

BULLETS AND BULLETINS



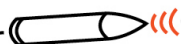
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Center for International and Regional Studies



MEDIA AND POLITICS IN THE WAKE OF THE ARAB UPRISINGS



MEDIA AND POLITICS IN THE
WAKE OF THE ARAB UPRISINGS

SUMMARY REPORT

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MEDIA AND POLITICS IN THE WAKE OF THE ARAB UPRISINGS

WORKING GROUP SUMMARY REPORT

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WORKING GROUP SUMMARY REPORT

The historic events of the Arab uprisings have been accompanied by profound changes in the role of traditional and new media across the Middle East. Early on in the revolts, printed and electronic media played critical roles in disseminating information, and conveying compelling sentiments, within and across national boundaries in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. As the uprisings grew in both intensity and scale, new media in the form of Twitter, Facebook, and the Blogosphere joined satellite television in helping facilitate popular mobilization aimed at overthrowing authoritarian establishments. Today, satellite television and the internet have become consequential in countries where popular uprisings are being cast in a sectarian light by some national and international actors, most notably in Bahrain and Syria.

Although many events of the Arab uprisings were, without a doubt, orchestrated for maximum media attention, they exhibited much more than just a media spectacle—they transgressed time-honored boundaries of civil and political conduct, and made themselves felt in other venues that were previously disenfranchised, whether within academia, the media, or other areas of the public sphere. For far too long, regional and international scholars adapted a narrative that emphasized the resilience of Arab authoritarianism: that many Arab regimes were entrenched, and would remain so for the foreseeable future. The literature highlighted the status quo in which incumbent Arab regimes exercised control over citizens, from monitoring the individual on the street to dictating from the halls of power. Since 2010, however, the Arab world has received an intense surge of curious and inquisitive local, regional, and international attention directed at the analysis of every aspect and condition of Arab publics' everyday existence. Regardless of the hype and over-romanticization that became the norm for elated commentary on the Arab uprisings, this global inquiry has opened up the scope of scholarship into the once muted countries of the Middle East and North Africa with fresh and stimulating forms of critical analysis.

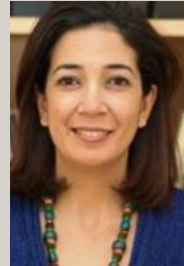
In line with this, CIRS launched a research initiative to study the connection between media and politics in the wake of the Arab uprisings. The purpose of this project is to explore the role of traditional and new media across the Middle East in the events leading up to the Arab revolts and changes to the media's roles and functions as the Middle East's decades-long national and international orders undergo change. This research initiative has resulted in an edited volume, *Bullets and Bulletins: Media and Politics in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings* (Oxford University Press/Hurst, 2016), offering critical examination into the profound sociopolitical and media transitions that have occurred within Arab states during and in the wake of the uprisings. It explores the intricate ways in which politics and media intersect in their representation and negotiation of political resistance and cultural production in a shifting Arab world. By analyzing different aspects of Arab mediascapes—transformations in the culture of Arab journalism, the construction of media cities, the rise of religious media, and the attention to subcultures and public diplomacy—this volume provides insights into the changing political dynamics of the region, and maps out the rearticulation of power relations between state and society. The chapters adopt a multidisciplinary approach in their analyses of the changing dynamics of media and politics before, during, and in the aftermath of the revolts.

MEDIA AND POLITICS IN THE WAKE OF THE ARAB UPRISINGS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAPER SYNOPSES

1. Introduction: The State of Arab Media in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings
Suzi Mirgani, *Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar*

Part I: Arab Media in Transition

2. On the Entangled Question of Media and Politics in the Middle East
Mohamed Zayani, *Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar*
3. A Comparative Analysis of Traditional Media Industry Transitions in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt
Fatima el Issawi, *London School of Economics and Political Science*
4. The Culture of Arab Journalism
Naila Hamdy, *American University in Cairo*

Part II: Space and the Cultural Production of Arab Media

5. Narratives and the Syrian Uprising: The Role of Stories in Political Activism and Identity Struggles
Dina Matar, *SOAS, University of London*
6. Public Space, Street Art, and Communication in the Arab Uprisings
Marwan M. Kraidy, *University of Pennsylvania*
7. Change and Continuity in Arab Media: A Political Economy of Media Cities
Joe Khalil, *Northwestern University in Qatar*

Part III: Media, State Interests, and Non-State Actors

8. Framing Political Islam: Media Tropes and Power Struggles in Revolutionary Egypt
Abeer AlNajjar, *American University of Sharjah*
9. Hezbollah, Al Manar, and the Arab Revolts: Defiance or Survival?
Zahera Harb, *City University London*
10. U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Media in the Middle East
Philip Seib, *University of Southern California*

1. *Introduction: The State of Arab Media in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings*

Suzi Mirgani

Although, individually, Arab states have evolved according to historically specific trajectories, collectively, they bear similar characteristics. On the whole, the story of the Middle East and North Africa region has been fraught with state-structured political and economic turmoil, defined by growing disparities, marked by disquieting degrees of overarching authoritarianism, and populated by millions of resentful, but largely quiescent publics. On December 14, 2010, these disjunctions came to be encapsulated in a singular act of retaliatory public performance that had an enduring impact on the Arab nation: the gripping self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi. A sacrificial act against state authorities, the tragic story of this young Tunisian man sparked unprecedented outrage among local, Arab, and international populations. Even before the onslaught of the contagion of media-infused Arab uprisings, this was fundamentally an act of political communication.

