Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East

Islamic, Christian and Jewish Channels: Programmes and Discourses

CAMBRIDGE ARAB MEDIA PROJECT (CAMP) AND THE
PRINCE ALWALEED BIN TALAL CENTRE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE (CIS)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SINCE THE MID-1990S, the influence of satellite television broadcasting in the Middle East has become central to the shaping of public attitudes in the region and beyond. The number of channels has grown rapidly in less than twenty years from none to almost five hundred today. While many of the most influential mainstream satellite channels are news-focused, entertainment and religious broadcasting are also significant. The aim of this conference was to focus on religious broadcasting – Islamic, Jewish and Christian – in the Middle East in order to gain an understanding of the channels' different discourses, as well as the wider factors and structures which sustain them.

The case studies summarised here range widely, from "mainstream" channels like *al-Jazeera*, to Christian broadcasting in Egypt; from Salafi channels based in Saudi Arabia to Jewish broadcasting in Israel; from Shi'ite and Sunni channels in Iraq to those affiliated to Hamas and Hizbullah; from female popular preachers in Cairo to international television stars with celebrity status. Naturally, each channel studied is located in a specific historical and political context, with particular funding arrangements, presenters, discourses, and target audiences. However, a broad context referred to in many of the presentations on Islamic and Christian channels is the trend of increased religiosity since the late 1970s sometimes called the Islamic revival. Some presentations also refer to the fact that traditionally authoritative Muslim voices have lost their discursive monopoly, and face challenges from new interpreters of religion who are making use of satellite and internet technologies. Does the emergence of these satellite channels constitute a historical shift in the way religious discourse is communicated, in the kind of publics it forms, and in the politics implied by these formations? Or is it one part of a longer-term trend, governed by less changeable political dynamics? These issues are taken up in Sections One, Four and Six among others.

The study of mass media is important partly because of the way the media help to form a collective consciousness. The studies summarised in this report therefore depart from the assumption that the study of discourse is a crucial method of approach. But a theme running throughout all these presentations is that discourses cannot be studied in isolation of the political economies and the technologies which sustain them and enable them to be marketed and transmitted effectively. A focus on political economy raises questions such as: who decides which programmes to produce, which guests and presenters to invite, which issues to cover and which positions to promote? In some cases, for example the channels affiliated to Hamas and Hizbullah (Sections Nine and Ten), it is immediately obvious why the broad political context is important to consider. But most satellite channels are also businesses, which means that other forms of governance and technology are important too: the role of rich individuals, and to a lesser extent advertising revenue, in funding; the lack of universally agreed mechanisms for measuring audiences and channelling funding; the relation to states' media regulation policies; the views and sensibilities of elite groups; and the logics of audience research and categorisation. Several presentations take up these themes, investigating the particular and diverse relationships of satellite channels to power structures and commercial mechanisms. They argue that these relationships are complex: the relationships between "the media", "the state" and "the market" are conflicting and overlapping, since formations of power are not uniform, but rather each consists of competing groups.

Religious channels are also political tools to the extent that they promote particular visions of social and political order, for example gender roles and class hierarchies, and thus either preserve or challenge the status quo. Sections Six and Eight explore these issues in more detail. Themes of power and persuasion also call attention to the medium of the broadcast: the style and language of the presenter, the design of the set, and the idiom of the content. This theme is taken up particularly in discussion in Sections Five, Seven and Ten, where it is argued that the way authority, exclusion and solidarity are encoded in language and bodily habitus is an important topic for future research. This approach

suggests that presenters and participants in religious programmes are not simply arguing over the rightness and wrongness of particular ideas, they are also claiming and contesting the authority to speak for Islam. These issues are raised in Sections Seven and Nine. The idea that religious broadcasting is an extension of the market in which religious spokespersons compete for the hearts and minds of their audiences is also explored in Sections Two, Three and Six.

Another area identified for future research, throughout the conference but particularly in Sections Two and Three, is the nature of the audience for these broadcasts. Who are they, in relation to their broader society? What, why and how do they watch? Like any media, satellite channels need to be understood in the context of their audience's lived experiences, into which they are integrated, from which they arise, and which they help to shape and make sense of. What happens to the programmes' content within the family, the community, the individual's daily and weekly rhythms, their self-understandings and life projects?

The study of audiences inevitably raises the problem of categories. Categorisation – of audiences, discourses, intellectual opponents and theological trends – is part of the practice of observers and analysts, but it is also part of the practice of the satellite channels' management teams, and of the programmes' scholars and presenters. The construction and use of categories is a common if sometimes implicit issue in many of the presentations summarised here. Many presentations approach categories as useful tools – religious versus secular; traditional versus centrist versus liberal; public versus private. Others suggest that these categories sometimes risk obscuring as much as they reveal. These issues are explored particularly in Sections One, Three, Four, Five and Twelve. Are "entertainment" and "religion" separate categories, or can religion be entertaining? How can entertainment, or "religious broadcasting", be recognised?

If the study of these programmes' discourses entails a consideration of political economy and the need to study audiences, it also implies the need for understanding the programmes' presenters. Sections Six and

Seven argue that religious television presenters should be analysed not only as scholars with a particular theological position, but also as personalities with a following, a public, and a particular style. Television presenters are not just products vying for influence in a market of competing voices, but figures who appeal in a particular kind of way, which follows its own logic of celebrity. This analytic approach – the category of "stardom" – raises an interesting set of issues around the emotional loyalty of audiences, the habitus and life-style of the presenter off-screen as well as on-screen (which sometimes seem to contradict the values espoused by the channel), and the star's marketing profile and wider activities as a public figure.

In the case studies and discussions summarised here, the themes of political economy, religious discourse, audiences and presenters, and the relationships between these factors, therefore form a common thread. They meet in an implicit recurring question throughout the conference: what kinds of communities are being created or mediated by particular religious satellite broadcasts? Are they nationalist, ethical, apolitical, social reformist, counter-hegemonic, sectarian, or transnational etc.? How are the exclusions and inclusions that underpin these emergent communities brought into being: through different kinds of discourse (dialogic, polemical, proselytising – see Sections Seven and Eight); through particular uses of language; through new technologies; through the choice of presenters, participants and callers; and in the choice of visual and verbal repertoires and styles?

The need for a greater understanding of audiences is implicit in all these questions. So too is the issue of regulation: what should be the ethical limits to provocative discourse? What does political engagement, as in the case of Hamas's *al-Aqsa* channel (Section Nine), mean for the concept of impartiality in international reporting standards? And what should be the response to moves by powerful governments to prevent stations from broadcasting?

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The conference consisted of keynote speeches followed by presentations of eleven case studies. Each case study presentation was followed by an intervention by a discussant, and then an open discussion with the audience. This report offers a synopsis of each presentation, and the discussions and interventions that followed it. The presentation sections in the report are a synopsis rather than an exhaustive account and should not be associated verbatim with the speakers. Similarly, the views recorded in the discussion sections must not be associated with a particular presenter or discussant, since they combine and summarise a variety of points made by a number of speakers. Overall, the views expressed in this report are reflections of a wide-ranging and dynamic discussion and should not be taken to represent those of the Cambridge Arab Media Project, or of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies.

Finally, a note on terminology: some of the discussions and presentations summarised in the report use terms such as "Salafi" and "fundamentalist". The term "Salafi" refers originally to an Islamic reform movement that aimed to purify and strengthen Islam by returning to the ways of the "pious forefathers" (*ahl al-salaf al-salih*)[1] and that has inspired a variety of theological and political trends. In using the terms here, we recognise that their meanings are often contested, and open to interpretation and debate.

SECTION 1

Keynote Speech: Mapping Middle Eastern Religious Broadcasting: The Project and The Context

THE CONFERENCE formed part of a larger project, whose initial aim was to map out religious media in the Middle East. The scope included Arab countries, Turkey, and Israel/Palestine, but not Iran as this merited a separate project of its own. There were some fifteen well-established free-to-view satellite religious channels in the Middle East, but the scene was fluid: there were several dozen smaller religious channels which could appear and disappear quickly. Around a dozen Shi'ite channels had appeared since the 2003 Iraq war. The project had selected some of the most prominent channels, focusing qualitative and quantitative analysis on two programmes per channel (one weekly, one daily). Material had been gathered on a website available to members of the project. The next stage would be to conduct research on audiences.

The idea of religious broadcasting in the Arab world had started in 1987 at a meeting in Muhammad ibn al Sa'ud University in Riyad, according to the founder of *Iqra'* Channel. The idea had been to counter what was seen as sweeping Westernisation and secularisation of media in the region. *Iqra'* was the first exclusively religious Islamic channel aimed at the Arab market, and had started transmitting in 1998 as part of the ART network. However, there was often a sophisticated political economy behind the prominent religious channels. For example, the same company that owned a religious channel might also own a music channel showing "Westernised" video clips.

One perspective to consider, particularly regarding the Arab Middle East, was the link between broadcasting and political action. In the mid-1990s, hopes had been high that pan-Arab satellite broadcasting would bring political freedoms to a region characterised by authoritarian regimes. But while satellite broadcasting had meant that many previously

taboo subjects – such as for example succession in Egypt, or corruption in Saudi Arabia – had been discussed, this had not led to substantial political change on the ground. It seemed to function at most as a pressure valve to let off steam. The "fourth estate" of the media had not been able to ensure a separation of the other three powers – legislative, executive, and judiciary – in the Arab world.

Theoretically, one question was whether the idea of a public sphere – that buffeted individuals from the state and enabled political interests to be debated and pushed forward – applied to Arab societies, and whether it helped make sense of religious broadcasting. If so, did religious broadcasting enlarge this sphere, or hinder its emergence? Did religious broadcasting increase personal freedom, or restrict it? And what was the relationship between particular religious channels and political authority: did they challenge it or endorse it?

Another issue was the relation between religious channels and the distribution of power in society. The rapid growth of religious broadcasting had accompanied a general trend of Islamisation in the Arab world. Certain "TV shaykhs" had become powerful figures in setting social norms. This had happened at the same time as the fatwa had become an increasingly powerful instrument to (de-)legitimise certain social, cultural and political practices. It was important to understand this power in the context of illiteracy rates among audiences, which reached 45% in some countries.

Another perspective to consider was the link between satellite media and broader trends and influences in the region – in particular, Islamisation, authoritarianism and external Western intervention. As a simple but instructive model, there was a triangular dynamic, whereby satellite media tended to react against one of these three influences by allying themselves to one of the other two: hence Western interventions could lead to an increase in Islamisation, or greater support for authoritarian leaders, and vice-versa.

