moral) legitimacy of the war they were fighting and the violence they were using. For others, this statue in the shape of a woman honored the memory of the young suicide bomber and her sacrifice to liberate them from Turkish oppression.²⁷ These conflicting interpretations over the statue's meaning, both locally and nationally as rumor spread that it celebrated the memory

of the suicide bomber,²⁸ highlighted readings of the situation that were far from being equally audible. In a way, the statue embodied a broader struggle over loyalties, though these were still very much limited to the war-makers' positions. The city mayor, both in his decision to build this statue and in his attempt at justification following the controversy, tried to subvert categories:

These days, human rights are our greatest need, all the people (of Tunceli) are longing for it. We are proud to have this statue erected.²⁹

The woman is a symbol of peace and tolerance. She consolidates friendships... We condemn violence. Why would we raise a monument celebrating violence? [... Following the suicide bombing on the Square of the Republic, everyone in Tunceli were on the side of the security forces.] We even cancelled weddings. But nobody records that we made these martyrs our martyrs!³⁰

By appealing to the higher principle of respect for human rights to promote transformed conditions of coexistence between state agents and Tunceli inhabitants, the mayor also failed to challenge the state order and its use of violence. The statue should have been a central landmark in the production of a public space where inhabitants would not be stigmatized as "enemies," as "terrorists" deprived of human rights; a space where living together would have been possible.

In Tunceli, war deprived inhabitants of most of their landmarks. Moreover, while instilling fear and distrust among former friends or neighbors, it made actual procedures of coexistence and interaction nearly meaningless. As for the relations between inhabitants and state security forces, (extreme) experiences like identity controls, trials, the funeral of a guerrilla or attempts to get one's son or daughter freed or at least protected from torture, could have provided opportunities to argue over principles of justice, to adjust rules of coexistence and categories of identification at the margins. But, at the height of the conflict, these were generally strangled by nonnegotiable procedures and silenced under war-makers' propaganda. The Turkish state and, at a smaller scale and

in restricted space, the PKK, were thus monopolizing the production of rules of publicness along extremely tight grammars.

Reclaiming space

The lifting of emergency rule in July 2002 formalized an easing of the repression of inhabitants since before 2000. If the repression did not regain the intensity and the extensive forms of the 1990s, however, military operations never really ceased in the mountains of Tunceli. The pace of violence even accelerated after the PKK broke its five-year unilateral cease-fire in June 2004.³¹ Devices of control and surveillance thus were transformed without disappearing. Of the six military checkpoints once found on the road from the neighboring province of Elazığ, one remains today. But Tunceli is one of the few Kurdish provinces in which identity control at the entry is still systematic. Checkpoints are also maintained between each district. As for city centers, these are generally safer than before. Torture and extralegal killings have nearly disappeared³²; violence and harassment are generally less indiscriminate. Arbitrary identity checks have ceased in the main cities of the province but streets remain under the close surveillance of agents in plainclothes. People can now gather more safely for demonstrations or meetings but police cameras have multiplied and watch for any protest movements within the crowd.

These transformations in the spatial discipline, as fragile and reversible as they may have been since 2000, created some room for a renegotiation of the rules of coexistence between state agents and members of the Tunceli community. After a long period of violence that has wrested inhabitants from acquired social norms and principles, but in a political context still characterized by an important fluidity and uncertainty (Dobry 1992), conflicts over spatial devices and rules of daily interactions are privileged tools in the reconstruction of publicness.

The nation-state and ideologically desirable reconstruction

At this stage, the nation-state had to be performed locally, not only as a mechanism of the police but also as an institutional structure rebuilding

and reallocating resources and providing services. New landmarks were consequently proposed so that the state and its agents could be identified differently. Trees were planted by soldiers at the entry of the city, for example, in an area bordering the road, interestingly renamed the “Forest of Friendship” [*Sevgi Ormanı*]. In the main city center, the governor of the province financed the construction of a monumental fountain in 2004, decorated with epigraphs by well known Alevi thinkers. The greatest homage, however, is to Atatürk, the hero of the national War of Liberation (1919) and father of the Turkish Republic (1923). One of his 1923 sayings, reproduced on a large outdoor billboard, reminds passersby that inhabitants of any part of the (then) newly conquered Turkish territory are “all children of the same race.”³³ A more humble fountain, commissioned by the chief of police in 2005, stands at the corner of the Square of the Republic and celebrates the devotion of the police force towards the inhabitants of Tunceli, with a plaque reading “A Warm Friendly Hand” [*Sıcak bir dost eli*], part of the wider campaign, “Strong like Bronze, Safe like Tunceli” [*Tunç gibi sağlam, Tunceli gibi güvenli*]³⁴ launched in 2004. Policewomen were also invited to become “voluntary mothers” of orphaned children of Tunceli, thus committing themselves “to share their problems and to contribute to their education, their psychological and social development.”³⁵ On 8 March 2007 (International Women’s Day), these same policewomen distributed carnations to female travelers during traffic identity checks. In sum, this “postconflict” material production of space aims at providing inhabitants with renewed categories through which to interact with the state, its agents (as protector and provider), and its surveillance devices (like the checkpoints). As such, it is an invitation to a new type of coexistence, in which inhabitants are supposedly interpellated through transformed categories, and are no longer lumped together in the “potential terrorist” category.

Nonetheless, this state spatial production also constantly reminds them of their loyalty and duties as “true” Turkish citizens; it is intended to implement categories to read the environment as well. The way local authorities implemented the “Return to Villages” [*Köye Dönüş*] policy, from 2004 on, is quite revealing on that matter: it clearly indicates responsibilities, “proper” allegiances and consequently differentiates between reliable and unreliable members of the community. In fact, anyone

accused or suspected to have hosted or fed a member of the guerrilla, which concretely encompasses most of the villagers inhabiting the region in 1994, would be denied financial or material redress.³⁶ Villages to be rebuilt were carefully selected, mapping the degrees of loyalty and discipline displayed towards the state. The village of Güneybaşı, for example, was among the first to receive funds for the reconstruction of houses and served as a showcase for the implementation of the redress and reconstruction policy. A drinking fountain was inaugurated there in September 2004, shortly before the promised twenty-four houses in July 2005, in the presence of the governor, military chiefs and the head of the police, as well as one deputy and a city mayor. This fountain commemorates the “martyrs,” “eight citizens slaughtered by the terrorists of the PKK” in August 1993 and July 1997 in the village, “just like the Armenians slaughtered our citizens in front of the mosque in 1915”; it made of this pilot village “the best example of the state healing the wounds caused by terrorism.”³⁷ Again, this fountain and its plaque are there to recall the inhabitants—those attending the ceremony or discovering it through media as well as those passing by in their daily circulation—to the “proper” behaviors and discourses, to the “legitimate” terms (martyrs/terrorists, slaughter/healer state) and the relevant wider context of understanding (that is, that the PKK like the Armenians before them are a threat to the true Turkish nation and its territory) needed to discuss a related issue or to differentiate the victims from those responsible for violence, as well as the good and deserving citizens from the bad ones. This fountain, like official buildings, monuments, replanted forests or the inscription of nationalist symbols and slogans on mountains, constitute the nodes reordering the environment to produce publicness: they command a specific regime of discursive and practical engagement to be seen or heard, in conformity with the principles of justice and legitimacy defined by the state agents. But in the context of postemergency rule, adherence to this promoted public grammar was to be rewarded rather than secured through threat or repression.³⁸ Reconstruction policy provided the local state agents with tools to both encode the environment and offer these rewards. Spatial meaning-making is thus a full-fledged element of the process of production and dissemination of the state-sponsored public grammar, one that is all the more efficient when the state does control spaces critical to the

reproduction of the dominant grammar and memory. With the changing political configuration, however, state agents can not silence the counter-strategies or conflicting meaning-making operations the way they used to at the height of the conflict.

Counter-meaning-making: Challenging the sociospatial order of the nation-state

The inhabitants of Tunceli have gradually (re)gained the ability to attach meanings to their surrounding environment and to challenge state-sponsored meaning-making. To make sense of this dramatically transformed environment, they notably engaged in the active production of a local time and space.³⁹ The most spectacular staging of this “production of locality” (Appadurai 1996) is probably the annual Munzur Cultural Festival. Munzur is the name of a mountain chain in Tunceli, and also designates the river that flows across the region. This festival, initiated in 2000 by the associations of migrants of Tunceli, has been co-opted, if not hijacked, by the newly elected pro-Kurdish city council of the provincial main city from 2004 on.⁴⁰ Among the tens of thousands of people attending the event, many are Tunceli émigrés, now living all over Turkey but also the rest of the world (especially Europe). This festival time marks a temporary withdrawal of the security forces and a certain weakening of their hold over the definition of “proper” behaviors and discourses in public. They are indeed overwhelmed by the alternative meaning-making operations these visitors engage in or simply enable by their presence. During the four days of this festival, colors, songs and readings considered “publicly illegitimate” or de facto stigmatizing the rest of the year force their way into the streets, on the stands and musical stages of the festival. Meanwhile, sensitive issues are discussed in seminars.⁴¹ Young revolutionary sympathizers, while attending crowded concerts of Turkish, Kurdish or Alevi leftist artists, systematically display challenging, often illegal, signs of allegiance (the V for victory, pictures of the founders of armed revolutionary movements, slogans). Émigrés who have been able to learn and improve their native tongue (Zaza or Kurmanc) in Europe now converse in Zaza in the streets, try to remember old words with inhabitants and use the former names of places. In recent years, the festival has

also increasingly become an occasion to organize and expose collective memories of violence; not so much those of the last decades, but the massacres perpetrated in 1937–1938 by the Turkish army, which killed tens of thousands of people in the region and forcibly displaced many others.⁴² Efforts have increased to collect and diffuse the memories of this period. Though it is still impossible to openly discuss these massacres in public or debate them in a seminar, bus drivers, notably, found a way to directly challenge official history. Transporting people from one district to another during the festival, they took the opportunity to indicate sites where the massacres took place: on the road, in the hills from which bodies were thrown into the river, and on the banks where survivors were recovered.

By practicing and narrating spaces in “localized” terms, all these people thus challenge the sociospatial standardization process. How does this production of challenging spatial meaning-making concretely pave the way for the renegotiation of the rules of public life and for the emergence of arenas of debate? Scaling down in the analysis, I will here more specifically claim that this adversarial production and display of alterity provides opportunities to effectively question and transform the existing categories governing identification and interaction and, at the same time, creates social experiences through which the formulation of a “public issue” can be made meaningful.

Renegotiating categories

“Ordinary” public experiences

The display of Alevi identity plays an important role in reclaiming space in Tunceli. Besides the resumption of pilgrimages towards previously forbidden sacred sites, several places of worship [*cem evi*] were built from 1999 on, generally located in meaningful sites for Alevi cosmology in Tunceli, such as water sources or mountains embodying legends. Forms of circulation, attitudes and practices around these new landmarks were partly defined in contrast to the dominant norms of Sunni Islam and associated rituals. In Tunceli, state agents have long tried to remind Alevis of their “true” Muslim identity. More specifically, after the 1980 military

coup, the governor of the province fostered the building of mosques, one in nearly every village, and imams were appointed. Nowadays, within the cities, the *cem evi* generally operate as cultural centers, providing music and *semah* [an Alevi ritual dance] courses as well as a site for worshipping.⁴³ Further, the celebration of Alevi holidays and commemoration of the violence perpetuated against the Alevi community began to animate streets and recovered sacred sites of Tunceli again. This renewal of a heterodox religious space, with (nearly exclusively) Sunni state agents looking on, did not come about without tensions. A young girl, going to the *cem evi* of the main city of Tunceli with her mother, remembers one of the policemen at the checkpoint sneering: “Dirty Christians, go and light some candles for us too!”⁴⁴ The young girl, shocked, stared at the policeman, while her mother chose to ignore him.⁴⁵ Here, the policeman’s disparagement gave visibility to conflicting normative systems and adversarial moral principles. There was no stabilized system of mutual expectations as such: the policeman did not show the “civil inattention” that might have been expected; but neither did he prevent them from going to the *cem evi*, by using violence or further harassment for example. As for the mother and daughter, they tried to appear unaffected, ignore this verbal aggression and go on their way as proudly as they could. That the policeman asked for moral accountability, using references and terms that are part of a broader debate on orthodoxy (however stereotyped); and that this affected both the protagonists and onlookers in their attitudes, as well as in their later conversations, makes it a *public experience*.