The surge of protests that began spreading across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, and the subsequent ousting of authoritarian governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, cannot be attributed to a single factor or sector of society, but what added significantly to the amplification of demands and grievances in the public spheres, streets, and squares was the dovetailing of an increasingly indignant population with high rates of media literacy, digital connectivity, and communicative prowess.

Information and communication technologies have long been used by both government authorities and the public as simultaneous tools for silencing or amplifying dissent, but, during the first few months of the mass revolts, the sheer force of protestor numbers tipped the balance of power. Thus, questions of representation—who, how, and to what effect—necessarily buoy all discussions of politics and media in the contemporary period.

Media practices, media content, and media laws reflect a country's prevailing political structure. On the whole, Arab media, since its inception as a state industry and a tool for civic discipline and nation-building, has always operated largely in service of the authoritarian regimes in power. Yet, resistance to the overarching state-imposed restrictions on media, or at least engaging in alternative practices and discourses, is also part of these very same media systems, and flourishes in tandem. When these constricting boundaries were further challenged during the uprisings, many Arab societies experienced a tremendous, even if temporary, form of release where once outlawed and prohibited forms of expression were unexpectedly and daringly exercised openly, and often provocatively, in public. Decades of carefully orchestrated and managed rules of state control and self-censorship were tested in a matter of days, and an explosion of expression rushed to break the barriers of constraint—everyone had something to say, and a different way of saying it.

The initial Arab protests were accompanied by a heady mix of simultaneous confusion and celebration, exemplified in words like “awakening,” “revolution,” and “spring,” which created an energized, if anomalous, space that was charged with the possibility of altering the relationship between media and politics, and, in fact, renegotiating the relationship between state and society. Public space in the Arab world, whether physical or technologically-enabled, became an increasingly complex arena that reflected the mode of political rule, and simultaneously reverberated with social responses to that rule, constituting spaces for communication as

well as spaces of communication. Citizens took to the streets and other forms of mediated public spheres to make themselves heard, to express a variety of grievances and previously prohibited opinions—both banal and poignant—to demand accountability from those in power, and to ridicule those very same figures in words, pictograms, and graffiti, among other forms of symbolic communication. As the protests grew more vocal and widespread, digital media and traditional media forms became intertwined and enmeshed within a symphony of communicative power.

Suzi Mirgani is Manager and Editor of Publications at the Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. She received a Ph.D. in Communication and Media Studies from Eastern Mediterranean University. Mirgani is author of *Target Markets: International Terrorism Meets Global Capitalism in the Mall* (Transcript Press, 2016) and co-editor (with Zahra Babar) of *Food Security in the Middle East* (Oxford University Press/Hurst, 2014). She is an independent filmmaker who works on highlighting stories from the Gulf. Her film “Hind’s Dream” was selected for the Short Film Corner at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival.

2. *On the Entangled Question of Media and Politics in the Middle East*

Mohamed Zayani

Any serious discussion of the Middle East and North Africa is incomplete without reference to the region's evolving media scene. Authoritarian political systems, technological advancement, national development policies, privatization trends, geopolitical considerations, state interests, regional rivalries, religious revival, demographic trends, traditional values, cultural sensibilities, and processes of globalization have all made Arab media a complex and entangled subject. Over the past few decades, the Arab media scene has witnessed significant transformations that are still unfolding. The mediascape grew increasingly more vibrant, more diverse, and more open. This is evident in the numerous satellite channels that cropped up, the rich variety of programs that became available to audiences, and the thriving media cities that were set up in various Arab countries. Investment in information and communication technologies and widespread internet immersion are only the latest phase affecting Arab media development, but one that has a considerable appeal for many Arabs and portends significant alterations. Social media networks and new communication platforms have created exciting opportunities and opened up new frontiers for a growing number of internet users, providing a predominantly young generation, but also various other constituents of Arab societies, with alternative sources of information, competing forms of sociality, and more inclusive spaces for engagement. Never before have Arab publics been more connected, more informed, and more empowered.