To the extent that religious channels could be considered more or less "radical" – inclined to portray a negative image of the West in general, and critical of Western policies in the region – this was a general feature of politics and political events in the Arab world, and not simply the result of an editorial line. In this sense, even mainstream satellite

channels such as MBC, *al-Jazeera* or *al-'Arabiyya* were "radical". *Al-'Arabiyya* was considered one of the most liberal channels, and relatively uncritical of Western policies. But theme and discourse analysis of three of its prominent talk shows[2] indicated that they tended to portray a negative image of the West and Western policies. Guests on these shows inevitably linked political realities in the Arab world to Western influence.

Religious programming was also moving to the mainstream. Prominent religious channels such as *al-Majd*, *Iqra'* and *al-Risalah* were well-resourced and popular. And religious programmes and discourse were also now a feature of channels such as MBC, *al-Jazeera* and Dubai which were not exclusively religious. Some channels, such as *al-Mihwar* and *al-Hiwar*, did not opt for a heavy "religious" style, but nevertheless had a religious message to deliver.

Keynote Speech: Arab Satellite Media – Where Do We Stand Now?

For Arab satellite broadcasting as a whole, not a great deal had changed structurally since the mid-1990s. Now, as then, the number of channels was increasing rapidly. There were currently almost five hundred free-to-air Arabic satellite channels (although the number of large religious broadcasting channels was in low double digits). The increased competition was pushing up the price for content, and also meant that advertising budgets were being spread more thinly. This had led to cost-cutting, redundancies and mergers across the industry.

Now, as then, the industry was dominated by a small number of channels. The largest ten channels currently attracted 84% of monitored advertising spend, although a lack of consensus on how to measure audience figures meant that the most popular channels did not necessarily attract the most revenue. In any case, financial viability was a challenge even for the largest channels: advertising revenue rarely covered a channel's costs.

The large channels were often owned by rich individuals, such as Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal who owned Rotana Sat, and who had stakes in LBC Sat as well as in Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. There was no imminent prospect of a change in the system which steered most

advertising revenue towards a small group of channels owned by a number of rich individuals. It could be doubted whether current business models in Arab satellite broadcasting were profitable over the long-term. Whether or not News Corporation decided to take a stake in Rotana Sat might provide an indicator of this[3].

It was important to understand religious broadcasting channels within this context of funding and ownership. Like other channels, they sought a variety of revenue streams which it was important to understand. Often ownership structures involved a mix of public and private entities. Some scholars had argued that because of their ownership structures, Arabic satellite religious channels reflected prevailing power struggles in the Arab world.

SECTION 2

"Pure" Salafi Broadcasting: *al-Majd* Channel (Saudi Arabia)

Al-Majd WAS A Saudi Salafi network, first registered in 2003, that had grown over six years to have twelve channels with studios in Dubai, Riyadh, Cairo and Rabat. The parent company was owned by many shareholders, although most of the shares were held by the Chairman of the Board of Directors. In May 2009, a new Chairman had been appointed. Major changes included a new business orientation for the network. This was described in news reports covering the company's deals with leading regional names, including the Saudi Telecommunications Company and an Emirati telecommunications company. *Al-Majd* was said to have the fourth highest income of television networks in the Arab world after Orbit, ART and Showtime.

Al-Majd was known particularly for its fatwa programs; a fatwa war had been waged among competing channels over audience ratings, including with *al-Nas* channel. *Al-Majd* occupied fifth place on the list of the most viewed channels in Saudi Arabia, the most important market in the region. As well as boosting audience numbers, fatwas also contributed to the celebrity of the scholar.

The *al-Majd* network broadcast four free-to-air channels, and eight encrypted channels only available to viewers with special equipment that blocked the reception of other channels. The four free channels were a general channel, a Quran channel, a hadith channel, and a channel devoted to religious sciences. The encrypted channels included news, documentary channels, a Ramadan channel and four channels aimed at children. In addition, the *al-Majd* Open Islamic Academy was an online educational institution that taught Shari'ah sciences to more than 17,000 registered students. Many of the lectures were delivered on one of the encrypted channels.

The comprehensiveness of the channels provided by *al-Majd* and the exclusiveness of its reception highlighted the particular audience for which the network was catering. Salafis tended to place most emphasis on Quranic and hadith texts as well as the quality and correctness of the beliefs held by individual Muslims. *Al-Majd* sought to position itself as the only source of media for that audience and to act as a barrier between its viewers and other media content. The network offered the whole family channels covering science, documentaries, news, the Quran, hadith, and health. This practice of offering the audience all the content they might need or demand was in line with the network's stated view of the media as a major source of social and religious problems.

According to *al-Watan* newspaper, the *al-Majd* network was committed to the media policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The channel's programming was under the control of a committee of Shari'ah scholars, many of whom were members of the Council of Senior *'Ulama'*, appointed by the King. *Al-Majd* was apparently attempting to create for its audience a specially designed world that was woman-free, music-free, and sin-free. The programmes were based on the view that Muslims' faith and beliefs had suffered from distortion and that this needed to be put right.

Two prime-time talk shows had been chosen for the study: "Dialogue Time" (*Sa'at Hiwar*) and "The Adequate Answer" (*al-Jawab al-Kafiy*). Both were weekly programmes on the general free-to-air *al-Majd* channel and were moderator–guest talk shows with audience participation, to which prominent Saudi religious figures were repeatedly invited back to address the audience. The majority of call-ins came from places within Saudi Arabia, but other nationalities, in particular Egyptians, Jordanians, Kuwaitis and Yemenis, were included in the audience.

The questions addressed in "Dialogue Time" were mostly abstract. Themes covered included the Islamic renaissance, liberal Islam, atheism, the Westernisation of Arab countries, and the mission (*al-da'wah*) of proclaiming the true faith. The set appeared non-traditional with a glossy background and large modern screens. The presenter had no beard and wore a white robe and a traditional head covering. He spoke *fusha* (standard) Arabic, emphasizing the pronunciation of his words as

if he were reciting the Quran. Many of the guests were university professors. The speakers on the show frequently expressed their fear regarding accusations that the *'ulama'* (religious scholars) were being Westernised, advocating a Western agenda and values and promoting secularism. Writers, film directors, novelists, journalists, and other media professionals were considered the real agents of Westernisation and colonisation, even if they called themselves reformists.

"The Adequate Answer" was a fatwa program. The host received calls from women, children and men, who asked questions. There was also an online forum where members of the audience could post questions. General topics often included women, media, Islamic purity, the Westernisation of Arab countries, the detail of Islamic rituals of worship, and, increasingly, Islamic finance. One of the episodes was dedicated to answering the accusations of secularists against Islam, particularly regarding the veil. Generally on *al-Majd* shows, women were seen as a potential source of threat to society: morality was jeopardized by the presence of women except if they were completely veiled. The presence of even veiled women on television was also condemned.

For the religious scholars of *al-Majd*, the deterioration of ethics and morality, also understood as a Westernisation of young people's values, was the most important social problem. The media were often blamed. A former member of the Saudi establishment for fatwas also told *al-Majd* TV that journalists and writers who dared to criticize shaykhs should be punished. The media were blamed as a major source of Westernisation and for having facilitated the conquest of Arab countries since Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt. Another recurrent theme was the condemnation of other "unorthodox" Islamic religious channels, the "deviations" of their scholars, and the ramifications of giving them a media platform.

Overall, the media, women, the West and unorthodox scholars were seen to threaten Muslim society and a true understanding of Islam. Society's problems were to be explained in terms of these four variables; terrorism, for example, if discussed at all was attributed to a combination of Westernisation and secularism rather than seen as a more complex problem. According to *al-Majd* scholars, their group was the only one with a truthful understanding of Islamic beliefs (*'aqida*) and

the Quran and hadith, as well as of the West and its conspiracies against Islam. Consequently, only those who watched only *al-Majd* programs were seen to belong to the righteous group.

Discussion

It was important to pay attention to historical context. The increase in religious broadcasting over the past decade had not taken place because Saudi and Arab society had suddenly become more religious; it was part of a longer-standing trend that included for example the proliferation of religious literature sold on the pavements of Arab cities. This trend had to be understood in the context of the emergence of new social classes in the Arab and wider Muslim world, and a block on any kind of political participation. In this context, and particularly in the period after 11 September 2001, when the majority of religious channels had begun, the religious field was one of the areas in Arab countries where individuals were allowed to compete with one another and to rise in society.

The religious field also bore witness to an increased social stratification that had occurred in many Arab societies. The proliferation of religious titles was one example. For example, fifty years ago religious scholars had been divided simply into *'ulama'* and *fuqaha'*. Now, with the advent of state education, there was a variety of different ranks, including for example *duktur*, *da'i*, someone licensed to issue fatwas, and so on. All were vying for influence over the hearts and minds of their audiences.

It was important to understand how and why channels started. In the case of *al-Majd*, the channel had originated in the Wahhabi movement. This was not simply an Islamist movement, but a religious nationalist movement with a strong local identity. Most of its prominent members came from a specific region, and from families that had long enjoyed prestige as religious scholars. Now, as religious authority fragmented, these scholars were facing competition from less prestigious religious families who came from the periphery but who were asserting themselves on the screen, the internet and so on. In response, Wahhabi scholars were re-asserting their own authority. Since *al-Majd* was one example of religious nationalism, it was important to rethink the dis-

tinction that was often assumed to exist between Islamist and nationalist, or between "radical" and "liberal".

An in-depth study of audiences would be important, and could consider class and status, how different audiences watched the channels and what effect they had on their lives. It was also important to bear in mind that audiences were transnational. Sometimes visitors from other countries (for example, Britain or Indonesia) might have contact with a shaykh in Saudi Arabia and then continue to watch *al-Majd* on returning to their own country. So audience analysis needed to go beyond the immediate national context. What kind of effect did the programme have outside the country, particularly in the context of local issues such as sectarianism or debates about gender roles? Analysis also needed to focus on the "schizophrenic" culture that was a feature of this market, where it was easy for viewers to flick between a religious channel and a music clip channel. It was also important to study the complex and evolving relationship between the audience and programme makers, to understand how producers chose topics for discussion.

Another area of research could be those who "telephoned in" on talk shows. How were callers selected? Were they pre-arranged? If so, what purpose did they serve? In some cases, they were used to raise issues "spontaneously" that were either too sensitive for producers to tackle directly, or that could be used to settle scores with rival scholars or political figures. Call-ins were part of a religious market where rival scholars competed for their audience. It was also important to realise that the state was not a single actor, but a collection of competing interest groups who could use these channels as a forum in which to assert their own interests.