This experience then became available to feed the definition of a public issue or a broader debate. The young girl in this story was, for example, recounting this event during a discussion with friends and foreigners to support her argument over the identity of the people of Tunceli and their uniqueness. This is also the same type of “ordinary” experience that participants in the seminar on “Alevism: An Identity under Pressure” during the Munzur Festival mobilize to illustrate their point and to make sense of the more “general” arguments of the speakers. To find resonance, these debates need to be grounded in lived experience and practical knowledge. The rise in generality calls for a simultaneous confrontation with particularity.⁴⁶ Conversely, the rise in generality within debate can more immediately follow from this confrontation over devices and rules

of coexistence and circulation. Checkpoints progressively became privileged sites for exactly this purpose, as the legitimacy of systematic and repetitive identity controls increasingly came into question. On one occasion, on the bus on the way back from a district center to the provincial main city center in the summer of 2006, the reluctance of the passengers (among them a majority of migrants and outsiders) to show their identity cards—for the seventh time that day, for both military and police checkpoints—turned into a more general debate on the rationale of the surveillance and control policies. When asked to justify such repetitive controls, policemen and soldiers generally offer the same explanation: “We are doing our duty. This is Tunceli, a zone of terror.” But this time, passengers expressed their sense of injustice, pointing out that these devices conveyed a negative image of Tunceli, with devastating effects on visitors and outsiders. Citing a recent official report on urban terrorism which located the threat of terror in large cities and metropolitan centers, the bus passengers challenged the categorization of Tunceli and its inhabitants as “terrorists”; or at least, as “suspects.” At that moment, the checkpoint, a device impeding circulation in the name of security and contributing to the production of an overregulated public life, was turned into a contentious public arena. Indeed a public sphere emerged in the transformation of the “engagement regime” of the minibuss passengers, from the simple identification of the control device to an active questioning of the device itself.

Collective action over contested spaces

In both cases discussed above, the emerging public sphere did not survive the dispersion of its public after the event. But these adversarial public experiences of everyday life, when engraved in memories and sometimes even bodies, become part of a practical knowledge used to adapt modes of circulation and interaction. They can also be exposed to and revived within larger publics in more or less institutionalized arenas of debate (from conversation with friends to participation in a conference) or relayed through media channels. What happens now when people engage in urban space to act collectively in an orchestrated way to challenge the spatial discipline and transform categories? Does this intentional and contentious regime of engagement produce other types of publicness? Does

it provide for other forms of articulation between spatial copresence and discursive arenas of debate?

With the lifting of emergency rule and the relative easing of repression in the cities of the province, numerous urban threats and issues have been diagnosed and collectively exposed by organized groups in Tunceli: from the lack of adapted devices for handicapped people to a general social (and political) degeneration marked by prostitution, alcoholism and drug addiction; and from the economic dependency of women to the forgetting of native tongues and local history. Each of these was translated into specific collective actions to reclaim space. Here I will focus on one of these issues: the inhabitants' campaign to halt the building of dams in Turkey.

With the funding of a Turkish-Euro-American consortium, the Turkish state began the construction of eight dams and hydroelectric power plants in the province, in the late 1990s, six of them within the national park itself.⁴⁷ These dams were to furnish a little less than 1% of the national electricity supply. Some local construction companies were involved, but the dams do not offer any middle or long-term perspective of development (through irrigation for example) for the province. To carry out this project, nearly sixty villages would be flooded, with a total of eighty-four villages evacuated. Parts of the roads between the districts and the provincial centers would also probably be swamped, which would reinforce the districts' isolation.

How was this dam project framed as an issue motivating collective action? Tunceli émigrés living in major Turkish cities initiated the debate in 1999, later joined by some organizations in Tunceli. At first, they identified the dam construction as a new and barely veiled attempt by the state to silence Tunceli and its rebellious identity. In recent years, the campaign has grown into a broader environmentalist movement, increasing its resonance beyond Tunceli and far-left circles. It is both discussed within diverse institutionalized public arenas (in courtrooms, in the Turkish Parliament, in the media) and articulated on different scales and in various places, through the migrants' associations themselves but also through their involvement within different broader environmental platforms. The movement has come to address the broad public as "the people of *Munzur*," a category that embraces the people of Tunceli as well as any

outsider concerned with the issue, and that is also partly free of the stereotypes (“terrorist”, “communist”) associated with the name “Tunceli”.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, they also started to widen their environmental concerns, to ore-mining and the associated use of toxic cyanide (in Tunceli and beyond), and to nuclear energy or genetically modified organisms. Thus a general appeal has been made at the national level. But how does this campaign make sense in Tunceli itself and how does it impact the rules of public life there?

To find “cultural resonance” among inhabitants, the activists’ discourse notably reinvented the place of nature in the Alevi cosmology, appealing to their “innate” sense of respect and responsibility towards the environment.⁴⁹ In urban centers, collective action to protest the construction of the dams was performed accordingly: marches were organized along parts of the roads and valley to be flooded; rubbish was collected on the banks of the Munzur river and Alevi religious performances were organized on the sacred site where two tributaries of the river join. The marches were designed to promote modes of circulation that (re)produced inhabitants’ attachment to their surroundings while transforming categories of identification (“environmentalist” rather than “far-leftist/terrorist” or “Alevi/heretic”). This constitution of the Munzur river as a privileged location and scene for demonstrations contributed to transform the local geography of contention. It somewhat challenged the “traditional” Square of the Republic or the Human Rights statue as sites of protest for example. When however performing on, or starting their action from these “traditional” sites, activists are also often privileging innovative repertoire. In August 2004, the “Mads of Munzur” activist group protested the dam construction by lying in the middle of the Square of the Republic, each of them embodying an endangered river in the world. A considerable public assembled; even police officers were intrigued.⁵⁰ On the one hand, this repertoire combining play and seriousness somewhat detaches the activism over the dams from spaces associated with “traditional” political forces (far-leftist movements, trade unions, political parties) that are already heavily stigmatized. It may consequently appear less suspicious to inhabitants concerned about potential repression, if not to state security agents, even though it does not display any of the symbols of the official public grammar. By “conquering” other spaces for contentious politics

and associating them with specific practices and meanings, this repertoire thus arguably contributes to enlarging the public sphere. Here again, the presence of migrants and outsiders is decisive in the shaping and framing of contentious performances.⁵¹ As they experience other rules of publicness and associated practical knowledge, their regime of engagement in a situation (whether at a checkpoint, during a demonstration, or some other event) and their apprehending of regulating agents may differ from that of inhabitants. In fact, their specific discursive and practical resources allow them to innovate and adapt their responses, which may have an influence on inhabitants' and security forces' behavior.

On the other hand, this expansion of the public sphere is countered by immediate limitations: first, state agents are not about to tolerate any bridging of frames, such as by coupling the collective action over environmental issues with another politically loaded issue. Though they may have allowed more public displays of diversity and alterity, they also emphasized pressure on and stigmatization of specific targets: In July 2004, state security forces heavily sanctioned and indiscriminately repressed a march to the Munzur intended to draw attention to Turkish revolutionary activists dying from hunger-strike in prisons. State forces continued to exercise their power, both to define the borders of legitimate public space and, within it, to differentiate among more or less legitimate causes. For example, in his 26 April 2005 speech, the then-governor of Tunceli celebrated the first steps of the construction of a rehabilitation center for handicapped persons, funded by people from Tunceli (especially migrants settled in Europe) and diverse donors (among them the then-President of the National Assembly). The governor took that occasion to publicly attack the dam campaign: "Certain civil associations should follow this example and do something concrete rather than criticizing what they have. They talk about the dams and cyanide but they don't know about details. They should know well what is positive for our province and only after should they criticize!" This cooptation of what reconstruction and modernity should be in Tunceli against other perspectives is, again, revealing in terms of the renewed state strategy to regulate urban space.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to highlight the conditions of emergence of the public sphere in a restrictive political environment by considering its urban and spatial dimensions. I considered this as an invitation to both scale down the analysis and to pay close attention to visual and performative aspects in order to reveal the power dynamics in the constitution of the public sphere. Political actors indeed continuously struggle over the rules of coexistence and the meanings attached to the environment—that is, the constitutive elements of urban publicness—to secure or challenge the existing sociospatial order. But this struggle is more often than not fought on unequal bases. In highly conflictual contexts, collective actors who do not have access to institutionalized public (discursive) arenas may go underground and resort to violence, which is as much an acknowledgement of their inability to make themselves heard or seen as an attempt to transform the existing public order. But urban publicness is also continuously produced and renegotiated through daily coexistence and ordinary interactions. In a restrictive political context, these ordinary interactions become a privileged way to contest the political order and transform the public grammar.

In Tunceli, the relative appeasement that followed the PKK declaration of a cease-fire in 1999 led local state agents to redefine, or at least diversify, their meaning-making operations in order to regain inhabitants' loyalty and adherence to the national order. But it also gave room to inhabitants to renegotiate rules of coexistence as well as meanings ascribed in their environment and, in this way, to challenge this same national order. These challenging regimes of engagement in "postconflict" urban space may be more or less organized or intentional: from returning to the *cem evi* despite police harassment to a collective occupation of river banks to contest dam construction. But they commonly contribute to the transformation of categories of identification and interpretation, and promote new ways of inhabiting space and possibly new geographies of resistance. Further, as we have seen, individuals "unintentionally" involved in a contest over spatial devices or norms regulating the system of mutual expectations may borrow arguments from a more institutionalized arena

of debate. This suggests that public action needs to be grounded in “ordinary” public experiences to make sense among the inhabitants as well.

To observe public spheres in a contentious and restrictive environment thus requires that we question their conditions of emergence, notably by looking at how everyday practices, including the more discrete, embody or challenge the dominant public grammar. Such an approach, which repositions the public sphere at the core of a power struggle, further blurs the distinction between “public” and “private” and calls for an analysis that pays more attention to the mechanisms of passage between “hidden” and “public” transcripts.⁵²

Notes

1. Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga, eds., *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).
2. Lyn Lofland, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1973).
3. Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 1974).
4. Alevism is a syncretic belief system, defined in close harmony with nature, which incorporates elements from pre-Islamic beliefs as well as aspects of Shiite Islam and other monotheistic religions. It is possible that 10 to 25 percent of the Turkish population is Alevi. The identity and religious practices of the (Zaza-speaking) Alevi of Tunceli are slightly different from those of other Alevi in Anatolia. Historically, Alevism has been defined in opposition to Sunnism and identified by its opposition to central authority; see Hamit Bozarslan, "L'alévisme, la méta-histoire et les mythes fondateurs de la recherche," in *Turquie, les mille visages. Politique, religion, femmes et immigration*, edited by Isabelle Rigoni (Paris: Syllepse, 2000). Categorized as a heterodoxy, it has often been stigmatized as sacrilegious and repressed as such. After enduring violence and subsequently migrating to cities, various adaptations and "rereadings" of the Alevi identity and a significant—but fractured—movement around Alevi identity has emerged and developed in the last twenty years. See Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere, eds., *Alevi Identity* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1998); and Elise Massicard, *Constructions identitaires, mobilisation et territorialité politique: le mouvement aléviste en Turquie et en Allemagne depuis la fin des années 1980*, PhD dissertation, IEP Paris, 2002.
5. Craig Calhoun. "Rethinking the Public Sphere," presentation to the Ford Foundation, 7 February 2005, http://www.ssrc.org/program_areas/ps/Rethinking_the_Public_Sphere_05_speech.pdf.
6. Louis Quéré, "L'espace public comme forme et comme événement," in *Prendre place: Espace public et culture dramatique*, edited by Isaac Joseph (Paris: Recherches-Plan Urbain, 1995), 94.
7. Quéré, "L'espace public," 98.
8. Louis Quéré and Dietrich Brezger, "L'étrangeté mutuelle des passants: Le mode de coexistence du public urbain," *Les Annales de la Recherche Urbaine* 57–58 (1992–1993): 89.

9. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959).
10. See, for example, Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, *De la justification: Les économies de la grandeur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); and Daniel Cefaï and Danny Trom, eds., *Les formes de l'action collective: Mobilisations dans des arènes publiques* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2001).
11. See Daniel Cefaï and Dominique Pasquier, eds., *Les sens du public: Publics politiques, publics médiatiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003); Bastien François and Erik Neveu, eds., *Espaces publics mosaïques: Acteurs, arènes et rhétoriques des débats publics contemporains* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999); Isaac Joseph, *Prendre place: Espace public et culture dramatique* (Paris: Recherches-Plan urbain, 1995); and Louis Quéré, "L'espace public: De la théorie politique à la métathéorie sociologique," *Quaderni* 18 (Autumn): 1992.
12. Marc Relieu and Cédric Terzi, "Les politiques ordinaires de la vie urbaine. L'organisation de l'expérience publique de la ville," in *Les sens du public: Publics politiques, publics médiatiques*, edited by Daniel Cefaï and Dominique Pasquier (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), 373.
13. Relieu and Terzi, "Les politiques ordinaires de la vie urbaine," 386–387.
14. Erving Goffman, *Stigma* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963).
15. Laurent Thévenot, *L'action au pluriel. Sociologie des régimes d'engagement* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006).
16. Danny Trom, "Grammaire de la mobilisation et vocabulaire de motifs," in *Les formes de l'action collective: Mobilisations dans des arènes publiques*, edited by Daniel Cefaï and Danny Trom (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2001), 99–134.
17. Low and Lawrence-Zuniga define "contested spaces" as "geographic locations where conflicts... engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power. While these conflicts principally center on the meanings invested in sites, or derive from their interpretation, they reveal broader social struggles over deeply held collective myths. In this way, contested spaces give material expression to and act as loci for creating and promulgating, countering and negotiating dominant cultural themes that find expression in myriad aspects of life." Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, 18.

18. As of 2008, over 3000 villages have been destroyed, 44,000 people have died, and thousands more have been forcibly displaced (378,335 villagers were displaced in the 1990s, according to the official figures. The actual figure is probably much higher.)
19. These are the results of the 2000 official census. In 1990, 133,600 inhabitants were living in Tunceli (152,000 in 1985), 8,800 of them in villages.
20. Dincer Gökçe, "Para Orduya akıyor," *Özgür Gündem*, 8 April 2006.
21. Kurdish language being forbidden, Kurdish TV programs prepared out of the country were broadcasted via satellite. In 2002, as part of legislative efforts to bring the country closer to European Union standards, the Turkish Parliament allowed the broadcast of Kurdish-language programs a few hours a week.
22. Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
23. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 189–191. For an excellent account of the ethnonationalist incorporation of space and time in Turkey, based on the case of the city of Urfa in southeast Turkey, see Kerem Öktem, "Incorporating the Time and Space of the Ethnic 'Other': Nationalism and Space in Southeast Turkey in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 4 (2004): 559–578.
24. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 191.
25. In Turkey, hair- and beard-cut can reflect political identities. In Tunceli, leftist-minded people used to wear a short but abundant moustache; traditional religious leaders wear a long white beard. For anthropological insight into the meaning of hairiness among Turkish migrants in France, see Benoît Fliche, "Quand cela tient à un cheveu: pilosité et identité chez les Turcs de Strasbourg," *Terrain* 35 (2000): 155–165.
26. For a stimulating analysis of space in flux, with a continual shift in meaning of things, including monuments, see Sunil Manghani, "Picturing Berlin: Piecing Together a Public Sphere," *Invisible Culture* 6 (2003), www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_6/manghani/manghani.html.
27. In Kurdish and Turkish far-leftist ranks, the suicide-bomber Zeynep Kınacı is, still today, largely praised as a symbol of determination in the fight against fascism, and a symbol of freedom. Interestingly enough, her gesture is nowadays celebrated as a call for peace.

28. For an account (in Turkish) on these debates over the statue, see the daily newspaper *Hürriyet*, 5 July 2000, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=-166063>. Over the years, the statue has become a meeting point for diverse demonstrations, notably to reclaim women's rights. Recently, the site was chosen by the elected Kurdish female mayor to call for and celebrate peace.
29. "Şu günlerde en fazla gereksinim duyduğumuz insan hakları, bütün milletin özlemle beklediği bir ihtiyaç durumuna gelmiştir. Bu heykeli yaptırmakla gurur duyuyoruz." (*Milliyet*, 13 December 1996)
30. "Mazlum Arslan, 'Kadın barışı, hoşgörüyü simgeler. Dostlukları pekiştirir ... Şiddeti kınıyoruz. Neden heykelini dikelim' diye konuştu ... Cumhuriyet Meydanı'nda 'canlı bomba' eyleminden sonra tüm Tunceli halkının güvenlik güçlerinin yanında yeraldığını söyleyen Mazlum Arslan, 'Düğünleri bile iptal ettik. Şehitlere sahip çıktığımızı kimse söylemiyor' dedi." (*Hürriyet*, 5 July 2000)
31. Most of the PKK forces have withdrawn and joined Iraqi camps since 1999. The Turkish army's hawks are however determined to exterminate any remaining threat (rejecting amnesty), even if it means entering northern Iraq. In June 2004, Abdullah Öcalan allowed its guerrillas to fight back ongoing operations. A new cease-fire was again unilaterally declared in October 2006, without much success. In June 2007, the PKK again declared a cease-fire, keeping its right to fight back in case of aggression. In Tunceli, the situation is even more complex due to the relative autonomy of Tunceli-native PKK fighters from the central authority of the Party (some of them refused to comply to the 1999 declaration of cease-fire), as well as the presence of Turkish leftist revolutionary groups in its mountains.
32. During the summer of 2004, at least four killings by "unidentified assailants" (possibly military special forces or guerrilla members punishing "traitors") took place in villages of the province.
33. In a discourse pronounced in Diyarbakır in 1923: "*Diyarbakırlı, Vanlı, Erzurumlu, Trabzonlu, İstanbullu, Trakyalı ve Makedonyalı hep bir ırkın evlatları, hep aynı cevherin damarlarıdır*"; that is, "People of Diyarbakır, of Van, of Trabzon, of Thrace and Macedonia are all children of the same race, veins of the same precious mineral."
34. This is a play on words: Literally, "Tunceli" means "hand of bronze" in Turkish. Atatürk himself wanted to rename the territory of "Dersim" (a

- Kurdish name) with “Tunceli” in 1935, to signal that the new Turkish state had decided to take back the troublesome province.
35. See the press article in *Tercüman*, 12 December 2005.
 36. See Hüseyin Aygün, “Tunceli’de Zarar Tespit Çalışmalarına Dair” [On the Evaluation of Damages in Tunceli], *Bianet*, 17 March 2006, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kategori/insanhaklari/76081/tuncelide-zarar-tespit-calismalarina-dair> (in Turkish). The law on “redresses concerning damages caused during the struggle against terrorism” was voted on 17 July 2004.
 37. See “Köye Dönüş Konut Desteği” [House-Building to Promote Return to Villages], *Venge Dersim*, 24 July 2005, www.vengedersim.com/article_view.php?id=168 (in Turkish).
 38. For a stimulating account of the way the official public grammar shapes collective action in Istanbul and Ankara around specific monuments and symbols, namely the Turkish flag and pictures of Atatürk, see Etienne Copeaux, “Le consensus obligatoire,” in *Turquie, les mille visages: Politique, religion, femmes et immigration*, edited by Isabelle Rigoni (Paris: Syllepsek, 2000). In Tunceli, demonstrators are generally reluctant to adopt these symbols, to the point that it has become an ultimate test of loyalty: inhabitants or groups appearing in public with the Turkish flag cannot be suspected of acquaintance with terrorist groups (as are most of the collective actors in Tunceli).
 39. On this point, see Marie Le Ray, “Associations de pays et production de locality: la ‘campagne Munzur’ contre les barrages,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (2005), <http://www.ejts.org/document370.html>.
 40. The festival was first forbidden in 1998, for “security reasons.” The 2005 festival was also cancelled by the provincial governor for the same reasons. Nicole Watts has emphasized the major role played by pro-Kurdish city councils in displaying (spatial) contentious symbolic politics. See Nicole Watts, “Pro-Kurdish Mayors in As-If Democracy: Symbolic Politics in Diyarbakır,” World Congress of Kurdish Studies, Erbil, 6–9 September 2006, http://www.institutkurde.org/en/conferences/kurdish_studies_irbil_2006/?intervenant=Nicole%20F%20WATTS. In Tunceli, symbolic politics appears more modest than in other Kurdish cities, like Diyarbakır.
 41. During the 2004 festival, for example, there were seminars entitled: “Alevism: An Identity under Pressure,” “Local Language and Literature,” and “The Great Middle-East Project, Democracy and the Kurdish Question.”

42. Until the mid-1930s, the people of the mountainous region then named Dersim had indeed never been completely brought under control by the central government and had a long history of rebelling whenever tribal autonomy was at stake. In 1937–1938, large military operations were launched to put an end to what was then perceived as the “ultimate resistance of pre-modernity.” See Mesut Yeğen, “The Kurdish Question in Turkish State Discourse,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (1999): 553.

On the Dersim uprisings and suppression and its place in the production of local history, see Martin Van Bruinessen, “Genocide in Kurdistan? The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937–38) and the Chemical War against the Iraqi Kurds (1988),” in *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions*, edited by G.J. Andréopoulos (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); and Nicole Watts, “Relocating Dersim: Turkish State-building and Kurdish Resistance, 1931–1938,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 23 (Fall 2000): 5–30.

43. In the past, Alevis used to worship outside or within a house chosen for that occasion. Men and women (unveiled) take part in the ceremony together. Important changes affected this system of belief and its rituals, notably due to the experience of migration from the 1950s on, urban life, and intolerance and repression. The first *cem evleri* appeared at the beginning of the 1990s, in the larger cities of Turkey. See Fuat Bozkurt, “State-Community Relations in the Restructuring of Alevism,” in *Alevi Identity*, edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1998).
44. Lighting candles is one of the practices considered superstitious in the orthodoxy, as defined by the State Department of Religious Affairs. The line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy is however much more blurred than that. Some Sunni believers do light candles in mausoleums, for example. See Benoît Fliche, “Les frontières de l’orthodoxie et de l’hétérodoxie: Türbe et églises à Istanbul,” in *Boundaries of Religion, Boundaries in Religion*, edited by Galia Valtchinova (Istanbul: Isis, forthcoming).
45. Informal conversation with Rojda, Istanbul, 28 August 2006.
46. Relieu and Terzi, “Les politiques ordinaires de la vie urbaine,” 391–392.
47. The valley of Tunceli, Turkey’s first national park (1971), shelters an extreme diversity of animal and plant species, some of which are not found elsewhere.

48. This does not prevent the fragmentation of the movement along diverse political allegiances.
49. On cultural resonance, see William Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: a Constructionist Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* 95, no. 1 (1989): 37. Most of the inhabitants do not see or experience the dam construction (even the purchase of the to-be-flooded lands are quite discreet). To ground their discourse in intelligible experiences, therefore, the members of the campaign developed two related arguments: first, the dams would mean a new loss of space; and second, they would threaten the cultural identity of Tunceli and its inhabitants. Very concretely, the dam construction means that thousands of inhabitants will once again lose either their houses or their land, their access to the pastures or apiaries, and also to sacred or historical sites.
50. See "Dersim'i deliler bastı," *Radikal*, 7 August 2004, http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=cts&haberno=3673.
51. Le Ray, "Associations de pays et production de locality."
52. James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

A Tug of War: Hizbullah, Participation, and Contestation in the Lebanese Public Sphere

Joseph Alagha

The Lebanese Shi'i movement Hizbullah has undergone remarkable transformations since its founding in 1978. It started as an Islamic jihad [struggle] of social and political protest by various sectors of Lebanese Shi'i clergy and cadres, with Iranian ideological backing. However, over the period from 1985 to 1991, Hizbullah became a full-fledged social movement in the sense of having a broad overall organization, structure, and ideology aiming at social change and social justice for its constituents. Still later, in the early 1990s, Hizbullah became a mainstream political party participating fully in all aspects of Lebanese national politics.

With the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990, Hizbullah confronted major developments in Lebanon, especially the emergence of a pluralist public sphere and an increasing openness between the various communities, political parties, and interest groups that compose Lebanese society and the polity. Hizbullah responded by changing its discourse and priorities, moving from marginalization to integration through a policy of *infitāh* [opening up]. Hizbullah has since become a major player in the Lebanese milieu and has shifted its strategy from "Islamization" to "Lebanonization" by propagating a domestic focus for its political program. And so, over time, Hizbullah has evolved into an "ordinary" political party, allied with a number of other parties and with an extensive network of social services open to both Muslims and Christians. It participates in parliamentary, municipal, and governmental work. Although

Hizbullah is still primarily an Islamic movement, it displays, more and more, the characteristics of a nationalist-patriotic political party pursuing *realpolitik*. In the past few years, following the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, the Syrian military withdrawal, and the war with Israel in the summer of 2006, Hizbullah has in fact attempted to dominate and lead the Lebanese political scene and the public sphere.