Invigorating as they may be, these transformations are marked by an overriding unevenness. They are often motivated by various interests, follow different progressions, and obey conflictual logics that are inescapably bound up with the region's political dynamics. The evolution of the media sphere in the Arab Middle East was matched only by a notable devolution of political life, which until recently left the region untouched by the third wave of democratization that transformed a number of countries. Ironically, and with a few exceptions, the more open the media systems in the Arab world grew, the more closed the political systems became. The Arab uprisings added yet another level of complexity to these unique configurations. The revolutions that swept through the Middle East and North Africa region since 2010 have been closely associated with a distinct media momentum, the full implications of which remain elusive. This chapter engages with the intricate relationship between media and politics in the context of the changes the region has been witnessing. By mapping out continuities, examining discordances, pointing out uneven developments, and identifying emerging trends, it delves into the complex workings of Arab media. Dwelling on the intricate relationship between media and politics necessarily entails looking at a host of issues that became salient during the uprisings and throughout the transitional period in a post-revolutionary context, but also tying these developments to historical junctures and significant moments that affected the workings of Arab media and shaped the experience of Arab subjects.

On December 17, 2010, a tragic incident in the provincial Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid provoked a wave of angry reactions, which would ignite a revolution no one could have anticipated. A street vendor who operated an unlicensed fruit and vegetable stand set himself on fire in front of the local government office to protest the harassment of the municipality officer on duty, and to draw attention to his dire condition. In what was otherwise a police state, people posted user-generated content and shared videos of protests captured on their mobile phones. This helped break the media blockade that the authorities imposed on the events, and increased

awareness of what was happening in the inner cities. Social media platforms like Facebook became a mobilizing tool for the protesters and an invaluable source of information for the wider public. Images of the violent clashes circulated widely on the internet, drawing attention to the intensity of the situation, documenting the plight of the people, and highlighting the repressive response of the regime. As the popular unrest widened and the protests spread to various cities across the country, images of confrontations and footage of swelling protests were picked up by transnational news channels like France 24 and Al Jazeera.

Digital media helped foster a shared awareness of common grievances and foreground the potential for political contestation and street action. It helped connect individuals, capture the political intensity of the protests, disseminate information to the wider public, link up local activists with activists in the diaspora, and connect local players to international media organizations, which increasingly became dependent on unconventional news material as a source of information. The traditional media's reliance on eyewitness accounts and Facebook clips of protest scenes originating from activists and protesters did more than create a competing narrative to the stilted official account of the events; they helped give additional momentum to the people's movements. Never before had cyber-activism and on the ground activism been so tightly linked.

Mohamed Zayani is Associate Professor of Critical Theory at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, and an Affiliate Faculty with the Communication, Culture and Technology Graduate Program. His works include *Networked Publics and Digital Contention* (Oxford University Press, 2015), *The Culture of Al Jazeera: Inside an Arab Media Giant* (McFarland, 2007, with Sofiane Sahraoui) and *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media* (Pluto, 2005).

3. *A Comparative Analysis of Traditional Media Industry Transitions in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt*

Fatima el Issawi

With the outbreak of the 2011 uprisings, the world witnessed extraordinary social and political changes in the Arab world. Although the impact of social media in empowering these changes has already been the subject of extensive research, there has thus far been little empirical work done on the role played by traditional media in shaping Arab political transitions, both during and after the uprisings. Based on extensive research conducted in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, this chapter comparatively investigates ongoing changes and new trends in the traditional media industries of these three countries. Using field data gathered through more than 200 semi-structured interviews with journalists and media stakeholders, the chapter reflects on the various changes in regulatory frameworks introduced by the new regimes, and explores journalists' own perceptions of their professional roles, as well as their relationship to the political sphere. In so doing, the chapter attempts to define a comparative framework of journalists' post-revolution practices, taking into consideration important historical differences marking the specific national contexts within which each of these media industries is embedded.

In this chapter, I argue that from the outset of the Arab uprisings, the openness of the media market did not lead Arab journalists to challenge a stereotyped perception of their role as messengers of the regimes. The intense political struggle as well as a decades-long deterioration of professional skills due to regime manipulation hindered the development of independent reporting; media platforms became hostage to politics and were used as a powerful tool. The lack of legal protections for journalists, and the weak support they receive from unions, aggravate the vulnerability of their situation. The findings I present in this chapter demonstrate similarities between the development of Arab media systems in the recent period of transition and previous media transitional experiences. These include the use of media platforms for political lobbying and the regression of the media's dual role as information provider and watchdog. In the context of Arab transitional media, journalists take on an active role as creators of political messages, affording the media a powerful stake in political struggles. The political alignment of traditional media outlets in the Arab world is starkly apparent and seriously impacts the democratization process.

Before the advent of the Arab uprisings, regional Arab satellite television was instrumental in introducing a culture of debate, breaking with the official, state-sanctioned media discourse that had up to that point been dominant. The expansion of transnational media—led by Qatar's Al Jazeera television channel—in addition to changes in information and communication technologies (ICTs) provided a window for both journalists and public opinion to evade government censorship, as well as exposure to more informed media content and innovative programming. For instance, before the fall of Gaddafi, Libyans were permitted access to the production of Arab satellite television channels, although the regime also invested in technologies designed to jam their transmissions when they were deemed troublesome.

In the post-revolution period or, more accurately, after the first episodes of these uprisings passed, traditional media became infused with a more pluralistic tone. Having failed to broadcast voices from the streets at the start of the uprisings, many media channels became more attentive to critical and pluralistic views. In the Egyptian context, the "official" media supported the regime through misrepresentations of the scope and extent of the street movement, often referring to demonstrators as thugs or agents working on behalf of foreign interests.