It was important to understand how channels such as *al-Majd* helped to maintain hierarchies and power relations in society. Gender and exclusion was an obvious topic, since *al-Majd* promoted certain gender roles, for example through its view that women should not appear on television. Another issue was the channel's position on political activism. Callers asking about the best way to tackle a particular social issue were never encouraged to do anything other than "promote the good and warn against evil" in their immediate social circle. Complex social and political problems such as terrorism were discussed only

indirectly in terms of a general deterioration of ethics, and the exposure of young people to radical liberalisation

SECTION 3

"Modern" Salafi Broadcasting: *Iqra'* Channel (Saudi Arabia)

Iqra', THE FIRST SATELLITE channel in Arabic defining itself as Islamic, had started transmitting in 1998. The channel was part of the ART network, which included non-religious channels and which was owned by a Saudi billionaire. *Iqra'* was therefore a business interest. Its stated aim was "to build a modern Muslim society that truly believes in and loves God and His Prophet Muhammad, acts upon the Quran and the Prophetic Tradition and follows in the righteous Muslim ancestors' lead." Another aim was to correct the image of the Muslims in the West, so the channel promoted words like "tolerance" and a "moderate course" (*al-wasatiyya*). According to *Iqra'*, the Muslim community was characterized by specific Muslim behaviour at the individual level rather than by a particular way of organising society politically.

For its owners, the choice of promoting a religious channel was part of a wider trend whereby Islam was treated as a consumer product aimed at a particular market; whatever else it might be, religion could also be brilliant entertainment. *Iqra'* was a private channel operating in an economically liberal environment. But its owners had good relations with the Saudi regime, which was interested in promoting a conservative re-Islamisation focused on individual ethical behaviour, often taking individual celebrities as its model. The channel broadcast a wide range of programmes from news to entertainment, drawing on genre types known from secular television: children's programmes, quiz programmes, educational programmes, recitations, debates, talk shows, historical films, drama series, and so on. Some, like fatwa programmes, focused explicitly on interpretations and recitation of the Quran, hadith and Sunna; others focused on Islamic ideals as a practical frame of reference for everyday life. In both cases, a particular lifestyle and identity

were explicitly presented as Muslim. Other programmes lacked any Islamic frame of reference.

Two programmes had been studied: *al-Bayyinah* ("Evidence") and *Mawaddah wa Rahmah* ("Affection and Mercy"). The first was a weekly programme with a Saudi Salafi presenter who invited guests (who were also often Saudi scholars) to discuss issues such as the relationship of the Ummah or worldwide Muslim community to the USA, the relationship between citizens and government, and the role of Islam in public order and disorder. The general approach was to advocate Islamisation of societal institutions and of the community, and to discuss how to live in a plural global society on the basis of Islam. Linking problems in the Islamic world to persecution by the West and the USA in particular, and idealising Muslim history, were features of the programmes studied.

The second programme dealt with the problems of individual Muslims, and women in particular. The host and her guest discussed and answered letters that had been sent in by the primarily female audience. Discussions tended to focus on family relations, particularly transitions and crises like marriage, adultery and divorce, and to a lesser degree on friendships. The solutions to these problems were said to be values such as honesty, honour, tolerance, commitment, love, obedience and repentance. These values were presented as being typically Islamic. Many female presenters at *Iqra'* were known as former actresses in the national TV and film industries; they personalised the repentant and re-converted Muslim and acted as a role model for the audience. One prominent figure was a female religious scholar attached to al-Azhar University who had become well-known by appearing on many television channels. The Director of a secular satellite channel in Egypt, *Dream TV*, had invited this guest onto his channel's religious shows, because she was a star who was able to attract fans.

What kind of Muslim identity was constructed in these broadcasts? The question was related to the kind of religious space presented by the two programmes. Audiences used Islamic channels as a space in which to practice and reflexively negotiate their own religious identity. The media was a place of practice: the audience was not a passive receiver of media messages, ideology and products. Rather, they interpreted a

programme's content and participated in shows, for example through phone-ins. Religious identity was achieved rather than ascribed, and religious broadcasts were one space in which to achieve it.

The two programmes offered different religious spaces. *Al-Bayyinah* offered a space to come into being as a politically aware Muslim citizen of a global counter-public, while *Mawaddah wa Rahmah* offered a semi-private space where the audience was expected to perform in line with a conventional and conservative morality. There was a paradox here: by presenting one's private problems on the programme one rendered them public. Thus, private and public spaces seemed to converge, though this was also true in non-religious talk shows. There was a gendered element too: in the public space of *al-Bayyinah* Islam offered both men and women an oppositional identity; but according to *Mawaddah wa Rahmah*, women should not take up contentious positions on social relations or in family matters.

In summary, *Iqra'* did not explicitly support any state or political movement. Instead it emphasised devotion, a moral and religious lifestyle, and promoted an Islamic identity politics. Focus was on the individual Muslim lifestyle and the moral and ethical ideals of the Islamic community. The channel supported a process of re-Islamisation which was primarily a matter of symbolic politics and conservative moral values.

Discussion

A general question was how to identify religious broadcasting. Sometimes participants in a programme put an Islamic label on certain concerns, values or practices, thus "performing Islam". But for those who argued that the preaching of religious values should happen in all domains of life, a distinction between "religious" and "non-religious" programming might not be useful. *Iqra'* was said to promote an "Islamic" identity, but some of its programmes, for example drama serials, had no explicit religious idiom. Was this an attempt to reach a wider audience and increase market share? At the same time, *Iqra'* was part of a stable of channels that included non-religious entertainment channels, so it was possible that there was a mutual influence between "secular" and "religious" channels.

The question of how to identify religious broadcasting was not only a question of the idiom and content of the programme. An important feature was the way in which it was received by audiences. How did transnational audiences "consume" a particular programme or channel? Ethnographically, the way in which viewers used channels was complex. Some watched programmes to improve their Arabic. For others, it might be a way of passing the time, a permitted form of enjoyment, or a way of being a good Muslim. At the same time, for some it might be a form of excitement or entertainment.

If *Iqra'* promoted an "Islamic" identity and lifestyle, it was important to ask what version. The channel was often labelled "Salafi", but what were the concepts that lay at the heart of Salafism, and how did they transpire in broadcasting? *Iqra'* was seen as one of the few genuinely transnational channels in Europe (along with *Al-'Arabiyya* and *al-Jazeera*). Partly this was because of access and the reach of particular satellites, but it was also because *Iqra'* had a "modern" Islamic image, and content that might appeal to Muslims living in non-Muslim-majority surroundings. One avenue for research therefore might be how such a channel packaged modernity, and whether it portrayed a tension between "tradition" and "modernity" in the way it presented Islam.

It was important to understand the links between channels and state religious establishments, how these links influenced editorial policy, and the role of state media policy. *Iqra'* was able to show unveiled women on television despite the position of the Saudi religious establishment on this issue. How was it able to do so?

Another avenue for research was the type of language used on the channel, since language and values were closely interrelated. What kind of language was being promoted on *Iqra'*, and what kind of messages did it send? This meant going beyond a media-centric analysis and studying the wider context – since the way language was used, and the messages that it conveyed, depended on what was happening locally, regionally and internationally. In doing this research, and in studying satellite broadcasting more generally, it was important to analyse channels by comparing similar types of programmes.

SECTION 4

Religious Broadcasting on Mainstream Channels: *al-Jazeera*, MBC and Dubai

RELIGION HAD BEEN A central feature of television programming in the Arab world since the mid-1950s, with terrestrial state-operated Arab television channels carrying religious programs such as talk shows, religious sermons, and Quran recitations. In the early 1990s, parallel to the advent of the internet and satellite television, a new wave of political, social and cultural transformations, mostly characterised by democratization, socio-demographic transitions, and a resurgence in Islamic consciousness, had been taking shape across the Arab world. This had been reflected in the development of media: the region had begun to enjoy freer, more diverse, and higher quality television. In 1991, the then London-based Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) had started as the first private television service with Western-style programming, the first of its kind in the region. Ever since, government television channels had started to broadcast internationally, including Dubai Television, which had started satellite transmissions in 1992. In 1996 the Qatar-based *al-Jazeera* Satellite Channel had been established, with highly critical and investigative content. The three channels were rated as among the most-watched in the Middle East.

After the terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, satellite television programmes, including those with visible religious orientations, had been brought under the spotlight in an effort to ensure their conformity with a moderate and centrist vision of Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance. State-affiliated mainstream satellite channels in the Middle East had come to embrace a more centrist and accommodating religious discourse that side-stepped politics and intercultural and interfaith tensions, and instead promoted spiritual religiosity, a dialogue of civilizations and global coexistence. This

religious discourse could be seen in *al-Jazeera*, MBC1 and Dubai Television. However, this discourse was a function not only of declared state policies on religious issues in the post 11 September 2001 era, but also of the theological and ideological views of their guests and presenters. These channels' discourses were the product of a negotiated convergence of both states' and guests' perspectives on religious issues.

Funded by both advertising revenue and subsidies from the Government of Qatar, *al-Jazeera* presented itself as a forum for open dialogue and debate and had provided a forum for political views that were not likely to be positively received by government-operated media in the Arab World, as writers such as Marc Lynch had noted[4]. The programme chosen for study was *al-Shari'ah wa-l-Hayah* ("Shari'ah and Life"). In it, an Islamic scholar, normally Yousuf al-Qaradawi, took questions from viewers who telephoned in to the programme. *Al-Shari'ah wa-l-Hayah* was reputed to have promoted progressive Islamic visions of society, and al-Qaradawi was credited with developing a "jurisprudence of reality"[5], which sought to ground fatwas in both the past and the present without compromising the core theological tenets of the Islamic faith. However, others had criticised him for what they saw as "fundamentalist" inclinations.

Dubai TV was the official channel of the Emirate of Dubai and was aimed at Arab viewers worldwide. It claimed a reputation for balanced and credible content that respected Arab heritage. The programme chosen for study was *al-Buyut al-Amina* ("Safe Homes"). In it, an Egyptian-born scholar offered callers "Islamic solutions" for family issues, often airing the views of non-religious specialists in psychology and sociology. The show focused on spiritual matters and individual behaviour but not on overtly political issues. MBC, owned by a Saudi group, was a commercially oriented network with six channels that presented mostly Western-style entertainment and news content. The programme chosen for study was *al-Hayah Kalima* ("Life is a Word"). In this programme, aired weekly, a Saudi preacher addressed issues relating to family life, social relations, and community ethics. He promoted non-violence and the importance of inculcating love and mercy.

Quantitative data for the three programmes showed that values promoted by the three shows ranged from religiosity and piety to tolerance

and peaceful coexistence. The three programmes adopted moderate approaches, as could be seen in their approach to concepts such as knowledge, reason, centrism, freedom, and co-existence. Knowledge was seen in terms of both revelation and real-world experiences, and issues were addressed within a framework that sought to combine reason with revelation. For example, in an episode of *al-Shari'ah wa-l-Hayah* about the relation of Jinn to humans, al-Qaradawi invoked scientific theories about invisible worlds and black holes and drew on the Quran to answer the question by noting three categories of creation: humans, Jinn and angels. His discourse was characterised by an interplay between theology and science. All three programmes seemed to draw heavily on reason in their religious discourse. Reason was seen as a divinely endowed capacity that underscored human accountability for one's actions in this life.