This chapter examines the three phases of Hizbullah, with special attention to the third phase and recent developments. While a full study of the role of Hizbullah in the Lebanese public sphere is beyond its scope, the chapter makes clear the different ways in which Hizbullah wields influence through political action, media communications, and a street presence as well as how it accommodates and reconciles national discourses that may not be congruent with its own ideology.

Phase I: Beginnings

In its own words, Hizbullah is an Islamic movement “whose emergence is based on an ideological, social, political, and economical mixture in a special Lebanese, Arab, and Islamic context.”¹ The roots of Hizbullah can be traced back to the first Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978 and the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr later that year. Musa al-Sadr was a charismatic leader who mobilized Lebanese Shi‘a in the 1960s and 1970s and was able to channel their grievances into political participation, including the establishment, in 1975, of “Amal” as a secular Shi‘i political party with a military wing. Led by al-Sadr, Amal maintained relative unity as a movement. With his disappearance, elements within the party grew dissatisfied with its program. This coincided with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and various Shi‘i clerics calling for “The Hizbullah of Lebanon.”²

The second Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was the spark that led to Hizbullah’s full formation as an Islamic *jihādī* movement. Hizbullah’s military wing, the Islamic Resistance, made some breakthroughs in the face of the Israeli army advancing on Beirut and led a campaign of resistance against the Israeli forces after they occupied the Lebanese capital. Hizbullah leaders, such as Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah

(the current secretary general) and Sayyid Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid (the current head of Hizbullah's Political Council), were Amal members who had become disillusioned with its compromising attitude and participation in the Lebanese cabinet.³ They had abandoned Amal and joined ranks with existing Islamic Shi'i groups—including members of Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya [The Islamic Call] and Ittihad al-Lubnani li-l-Talaba al-Muslimin [The Lebanese Union of Muslim Students]⁴ as well as independent active Islamic figures and clerics—to establish Hizbullah as an Islamic *jihādī* movement against the Israeli occupation, with the material support of Iran and backing from Syria.⁵ These groups became the backbone of Hizbullah, including, most importantly, its “resistance identity.” Unprecedented accomplishments in directing several blows against the Israeli army gained Hizbullah a wide reputation and credibility among its constituencies. Later achievements in addressing socio-economic grievances resulting from the Israeli occupation also helped Hizbullah gain a solid footing among the grassroots Shi'i population.

Until the mid 1980s, Hizbullah mainly operated clandestinely. However, on 16 February 1985, the group publicly revealed its political manifesto in an “Open Letter” that disclosed its religio-political ideology, thus beginning a direct engagement in Lebanese political life.⁶ In the Open Letter, Hizbullah advocated a radical-militant approach that regarded the Lebanese political system as infidel and the Lebanese government as apostate, to be uprooted through revolution and replaced by the rule of Islam. Hizbullah's commitment to an Islamic revolution in Lebanon and the creation of an Islamic state—and its strict application of Ayatollah Khomeini's notion of *wilāyat al-faqīh* [guardianship of the jurisprudent]—backfired domestically, alienating Hizbullah from other political and social movements and exiling it from the Lebanese political sphere to a great extent.

Through the 1980s, Hizbullah remained a (closed) sectarian social movement with a limited following, however one that developed a strong internal organization and institutional infrastructure. During this period Hizbullah collected religious capital (through adherence to the Iranian *marji'iyya*, or authority of emulation); political and symbolic capital (through the fighting and “martyrdom” operations of the Islamic Resistance against Israel, both in the south and in the Biqa' region in the

northeast); and economic and social capital (through social welfare institutions targeting only the Shi'i grassroots).

It should be noted that this period was one of continuing civil war in Lebanon, characterized by fragmented public spheres and "cantons"—confessionalism-based mini-states. In the mid 1980s, the notion of establishing cantons along sectarian lines was high on the agenda of many political parties, including the Christian ones. Hizbullah, however—unlike, for example, the Lebanese Forces and the Progressive Socialist Party⁷—did not seek the establishment of a mini-state with its own ports, airports, taxation, and civil administration. Nor did Hizbullah call for federalism. In 1986 Nasrallah stressed that Muslims have no right whatsoever to even entertain the idea of a Muslim canton or a Shi'i canton or a Sunni canton. "Talking about cantons annihilates the Muslims, destroys their potential power, and leads them from one internal war to another," he said. "Only the Islamic state upholds their unity."⁸

In the 1990s, Hizbullah's leading cadres took great care to ward off charges of the party being a state within the Lebanese state. Hizbullah's leaders, most notably Nasrallah and Hajj Muhammad Ra'd, the current head of Hizbullah's parliamentary bloc, repeatedly stated that the party never took part in the Lebanese Civil War and asserted that it has never imposed (by force) its ideas, opinions, ideology, or political program on anyone. Nasrallah has said that the party views the existence of eighteen ethno-confessional communities in Lebanon as an asset and that the party aspires to openness and dialogue among all Lebanese.

Hizbullah has repeatedly refused to be a social, political, judicial, or security alternative to the Lebanese state and its institutions.⁹ If nothing else, said Hajj 'Imad Faqih, a member of a mid-ranking cadre, performing functions of the state would eventually dirty the party's hands, which Hizbullah could ill afford, having spent years nurturing a reputation for probity.¹⁰ As such, and as will be further described in the next section, Hizbullah's entry as a major player in Lebanese politics has helped to restore some kind of a coherent *national* public sphere, which, more or less, had existed before civil war erupted in April 1975.

Phase II: *Infitāḥ*

As the 1990s unfolded, Hizbullah continued to promote its Islamic identity and agenda, now however following a pragmatic political program and gradually integrating into the public sphere. Hizbullah remained faithful to its Shi'i constituency by establishing Islamic institutions within civil society while at the same time working within the Lebanese state's political and administrative structures to promote Islamization. Religious capital within its constituency was consolidated when Ayatollah Khamina'i, the supreme leader of Iran, named Nasrallah and Muhammad Yazbik¹¹ as his *wakīlayn shar'īyyān* [religious deputies in Lebanon]. Broader political capital was gained with the inclusion of Sunnis and Christians on Hizbullah's electoral ballots. And symbolic capital was advanced with further disassociation from Islamic Jihad. Hizbullah earned social and economic capital with the Sunni and Christian grassroots through the services provided by its non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Hizbullah employed the term *infitāḥ* [opening up] to signify its entry into Lebanese national political life. *Infitāḥ* is a policy of open dialogue in a pluralistic setting through interaction and cooperation with all the sects and communities that comprise the Lebanese polity in order to solve political and social problems, foster national unity, and build a stronger and united Lebanon on shared common ground. This change in Hizbullah's strategy is linked to the Ta'if Agreement of 1989 that concluded the civil war in Lebanon and established a new constitution. The new constitution specified the Christian and Muslim sharing of political office on a 50-50 basis, most notably in the legislature and cabinet, and also stripped the president of most of his powers, transferring them to the cabinet.

The Ta'if Agreement also stipulated the disbanding of all militias and the surrender of their weapons to the Lebanese state. It called for the integration of the militia members into Lebanese civil society and Lebanese state institutions, most prominently the Lebanese Army. This allowed the militias to transform themselves into full-fledged political parties. Since the Lebanese government classified Hizbullah as a resistance movement rather than a militia, it granted the group permission to maintain its arms and continue in its role of confronting the Israeli occupation in the south.

At the same time, Hizbullah continued gradually integrating into the new national public sphere emerging as a result of the civil peace.

In May 1991 Hizbullah elected Sayyid Abbas al-Musawi as secretary general. In his political program, Sayyid Abbas initiated the *infitāh* policy of dialogue, especially with the Christians, for example, by taking the initiative and visiting the Maronite Patriarch. On 16 February 1992, an Israeli helicopter assassinated Sayyid Abbas, his wife, and his son. Two days later, Nasrallah was elected secretary general and Shaykh Na'im Qasim was elected deputy secretary general,¹² posts they have both held until the current day.

After Ayatollah Khamina'i selected Nasrallah and Yazbik as his religious deputies in Lebanon in May 1995, Hizbullah consolidated its financial resources. Since then, the one-fifth tithe [*khums*] imposed on those Lebanese Shi'a who follow Khamina'i as their authority of emulation [*marji'*], as well as their alms [*zakat*] and religious [*shar'i*] monies have poured directly into Hizbullah coffers instead of being channeled through Iran, as had previously been the case. Since 1982 this money stream had already allowed Hizbullah to found an efficient network of NGOs and social welfare institutions, including the Martyr's Association, the Association of the Wounded, the Association of Lebanese Prisoners,¹³ the Islamic Resistance Support Association, the Institution of the Good Loan, the Association of Islamic Health, the Institution of Construction and Development, the Association of the Relief Committees of Imam Khumayni, and the Association of Islamic Pedagogy and Education. Hizbullah also built its own media and research institutions. Its weekly mouthpiece *al-'Ahd*, established in 1984, was renamed *al-Intiqad*¹⁴ in 2001; it founded the journal *Baqiyyat Allah* in 1991 with the aim of inculcating Islamic values and culture. Its think tank, the Consultative Center for Studies and Documentation (CCSD), and the al-Nour satellite radio station were both founded in 1988. The flagship al-Manar¹⁵ satellite TV channel, the only channel belonging to an Islamist movement in the Middle East, was watched by 12 million people in 2007.¹⁶

Lebanon's 1992 parliamentary elections mark the turning point in this second phase of Hizbullah. Although Hizbullah initially regarded the Lebanese political system as unfair and unjust, the party's integration through electoral politics brought it additional political legitimacy and a

wider following. Hizbullah seems to have learned from the Iranian experience, as well as from the internal dynamics of the Lebanese milieu, that electoral politics (parliamentary and municipal elections¹⁷) is the cornerstone of democratic practice.

Hizbullah's participation in the elections could be considered a pivotal event in the shaping of the group's current identity. This decision came after much internal heated debate¹⁸ as well as a request to Ayatollah Khamina'i for a formal legal opinion on the legitimacy of such participation. This was necessary since Hizbullah would be applying *wilāyat al-faqīh* in a non-Islamic state and in a multi-confessional, multi-religious pluralistic society. As soon as Khamina'i authorized participation, Hizbullah began drafting its election program and officially announced its intentions.

Hizbullah's 1992 election strategy can be described as circumstantial and contextual, based upon and legitimized by the Shi'i jurisprudential concept of *maṣlaḥa* [public interest]. In addition to its strategic alliance with the secular Shi'i party Amal, Hizbullah reached out and allied itself with other secular parties and former "enemies." In this it behaved like any political party that accommodates differences through negotiation with a wide spectrum of groups and compromises on some doctrinal aspects. The party now includes Christians and Sunnis in its parliamentary bloc and the municipal councils that it controls.

Hizbullah's policy of *infitāḥ* and its "Lebanonization" approach endeavored to strike a balance between its Islamic program, on the one hand, and its Lebanese national loyalty, on the other. By "opening up" to the various constituents of the Lebanese polity through the buttressing of civil peace, public freedoms, and a functioning civil society, Hizbullah attempted to preserve its Islamic identity while working within a non-Islamic and a multi-religious, confessional-sectarian state. In so doing, Hizbullah shifted from a *jihādī* to a more flexible shari'a perspective. The party accepted positive (man-made) laws and regulations [*al-qawānīn al-waḍ'īyya*] and even contributed to their legislation through its members of parliament (MPs).

Hizbullah argued that the shari'a, as a socially constructed phenomenon, is flexible and can account for all the complexities of modern life. Thus, the party displayed a remarkable adaptability in its political program

in an attempt to reconcile, as much as possible, its principles, aims, and political ideology, on the one hand, and the circumstances and its objective capabilities, on the other, by heavy reliance on the jurisprudence concepts of necessity, vices, and interests. This dramatic shift allowed Hizbullah's involvement in the Lebanese political system *as it is*. Thus, Hizbullah has participated in all the elections in the post-Ta'if Agreement era.¹⁹

In the domestic sphere, Hizbullah called for the establishment of civil peace; the founding of a state of law and institutions; the promotion of political participation; political, administrative, social, and economic reforms; the upholding of public freedoms; and dialogue among all Lebanese. Hizbullah stressed the need to address pressing social and developmental issues, such as health, education, and culture, as well as the environment. The party emphasized social justice through constructive mechanisms that could help resolve Lebanon's serious socio-economic and financial crisis by finding a proper balance between material and human resources. This could be achieved not only by defending the downtrodden and oppressed but also by realizing socio-economic development through balanced development projects targeting deprived and dispossessed areas.