Some of the independent media challenged this position, while activists and citizen journalists used social media platforms to raise awareness and to encourage support for the movement against Mubarak. Similarly, in Libya, while the uprising in the eastern parts of the country was raging, official media channels represented street demonstrations as being in favor of the regime.

In the months following the uprisings, traditional media systems witnessed an immense expansion, which was reflected in the launch of numerous new media outlets. Nevertheless, such expansion is marked by a degree of chaos. This appetite to invest in traditional media reflects the growing importance of media platforms in the political struggles raging in the so-called “Arab Spring” countries, mainly between secularist and Islamist political camps. Owning traditional media outlets, especially television channels, is solidly linked to enjoying political visibility.

Fatima el Issawi is Senior Lecturer in Journalism at Essex University and Assistant Professorial Research Fellow for the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics. Her expertise in the media industry, with a specific focus on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), crosses journalism, public communication, policy, and academia. Between 2012 and 2014, el Issawi was leading the project “Arab Revolutions: Media Revolutions” funded by the Open Society Foundation. She is currently leading the project “Arab National Media and Politics: Democracy Revisited,” looking at changes in media practices in traditional media industries in Morocco and Algeria. The project is hosted and funded by the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics. El Issawi has over 15 years of experience in covering the Middle East for international media such as *Agence France Presse* (AFP) and the BBC Arabic Service.

4. *The Culture of Arab Journalism*

Naila Hamdy

The emergence of journalism as a profession in the Arab region dates back to the nineteenth century with the establishment of newspapers and presses in Iraq, Egypt, and Syria under Ottoman rule. Since the colonial powers did not encourage freedom of expression, Arab journalism developed unique characteristics, with journalists negotiating their roles by circumventing or accepting censorship and authoritarianism. This largely repressive environment influenced the way journalists viewed their profession. From the outset, Ottoman authorities dominated the scene, and so Arab journalism followed an established system of relationships between the ruling political class and the people, governed by principles of respect to the rulers. However, the repressive environment also encouraged some journalists to write for political causes and ideologies. Grand concepts such as Arab nationalism and the Arab renaissance were articulated in newspapers, which represented the intellectual forums of the time. With nationalist aspirations and stances against Ottoman rule flourishing in the press, Arab journalism took off.

Not all Arab news practitioners have the same perspective, nor do they all work under the same circumstances; nonetheless, there is a commonality, which appears to have been cemented with the advent of the transnational satellite era that bound journalists and their publics in a new shared consciousness. Studies indicate that many Arab journalists are supportive of a shared regional bond regarding “Arab-Muslim” notions of identity, which is a value that surfaces in their work. Many Arab journalists are advocates of social and political reform, believing that Arab governments are responsible for many of the failures of Arab nations.

Journalists working in Arab media share many of the same values and principles regarding the profession—such as the need for accurate and timely reporting—as other journalists around the world. Where they differ from their Western counterparts is in their general perceptions of journalism’s role in society. Many Arab journalists disseminate messages of social cohesion and national wellbeing. For them, journalism is a means to effect positive change, subscribing to the mobilizing role of the media, rather than engaging in uninvolved objective coverage of events in their countries. This characterized much of the journalistic output in the pre-uprisings era, although the actual ability to effect change differed from one country to another. Feeling responsible for the wellbeing of their communities did not necessarily mean that journalists supported their governments, despite years of being socialized into that mindset.

Despite the difficulty of defining the concept of professional journalism in the Arab context, there are several themes that have driven the improvement of journalistic performance over the last decade. Many Arab journalists, especially those who had the opportunity to work for the pan-Arab news media, have shown aspirations that are based on Western exemplars of the profession. For those who remained outside this arena, media training programs provided a means for attaining professional goals. After all, many regimes continued to stunt the growth of critical journalism, fearing the effect that it could have on their positions of power.

Naila Hamdy is Associate Professor and Chair of Journalism and Mass Communication department at the American University in Cairo. Hamdy joined AUC in 1997 to teach courses in the graduate program of the Adham Center for Television Journalism. She has since expanded her teaching interests to other areas of journalism and mass communication. Her research interests focus on various aspects of the journalism profession in Egypt, and the impact of communication technologies and media development in the Arab region. Hamdy is on the editorial board of *The Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* and the Arabic edition of *Global Media Journal*.