The three shows also represented a centrist Islamic worldview: moderate perspectives as opposed to either "fundamentalist" or liberal ones. The three scholars made reference to the assimilative power of Islam throughout history to interact with other cultures and civilizations and integrate them into its universal mission. Muslims' relations with other cultures and denominations were recurring topics in *al-Shari'ah wa-l-Hayah* and *al-Hayah Kalima*. The presenters argued against a co-existence that required Muslims to have to compromise their identity. Instead, they promoted a vision of reconciliation in this world through agreement on a set of human ethical values that enabled dialogue and persuasion. Such co-existence sought to help people to interact constructively with each other for the sake of human development and the diffusion of genuine Islamic values and beliefs.

The three shows reflected enlightened views of Islam as a religion that respected tolerance, moderation and dignity: one that was far from Salafi rhetoric, but also did not advocate explicit alignment with Western lifestyles and values. This discourse was the result of a negotiation between politicians and religious scholars: the former would promote new religious thinking that coped with political realities and marked a departure from fundamentalist perspectives; the latter found in state patronage an opportunity to promote the religious perspectives that they had sought to popularize. From critical Western intellectual

perspectives, describing the programmes' discourse as moderate, centrist and accommodating might seem flawed because the programmes insisted on the centrality of revealed knowledge. Some observers might also argue that the three shows resembled Salafi discourse on issues of women's rights and relations with the West.

Discussion

There was reason to be sceptical of the argument that social and political transformations in the 1990s, including a resurgence of Islamic consciousness, had triggered a new phase of religious broadcasting, which appeared to promote reason, freedom and co-existence, and where there was a new convergence between state policy and the presenter's ideological leanings. In reality, this convergence was not new; all through Islamic history, there had been strong links between the state and religious scholars – although there was now a third element in the convergence: the business model of the satellite channel. It was important to pay attention to structures of power when studying these links. When these structures were taken into account, there was reason to be sceptical of the claim that these programmes promoted knowledge, rational thought, freedom, and co-existence. They might rather be seen as strategies of social engineering, which stood in the way of more creative and democratic ways of talking about religion in the Arab world.

It was also important to clarify what was meant by "knowledge", "reason", "freedom" and "co-existence". The concept of knowledge promoted by the programmes had a particular temporality. Shaykh al-Qaradawi for example dealt with questions from the present, but by using answers from the past – the examples of rightly guided predecessors (*ahl al-salaf al-salih*). In addition, the use of "in-house" shaykhs by religious channels led to a monopoly of knowledge and meaning, which limited what could be said about religion. It meant that knowledge became dogmatic, and that one religious discourse was privileged over another. For example, the format of the programme al-Shari'ah wa-l-Hayah implied a clear power differentiation, whereby guests put questions to the mufti, who represented the Shari'ah. Shaykhs were bestowed with great authority – through the format of the programme, the way they dressed, and the way they were introduced and titled. The

way in which these vital adjuncts constructed the scholar as a formidable presence deserved to be studied. Another subject for research was the absences: certain prominent thinkers such as, for example, the Moroccan philosopher al-Jabri tended not to be mentioned, which cast doubt on the idea that satellite religious broadcasting was part of an intellectual and social transformation in the Arab world.

The claim that the channel's programmes used "rational means to make their points" needed to be investigated. What happened to reason when its use was limited to affirming revelation? This reflected a long-standing tension in the history of modern Islamic reform. Muhammad Abduh, known as an early moderniser of Islam, had acknowledged that Islam was a religion of reason, while critiquing those who sought to rationalise the Islamic faith through theological argument.

The notion of "freedom" needed to be clarified: freedom from what? The programme promoted a "centrist" position – opposed to fundamentalism, but also rejecting Western liberalism. However, this position reflected a problematic dual position towards tradition and modernity, whereby the idea of modernity as opposed to tradition was accepted in order to reform certain institutions (economic, political and educational), but rejected at other levels of spiritual and intellectual life, as the Moroccan philosopher al-Jabri had noted.

The idea of co-existence with the non-Muslim/Western other also needed to be interrogated. Did it reproduce Orientalist discourses about "us and them"? Did it shift attention away from other types of co-existence within the Arab world, such as between women and men, and Sunni and Shi'ah?

Questions of methodology were raised regarding the use of percentage figures to correlate programme content to particular issues. What did these figures mean? What could be deduced from them, and how? How were the categories drawn up and the percentages arrived at? It was always important to match this approach with qualitative analysis which could capture wider issues, such as who spoke and how; who kept silent; and who had not been invited.

SECTION 5

Sunni / Shi'ite Broadcasting Divide in Iraq

RELIGION HAD BEEN a divisive factor in Iraq, whether in the media or elsewhere. One of the main reasons that people followed religious broadcasting was to observe the dates and times of their worship practices. This had led to a controversy between Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims, for whom the timing and content of the call to prayer were different. After the fall of Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated government, the Shi'ite call to prayer had been broadcast. Then in 2008, the Iraqi Prime Minister ordered the government-owned *al-'Iraqiyya* Channel to stop broadcasting the (Shi'ite) midday prayer call. The decision had been justified as an initiative of national reconciliation.

There were at least seven Iraqi Shi'ite satellite channels but only two Sunni satellite channels in Iraq that could be termed religious. Non-Iraqi Arabic-speaking channels were also extensively followed in Iraq; for example, the Kuwaiti *al-Anwar* and the Iranian *al-Kawthar* were popular among Iraqi Shi'ah, while the Saudi *al-Majd* and *Iqra'* channels had a presence in the Sunni community.

The Sunni religious channel that had been studied was *al-Rafidayn*. Owned by the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq, it had been an anti-American and pro-resistance TV channel since its launch on 10 April 2006. The Association of Muslim Scholars, established immediately after the invasion of Iraq in an attempt to unify Sunni clerics, had opposed the political process in post-war Iraq. It had been increasingly excluded from the wider Sunni bloc since 2007 when Sunni tribal leaders from Western Iraq and the American army had formed an alliance against al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, while the Association of Muslim Scholars had largely been deprived of its network of loyal clerics in the mosques, *al-Rafidayn* remained a well-watched channel. It did not

broadcast American-sponsored commercials about supporting Iraqi forces and the political process and renouncing violence, and therefore did not have this source of income.

Al-Rafidayn was not an exclusively "religious" channel, but broadcast political, social and cultural programmes. Despite its emphasis on news and current affairs, its main fatwa programme, *Hiwar fi-l-Shari'ah*, was apparently the most popular show and had a strong following among Iraqi Sunnis. Its presenter, who wore a suit and tie, took viewers' questions via telephone calls, text messages and e-mails. Most callers were Sunni. He used different sources in his fatwas, and referred to the grand clerics in Sunni Islam theology, especially the founders of the four main Sunni theological schools. However, he always stressed that Shi'ite Islam was a respected strand of Islam, and had said that he regarded Shi'ite religious rulings as equal to all other Muslim theological schools. He supported jihad in Iraq against the foreign forces, classifying it as a defensive jihad.

The Shi'ite channel studied was *al-Furat*, launched in late 2004 as part of the media wing of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), one of the most powerful Shi'ite parties in Iraq. The ISCI had been founded in Tehran, Iran in 1982 during the Iraq-Iran war as an umbrella group of Iraqi Shi'ite parties in exile. It had been part of Iranian efforts to organize the Iraqi Shi'ite opposition. It had been part of all of the governments formed after the war in Iraq, and was considered the biggest group in the Shi'ite parliamentary block. Its followers recognized Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani as the supreme spiritual leader. The channel was well-organized, better resourced and had higher production standards than its peers. The channel was not totally focused on religion: news bulletins and current affairs programmes occupied half of the daily schedule.

The most followed religious show on *al-Furat* was a prime-time fatwa programme entitled *Fiqh al-Mustafa*. Its presenter had emerged as a television personality after the war. He wore the traditional Shi'ite clerical dress – a long black robe and turban – but did not issue fatwas himself. Instead he presented fatwas of the supreme Shi'ite spiritual leaders (*Maraji' al-Taqlid*[6]). His audience – Shi'ah from Iraq, but also the regional and global diaspora – put questions mainly through telephone calls and text messages.

The presenter, Sayyid Rashid al-Hussayni, did not promote violence or support jihad against the foreign forces in Iraq. During the peak of the sectarian killing in Iraq, his strategy had been to stay calm and avoid sectarian messages. He refused calls for a religious state in Iraq arguing that this pattern had not succeeded in Iran; he supported the policies and approach of Grand Ayatollah Sistani in this context. He did not want religion and politics to be mixed, but called for a civil state that respected Islam.

The other programme studied on *al-Furat* was the Friday Prayer, a weekly programme broadcast every Friday evening that showed parts of different Friday prayers in Shi'ite mosques in Baghdad and around Iraq. The speeches were recorded from the prayer of the same afternoon, and were often given by Shi'ite Members of Parliament from the ISCI bloc. Politics dominated the content of these speeches, for example how the speaker perceived and reacted to current political and security issues in Iraq, with instructions for his audience on how they should act. One explicit message of the programme was that Muslims all around the world should unite in the face of attempts to divide them. But the fact that the programme did not broadcast Sunni speeches and indeed criticised the Ba'ath party meant that many Sunnis might interpret it as partisan.

Overall, despite the Shi'ah-Sunni differences and the clear sectarian affiliations of Iraqi channels, the programmes studied were cautious not to incite sectarian violence. Both *al-Furat* and *al-Rafidayn* channels tended to avoid debating the religious beliefs of the Shi'ah and the Sunni. There was also almost no sign that either side was seeking to gain audience among the other group: there were no Sunni-focused programmes on the Shi'ah-owned channels or vice-versa. Nevertheless, Shi'ite parties and factions had established an increasing number of satellite channels which expanded the presence and influence of the Shi'ah as religious group in the Middle East and in the diaspora. This was the result of political factors, namely the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, and the tolerant policies of the governments of Kuwait and Bahrain toward the Shi'ah and Shi'ite regional broadcasting in these countries.

Discussion

The *al-Furat* channel had been selected for study because it was an example of a prominent channel: well-resourced, and chosen by a figure like al-Sistani to broadcast one of his messages.

Whereas religious channels broadcast elsewhere, such as from Saudi Arabia, tended to avoid talking directly about politics, in Iraqi channels, politics was an inevitable part of the discourse. The story of how the call to prayer had become part of the daily media schedule was indicative of the political environment. Under Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party regime, it had been broadcast in its Sunni version; later, under *al-'Iraqiyya* channel, which was part of the US project, it had been changed to the Shi'ite version.

The rise of Shi'ite broadcasts after the fall of Saddam Hussein had promoted particular narratives of history, with many references to key events and figures in Shi'ism such as the battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Hussein. These were presented as historical rather than particularly religious narratives.