Nonetheless, in this phase of Hizbullah, all the party's political programs continued to strongly support the Resistance, even after the liberation of Lebanon from the Israeli occupation. Hizbullah developed a special relationship with Emile Lahoud, a general of the Lebanese Army (1989–1998) and then president of the Lebanese Republic (1998–2007). In 1993, when Lahoud was general, he had refused to obey the Lebanese cabinet and send the Army to the south to impose order and stop Hizbullah's fight against Israel, much to the approval of Syria and Hizbullah. The relationship between Lahoud and Hizbullah was further consolidated when Lahoud visited Nasrallah in 1997 and "congratulated" him on the "martyrdom" of his son Hadi. Despite Hizbullah's focus on resistance, in November 1997, as a way to demonstrate the party's national character, Hizbullah established the secular-patriotic, multi-confessional Lebanese Brigades for Fighting the Israeli Occupation,²⁰ a move encouraged by Lahoud. During Lahoud's tenure as president, Hizbullah developed a strategic alliance with him as Syria's man in Lebanon, who would not allow the Resistance to be disarmed.

As part of its *intifāh* program, Hizbullah tried to portray itself as a promoter of Muslim-Christian coexistence, stressing the importance of pluralism through multi-confessional representation. It incorporated Christians, including Maronites, in its parliamentary elections lists, granting them the right to speak in Hizbullah's name as long as they did not deflect from the party's established doctrines, and it also shared municipal council seats with Christians. Hizbullah modified its demand for the abolishment of political sectarianism,²¹ taking a stance closer to that of the Maronite Church and papal guidance, which stress the abolishment of political sectarianism in "the mentality" before abolishing it "in the texts."²² In turn, the Pope's call for fraternity and the inculcation of dialogue and tolerance among the Lebanese hit a responsive chord in Hizbullah circles since much of it was reminiscent of Imam Musa al-Sadr's discourse on Christian-Muslim understanding, mutual coexistence, and open and permanent dialogue.

As dynamics at the national level reshaped Hizbullah and its policies, the party made decisions that may not have been popular with the rank and file or even with some of its leaders. On the whole, Hizbullah's actions during this *intifāh* phase were based on realpolitik, political expediency, benefit, and interest [*maṣlaḥa*]. Having met success with its initial foray into politics and governance, Hizbullah was poised to seize a more prominent national role.

Phase III: Participation, domination, and contestation

In 2005, Nasrallah delivered a fiery speech in which he announced Hizbullah's intention to play a leading political and developmental role in Lebanon through complete participation in Lebanese political, economic, and administrative life, as well as in all governmental institutions, including the cabinet.²³ As described previously, the founders of Hizbullah, including Nasrallah, had originally split from Amal when it made this very decision. This pivotal move for Hizbullah came about due to the major shift in relations between Lebanon and Syria following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri on 14 February 2005, an event many saw as the work of Syrian agents and that polarized the country into

two main political groups. The “8 March Group”—comprising Hizbullah, Amal, and other pro-Syrian groups, the majority of which are Shi‘i—organized a demonstration in support of Syria. The other group, known as the “Cedar Revolution” or “14 March Trend,”²⁴ responded with a demonstration of an estimated one million people in downtown Beirut—spearheaded by “Future Trend,” the majority of whom are Sunni—to demand the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanese soil and the truth about Hariri’s assassination. Under pressure from the street, as well as international pressure in the form of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1559, Syria withdrew from Lebanon on 26 April 2005, after a presence of twenty-nine years.²⁵ While the 14 March group hoped for Syrian influence to then wane in Lebanon, Hizbullah’s strategic-political relationship with the Syrian regime remained strong.²⁶

Hizbullah concedes that the Syrian withdrawal hastened the party’s increased participation in Lebanese politics and state institutions and its decision to join the cabinet. Previously, it had resolved not to join the cabinet as long as the Syrians were in Lebanon since their presence accorded Hizbullah political patronage and indirect influence at the highest levels of government. With the departure of the Syrians, Hizbullah felt that the Lebanese cabinet would be faced with political and strategic choices that would have grave consequences for Lebanon’s future²⁷ and deemed it necessary to seek representation in the cabinet so as to directly influence its policy statements and implementations.²⁸

Although the watershed decision to participate in the Lebanese cabinet should have required a shari‘a judgment and legitimization by the *faqih*, Hizbullah set a precedent by securing legitimacy from a local Lebanese cleric, Shaykh ‘Aff al-Nabulsi,²⁹ and not Ayatollah Khamina‘i.³⁰ Although this suggests that the party was now heeding a Lebanese religious authority in addition to the Iranian one, Hizbullah regarded its participation in the Lebanese cabinet as an administrative matter on which Hizbullah’s leadership was able to take an independent stand. Thus, Hizbullah was shifting from its 1980s strategy of complete ideological dependency on Iran to more independence in decision-making, not only in practical political issues, but also in at least some doctrinal issues.

In the first parliamentary elections after the Syrian withdrawal, from 29 May to 19 June 2005, Hizbullah competed on the basis of a temporary

four-partite alliance with Future Trend, Amal, and the Progressive Socialist Party. Future Trend and its allies won 72 seats out of 128. Hizbullah won 14 seats, adding 2 seats to its previous representation.³¹ Hizbullah joined the cabinet with two ministers and began to have an expanded presence in state institutions and the administrative structure.

The two Hizbullah cabinet ministers became instrumental in the drafting of a policy statement that granted Hizbullah the right to continue its resistance in the disputed Sheb'a farms, a small area of territory still occupied by Israel. Among other policy recommendations, Hizbullah also called for reducing the voting age to 18 and changing the electoral system to proportional representation, which the party believed would give the eighteen ethno-confessional communities more equitable representation.³² Although two ministers alone cannot veto cabinet decisions, it seems that Hizbullah gave up its previous argument that it would not join the cabinet because it could not accept responsibility for dire decisions or unfavorable actions adopted through a two-thirds majority vote.³³ In justifying this change, Hizbullah was hoping that cabinet decisions would be made based upon the principle of "consensual democracy," whereby the unanimity of all the ministers would guarantee that no legislation would be passed that did not accord with Hizbullah's policies and principles. Hizbullah thought that there would be no need to resort to the two-thirds majority vote principle, which is only employed when there is a serious disagreement. However, practice would prove Hizbullah wrong.

The next period of this phase for Hizbullah was to test the party's power and prestige, both nationally and internally with its own constituencies. A series of events illustrates the contestations and compromises that began to characterize Hizbullah's place in Lebanon's national political arena.

On 12 December 2005, MP and former editor and publisher of *al-Nahar* Gebran Tuéni was assassinated. That same day, the Lebanese cabinet met and referred that case and other politically motivated assassinations to the UN commission investigating the Hariri murder and asked for the formation of an international tribunal to bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes. When the issue was put to a vote, in an apparent sign of disapproval, the five Shi'i ministers walked out, including the two from Hizbullah, thus suspending their participation in the cabinet

ultimately for a period of seven weeks. Only after Prime Minister Sanyura reiterated Hizbullah's right to resist the Israeli occupation (in the Sheb'a farms) did the five ministers reassume their duties.

Another incident took place on 5 February 2006, one day after the torching of the Danish Embassy in Damascus as a protest against the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed in a manner found offensive by many Muslims. Mobs of Muslims attempted to set the Danish Embassy, in a Christian East Beirut neighborhood, on fire. Chaos broke out, and many shops, cars, and churches were vandalized. Lebanese security forces failed to establish order, and as a result the minister of the interior later resigned and the Lebanese government offered Denmark a formal apology.

In order to contain negative repercussions and prevent the escalation of Christian-Muslim discord, not to say civil unrest, the next day General Michel 'Auon, the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), and Nasrallah met in a church across the old "green line" (demarcating the line between primarily Muslim and Christian neighborhoods and factions during the civil war) and signed a historic ten-point "Understanding" addressing political, economic, administrative, and security issues, as well as relations with Syria. The Understanding also dealt with domestic concerns, such as administrative reform, election law, corruption, and investigations into the Hariri murder.³⁴ Interestingly, Article 7 of the Understanding, entitled "Lebanese-Syrian Relations," suggested four measures to ward off "foreign tutelage," including demarcating the borders between Lebanon and Syria,³⁵ revealing the fates of Lebanese detainees in Syrian prisons, and establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries. It is worth mentioning that the foregoing points corresponded to the demands of the Maronite Church as well as the defunct Christian opposition group Qrnet Shahwan.³⁶ Furthermore, they reflected the demands of the 14 March movement, and thus the alliance between Hizbullah and the FPM weakened and split the 14 March ranks. Although the majority of 14 March Trend members were still Sunni and those of 8 March Group were still Shi'i, the temporary four-partite alliance formed for the purpose of the elections had been dissolved, and following the Understanding, the FPM shifted its support to 8 March Group. This escalated tensions and generated confrontations between the 14 March and 8 March blocs.³⁷

On the evening of 1 June 2006, LBCI (Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International) aired its weekly political satire show entitled “Basmāt Watan,” which is a pun that could imply either “The Death of a Nation” or “The Smiles of a Nation.” One of the actors, dressed like Nasrallah in his turban and attire, mocked the secretary general’s political leadership (though not his religious position). Hizbullah’s constituency took to the streets chanting “death to humiliation” [*hayhāt min al-dhull*], and intending to go all the way to the Christian heartland of Beirut to “burn” LBCI. On their way they wreaked havoc in Sunni and Christian areas and almost clashed with the youth there. After Hizbullah’s MPs and mid-rank cadres failed to contain the crowds, in an unprecedented move, Nasrallah called on the demonstrators to return to their homes. Although they immediately obeyed, the riots tainted Hizbullah’s image as an advocate of free speech and expression.

These events, especially the return of violence to the streets of Beirut, were worrying signs threatening the still fragile post-civil-war public sphere. In an effort to achieve more coherence at the national level, in 2006 national dialogue sessions among fourteen leading politicians in Lebanon, including Nasrallah, were planned to deal with sensitive issues, including subjects hitherto taboo, such as the right of Hizbullah to carry weapons and continue its military strategy. At the first session, a consensus was reached on two important issues: 1) the Sheb’a farms³⁸ were recognized as Lebanese, justifying Hizbullah’s right to continue its resistance against the occupying Israeli Defense Forces (IDF); and 2) it was agreed that an international tribunal should bring to justice the perpetrators of the Hariri murder. The last session was supposed to be held on 25 July, but due to the Israeli invasion on 12 July, it never took place. The war with Israel halted the national dialogue and would also come to have important implications for Hizbullah’s role at the national level.

The present: Hizbullah’s contested hegemony in the Lebanese public sphere

The July–August 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah was triggered when Hizbullah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border

raid. Hizbullah's strategic mistake was not anticipating that such an action would spark a large-scale conflict that would ultimately lead to the destruction of almost all Lebanon's post-civil-war achievements.³⁹ Although some Lebanese question the wisdom of Hizbullah's action, which was used by Israel as a justification for inflicting so much damage on the country, in many ways Hizbullah emerged from the crisis enjoying more popularity than before.⁴⁰ However this was not uncontested or unproblematic, as will be made clear in this section.

Among the factors that helped the image of Hizbullah during the war was the role of its media. Although the main purpose of its media was to mobilize Hizbullah's constituency and raise its morale, al-Manar TV, "the channel of the Arabs and the Muslims," continued its regional and international outreach to the Muslim world and beyond. Even though Israel completely leveled the al-Manar building and radio station al-Nour sustained substantial damage, neither went off the air for a single minute as Hizbullah had contingency measures in place and had organized alternative undisclosed locations underground from which to broadcast.⁴¹ Likewise, the newspaper *al-Intiqad* was regularly published on time every Friday, and even, exceptionally, twice in the second week of the war⁴² in order to publicize Hizbullah's "feats" on the battlefield.

In an attempt to end the war, on 5 August 2006 the Lebanese cabinet unanimously endorsed Prime Minister Sanyura's "Seven Points,"⁴³ including the fourth point, which stressed that the state has absolute monopoly over the use of force. After rejecting a UN draft resolution that fell short of demanding an Israeli withdrawal and in an attempt to influence the wording of a new resolution to Lebanon's advantage, the Lebanese cabinet unanimously approved the deployment of 15,000 Lebanese Army soldiers to the border with Israel. The cabinet also approved UNSC Resolution 1701 of 11 August 2006, which called for, among other things, the cessation of hostilities and Hizbullah's disarmament—just as UNSC Resolution 1559 had in September 2004. In these decisions, Hizbullah's two ministers voted "yes."

Agreeing to these cabinet decisions seems to constitute a genuine policy change rather than a rhetorical move. Hizbullah had hitherto opposed sending the Army to the south, seeing it as a pretext for protection of Israel from the Lebanese Resistance. Now, however, Nasrallah

was asserting that accepting the deployment—which had been a repeated Israeli demand—and agreeing to the terms of UNSC Resolution 1701 would serve the national interest.