5. *Narratives and the Syrian Uprising: The Role of Stories in Political Activism and Identity Struggles*

Dina Matar

A key feature of the recent complex transformations in the contemporary Arab world is the reversal in popular perceptions of political agency and participation. This is manifest, in its most dramatic forms, in collective public acts of disruptive politics, and, in its most expressive forms, in the plethora of individual and collective voices engaged in creatively telling, witnessing, and constructing alternative modes of being. Different aspects and meanings of these voices as well as the ideologies or interests they represent have been discussed in the burgeoning literature on the Arab uprisings. However, little attention has been paid to the narratives these voices tell, or to the ways in which they invite affective and experienced co-identifications with real, lived sociopolitical situations and ways of knowing, as well as with alternative collective memories. While these narratives do not necessarily change the status quo, they may, and can, propel activism, and as such help explain how or why people who are not formally affiliated with political parties or organized in social movements move from “cultures of political disengagement” to cultures of political agency and public dissent. Paying attention to the role of narration in mobilization, and other forms of activism, is relevant in addressing the diverse and multiple emerging voices in Syria where, as Lisa Wedeen has shown in her seminal work *Ambiguities of Domination*, a culture of obedience had been enforced and manipulated by Syrian regime practices and discourses intended to ensure that ordinary people accept official ideology as given. In such a scenario, she notes, private or individual acts of transgression could have expressed a disbelief in the official ideology, but these acts did not change the “order of things,” leaving little room for individual or collective political agency, let alone political participation.

This chapter draws on some debates in social movement theory and activism as well as on an analysis of a select number of narrative practices that were made visible and circulated on Syrian digital “protest websites” and created by activists and ordinary people to contest power structures and repressive rule. I argue that these practices, understood in the Foucauldian sense as “knowing” practice that come out of particular histories and historical formations, make disorder visible and offer alternative understandings and readings of the nation and national identities.

The protest websites explored in this chapter include *Abou Naddara* (literally, “father of the spectacles”), a creative production house and an interactive website used to showcase short films and documentaries produced by Syrian artists in Syria and abroad, and the *Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution*, an online archive of diverse forms of cultural creative productions, including songs, graffiti, art, documentaries, and cartoons concerned with the Syrian revolution. Other websites consulted for this paper include *Syria Untold*, which aims at disseminating stories of what it calls the Syrian Civic Movement, while giving voice to marginalized voices, the website proclaims, and *Sawteya* (meaning vocal), a Facebook page created by individuals who describe themselves as “neutral” participants in the uprising, meaning they do not support the regime or the motley group of armed Islamist groups engaged in a violent battle with the regime. The selection I make is neither all-inclusive nor extensive as it is not possible to pay attention to all the diverse and multiple emerging voices and narratives coming out of the Syrian uprising within the scope of this chapter. The narrative practices under consideration are biased towards digitalized storytelling practices of the everyday that have been largely excluded from the predominant totalizing discourses, including discourses and narratives disseminated and normalized by the main

protagonists in the ongoing conflict—the Syrian regime and the motley crew of various jihadist rebel groups—intended to put across an exclusivist and exclusionary narrative of the ongoing Syrian conflict. In fact, both the regime and its opponents have also been using new media platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook, as a “virtual battleground” in which competing narratives and interests are played out. Finally, my focus on narrative practices in digital media platforms is not intended to privilege social or new media over other spaces where narratives are told, mediated, enacted, and circulated. Rather, it is intended to underline the fact that it is in these new media platforms, particularly YouTube and Facebook, that Syrian activists and ordinary citizens are making public the excluded or unheard aesthetic and narrative aspects of what George Marcus has called the “activist imagery.” In other words, these platforms, as all other spaces of communication, are important for bringing this imagery into the public domain and making it visible to others. For imagery and discourse to have meaning, they must be communicated—just as various publics, including activists and citizens, need cultural platforms in order to exist as publics.

Dina Matar is Senior Lecturer in Arab Media and International Political Communication at the Centre for Media and Film Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She is co-editor of the *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*. Her research interests include the relationship between politics, culture, and communication in the Arab world, especially in discourses of power and resistance. She is also interested in processes of empowerment and democratization, particularly as experienced by emerging communities and forces in the Arab world, Islamist politics, Arab cultural studies, memory and oral history, diasporas, and social movements

6. *Public Space, Street Art, and Communication in the Arab Uprisings*

Marwan M. Kraidy

Most analyses of communication processes during the Arab uprisings have focused on social media as technological platforms at the expense of other older, or less attention-grabbing modes of communication such as public space. But as de Souza and Lipietz note in a journal forum on ‘The “Arab Spring” and the City,’ the Arab uprisings remind us that prophecies about the end of space as an important factor under conditions of globalization are exaggerated. Though we do not have to supplant the unfortunate technology-determinism endemic in some analyses of the Arab uprisings with an equally misguided space-determinism, evidence supports the argument that public space played a significant political and communicative role in the popular rebellions that began in Tunisia in December 2010.

This chapter offers preliminary considerations regarding the connections between public space and communication in the Arab uprisings. Public space is understood to mean physical space that can be used, contested, and controlled by humans, and has therefore a narrower scope than “public sphere.” By the late nineteenth century, old, pre-modern hippodromes, which were already functioning as central squares, were joined by a new open space, the *maydan*. In the twentieth century, as nationalist movements rose against colonial masters, these spaces acquired new political meanings, and once these *maydans* had witnessed repression of nationalists, they assumed deep symbolic resonance and entered national collective memories. Revealingly, in Aden, Algiers, Beirut, and Damascus, these became known as *sabat* or *maydan al-shuhada*, or martyrs’ squares.