Some observers had interpreted the proliferation of these channels as a kind of "Lebanonisation" of Iraqi media, where ethnic and religious sectarian identities were assumed to be decisive in shaping the landscape. It was true that channels did not provide a platform that brought together Sunni and Shi'ite scholars, or that featured a diversity of contemporary religious legal opinions. However, none of these channels broadcast aggressive sectarian accusations. There was instead a kind of virtual reconciliation where sectarian political sentiments were present but not directly expressed. All channels tended to respect national unity, but national symbols could become a matter of competition between them.

Some presenters on the channels saw religion as a divisive issue for the future of Iraq. The rapid emergence of some fifteen Shi'ite channels certainly seemed to assume an audience of committed Shi'ah Muslims. But what was "Shi'ah Iraqi", as a sub-category? Who saw themselves as such and how did they fit into the rest of society? Some Iraqis who did not pray nevertheless warmly welcomed the fact that the Shi'ite version of the call to prayer was now broadcast from the main mosque in

Baghdad. This suggested that "Shi'ite" could be a cultural identity as much as a religious one.

At the same time, "Shi'ite broadcasting" was a category that obscured as much as it revealed. There were many different factions among Shi'ite clerics and broadcasters, and in many cases – both Sunni and Shi'ite – satellite channels were subject to transnational influence. Some Shi'ite channels in Iraq (such as *al-Zahra*) focused on Lebanese issues; similarly, there were possible links between Sunni channels broadcast in Egypt and Wahhabi channels emanating from Saudi Arabia. This suggested the need for a dual methodology, regarding the study of both Sunni and Shi'ite broadcasting: to look at each channel in itself, rather than simply put it under a broad category of, for example, "Shi'ite broadcasting"; and then to investigate how particular channels were linked to others.

A related dynamic was the structure of political power in the country. In both the programmes studied, clerics were presented as independent religious scholars, rather than members of political parties associated with the channel's owners. However, there was directly political content in the Friday prayers, where speakers tended to be members of Shi'ite parties in the Iraqi parliament. More generally, Iraq was subject to major competing influences – Iran, Saudi Arabia and the occupying forces led by the United States – which through funding and other connections influenced the editorial agenda of particular channels.

An interesting topic for a further study would be the role of language, and the position of ethnic minorities in Iraq who did not speak Arabic. While Kurdish channels existed, there was no fully fledged religious Kurdish channel; the two channels catering to Iraqi Christians also did not have an exclusively religious focus.

SECTION 6

"Modern Preachers", Mixed Discourses

IN THE MID-1990S, "new preachers" emerged as a phenomenon in Egypt, as the presence of traditional, Azhari Islamic preachers began to fade. The young new religious leaders had arisen because of people's need to assert and reinforce their own set of values against the background of a religious establishment that, subject to tight state control, had lost its appeal. These new untraditional thinkers could be seen, in Gramsci's hegemony theory, as a struggling group with their own worldview, who were succeeding in conquering and replacing the previously dominant ideology. That was not to say that the preachers of the new media age were all representatives of the same social group, or of the subordinate classes.

The new preachers had benefited from neo-liberal economic reforms – which promoted an ideology of "choice" – and the related phenomenon of the proliferation of satellite channels. Highly commercialized mass media and a group of religious celebrities presented to their audiences different positions and applications of religious doctrine as a matter of personal choice and conviction. By talking about religion, an integral part of the practice of everyday life, these preachers had the opportunity to influence many people by asserting a normative order.

The new preachers tended to focus on ethics and personal piety rather than calling for an Islamic state. One such preacher, Amr Khaled, had risen to stardom as a religious broadcaster in the late 1990s. He had consistently renounced any engagement in domestic politics, and focused on reconstructing the moral fibre and behaviour of individuals. For example, in his program *Bi-l-Qur'an Nahya* ("We will live by the Quran"), his account of Moses' birth, conflict with the Pharaoh and personal dilemma was designed to highlight ethical values that a

Muslim should refer to and apply in his daily life. However, Amr Khaled also advocated social action: he invited viewers to log on to his website to print and distribute slogan stickers. This behavioural, goal-defining religious discourse differed from traditional conservative Islamist discourse, which focused on the practice of rituals, and distinctions between the licit and the illicit. Despite his renouncement of domestic politics, there was a latent political aspect in Amr Khaled's social vision to combat poverty, to support the oppressed and to stand up to injustice.

Throughout his media career, Khaled had enjoyed support from Saudi and Gulf financiers, who aired his programmes on different channels including *Iqra'*, Orbit, *al-Ra'y* and *al-Risalah*. Saudi finance had also played an important role in supporting Tarek al-Suwaidan, another of the "new preachers". A Kuwaiti who had studied and lived in the USA for seventeen years, al-Suwaidan had been sponsored by a Saudi billionaire, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, the owner of *al-Risalah*. When *al-Risalah* had been launched in March 2006, the two had agreed on creating a channel that would "serve Islam and change young people's ideas about terrorism". This was done by offering programmes such as "The Leaders' Training Academy" that offered Muslim youth a vision of their role in life. The programme resembled a university lecture with an audience of young men and women.

The third figure studied in this presentation, al-Gendy, was an Azhari scholar who had the institutional authority to issue fatwas. Before establishing his own religious Azhari channel, al-Gendy had been perceived as a shaykh for the elite since he offered scriptural interpretations to justify the accumulation of wealth. However, al-Gendy believed that he had earned a great deal of popularity among the Egyptian masses when presenting his teachings on one of Egypt's state-owned television's most prominent talk shows, *Al-Bayt Baytak*. On this programme, he had been hosted by one of Egypt's most popular television presenters. The show had originally been conceived to provide an attractive government-controlled alternative to compete with the rising popularity of satellite talk shows.

The goal of al-Gendy's current *al-Azhari* channel was to re-instate the institutional power of al-Azhar as the supreme religious authority in Egypt and the Arab world. This was a recurrent theme often repeated by

al-Gendy. In one episode he broadcast the quote that Muslims no longer had a point of reference that they all agreed upon, and he proceeded to assert that this should be the role of al-Azhar and its scholars. In his live programme *Ma'a al-Gendy*, ("With Al-Gendy"), he invited both his intellectual supporters and his opponents to his screen to engage in heated discussions, although he usually was careful not to anger his guests. The widely varied list of guests included al-Azhar scholars, scientists, government officials and ministers, journalists, famous talk show presenters, liberal thinkers, secular writers and even Salafi preachers.

Another young preacher who had attracted much attention in recent times was the American University of Cairo Graduate Moez Massoud. He had been a daily guest throughout Ramadan 2009 on a widely popular talk show, "90 minutes", that was produced and broadcast by *al-Mihwar*, a privately owned Egyptian Satellite channel. Massoud was careful to distinguish himself from al-Gendy and Amr Khaled, whom he saw as offering a kind of Islamic televangelism, which he argued was essentially focused on making money in the name of religion. Ethics and morality were central in Massoud's discourse: religion was seen as a continuous process of learning and development, and rituals were a training tool that helped man in his fight against worldly desires and lust. His programme *al-Tariq al-Sah* ("The Right Path") took the form of a conversation with the host, Moetaz al-Demerdash, who often played the role of devil's advocate. Massoud's audience was largely upper-middle class, who saw him as representative of modern cultured Muslim youth.

The discourse of the new preachers posited religion as an alternative space to political participation, by offering an individualistic rather than a communal approach. Religion was presented as offering young people hope that they could achieve practical success in life, with a focus on material achievements and practical outcomes (particularly in the case of Amr Khaled and al-Suwaidan). Their discourses were laden with latent political reform and anti-hegemonic stances.

Discussion

Were the preachers in this study really challenging state power? It was true that the media could be used to uphold power or to challenge it, by portraying the existing social order as natural or by questioning such a portrayal. But the idea that these preachers were confronting a secular Egyptian state was questionable. Since Nasser, the Egyptian state had a long tradition of playing Islamic politics, using the state media. While much of the cultural elite in Egypt was strongly secular, the tradition of Islamic programming in Egyptian state television went back to the 1960s. More recently, al-Azhar university had launched its own channel. There was not necessarily a confrontation between popular preachers and the state: the state tended to adapt itself to rather than confront the market of Islamic preachers.

Even if the preachers were not directly confronting the state, their popularity and ability to mobilise youth and speak to their concerns meant that the state could see them as a political threat. There was an element of unpredictability in politics, because there were often popular currents developing beyond the immediately visible public sphere of television broadcasts or in the entourage of famous religious preachers. It was important to pay attention to less prominent "counter-public" spheres, which had the potential to produce political or social change seemingly out of nowhere.

In this study of preachers, the focus had moved from channels to personalities, which raised an interesting set of issues. How could personalities be studied and compared? The study had rightly considered the class base of preachers, and audience studies were needed to complement this approach. As personalities, preachers were in competition with each other and aware of it. The more prominent preachers such as Amr Khaled could be considered "stars" – they had a large entourage, a high public profile, and there was popular interest in their life off-screen.

Stardom was a familiar media category, and opened up a new set of questions to explore. Why were almost all religious broadcasting stars Egyptian? Egypt had a long history of stardom in cinema, and a strong tradition of popular preaching: many had begun in mosques and with

cassette tapes. Why did the media want stars? They could build up emotional loyalty in an audience. The sophisticated management of emotion and image among these stars, and the construction of "personality" and "lifestyle", were areas for further research which could draw on concepts such as class and habitus. Stardom itself was a concept through which to compare preachers: how they dressed, spoke and styled themselves; how they treated particular subjects (such as the lives of the prophets); what they did in their leisure time; what kind of public diplomacy work they engaged in; how far they engaged issues and communities beyond their immediate contexts, such as in other Arab countries and in Europe; and how they managed relationships with other stars – whether through rivalry or co-operation.

SECTION 7

"Family Business" Broadcasting Stations – *al-Nas*

AL-NAS WAS A CHANNEL broadcast from Egypt but owned by a Saudi businessman. It had started in 2006 as an entertainment channel, but had not proved profitable, so about a year later it had become a religious broadcasting channel with Salafi preachers, and the slogan "a screen that would take you to Paradise". Two programmes had been studied: "Heart to Heart" (*Fadfada*) and "Let Us Live Correctly" (*Ha Na'ish Sah*).

Many of the presenters on "Heart to Heart" were Salafi or in some cases Azhari scholars. Each had his own style of presenting and chose the issues to focus on. Some used the programme to respond to and defend their position against preachers on other satellite channels. The programme content encouraged viewers to be "Godly" as individuals, to follow the example of the rightly guided ancestors (*ahl al-salaf*), and to withdraw from mainstream society by not involving themselves in broader social concerns. There was a focus on individual salvation rather than social participation, and on religious appearance and duties such as wearing a beard, regular prayer, and fasting. Tolerance was seen as an issue to be practiced between Sunni Muslims.