Following a UN-brokered cease fire in mid August 2006 and the ending of Israel's blockade of Lebanese ports in September, Hizbullah celebrated the end of the war with a "divine victory" parade on 22 September.⁴⁴ Nasrallah gave a speech attended by Lebanese MPs, cabinet members, politicians, and clergy, as well as many Arab dignitaries. An audience variously reported at around 800,000 guaranteed a perfect human shield that barred Israel from executing its threat of killing Nasrallah as soon as the opportunity presented itself.⁴⁵ On a conciliatory note of sorts, Nasrallah stressed that Hizbullah would surrender its arms when Israel relinquished the Sheb'a farms, released the Lebanese prisoners of war, and turned its landmine maps over to the UN. However, Nasrallah also affirmed that Hizbullah's rockets had increased, from 20,000 before the war to 33,000.⁴⁶ While the parade and speech illustrated Hizbullah's continued—or renewed—power at both the national and the street level, many 14 March cadres criticized Nasrallah, and in a pun on his name, which means "Victory of God," stated that there is nothing in the military dictionary called a "divine victory."⁴⁷

An important outcome of Hizbullah's growing dominance at the national level and the various strategic alliances that it was building (primarily with the FPM) was the emergence of the party as the leader of the Lebanese opposition. *Al-Intiqad* had a face-lift in order to accommodate this new image. Starting with issue 1192, the left banner of the paper read: "Lebanon 1: The Popular Movement for National Unity." Al-Nour began to label itself as "the voice of national unity" and would open its broadcasts with the national anthem, followed by songs by Marcel Khalifé, a popular Christian nationalist-leftist Lebanese singer.

As a political price for its "victory" in the war, Hizbullah demanded that the opposition be given one-third veto power in the cabinet, in a move to further consolidate the influence that the party already held over the legislature and President Lahoud. This could only be accomplished through its alliance with the FPM, which had received the highest number of votes in the 2005 legislative elections.⁴⁸ Hizbullah also demanded the formation of a representative national unity government and the holding

of legislative elections based upon a more representative election law that all Lebanese could agree upon, preferably one based on proportional representation and small electoral districts.⁴⁹

The Ta'if Agreement had divided political power, according to a quota system, evenly between Muslims and Christians, both in the cabinet and the parliament. The seats were then being further divided among the various Muslim and Christian groups. Thus, the 128 seats in the legislature were split 50-50 between Muslims and Christians, as were the 24 seats of the Sanyura cabinet, with Shi'a given five of the 24. Even if all five Shi'i ministers resigned, the cabinet could still meet and make decisions by a two-thirds majority vote. This representation definitely reflected neither Hizbullah's demographic strength nor its political force.

In the legislature, Hizbullah had a parliamentary bloc of 14 members and, together with its allies, could count on 57 MPs⁵⁰ out of a total of 128. In other words, the party controlled 44% of the parliament, which implied that the Hizbullah-led opposition was entitled to more than thirteen of the thirty ministers that would be potentially seated as a national unity cabinet. Aiming at veto power, the Hizbullah-led opposition asked for eleven ministers. With the president, Emile Lahoud, and the speaker of parliament, Nabih Berri, already on the side of the Hizbullah-led opposition (although this is not to say that the opposition controlled the presidency and the parliament), all that was needed to become the most powerful force in the Lebanese political system was to gain veto power in the cabinet.

In an interview on 31 October 2006 on al-Manar TV, Nasrallah gave the cabinet an ultimatum: one-week, starting from Monday 6 November, to form a national unity government in which Hizbullah and its allies would wield one-third veto power. Otherwise, he threatened, the Hizbullah-led opposition would take to the streets until the cabinet yielded to their demands. Quoting John Stewart Mill's concept of the "tyranny of the majority," *al-Intiqad* labeled Sanyura's government as tyrannical, claiming that it only had an "artificial" majority. In turn, Sanyura replied that granting the Hizbullah-led opposition veto power in the cabinet would amount to the "tyranny of the minority."⁵¹ Criticism of Hizbullah also came from various sectors of the media as well as political and religious circles. The Mufti of Mount Lebanon, Shaykh Muhammad 'Ali al-Jusu, accused Nasrallah of fomenting Sunni-Shi'i discord and of

making unfounded accusations about the prime minister that were tantamount to branding him with treason. MP Pierre Gemayyel—the minister of industry, the son of ex-president Amin Gemayyel, and a member of a leading Maronite Phalangist cadre—said in reference to Hizbullah’s one-week ultimatum that he and compatriots would not allow those who determine war and peace to have the final say in state building.

The symbolic day of 11 November, Hizbullah’s “Martyrs’ Day,” saw the resignation of the five Shi’i cabinet ministers. After a few days, an ally of President Lahoud, Jacob Sarraf, the Greek Orthodox minister of the environment, followed suit.⁵² The resignation of the six ministers did not lead to the collapse of the Sanyura cabinet since eight ministers would have needed to resign for this to take place. In the wake of these tensions, Pierre Gemayyel was assassinated on 21 November 2006. After that tensions reached a new high.

In spite of earlier⁵³ dangerous precedents, which demonstrated that no one could guarantee the security of the street, on 1 December 2006, Hizbullah, the FPM, and other members of the Lebanese opposition took to the streets in downtown Beirut—completely filling Martyrs’ Square and Riyadh al-Solh Square—to demand the formation of a national unity cabinet and one-third veto power. Prime Minister Sanyura admonished Nasrallah to not waste Hizbullah’s military accomplishments and victories versus Israel in Beirut’s alleys. In response, addressing the demonstrators from a large screen, Nasrallah delivered a promise: “We will defeat the Lebanese government like we defeated Israel in the 34-days war.”⁵⁴

In the early days of the protests and sit-ins, frontline Hizbullah followers besieged the headquarters of the cabinet in downtown Beirut.⁵⁵ On 23 January 2007, after 53 days of sit-ins, the Hizbullah-led opposition crippled the country through a general strike coupled with the blocking of main roads, tire-burning, and so on. Three people died and 150 were wounded. Two days later, a Sunni-Shi’i confrontation erupted in a populous Sunni neighborhood in Beirut. This resulted in 4 dead and 300 wounded, including 13 Lebanese Army soldiers, and 216 arrests. There were dangerous scenes reminiscent of the civil war: sniping, automatic weapons, burning cars, and destruction of property. After these bloody confrontations, Hizbullah labeled the Sanyura cabinet as “the government of the armed militias.”⁵⁶

Despite the upheaval, Hizbullah failed to deliver on its promise of a fast government collapse,⁵⁷ and behind-the-scenes negotiations ended the strike. In an attempt to calm the situation, Nasrallah issued a fatwa calling on his supporters—and by extension all Lebanese—to immediately vacate the streets: “From the stance of a national, patriotic, ethical, religious, and shari’a duty... I call on you to fully cooperate with all the measures that the Lebanese Army is taking in order to ensure and uphold peace and stability... this fatwa is in the interest [*maṣlaḥa*] of our country, its civil peace, and peaceful coexistence... we insist on using civil, democratic, and political means in expressing our political differences, and any recourse to arms, from whichever party, is considered treason.”⁵⁸ Similar entreaties were made by Speaker Berri and Sa’ad Hariri, the parliamentary majority leader.⁵⁹ Nasrallah added: “Even if 1000 Hizbullahis die we will not be led to *fitna* [discord] or take recourse to our weapons in the domestic infighting.”⁶⁰

Reaching out to the Hizbullah-led opposition, Prime Minister Sanyura came up with a proposal for ending the deadlock. He conceded to the opposition’s demands by offering them two seats more than they had asked for in the cabinet (13 out of 30), on condition of agreement on a common political program based on the Seven Points, implementation of decisions reached in national dialogue sessions, and most important, full implementation of UNSC Resolution 1701. Although Berri, the speaker of the parliament and the leader of the Amal movement, agreed, Hizbullah rejected the offer because this would eventually lead to its disarmament. However, Hizbullah did not put it bluntly; rather it argued that it was unwilling to participate in a government headed by Sanyura, whom the opposition held responsible for Lebanon’s socio-economic problems since he served as minister of finance for twelve years in the previous Hariri governments.

The conflict between the Hizbullah-led opposition and its supporters (8 March Group), on the one hand, and the Lebanese cabinet and its supporters (14 March Trend), on the other, led to a bitter polarization that plunged Lebanon into a paralyzing political stalemate for over a year, with periodic further escalations. For example, on 5 May 2007, Hizbullah revoked its earlier acceptance of the Seven Points, calling them “Condoleezza Rice’s orders to Sanyura,” as stated by Sayyid Nawwaf

al-Musawi, Hizbullah's foreign relations officer and member of its Political Council.⁶¹ On the same day, Nasrallah affirmed the statement,⁶² contrary to his earlier public declarations.⁶³ Two days later Sanyura labeled the Hizbullah establishment as "oppressors."

A tug of war

In April 2007, *al-Akhbar*⁶⁴ columnist Nikolas Nasif commented⁶⁵ that there were three main points in the ongoing tug of war between the Sanyura cabinet and the Hizbullah-led opposition: 1) the international tribunal,⁶⁶ 2) the national unity cabinet,⁶⁷ and 3) the presidency. Nasif maintained that Hizbullah had lost the first two issues but the third was not yet determined. He questioned what would happen to Hizbullah's credibility following these "defeats." What seems to substantiate Nasif's analysis is that the discourse of all the parties shifted to the issue of the presidency, which then dominated public political discussion. Qasim, deputy secretary general of Hizbullah, admonished that the president⁶⁸ should be elected by a two-thirds majority of the parliament, not the simple majority that 14 March Trend was lobbying for. The FPM leader 'Auon proposed that the president be directly elected by the people. Since 8 March Group does not recognize the legitimacy and constitutionality of the Saynura cabinet, it proposed either the holding of early legislative elections or one-third veto power in any future cabinet. 14 March Trend insisted on electing the president first before discussing the formation of the national unity cabinet and any agreement on a new electoral law upon which to base the May 2009 legislative elections. Although both groups (14 March and 8 March) agreed on Lebanese army commander General Michel Sulayman as a consensus candidate for the presidency, the tug of war continued.

In the meantime, the security situation in Lebanon was deteriorating further, with old and new conflicts erupting in violence. Two 14 March members of parliament were assassinated.⁶⁹ And armed clashes between Fatah al-Islam militants and the Lebanese Army broke out on 20 May 2007 in and around the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp near Tripoli.⁷⁰ Fatah al-Islam later extracted retribution for Nahr al-Barid with the assassination of Lebanese Army Brigadier General François al-Hajj.⁷¹

In his 17 August Friday prayer speech, Ayatullah Fadlallah, a prominent Shi'i cleric, warned that the political crisis was so severe that the issue was not about Lebanon's future but rather about its very existence. Fadlallah stated that Lebanon had become a battleground for regional and international struggles, struggles that had rendered the Lebanese pawns.⁷² The Maronite Patriarch reiterated the same concern in his 19 August Sunday sermon.⁷³ The fear was that if civil war erupted, it would lead to the total destruction of Lebanon since—unlike the 1975–1990 civil war, in which the fighting was mainly between Muslims and Christians—at this point the whole country was polarized and both camps (8 March and 14 March) included parties from all religious denominations and sectarian affiliations.

Conclusion: The waxing and waning of power

Hizbullah's bid for national power had laid the cornerstone for a new phase in which it sought to dominate the political arena and reformulate the political system [*al-mushāraka wa-i'ādāt intāj al-ṣulṭa*]⁷⁴—all under a slogan of openness and partnership. But in the end, after eighteen months of a wavering political stalemate, the cabinet decided to confront Hizbullah for the first time. After a long meeting on 6 May 2008 that lasted till the early hours of the morning, the cabinet denounced Hizbullah's telecommunications network as illegitimate and an “onslaught against the state's sovereignty and its financial resources.” The cabinet announced that it was going to bring to justice all those who participated or were involved in deploying this network, which was tantamount to issuing an arrest warrant for Nasrallah. The cabinet also dismissed the pro-Hizbullah and pro-Amal head of security at Beirut Airport, who had been serving in that post since 2000, Lebanese Army General Wafiq Shuqayr.