Public spaces played a significant, and so far understudied, role in the Arab rebellions. The uprisings witnessed mosques and *maydans* working together, even if new regimes in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, for example, appeared, for a short period dominated by Islamists, to represent the mosque taking primacy over the *maydan*. But beyond this consideration, public space is important for understanding media and communication in current revolutionary times because of the complex ways in which public space relates to communication: as a space of collective communication, a canvass for political expression, a field of embodied action, and a potent rallying symbol.

On a first level, public space has since the onset of urban civilization functioned as a space of expression for social and political opinion, which often entailed popular demonstrations and, in extreme cases, insurgent occupation of public space. On a second level, public space acts as a surface for political communication in the form of banners, graffiti, and murals. The Arab uprisings witnessed an explosion of political graffiti that, from Benghazi to Bahrain, represented the hopes and aspirations of popular demonstrators. On a third level, public space is a field of action for human bodies. The human body, at least since the French Revolution, has been a key metaphor, prism, and instrument of revolutionary political communication. On a fourth level, public space itself becomes rich with symbolic potency. In some countries gripped by rebellion, public spaces became symbolic of the struggle for freedom from dictatorship. Our understanding of the communicative functions of public space cannot be complete without adequate consideration of a fifth important dimension: intersecting these four communicative domains of public space is the virtual space afforded by the internet—websites, blogs, Facebook pages, tweets, and photographic repositories—which connected material spaces together, transmitting messages across distances and between cities that then reappeared in material public spaces.

The analysis also entails a discussion of how cyberspace intersects and expands public space. For analytical purposes, this chapter focuses on selected cases that are representative of broader trends in public space and communication in the Arab uprisings. The first section, which is mostly theoretical, discusses communication and political action in public space. The second section compares and contrasts the different kinds of revolutionary graffiti that emerged in Tunisia and Egypt, on the one hand, and in Syria, on the other. The third section compares and contrasts bodies in public space and cyberspace, paying particular attention to the cases of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia and Aliaa al-Mahdy in Egypt, while the fourth and concluding section focuses on Pearl Roundabout in Bahrain as an illustrative case-study of how public spaces can themselves become potent symbols.

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7. *Change and Continuity in Arab Media: A Political Economy of Media Cities*

Joe Khalil

Nearly all commentators agree that the Arab media landscape has undergone remarkable transformation since the Arab uprisings that began in 2010. They point to the liberating effects of social media, the growth in local media, and the challenges to news and information hegemony. But to what extent do these changes really represent a major shift in the way that Arab media are produced and circulated? After all, alongside these changes, there are many significant continuities that might be obscured by an overemphasis on change. For example, television continues to play an important role in the Arab world, local media are forging regional alliances with traditional market leaders, and the information divide is widening between news leaders and laggards.

Two issues animate this chapter: one concerns the durability of such changes and the resistance through these continuities, and the other concerns the best ways to understand and evaluate the current media landscape. Regarding the first, there is considerable debate as to whether it is advisable or even possible to determine changes and continuities in a constantly evolving situation. Writing in the aftermath of Egypt's 25 January uprising, one could assess the media landscape as "bolder." Throughout President Morsi's reign, there were outcries of journalist intimidation and Islamization of media. The patterns of change and continuity that can be observed since 2011 are unsettled and unsettling. Most importantly, we need to ask: are these changes unique and unprecedented, or are they part of a trend in regional and global media integration, marketization, and convergence, and what is their place in the history of Arab cultural production?

This chapter represents a preliminary foray into the various fissures in understanding these changes and continuities. It is an attempt to develop elements of a more systematic evaluation of the political economy of current Arab media. Key to this discussion is the belief that what we are witnessing are waves of uprisings that collectively define the current historical period. While a "pre-uprisings era" can be identified, it is premature to declare a definite "postuprisings period."

This study provides an account of media development in the Arab world that would explain current developments and help understand future mutations in a way that is empirically verifiable. Different researchers would approach such an ambitious question in distinct ways. Some would stress the contingency and agency of multiple players, including local and regional media moguls or entrepreneurs. Others would emphasize the centrality of the state, not the regimes, as logical units of analysis. This chapter contends that to understand the fissures, we need to explore the central nodes of production and circulation and their function in affecting changes or maintaining continuities in an increasingly complex and interconnected media landscape.

Whereas the dual economic and civic-cultural functions of media have been widely discussed in legal and media scholarship, Arab media have been treated less as an economic sector and more as a critical enabler of social development, cultural expression, national cohesion, and political control. Yet, economic geographers have maintained that an economic analysis of the development of clusters, in media and other sectors, should be accompanied by a thorough analysis of social, cultural, and institutional factors. It is only through such analysis that we will be able to understand how and why clusters develop and grow, and possibly decline and disappear.