"Let Us Live Correctly" was a weekly programme presented by a young preacher wearing "modern" clothing: jeans, T-shirt, styled hair and a trimmed beard. He had a lively style of presenting, and used some colloquial Arabic (as in the programme's title) and some English. The format was modern, including the use of vox pops, SMS messages to communicate with viewers, and website campaigns on contemporary social concerns such as drug abuse. The programme dealt with a range of social and psychological issues, particularly those concerning young people and students, and family relationships. The overall vision of the

programme was to create a better future for individuals and communities, by returning to Allah and putting more importance on Islam. This was to be achieved not by seclusion from society or family, but by participation, collective effort, and by benefiting from modern developments.

Across the channel as a whole, Salafism was the most prominent trend. Salafi preachers were said to have attracted many viewers to *al-Nas* due to their strong popularity in Egyptian society. In many cases, there was mutual harmony between Salafi preachers on the channel, who hosted and recommended each other. They often engaged in strong criticism of other trends of thought – whether Azhari, Christian, or "Western". They addressed controversial issues such as polygamy, circumcision, and attitudes towards Shi'ite doctrine. In many cases, they spoke in a high register of Arabic, and their style could be intimidating. Azhari preachers on the channel tended to deal with less controversial issues like the Israeli occupation.

The influence of Salafism could also be seen in the channel's position on gender roles. Female announcers were not permitted, even wearing the face-veil – although there had been female announcers when the channel started. Salafi scholars on the channel had argued that knowledge was "only for men", and had criticised a rival channel within the same stable of channels for permitting a female presenter to appear.

The channel's manager had said in an interview with 'Islam online' that the channel did not adopt political positions, but simply helped to provide what "governments need": "We deliberately intended to steer far away from anything that has to do with politics…we have a balanced policy that has no intention to oppose any Arab government. We support the trends adopted by states and formal institutions because we offer preachers who help to control young people's behaviour, and this is what states and governments need."[7] It was rare for channels to be so open about their relationship to institutional power; the context was that the manager had been asked about the possible closure of channels by the government.

Some Egyptian newspapers had linked *al-Nas* programmes with acts of violence against Christians, on the basis of a confession from one of the perpetrators of this violence, although it seemed that the programme did not broadcast direct incitement against Christians.

Discussion

The history of this channel showed the supply and demand dynamics of broadcasting. The initial entertainment channel had been an unpopular product, so had transformed itself into an explicitly religious channel in order to meet market demand. This showed that there was already popular demand for Salafism. There was little audience analysis or data available, but press articles claimed that *al-Nas* was one of the most watched channels in Egypt. It was important to study the channel not just by focusing on their content and discourse, but by understanding the consumer demand among the audience, perhaps as its own subculture.

Others argued that consumer demand was more complex; what needed to be understood was how demand was produced. Why had the channel failed in its initial entertainment product? Had it simply been poor entertainment? Had there been no demand? Had the entertainment content migrated elsewhere? The distinction between "entertainment" and "religious" broadcasting also needed to be questioned. Could the polemics on the channel – the harsh criticisms of Azhari fatwas, of Shi'ite doctrine, and of figures such as Hasan Nasrallah of Hizbullah – have an entertaining quality in themselves for some viewers?

Some said that regardless of supply and demand, media responsibility and ethics required that some of the views expressed on the channel were not given a platform, since they were equivalent to hate speech.

The programmes studied did not represent a fight not over the souls and bodies of the audience so much as they were a struggle over who had the authority to speak for Islam. There was a sense among some scholars on the channel that certain rival celebrity presenters, with a different style and from a different school, had "hijacked" Islam. Three of the channel's preachers had threatened to withdraw from the channel because the manager had invited the celebrity preacher Amr Khaled to talk about an anti-drug campaign.

Some of the channel's more prominent scholars had an entourage of their own, who would for example kiss their hands. One question was what relationship these kinds of performances and followings had to "popularity". Did they represent genuine popularity? How was popularity understood, constructed, measured and contested? What

qualifications and credentials did different speakers have and rely on? Who bestowed them? Some of the channel's preachers were renowned hadith scholars, and were paid high salaries (which had attracted some criticism in the press). In many cases, the fatwas issued were pre-paid by callers.

The absence of women on the channel reinforced patriarchal values, as did the gender roles promoted: scholars on the programmes advised women to stay at home rather than venture into environments such as universities where they would be asked to remove the face-veil. The promotion of patriarchy served the interests of the Egyptian government, and it was a way of neutralising or distracting the critique of intellectual opponents of the regime.

In order to understand the different ways that power operated in these programmes, it was important to study the medium and especially the language of the programme. This might be a separate project: to explore how power, exclusion, and solidarity were encoded in the use of language and linguistic forms such as pronouns, and in the way in which speakers used and moved between levels in the register of Arabic (classical, standard, colloquial and so on). It could also focus on the vocabulary used – the corpus of new or revived words that had emerged recently, and that were becoming hegemonic in Arab world. The study should also analyse the presenters' visual language: the way in which their bodies were used to communicate certain messages and produce certain effects.

SECTION 8

Islamist Female Activists and Preachers: Broadcasting, Platforms and Issues

EGYPTIAN WOMEN'S involvement in Islamic activism dated back to 1995. Since then, there had been notable achievements including in many cases the allocation of expanded mosque space for women's Islamic studies and the right for women to preach in the mosque. Currently the female Islamist movement in Egypt used thousands of mosques to reach women and their families. This trend was part of a broader movement which was flourishing, albeit with different levels of intensity, throughout the Middle East. Female preachers were active in Saudi Arabia, where they lectured in educational institutions, in charity societies and in social centres, and had a strong presence on online sites. In 2009, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Islamic Affairs had approved two lists – almost four hundred names – of female preachers qualified to lecture and preach to women. In Syria, the Minister of Awqaf had licensed some three thousand female preachers. However, only in Morocco had female preachers moved from addressing study sessions in homes and mosques to organized political action, using Islamic law to defend the rights of Muslim women and to combat illiteracy.

Nevertheless, the trend of female Muslim preachers in the Arab world could be considered part of a women's movement. The first stage of the women's movement in the Arab world dated back to the beginning of the 20thcentury, when the focus had been on women's right to education and work. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the rise in Islamic sensibility cross the Arab world, a newly inspired women's Islamist movement had taken shape. Some trends of this movement rejected Western feminism as a hegemonic perspective that ignored women's perspectives and specific experiences in the Arab world, as well as the strategies they had invented to handle repression. Instead, the emphasis

was on returning to the original Quran and the Prophet's traditions, and excluding patriarchal interpretations based on social prejudice. Crucially, rather than being independent entities seeking to unburden women from the unjust control of men, female preachers saw themselves as working on God's behalf as an integral part of a whole that included husbands and families.

The unprecedented widespread practice of donning of the Islamic hijab, by all social classes and age groups, illustrated the success of the Islamic movement, and was the sign of a form of feminism. While those in the Islamic movement considered this evidence of the success of their religious educational programs, others saw it as a reaction to Western hegemony – or, in Gramsci's theory, as a counter-hegemonic stage which preceded the attainment of influence. Indeed, female preachers were finding a role for themselves within the religious revival. Assuming the positions of activists, preachers, and religious teachers, they were presenting a clear challenge to male dominance in these fields. Some had gained powerful positions in their societies and had helped improve the status of women by combating illiteracy and offering free services in mosques and religious societies to address a lack of health care and high rates of poverty.

The Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf employed women with relevant degrees in two mosque positions: as religious guides for women and as preachers (*da'iyat*). Institutes for training female preachers existed throughout much of Egypt, and the number of female students surpassed that of male students. Female preachers had created support networks within mosques. These networks were accumulating power as the preachers offered a venue for religiously oriented civic activity, and thus filled a social vacuum left by the Egyptian government. To take an ethnographic example, one woman had left her job as an accountant at a foreign bank in order to take care of her family. After attending some religious lessons at the mosque in the company of one of her neighbours, she had become a regular attendee, gained a two-year diploma, and had risen up the occupational scale until she had ended up as the chief preacher in the mosque. Through the mosque she had found marriage partners for her son and her friend's son, and a job for her husband.

Female preachers had succeeded in engaging middle- and upper-

class Egyptian women in religious activities, and mobilizing them to be part of a collective social project. In contrast to the vast majority of male preachers, the female preachers' mission was not limited to religious lessons and persuasion. Rather, in addition to persuasion, they sought to serve communities through action. They extended their presence in the community through supporting women and their families: women came to the mosque to take religious lessons and have their children taken care of.

However, while male preachers had often taken up prominent positions in the broadcast media, female preachers had not. There were several explanations: cultural traditions which continued to view women in the public sphere negatively; the worsening political and economic status of women in the Arab world compared to men; the absence of women in religious decision-making positions and other high-status roles in mosques; religious opinions that prohibited the appearance of women on television (such as the fatwa by Shaykh al-Juwayni); and the taboos on female bodies and voices that these opinions amplified. Those female preachers who did appear in the media sphere were normally university professors associated with official institutions like al-Azhar, and they focused their attention on family matters. Female preachers in general were also less likely than their male counterparts to harness new technologies such as the internet (which enabled among other things a transnational following); this may have been related to issues of access.

On the other hand, the emergence of female preachers from middle-class backgrounds had changed the face of families and the role of mosques. After being marginalized for political, historical and cultural reasons, women preachers had come to occupy a unique position that empowered them to contribute to their communities.

Discussion

The presentation related hijab-wearing to a form of feminism, but was the hijab a tool of empowering women in Egypt, and how had it become so? Hijab could be a sign that a female preacher was empowered; it could also be a *tool* of empowerment, particularly in poorer communities, to the extent that it allowed a woman to leave the house and participate in a community, the job market, to find a husband, and so

on. There could be no universal one-size-fits-all understanding of empowerment or feminism. Feminist thinkers needed to re-identify empowerment from the perspective of the Arab world.

It was certainly impossible to generalise about why Muslim women wore the hijab, as this differed from case to case and particularly according to class and the rural-urban divide. In some cases, it could be a symbol of religious faith; an assertion of identity or even of defiance. In some cases, wearing the hijab in a novel or "fashionable" way could be a declaration of counter-hegemony.

A consideration of women working in broadcasting in the Catholic church showed there were commonalities between religions in this area. Vatican radio broadcast internationally in over forty languages. Many women worked in Vatican radio and television as presenters and in technical positions; some departments were female-dominated. However, the largely Western stereotype that Muslim women were passive and dejected, whereas Western women were educated and in control, was not valid. Despite their presence in broadcasting, there were few Catholic women in preaching positions. Women tended to remain at the vital grass-roots level in Christian churches.