In response, Hizbullah stormed and occupied West Beirut (where most government ministries and institutions are located) by military force in the night hours of 8 into 9 May. The party had managed to strike a “silent consensus” deal with the Lebanese Army not to interfere in the crisis. (At least 60% of the Army were Shi'i, and it was made up of eighteen confessional groups, so becoming involved in the clashes would have led

to its disintegration, as was the case during the civil war.) The Hizbullah-led opposition waged a campaign of civil disobedience, blocking vital routes and key arteries for the Lebanese economy, such as the national airport and the Beirut port. In scenes reminiscent of the civil war, turf battles between the warring factions left more than 65 people dead and 200 wounded,⁷⁴ including at least 16 Hizbullah fighters, as conceded by Nasrallah.⁷⁵

In an unprecedented development—which had not taken place even during the 14-day Israeli occupation of West Beirut in 1982—Hizbullah cracked down on the media supporting the cabinet, silencing Future TV, al-Sharq Radio, *al-Mustaqbal* and *al-Liwa'* newspapers, and *al-Shira'* weekly journal, physically attacking many of their facilities, and threatening them with total annihilation if they resumed broadcasting or publication. This situation continued till 14 May, when Hizbullah handed the media outlets over to the Army. Although Hizbullah's al-Manar TV and Member of Parliament Hasan Fadlallah, the head of the media and communications parliamentary committee, paid lip service in condemning such events, such a condemnation did not revoke the damage caused by Hizbullah's actions.

With the arrival of an Arab League delegation on 14 May, the cabinet annulled its two decisions as Nasrallah had demanded in an 8 May press conference, thus setting the stage for an end to the crisis. The guns were completely silenced on 15 May after the Arab League delegation was able to broker a deal among the warring factions. The "Beirut Declaration" stipulated that the warring factions would send representatives to dialogue sessions in Doha, Qatar, aimed at reaching a final settlement. When a "Doha Accord" was reached, after five days of intensive negotiations, Hizbullah finally had veto power in the cabinet. The Hizbullah-led opposition would have eleven ministers in the thirty-member national unity cabinet, while 14 March acquired sixteen ministers, and the president three. Based on this, after 537 days, Hizbullah ended its sit-in in downtown Beirut. After six months of vacancy in the seat of the presidency, the consensus president Michel Sulayman was elected on 25 May by 118 votes out of 127 MPs.⁷⁶ The next day Nasrallah delivered a fiery speech, but nonetheless stressed that Hizbullah abides by the Ta'if Agreement and would honor the Doha Accord to the letter.

Although Hizbullah's "despised" Prime Minister Sanyura headed the new cabinet, Hizbullah had obtained, by force,⁷⁷ its long-awaited veto power and appeared to have acquired even more political capital from its campaign of civil disobedience than it had from the 2006 war with Israel. Would the Doha Accord constitute a springboard for another Ta'if Agreement—and a new constitution—whereby the Lebanese Shi'a would wield more political power, especially after Mufti Qabalan, the deputy of the Islamic Shi'i Higher Council, called for instituting the post of a Shi'i vice president? Aiming at more hegemony, on 18 August 2008, Hizbullah reached out to its ideological enemies, the *jihādī* Salafists, and signed with them an "Understanding"⁷⁸ aimed mainly at warding off Sunni-Shi'i discord [*fitna*] in the future.

With these hopes, Hizbullah launched its 2009 election program on 1 March and entered the legislative elections on 7 June.⁷⁹ To the dismay of the Hizbullah-led opposition, 71 seats were won by 14 March and only 57 seats went to March 8, in elections that witnessed a 54.8% turnout. Thus, one year after the Doha Accord, 8 March failed to effect change by democratic means and, most likely, will be forced to work under the status quo that prevailed after the 2005 legislative elections.

In spite of Hizbullah's failure to achieve its aims in the latest elections and possible ruptures with both the elite and grassroots Shi'i communities⁸⁰, it continues to actively expand its domain, including reaching out to the international community and scoring diplomatic feats, such as the groundbreaking 13 June 2009 meeting between European Union Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana and Hizbullah MP Husayn Hajj Hasan. The rapid evolution of Hizbullah from a marginal splinter group to a dominant group in national and international politics seems to justify Nasrallah's 2007 statement that the movement was still in its early, and vigorous, youth: "We survived more than a quarter of a century and we're here to stay; the future is ours."⁸¹

Notes

1. The public statement “Identity and Goals” is Hizbullah’s 2004 self-description. My reliance on publicly available primary sources has its inevitable limitations given the largely secretive nature of the party and its operations.
2. Tawfiq al-Madini, *Amal wa-Hizbullah fi Halbat al-Mujabihat al-Mahalliyya wa-l-Iqlimiyya* [Amal and Hizbullah in the Arena of Domestic and Regional Struggles] (Damascus: al-Ahli, 1999), 172.
3. Nabih Berri, the current leader of Amal and Speaker of the Parliament, has repeatedly stated that Amal was the womb of Hizbullah.
4. Established in 1966. See Waddah Sharara and Dawlat Hizbullah, *Lubnan Mujtama’ Islami* [The State of Hizbullah: Lebanon as an Islamic Society], 4th ed. (Beirut: al-Nahar, 2006), 87ff. It is worth mentioning that Shaykh Na’im Qasim, Hizbullah’s current deputy secretary general, was one of the leading founding members of the student movement.
5. Talal Salman, *Sira Dhatiyya li-Haraka Muqawima ‘Arabiyya Muntasira: Hizbullah* [An Autobiography of a Victorious Arab Resistance Movement: Hizbullah] (Beirut: *al-Safir*, June 2000), 7.
6. ‘Ali al-Kurani, from a mid-rank cadre, was the first to expose the social movement’s mobilization strategies, in his book entitled *Tariqat Hizbullah fi al-‘Amal al-Islami* [Hizbullah’s Method of Islamic Mobilization] (Tehran: Maktab al-‘Ilam al-Islami: al-Mu’assasa al-‘Alamiyya, 1985), 183–203.
7. See, respectively, <http://www.lebanese-forces.com/> and <http://www.psp-lb.org>.
8. *Al-‘Ahd* 95, 18 April 1986, 11.
9. See “Victory Speech” in Bint Jubayl marking the nearly complete Israeli withdrawal on 25 May 2000. *al-Safir*, 11 July 2001; *al-Intiqad* 1428, 13 April 2007, 10–14. See also Narallah’s televised speech in Bint Jubayl on 28 July 2007.
10. Interview with the author, 2 November 2004. Hajj ‘Imad Faqih is currently a member of the Executive Council.
11. Shaykh Muhammad Yazbik, Hizbullah’s Shura Council member and the head of the Religio-Judicial Council.
12. Al-Madini, *Amal wa-Hizbullah*, 172–173.
13. For information on Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails in English, Arabic, Hebrew, or French, see <http://www.samirkuntar.org/>, which was officially launched on 19 April 2007.

14. *Al-Intiqad* is Hizbullah's current mouthpiece. The weekly newspaper was established on 18 June 1984 as *al-'Ahd* but changed its name and image in 2001, signaling a new "secular" orientation by dropping the Qur'anic substantiation (5:56), on the right side of the front page, and removing the portrait of Khomeini and Khamina'i, on the left. The last issue of *al-'Ahd* was number 896, dated 6 April 2001; the first issue of *al-Intiqad* was number 897, dated 20 April 2001.
15. Al-Manar literally means "The Lighthouse." It is probably named after the journal kept by Lebanese reformist Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935), which circulated from Indonesia to Morocco without interruption for thirty-seven years (1898–1935). Rida's journal served as an influential platform for Muslims to express their ideas on modernity in the form of fatwas, or legal and judicial opinions, and became a treasure house of Islamic subjects where almost every problem of modernity was discussed. As such, it was a most influential instrument of modern change. Hizbullah's al-Manar aspires to the same standing.
16. This number reflects legitimate cable subscribers. It is estimated that at least another 6 million watch al-Manar through pirating techniques. See Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 15, 19.
17. Unlike the parliamentary elections law, the municipal elections law is not drawn along sectarian lines, which leaves a large margin for the grassroots to voice their opinion in the ballot box and make their voices heard.
18. Based on inside sources and fieldwork observations by the author, it could be fairly stated that the majority of Hizbullah's cadres consider disagreements of religious and political opinions and conflicting viewpoints of leaders to be healthy and "democratic" phenomena although obedience and discipline should be maintained to prevent disagreements from festering into discord.
19. For the election programs and their results, see Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 42–62, 247–277.
20. Ali Fayyad, *al-Saraya al-Lubnaniyya li-Muqawamat al-Ihtilal al-Isra'ili: al-Tarkiba al-Ijtima'iyya-al-Siyasiyya wa Afaq al-Dawr* [Lebanese Multi-Confessional Brigades: The Socio-political Makeup and Future Role] (Beirut: CCSD, 22 November 1999).

21. It is worth mentioning that the abolition of political sectarianism is stipulated in Article 95 of the Ta'if Agreement. But all that has been achieved to date is Parliament's 2004 establishment of a committee that is supposed to pave the way for a "National Body for the Abolishment of Political Sectarianism."
22. The Maronite bishops' declaration cautioned against deleting political sectarianism from legal texts before erasing it from the minds of the Lebanese people, which could only be accomplished through an intensive educational process stressing coexistence and mutual respect. *Daily Star*, 5 February 2004.
23. *Al-Safir*, 11 June 2005. *Hizbullah: al-Muqawama wa-l-Tahrir* [Hizbullah: Resistance and Liberation] (Beirut: Editio International, 2006), 3:178–87. *Hizbullah: al-Muqawama wa-l-Tahrir* is a thirteen-volume encyclopedia on the party.
24. See the group's Web site at <http://www.14march.org/>.
25. UNSC Resolution 1559 called for the Lebanese state to have absolute monopoly over the use of force and to disband and disarm all militias, which is an indirect reference to Hizbullah and the Palestinian factions in Lebanon. See Shaykh Ja'far Hasan 'Atrisi, *Hizbullah: al-Khiyar al-As'ab wa-Damanat al-Watan al-Kubra* [Hizbullah: The Difficult Choice and Lebanon's Greatest Guarantee] (Beirut: Dar al-Mahajja al-Bayda', 2005), 309–311; and Rif'at Sayyid Ahmad, *Hasan Nasrallah: Tha'ir min al-Janub* [Hasan Nasrallah: A Rebel from the South] (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 2006), 215–230.
26. Joseph Alagha, "Hizbullah After the Syrian Withdrawal," *Middle East Report* 237 (Winter 2005): 34–39.
27. See Nasrallah's interview with *al-Safir*, 29 July 2005.
28. *Al-Safir*, 17 August 2005.
29. *Al-Safir*, 7 June 2005. Nabulsi is not a Hizbullah member but rather a local influential cleric revered by Hizbullah. It is worth mentioning that when five Shi'i ministers—including the two from Hizbullah—suspended their membership in the Lebanese cabinet in December 2005, it was Nabulsi, not Nasrallah, who issued a fatwa barring any other Shi'a from joining the cabinet in their absence. (See Lebanese daily newspapers of 12 December 2005.)
30. Sayyid Ahmad, *Hasan Nasrallah*, 231–232.
31. *Hizbullah: al-Muqawama wa*, 3:148–157.