To these ends, this chapter begins by arguing that critical political economy is the most relevant theoretical prism through which to address issues of change and continuity in the media. Building on existing literature on Arab and global media, the chapter focuses on media cities—the loci of production and distribution—as a useful site and concept for examining current mutations in Arab media. The last two sections of this chapter are dedicated to examining Arab media on a historical continuum of various uprisings, and to highlighting changing elements in Arab media. The chapter concludes with an outlook on research priorities to better understand the political economy of Arab media.

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8. *Framing Political Islam: Media Tropes and Power Struggles in Revolutionary Egypt*

Abeer AlNajjar

Over the course of the Arab uprisings, Arab news media has been a central arena for political conflict in which regional rivals eagerly compete to influence public perception and opinion. Increasingly, various political antagonists struggle over access to media outlets and content in order to shape the ways in which certain events are understood by a divided public. This chapter examines the political contestation of mainstream media frames in times of political conflict. It looks at the ways in which the framing of events in both Egyptian and transnational media organizations has been contested by various state and non-state political and media actors in Egypt and beyond. Particularly, it focuses on the framing of actions taken by and against the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during the eventful summer of 2013. Through the use of different frames, news media contributes to the legitimization of actors and actions in certain political contexts. Of particular interest are the ways in which the use of language and visuals in Arab news coverage helped contribute to the construction of a “terrorism” frame for Muslim Brotherhood activities, which worked to delegitimize the group and to justify state violence against them.

Following the Egyptian uprising of 2011, various Islamist groups were able to have a legitimate political presence and representation. The Muslim Brotherhood in particular moved from the margins to the limelight of the Egyptian political scene. For decades, the group focused its efforts on social, medical, and educational services that became the basis for its grassroots popularity. On June 6, 2011, the group’s political arm, Hizb Al Hurriyah wal ‘Adala (Justice and Freedom Party), was officially established, and won 47.2 percent in the People’s Assembly elections on January 20, 2012. In May of the same year, the Muslim Brotherhood’s presidential candidate, Mohamed Morsi, gained nearly 51 percent of the vote in the presidential elections to become the first Islamist party candidate elected as a head of state in an Arab country and the first civil president of Egypt since 1952.

This sense of triumph did not last long. The group’s ascension to power was met with a wave of discontent among the Egyptian public against the rule of Morsi, in particular, and the Muslim Brotherhood, in general. The unfolding events complicated the situation further. On 3 July 2013, the elected president was overthrown by the military under the leadership of the Defence Minister General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. A roadmap for political transition was presented to the people of Egypt, and the head of the Constitutional Court, Adly Mansour, was appointed as an interim president. Anti-Morsi protestors celebrated the move as a victory of the will of the Egyptian people. Meanwhile, Morsi supporters intensified their protests in the Rabaa al-Adawiya and Nahda squares, turning these public spaces into encampments until they were forcefully removed on 14 August 2013.

This chapter investigates the political and media contestations over the meaning of two major events. The first was the ousting of President Morsi, and the events that followed, particularly the violent interaction between the Egyptian military and security forces, on the one hand, and Muslim Brotherhood members and their supporters, on the other. The second event was the violent evacuation of the Rabaa al-Adawiya and Nahda encampments on 14 August 2013. Beginning with a theoretical understanding of the role of framing in political conflict, this chapter examines framing as a process that is highly dependent on the interaction between politicians and the media. The chapter then sheds light on the framing of political Islam in the media, especially as it relates

to positive or negative representations of the Muslim Brotherhood and their opposition. The Egyptian media scene and the Arab news media are discussed as the context against which media polarization is apparent in the frames selected by several media channels. Finally, the chapter explores the ways in which the various media reported the events, and examines the efforts exerted by politicians to wield influence over media content in their attempt to win public sympathy and legitimize their actions.

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9. *Hezbollah, Al Manar, and the Arab Revolts: Defiance or Survival?*

Zahera Harb

It was a fine summer's day on August 15, 2013, when a loud explosion echoed across the Lebanese capital Beirut. The civilian neighborhood of Ruwais in the southern suburb of the city—an area highly populated with Shi'a Muslims—was hit by a car bomb. Soon, the scenes of destruction and violence filled the screens of local and international television stations. Twenty-two civilians were killed, and more than 290 were injured. An unknown Syrian Sunni group claimed responsibility for the bombing, targeting Hezbollah, the predominantly Shi'a "Party of God." The southern suburb of Beirut contains several strongholds of Hezbollah, and the televised message clearly indicated that the bombing was a response to Hezbollah's military involvement in Syria and its support of al-Assad's regime.

Hezbollah rushed to contain the sectarian discourse that began surfacing in the Lebanese media. Through its satellite channel, Al-Manar TV, Hezbollah managed to steer the angry voices away from targeting the Sunni community in Lebanon towards the takfiris—Salafi jihadist groups affiliated with Al Qaeda. Hezbollah made it clear that these attacks would not stop it from battling the takfiris in Syria. A day after the bombing, Hezbollah's secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, announced in a live televised speech on Al-Manar that the party's battle in Syria would continue, and that its fight alongside al-Assad's regime was far from over. For Hezbollah, the battle in Syria has become a battle of survival—a battle against what it identifies as "the Zionist, imperialist anti-resistance project" in the region. Hezbollah has always emphasized the role that Syria played in supporting the "Islamic resistance" fight against Israeli occupation and aggression. Nasrallah often refers to Syria as "the friend" that never fails Hezbollah and the resistance movement.