Did female Muslim preachers in Egypt reproduce a masculine or even patriarchal discourse? Did they rely on permission from men in order to continue preaching? How did individual female preachers establish their own reputation in the market? These things often happened within the dynamics of the local community. Women preachers often depended on "informal media", which they used creatively and resourcefully, such as tapes sold in front of mosques which people bought and exchanged within the mosque society and the neighbourhood. The internet might become an increasingly useful resource for women, although there were obstacles for many women to access to the internet, and illiteracy was a major issue. A survey of internet use in 2007 had shown that less than 6% of Arab users were female.

Another interesting area was the effect of female preaching on authority and relationships within the family. If women had access to knowledge and claims to piety within the family, how did this change family roles, and ways of bringing up children? Women in upper and middle classes tended to extend their learning to the family. Women

often acted as the initiator, sending their children to the mosque for evening classes; in some cases they had encouraged husbands to change their lifestyle and to start praying.

SECTION 9

Hamas Broadcasting – *Al-Aqsa* Channel in Gaza

THE CHANNEL HAD emerged in the context of the rising political power and popularity of Hamas in Gaza. It had been launched in January 2006 in the same month that Hamas had won the elections for the Legislative Council. The establishment of *al-Aqsa* satellite channel after the radio station of the same name was a natural development for Hamas which had always been concerned about expanding the scope and reach of its media. It was also a reaction to the media of the Palestinian Authority as represented by the official Palestinian television *Wafa* to which Hamas's main rival political party, Fatah, was connected.

Al-Aqsa satellite channel was owned by Ribat Media and Artistic Production Company, which was headed by a senior Hamas figure. The company ran a number of other Hamas media apparatuses, including its bi-weekly newspaper *al-Risalah*. It had launched *Sawt al-Aqsa* ("The Voice of *al-Aqsa*") radio station in December 2003. *Al-Aqsa* had played a key role in mobilization and vilification campaigns against the Palestinian Authority and its security apparatuses, portraying them as in alliance with the Zionists. But its ability to function to its full capacity had materialised after Hamas's takeover of Gaza by force following ferocious fighting with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority forces. As criticism intensified that *al-Aqsa* had justified and encouraged the killing of Palestinian Authority and Fatah members, by labelling them as infidels and collaborators with the Zionist entity, *al-Aqsa* had asserted that it was not a spokesperson for any political faction.

Further criticism of *al-Aqsa* came from Israel and other international agencies, including Human Rights Watch, following a series called "The Pioneers of Tomorrow" (*Ruwwad al-Ghad*). The series was

centred on an impersonator of Micky Mouse, called Farfour, who represented an assortment of religious, political and cultural views. The series was described as anti-Semitic, as it was perceived as encouraging violence and saturating Palestinian children with hatred of the Jews. After a flurry of international and local condemnation, the series had been stopped[8].

The bulk of *al-Aqsa*'s news bulletins were concerned with the activities of Hamas and the Gaza-based government, the condemnation of the Palestinian Authority and Fatah in the West Bank as well as local or international bodies who supported them, and the policies and practices of the Israeli occupation. Operating in this context, *al-Aqsa* had faced significant opposition. Israel had destroyed the building which housed the channel and its equipment during its war on Gaza in 2009. However, its programmes had also given rise to some personalities: professional young Palestinian media stars who had been noticed for their rhetorical gifts at a young age and groomed for representative roles for Hamas.

The materials considered in the study derived from a range of programmes and political talk shows, including *Yas'alunak* ("They Ask You") and *Sada al-Shari'* ("The Echo of the Street"). The themes discussed in the programmes studied included the upbringing of children, the Pilgrimage to Makkah, the migration of Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Madinah, and the twenty-second anniversary of Hamas.

In the episode of *Yas'alunak* ('They Ask You'), the upbringing of children was placed within an Islamic framework. The presenter introduced the topic by quoting from the Quran and the hadith, and referring to the Quranic episode where Luqman exhorted his son against apostasy arguing that it was the highest level of sinfulness in Islam. The guest held a doctorate in jurisprudence from Umm Durman University in Sudan, and wore traditional Islamic clothing and a beard. He warned against apostasy and called upon parents to be vigilant with children when they were young, "as the companions of the Prophet were", so that they were grounded in Islam. He said that this should be done "so that the child [was] normalized from a very young age to believe in and revere Allah". The final part of the programme consisted of questions from the audience. In this programme, as in others, no differing points

of view were discussed. Rather, the Shaykh's pronouncements were presented as authoritative and were not challenged in any way.

The episode of "The Echo of the Street" focused on the twenty-second anniversary of Hamas. The programme was introduced with a description of how Hamas had come into existence, which linked it to a tradition of politics connected to Prophet Muhammad. It was portrayed as inevitable that Hamas would come to existence – hence its popular name of the "divine movement" (*al-harakah al-rabbaniyyah*). The spiritual genealogy was emphasised which connected Ahmad Yasin, the deceased spiritual leader of Hamas, to the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hassan Al-Banna, and to Prophet Muhammad. This was typically nationalist discourse, where the party sought to legitimate and authenticate its existence through reference to a pure and distant past that it purported to reclaim and safeguard. In the course of the programme, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank was described as Zionist. Hamas was referred to as synonymous with "the Muslims", whereas the Palestinian Authority was not described as Muslim.

In summary, the discourse of *al-Aqsa* channel was laden with religious references, in all types of programmes: political, religious, and others. And even in exclusively religious programmes, such as on the migration of Prophet Muhammad to Madinah, the current situation of Palestine was referenced, by way of lessons to be drawn from the history of Islam, and by way of spiritual and predestined connections made between the past and the present. Hamas was depicted as a primordial link between that Islamic history, read in puritanical terms, and the present. Other programmes painted the Palestinian Authority as Zionist and without Islamic or nationalist credentials.

Discussion

It was important to situate Hamas and the *al-Aqsa* channel globally, within the diaspora and the context of the Ummah or worldwide Muslim community. Hamas was an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and needed to be seen within the context of its international movement and its revivalist project.

Similarly, it was important to situate the channel politically and historically. The *al-Aqsa* channel, and Hamas more generally, had

emerged and drew their significance from a history of Israeli occupation. A key part of the religious programming was a discourse of resistance, and this pointed to the fact that the channel was also part of a media war, and had been understood as such in the recent Gaza war.

Broadly speaking, *al-Aqsa* was a mouthpiece of the Hamas government in Gaza; it posed a challenge both to the Palestinian authority in Ramallah and to the Israelis, because the channel brought the voice of Hamas to the rest of the world. The channel needed to be understood in the context of the political tension between Palestinians that had emerged over the last few years. Its discourse about who were "real" Palestinians was an attempt to undermine the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah.

Even within Hamas, *al-Aqsa* was closer to some trends (such as the Qassam brigades) than others. In this sense, *al-Aqsa* posed a challenge to some members of Hamas, as well as to the Palestinian authority.

After Hamas had taken control of Gaza, its media had proliferated. The *al-Aqsa* satellite channel was part of a broader *al-Aqsa* media network that also included online platforms, radio, a training centre for journalists, and a drama production village. The output was varied, including children's programming and cartoons; all were seen as part of the resistance effort, and the drive to mobilise. In its media, Hamas thrived on the idea of resistance – although whether it acted on it was a different question.

By mediating events in the region in a particular way, *al-Aqsa* was shaping Palestinian identity. One question was, how far was Hamas using the popularity and social capital it had gained through positioning itself as a resistance movement, to spread its social vision of Islamisation? At the same time, *al-Aqsa* differentiated itself from Salafi groups such as *Jaysh al-Islam* etc., by advocating "moderation" (*al-wasatiyya*) and arguing that those who went further than this were not acting in accordance with the Islamic vision.

Al-Aqsa was part of a trend of journalism-as-witness, which could be seen elsewhere among the rapid proliferation of satellite channels in the Arab world. During the recent war on Gaza, *al-Aqsa* had been one of few channels on the ground. This presence and its agenda of witnessing posed a challenge to the international media's norms of reporting. What

counted as hate speech, and what was simply a mediation of events on the ground? What counted as bias and what as impartiality? These were important issues, not least because they were linked to concerns about regulation and access: in the USA and the EU there had been discussions about preventing the broadcast of certain satellite channels.

SECTION 10

Hizbullah Broadcasting: *Al-Manar* and the Islamic Sphere in Lebanon

THE HIZBULLAH-affiliated channel *al-Manar* had been established in 1991, a year before Hizbullah had announced that it would participate in the first parliamentary election in post-Taef[9] Lebanon. Its establishment had marked a policy of reaching out to the larger Shi'ite community and the Lebanese public at large ahead of the elections. At first, *al-Manar*'s programmers had been primarily concerned with transmitting the reality of the Israeli occupation and the resistance to it in southern Lebanon. By the time of the Israeli withdrawal from most of South Lebanon in May 1999, the network had matured, with higher production standards, a more diverse programming grid and a wider viewership. A satellite channel was launched in 2000 oriented towards widening the scope of its transmission of the "Culture of the Islamic Resistance" to a global Arab and Muslim audience. *Al-Manar* soon became one of the most watched channels by Arabic speakers worldwide, especially for news on the Arab-Israeli conflict, with some estimates citing a viewership of ten million. It broadcast across the Arab region, as well as in Europe, Australia and the Americas. *Al-Manar* had evolved as a Channel of the Islamic Resistance from one that was exclusivist to one that was part of a diverse, multicultural Lebanese, Arab, Islamic and perhaps even global society.

Hizbullah sought to cultivate a "Community of the Islamic Resistance" through the creation and maintenance of the *hala islamiyya* or "Islamic sphere", an all-encompassing framework for the believer. This was pursued through the Party's infrastructure of social and cultural services. Hizbullah's radio stations, newspapers, magazines, websites, as well as *al-Manar* acted as disciplinary technologies in the Foucauldian sense. In other words, the ideal self was not constructed in

the ideological texts of Shi'ite *mujtahids* (scholars), but in the mundane practices of the everyday, as the self interacted with the sound of the call to prayer, the veiled community services volunteer, the words *al-salam 'alaykum* as one turned on the evening news, and so on. *Al-Manar* programming consisted of both religious programming overtly concerned with its Islamic agenda, and lay programming, which addressed other daily concerns of its viewers. Both types presented religious and lay issues through the prism of resistance. *Sabah al-Manar* and *Ila al-Qalb* presented two such examples.

Sabah al-Manar ("*Al-Manar*'s Morning") was a daily morning show broadcast live and presented by two veiled women. The show's guests were a mix of religious and secular characters, depending on the requirements of the topic at hand. Seven episodes over one constructed week in the summer of 2009 yielded the following titles: "Cardiac Health", "Quranic Evenings", "Cosmetic Dentistry", "Preparing your Child for the Birth of a Sibling", "In Memory of the Birth of the Three Moons"[10], "The Victory of the Resistance in the July War", and "Women Spending Money on the Home: Partnership or Control?" As indicated by their titles, most of the episodes tackled everyday health and family issues. They did so through an Islamic perspective predicated on a modern, progressive and scientific approach. Expert guests featured on the programme were both lay and religious, Christian and Muslim, male and female. Even religious topics were interpreted in a manner that promoted the values of the "Community of Islamic Resistance". The news bulletin of the episode on "The Birth of the Three Moons", for example, focused on events that had occurred during the 2006 war with Israel on that day.