32. *Al-Safir*, 15 June 2004; *al-Nahar*, 15 June 2005; 'Atrisi, *Hizbullah: al-Khiyar*, 435–39; *Hizbullah: al-Muqawama wa*, 3:200–206.
33. Previously, Hizbullah had argued that its prospective representatives in the cabinet wouldn't be able to do anything to alter majority decisions with which it disagreed. However, in the parliament and in municipality councils, Hizbullah members can voice their opinion freely and act in favor of the masses or the social base that they represent. Hizbullah-controlled municipal councils act as advocacy groups, serving as a kind of empowerment mechanism for lobbying the government to pursue a course of balanced development and to live up to its promises and perform on its developmental projects.
34. See http://www.tayyar.org/files/documents/fpm_hezbollah.pdf; and *Mawsu'at Nasrallah* [Nasrallah's Encyclopedia] (Beirut: Manshurat al-Fajir, 2007), 2:16–24.
35. The official Syrian position is that demarcating the borders is out of the question except as part of a comprehensive regional settlement that returns the Golan Heights to Syria. Al-Mufti al-Ja'fari al-Mumtaz, Shaykh Abd al-Amir Qabalan, the deputy of the Islamic Shi'ite Higher Council, said in his Friday speech on 20 April 2007 that Hizbullah would only relinquish its arms as part of an overall regional settlement whereby, in addition to the founding of a Palestinian state, Israel would relinquish both the Sheb'a farms and the Golan. *LBCI News Bulletin*, 18.00 GMT. In a similar vein, on 2 May 2007, President Lahoud affirmed that even if Israel were to withdraw from the Sheb'a farms, Hizbullah would not disarm until a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace is reached in the Middle East.
36. Qrnet Shahwan became defunct upon the establishment of 14 March Trend.
37. 'Auon and his FPM make all the difference in the tug of war between 14 March and 8 March. If 'Auon changes his alliance to 14 March, then they will have a two-thirds majority in the parliament in addition to the two-thirds majority in the cabinet that they already enjoy. (The FPM parliamentary bloc has more than twenty-one MPs.)
38. UNSC Resolution 1701 of August 2006 would set a one-month timetable to solve the Sheb'a farms issue, which did not materialize.
39. The war led to the death of around 1200 Lebanese, one-third of whom were children under the age of 12, wounded and handicapped 4000, displaced more than one million, and caused around \$15 billion in damage and lost

- revenues (see http://www.dailystar.com.lb/July_War06.asp). Hizbullah's launch of 4000 rockets caused Israel to lose 158 people, more than two-thirds of whom were soldiers; 5000 were wounded; 12,000 houses were destroyed; 750,000 trees were burned; and 5 aircraft crashed. Also, Israel incurred a financial loss of 25 billion shekels (around \$6 billion). See "The War in Figures," *Yadi'ot Ahronot*, 15 August 2006.
40. Sharara and Hizbullah, *Lubnan Mujtama'*, 389–442; Abdallah Balqaziz, *Hizbullah min al-Tahrir ila al-Radi'* [Hizbullah from Liberation to Deterrence] (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wihda al-'Arabiyya, 2006), 73–107; Joseph Alagha, "Hizbullah's Promise," *ISIM REVIEW* 18 (Autumn 2006): 36, http://www.isim.nl/files/Review_18/Review_18-36.pdf.
 41. Reached through an underground bunker lit by a long snake of small lights till one reaches the broadcasting room, where everything was manually operated, with very limited equipment and resources.
 42. A special edition on Monday 17 July, issue 1171, right after the city of Haifa in Israel was bombed by Hizbullah, and a regular edition on Friday 21 July, issue 1172.
 43. <http://www.lebanonundersiege.gov.lb/english/F/eNews/NewsArticle.asp?CNewsID=61> (accessed 2 August 2006). The Seven Points were: 1) release of Lebanese and Israeli prisoners and detainees; 2) withdrawal of the Israeli army behind the Blue Line (UN demarcated border between Lebanon and Israel); 3) Sheb'a farms placed under UN jurisdiction and Israeli surrender of all remaining landmine maps to the UN; 4) the Lebanese government extends its authority over its territory through its own legitimate armed forces, such that there will be no weapons or authority other than that of the Lebanese state; 5) a robust UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) force to guarantee stability and security in the south; 6) the 1949 Armistice Agreement between Lebanon and Israel put back into effect; and 7) international community support for Lebanon at all levels.
 44. See *al-Intiqad* 1181, 23 September 2006, 11–15; and Lebanese daily newspapers on and around that date. It is worth mentioning that the front page of the 18 August *al-Intiqad*, issue 1176, was red, symbolizing the blood of the martyrs, with on the right side the words "Divine Victory," with "Victory" in green, the color of Islam. On the left side was a Khamina'i letter to Nasrallah entitled "Your Victory is an Apodictic Proof [*hujja*]."

45. Although Hizbullah had taken precautions and dug elaborate underground bunkers, just a sonic boom by an Israeli plane could have caused a stampede and chaos. Fearing the worst, the party cancelled its annual show of force on "Jerusalem Day," which fell on the last Friday of Ramadan.
46. *Mawsu'at Nasrallah*, 3:151–177.
47. Israel also mocked Hizbullah's "divine, historic, and strategic victory," arguing that Hizbullah was only showing off at a time when Nasrallah had been in hiding since 12 July and would return to his bunker after his speech. Israel stressed that the claim of victory was being made by a person who had conceded three weeks earlier that if he had anticipated Israel's devastating response, the two Israeli soldiers would not have been kidnapped.
48. Naturally Hizbullah benefited from the Understanding and its alliance with the FPM before, during, and after the war. Before the war, Hizbullah boosted its image as a nationalist political party by saving Lebanon from plunging back into civil war after the 5 February civil unrest. During the war, Christian areas were no longer off-limits to Hizbullah, and displaced Shi'a were well treated and received all the aid they needed from members of the FPM (along with other regional and international NGOs), which was unprecedented harmony that had not been seen since the outbreak of the civil war in 1975.
49. As stated by Hajj Mahmud Qmati, the vice-president of Hizbullah's Political Council and the head of Hizbullah's Committee on Christian-Muslim Dialogue. *Salun al-Sabt, Sawt Lubnan* (Radio Voice of Lebanon), 6 May 2007.
50. Composed of four big blocs and a few independents.
51. For instance, see *al-Intiqad* 1189, 17 November 2006, 1–2; and *al-Intiqad* 1191, 1 December 2006, 2.
52. Mustapha, *al-I'sar*, 276–278.
53. The security arm of the Lebanese state killed thirteen Hizbullah supporters—including two women—and wounded forty because they took to the streets when the Hariri government imposed a ban on demonstrations on 13 September 1993 when the party was protesting peacefully against the Oslo Agreement. On 27 May 2004, demonstrations spread all over the country in protest of pressing socio-economic problems. In Hizbullah's southern suburb of Beirut, the Lebanese Army fired at demonstrators, killing five and wounding several others.

54. See his speeches of 1 and 10 December 2006.
55. The sit-in tarnished Hizbullah's image in different ways, including through word-of-mouth and media accusations of moral laxity among Hizbullah rank and file in the "tent cities" that housed the protesters. Hizbullah's insistence that its members upheld ethical and Islamic values and norms, while other members of the Lebanese opposition might be committing such acts, rang hollow when images of Hizbullahi hugging FPM members who were sipping champagne on New Year's Eve were disseminated and rumors spread that the youth were sleeping around in the tents.
56. The front page of *al-Intiqad* portrayed the map of Lebanon surrounded by the color red, symbolizing blood. The main slogan was in yellow, Hizbullah's color: "The Government of the Militias Confronts the Republic of the Opposition." A small headline in black, symbolizing death, proclaimed: "The Wisdom of the Opposition and the [Tactical] Moves of the Lebanese Army Warded off *Fitna*." *al-Intiqad* 1199, 26 January 2006.
57. Some Hizbullah cadres bragged that the government would resign in thirty-three hours; others affirmed that it would resign before thirty-three days. Neither materialized.
58. *Al-Intiqad* 1199, 26 January 2007, 3. This was Nasrallah's first fatwa in the political sphere.
59. The Lebanese Army imposed a curfew from 8:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., which was the first such measure since a May 1973 curfew before the start of the civil war.
60. Quoting a hadith by Prophet Muhammad, *al-Safir's* front-page editorial admonished against discord: "*Fitna* is slumbering; God damn [Those] who woke it up." See Editorial, *al-Safir* 10611, 26 January 2007.
61. Lebanese daily newspapers the next day, especially *al-Nahar*.
62. On a talk show on Iranian satellite TV, *al-'Alam* [The World].
63. For instance, on 9 August 2006, Nasrallah appeared on Lebanese TV programs unequivocally endorsing the Seven Points.
64. The *al-Akhbar* daily is even closer to Hizbullah than *al-Safir*, which is Nasserite in its overall approach.
65. On the morning talk show *Naharkum Sa'id* [Good Morning] on LBCI on 27 April 2007.
66. On 30 May 2007, UNSC Resolution 1757 established an international tribunal for the Hariri murder, effective 10 June 2007.

67. Berri's initiative on the occasion of the twenty-ninth anniversary of the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr seemingly eroded the opposition's demand for the formation of a national unity cabinet even "half an hour before the presidential elections" and apparently shelved such a demand till the election of a new president, as 14 March Trend had repeatedly requested. (See Lebanese daily newspapers of 1 September 2007.) Unfortunately, this was a tactical move and not a genuine policy shift.
68. The tenure of outgoing President Lahoud ended on 24 November 2007, with parliament having failed to elect a new president during the constitutional period between the 24th of September and the 23rd of November. Before the election of President Michel Sulayman on 25 May, the Speaker delayed the vote nineteen times.
69. MP Walid 'Ido was assassinated on 13 June by a car bomb in West Beirut, the Muslim sector of the Lebanese capital. On 19 September, a powerful explosion ripped the eastern sector of Beirut, killing the Phalangist MP Antoine Ghanem. Hizbullah vehemently condemned both killings. As it had for previous politically motivated assassinations, which all targeted anti-Syrian politicians, 14 March pinned the blame directly on the Syrian regime.
70. According to the Lebanese minister of defense, after the Lebanese Army took total control of the Nahr al-Barid camp on 2 September 2007, at least 150 Fatah al-Islam militants were killed and around 300 were arrested, while 170 Lebanese soldiers were killed and more than 1000 were wounded. Also, a total of 32 Palestinian and 10 Lebanese civilians died, killed by rockets that the militants fired on nearby villages.
71. On 12 December 2007 al-Hajj, the chief of military operations and the presumed successor to the Lebanese army command, was killed by a car bomb in Ba'bda, a Christian area of Beirut where the presidential palace and many Western embassies, as well as Yarzé, the headquarters of the Lebanese Army, are located. Al-Hajj had headed the ground operations at Nahr al-Barid. Fatah al-Islam also targeted UNIFIL three times with roadside bombs, fatally injuring three Spanish soldiers on 24 June 2007 and damaging a U.S. Embassy reconnaissance vehicle on 15 January 2008.
72. *Al-Safir* 10876, 29 August 2007, 4. In this, Fadlallah was echoing the late Gebran Tuéni's father, Member of Parliament Ghassan Tuéni, the 80-year-old veteran politician and journalist, who had depicted the sixteen-year

- Lebanese civil war as a proxy war fought on behalf of others, as the title of his book suggests: *Une guerre pour les autres*. Ghassan Tuéni, *Une guerre pour les autres* [A war for others](Paris: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1985).
73. Although the Patriarch stressed that the president should be elected by a two-thirds majority in the parliament (as the Hizbullah-led opposition argued), he cautioned that boycotting the parliamentary session to elect the president was tantamount to boycotting Lebanon.
 74. According to AFP estimates; Reuters reported the death toll as 80.
 75. See Nasrallah's speech of 26 May 2008.
 76. The vacant seat of assassinated MP Antoine Ghanem was not filled by conducting partial elections.
 77. See the editorial of *al-Akhbar* 524, 15 May 2008.
 78. See *al-Intiqad* 1291, 18 August 2008, 5.
 79. See "Hizbullah and the 2009 Elections in Lebanon," *European Union Institute for Security Studies* (June 2009).
 80. It is important to point out that Hizbullah does not have complete hegemony over the Shi'i public sphere, which includes such dissident voices as Sayyid Hani Fahs (a Shi'i intellectual), Sayyid 'Ali al-Amin (the ex-Mufti of Tyre and Jabal 'Amil), Shaykh Muhammad al-Hajj Hasan (the Leader of the Free Shi'i Movement—al-Tayyar al-Shi'i al-Hurr), Shaykh Yusuf Kanj, Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli, and Ahmad al-As'ad.
 81. Nasrallah's "Easter Speech" of 8 April 2007. *Al-Intiqad* 1428, 13 April 2007, 10–14.

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Scholarship on the Middle East and North Africa almost always engages with politics, yet the assumed absence of public spaces and fora has led many to think that debate, consensus, and concerted social action are antithetical to the heritage of the region. *Publics, Politics and Participation* demonstrates not only the critical importance of the public for the Middle East and North Africa, but how the term and notion of the public sphere can be used productively to advance understandings of collective life and, moreover, how conflict and resistance are generative forces in public discourse.

At a time when commentaries in the West reduce the Middle East to rubble, violence, and intolerance, it is a healthy reminder that public debate and deliberation, however fragile, occupy an important place in that stigmatized political region, now as in the past. Seteney Shami and her colleagues have done a great service in disrupting one more layer of Orientalism.

—Michael Burawoy, *University of California, Berkeley*

How are publics linked to politics? The Middle Eastern context provides the rich texture of this book as it moves through time and space—from the surveillance of public conversations in the Ottoman Empire to the Teheran bazaar and the role of the market in public-making to the ways in which present-day national public spheres are expanded and disrupted by new forms of resistance, such as Arab poetry in Iraq and the Munzur cultural festival in an Eastern Kurdish province. The authors engage a conceptual framework that is constantly questioned, revisited and enriched by both ordinary experiences and layers of historical heritage. They contribute to the opening up of “Western” social science and invite us to think differently about politics and publics.

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