This chapter focuses on Hezbollah's politics during and in the wake of the Arab revolts, and explores the role that Al-Manar TV played in disseminating the party's political stand, sentiments, and activities. It argues that Hezbollah has been consistent in its message of "resisting the oppressor" from the early days of its emergence up until its controversial involvement in the Syrian civil war. The chapter is divided into three parts. It begins with a brief account of Hezbollah's ideology and evolving identity. It then explores the party's media strategy before turning to a discussion on Al-Manar's coverage of the protests in Bahrain and Syria and how they fit within Hezbollah's political agenda and regional standing.

Hezbollah has emerged as the most influential and most vocal non-state actor in the Middle East, and its direct military role in the Syrian conflict has proved that it is a regional player and not simply "a proxy" of other players in the rejectionist front. In all its actions and public discourses, Hezbollah has been consistent about its image and intentions as a resistance movement that supports the "oppressed" against the "oppressor." However, in the regional power struggle, Hezbollah does not see the al-Assad regime as "the oppressor," but, along with Syrian people, as "oppressed" by groups of takfiris. Al-Manar has been consistent in disseminating this message to its supporters, but also to a broader Arab audience.

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10. *U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Media in the Middle East*

Philip Seib

The focus of this chapter is on US public diplomacy in the Middle East, with asides about other nations' efforts. The US-centric approach is featured for several reasons. First, to provide in-depth analyses of the public diplomacy of other countries, such as Turkey and Russia, would require an entire book, not merely a chapter. Also, although the involvement of the United States in the Middle East has been fraught with bloody missteps, US economic, political, and military capabilities are crucial factors when looking toward the future stability and development of the region.

This latter approach has long been at the heart of public diplomacy. Radio and television have been invaluable political tools for nations that have used them wisely. From the US initiating radio broadcasts on the Voice of America during World War II, to China's recent multi-billion dollar investment in its CCTV (Chinese Central Television), governments have calculated the value of delivering information to people's homes across the globe. In the Arab world, broadcasters such as the BBC and CNN have long offered outsiders' perspectives on events affecting the Middle East, and they have been joined by broadcasts from China, Russia, France, and elsewhere. More recently Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and other Arab television channels have allowed people in the region to watch the events that affect them as reported from Arab perspectives.

To appreciate the impact of various forms of media in the Middle East it is necessary to recognize the history of ways that news is delivered in the region and how politics influences that delivery. An important ancestor of today's regional Arab media was *Voice of the Arabs*, a program first broadcast on Cairo radio in 1953. It soon had its own channel, broadcasting eighteen hours a day, and its message was Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabism—a revolutionary mix of socialism and anti-colonialism that challenged conservative Arab governments. The Egyptian leader was among the first in the region to understand how broadcasting could affect regional politics.

The overt political messaging of Voice of the Arabs is only thinly disguised in the broadcasts of its most notable descendants, principally Al Jazeera television. The pan-Arab theme comes across in coverage decisions and talk shows, bringing a certain level of cohesion to the notion of "Arabness." Aside from purely political matters that contribute to the popularity of Arab media (although this popularity fluctuates depending on the issues of the day), the cultural significance of Arab news organizations covering the topics most affecting Arabs' lives is important in understanding the contemporary Middle East media environment. The strength of Al Jazeera, from its inception in 1996, has been that its existence serves as an answer to the question, "Why must we rely on the likes of CNN and the BBC to get news about ourselves?" Qatar-based Al Jazeera capitalized on its indigenous character, as did a slew of additional channels such as the Saudi-funded Al Arabiya.

The rise of pan-Arab broadcasting was accompanied by the rise of public expectations. News consumers found that the satellite dishes dotting almost every Arab city's skyline could bring them vast amounts of information. Their worldviews were changing and, by the time the Arab uprisings of 2011 began, their appetites for media content of various kinds had expanded enormously. Those appetites were also becoming more sophisticated, with audiences differentiating between state-run and independent offerings, and the preference for the latter becoming more pronounced. Al Jazeera was not exempt from this, as it found that it was perceived

by some as being merely a voice for Qatari foreign policy—policy that was seen by some as not adequately supportive of the uprisings in certain countries, or too inflammatory in reporting events in other nations.

This chapter examines changes in how the Arab world receives and dispenses public diplomacy since the uprisings that began in 2011. The Middle East media environment has expanded, becoming more sophisticated in ways that affect Arabs and others. At the heart of this change is the two-way communication and networking fostered by social media. Publics who use these media are no longer passive audiences to whom messages—news, propaganda, and other programming—are simply delivered. Thanks to social media, people can now respond to the senders of public diplomacy content, and they can talk with one another about that content on a vast scale.

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