Ila al-Qalb[11] ("To the Heart") was a weekly religious programme in which a Shaykh who was a member of Hizbullah's Central Committee discussed issues of interest to young men and women. Topics covered included: faith, hope, dress and elegance, happiness in marriage, personal jihad, a culture of brotherhood, manners in communication, and neighbourliness. In one episode, the Shaykh presented a complex argument in favour of religiosity and tolerance in a multicultural society. He spoke to an audience of young people, veiled women on one side, men on the other. The young men were all fashionably dressed in Western

clothing that would blend in on the streets of any European capital. The headscarf-sporting women tended to be young, urbane and highly educated. While maintaining that only the "People of Justice" (*ahl al-haqq*) would surely enter the gates of Heaven, the Shaykh said that God was not sectarian, and that followers of other faiths, even atheists, had a chance at forgiveness because of God's benevolence. Such an argument laid the ground for increased tolerance in a multicultural society like Lebanon. The Shaykh also condemned what he called Israeli and Western racism. Throughout, he was marking the boundaries of the acceptable and the unacceptable, disciplining the viewers' way of thought. The "Community of the Islamic Resistance" should be a tolerant community, one that did not discriminate on grounds of race, gender, class, or even religion. These values served the ideal type of the "pious modern" described by Lara Deeb, which was in contrast to both "the 'traditional' person, who practices religion improperly or without true comprehension and who believes that her only role is a domestic one" and the "'empty modern' and 'Westernised' person, who is selfish, materialistic, and obsessed with her appearance and social status"[12]. Hizbullah's pious modern was a self-styled progressive, tolerant Islamic ideal that also emphasised resistance against the oppressors.

Hizbullah operated a network of services in Lebanon including healthcare, education, media, defence, construction and rehabilitation. The *hala islamiyya* or "Islamic Sphere" that these institutions created and reinforced helped to "bring people into the fold". *Al-Manar* was one such institution. It had proved to have an evolving agenda, one that had increasingly been reaching out to non-Muslim communities in Lebanon. It was ironic that the more people it converted to the ideal of the "pious modern", the more that ideal type was having to change, and become more liberal.

Discussion

Since *al-Manar* was allied to Lebanese Hizbullah, the context and history of the party was important. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was key; Hizbullah had gained its force in Lebanon and within the Shi'ite community more generally by its resistance in the south against

Israel in the late 1980s. After the al-Taef agreement, the party had moved towards political participation; this change had produced the television station. Before the liberation of south Lebanon in 2000, Hizbullah had been concerned to broadcast and legitimise the Resistance; after 2000, it had established the satellite channel to take its message to the rest of the region.

However, in the period after 2000, Hizbullah's focus had not changed, as seen in the war with Israel in summer 2006. Its message was still about Islamic resistance; more broadly, it sought to develop a regional community of resistance, even if this was not entirely Shi'ite or even Islamic. *Al-Manar* had for several years been one of most watched stations in the occupied Palestinian territories. As it had a regional agenda, *al-Manar* had served as model for *al-Aqsa*; Hamas was copying Hizbullah's media strategies.

While its media strategy and way of framing its message had changed, the fundamental core of Hizbullah's vision had not changed. Its vision was long-term; it was seeking a transformation in society, which was not necessarily expected to happen immediately.

Al-Manar was broadcasting in the context of Lebanese politics and a mixed Lebanese society. During the Lebanese Civil War, many warlords and militias had had their own television stations which they had used to address their own communities. By contrast, *al-Manar* had not been set up to broadcast to only one community. When scholars on *al-Manar* talked for example about interacting with non-Muslims, their focus was on the Lebanese context. *Al-Manar* was broadcasting Islamic talk in a mixed society (which was also the context in which classical Islamic law had originally developed). Indeed, *al-Manar*'s board included Christian and Sunni figures, as required by Lebanese law. Hizbullah's current political partners included Communists and Christians, and this also affected the tenor of *al-Manar*'s religious discourse. This respect for difference and different lifestyles was possible because of the historical and political context within which *al-Manar* had emerged.

It was interesting in this context to compare the style of delivery of *al-Manar* presenters with that of other preachers. In the programme studied, the scholar spoke with a soft voice and manner. His language varied between standard and colloquial Arabic. He did not illustrate his

argument with many Quranic verses. The language was accessible; the content referred often to common sense, reason, and science; the studio set and opening credits were fashionable; the Quran and Quranic writing were present in the studio but in a subtle way. The presenters themselves cultivated a deliberate use of particular postures, delivery styles and registers. All these things demonstrated that the medium – the thing that audiences accessed – was an important object of study. The medium was related to the message, and the audience; *al-Manar* sought not just to "preach to the converted", but to persuade a wider audience to become part of the "pious modern".

SECTION 11

Christian Broadcasting in Arab Countries

THERE WERE BY some accounts fourteen Christian Satellite channels broadcasting to the Arab World, playing a variety of roles, including educational (explaining the faith), missionary or outreach work, and highlighting the contribution of Christians in public life. The first Christian television channel, established in Lebanon in 1991, was *Tele Lumiere*. It had been established by secular figures, then brought under the supervision of the Council of the Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops and had later evolved into a Satellite channel called *Nour Sat*. The fourteen Christian Satellite Channels currently broadcasting belonged to various denominations: Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic. Apart from the orthodox channels, most proclaimed an ecumenical agenda.

These channels had been established by Christians to explain, defend and preach their faith, and in response to their growing sense of marginalization within the Arab world. This was related to socio-political conditions, including the decreasing role of Christians in Arab societies. Following independence from foreign occupation in the 1950s and 1960s in Arab countries, Christians had played a noticeable role in public life as politicians, senior public bureaucrats, intellectuals and professionals. Fifty years later, the situation had changed. As large numbers of Christians had migrated to the West, fewer remained to assume top positions in the state apparatuses. Islamic movements sweeping Arab countries had posed further challenges to them, especially concerning identity and citizenship rights. The use of Islamic terminology in the media, social interactions, the public sphere, and political life in general had contributed to a sense of alienation among Christian communities. Some felt that their distinct religious identity was no longer tolerated by the Muslim majority.

In Egypt, (Coptic) Christians constituted around 10%-12% of the population. They had been treated to a large extent as fully fledged citizens since the 19th century, with the freedom to perform their own religious teaching privately, although not publicly. More recent trends of Muslim religiosity had been paralleled by unusually conservative attitudes among Copts, who had decided to insulate themselves within their churches. As a result, the clergy had gradually become the representatives of the Christian community before the state, while the role of Christian secular figures had begun to fade. In Lebanon, proportionate power-sharing mechanisms provided the eighteen officially recognized religious communities with an opportunity for their own political representation and socio-cultural presence. In Jordan, Christians were a tiny minority who enjoyed a special relationship with the monarchic political regime. Generally speaking, they enjoyed religious freedom, societal tolerance and political guardianship. The same was true to a large extent in occupied Palestine. However, in light of the growing Islamisation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, many Christians had emigrated, especially from Jerusalem. In Syria today, Christians were normally entitled to religious freedom in return for their unconditional support of the political regime. The same was true in Iraq until the removal of the Ba'ath System in 2003. Under the foreign occupation, many Christians' rights had been curtailed and they had faced assaults on their churches, houses and shops.

These political dynamics were influenced by Arab Christian groups in the diaspora who sought to defend the citizenship rights of Arab Christians, capitalizing on the contacts and networks they had created among Western political circles. These dynamics were to an extent reflected in the Christian satellite channels broadcasting in the Arab world. Two had been chosen for study: *al-Hayah* and the Coptic Television Channel (CTC).

Over the last five years, *al-Hayah* Channel had faced severe criticism across the Arab World because of its provocative discourse on the Islamic faith. Indeed, its broadcasting studios moved from one place to another to avoid any potential threat. *Al-Hayah* claimed to be affiliated to no particular Christian denomination, and its funding sources were unclear. Its main goal was to proselytize among Muslims, and its main

strategy was to search for the shortcomings, deficiencies and imperfections in "others" in order to convince them to convert to Christianity, which was presented as a "complete faith" in contrast to the "limitations" of Islam. Several of its presenters claimed to have been converted from an Islamic background. The channel's two best-known programmes were "Questions in Faith" (*As'ila fi-l-Iman*) and "An Audacious Question" (*Su'al Gharib*). "Questions in Faith" was introduced by a retired Coptic Orthodox priest who wore a traditional orthodox cloth. It was a nightly programme focusing on religious polemics with the aim of proving the supremacy of Christianity over Islam, for example refuting any claims that the Bible had been "distorted". "An Audacious Question" was introduced by a Moroccan convert from Islam, and aimed to discuss subjects normally censored in public life, such as the status of minorities under the rule of Islamic Law. Many of its claims were provocative, such as the argument that educational systems in Arab and Muslim countries had failed due to their excessive dependence on memorizing and reciting the Quran. A number of Islamic satellite channels had been established to counter *al-Hayah* through polemics, and the content of many of *al-Hayah's* programmes had evolved into hotly disputed matters on internet websites and in newspapers.

Coptic Television Channel (CTV), established in 2007, was the official mouthpiece of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt, with premises in Cairo. Its sources of funding included rich Coptic donors in Egypt and the diaspora. It did not seek to proselytize among Muslims, but rather congratulated them on their religious occasions, and received Muslim dignitaries on its screen to congratulate Christians at Christmas and Easter. It broadcast rituals and prayers and provided a forum for the Church's news (although it rarely covered the sectarian clashes between Muslims and Christians that occurred sporadically). Its orthodox character was clear, and sometimes it involved itself in intra-denominational debates to defend Orthodox doctrine in the face of critical views propagated by the Protestant community. It aimed to become a popular Christian channel not only in Egypt, but across the Arab World and the diaspora. The goal of one of its main programs, "The Word Does Not Fade" (*Kalima la Tazul*), was to explain the theology of the Coptic

Orthodox Church, and defend it against attacks by other Christian denominations. Also, by broadcasting rituals such as weekly masses and sermons such as the weekly address by Pope Shenouda, CTC had created a different religious style among Copts. Like Muslims, Copts could now witness their spiritual life during the day through this medium.

Christians had established satellite channels often out of a sense of marginalization. But it was important to recognize that Muslim communities too felt marginalized and discriminated against. Inter-cultural dialogue was a necessity – on a regular basis, not just in moments of crisis. Satellite channels could participate in this by abstaining from religious polemics, producing inclusive programmes built on issues of common concern, and by demonstrating a genuine respect for diversity.

Discussion

It was important not to generalise, but to look at specific histories of the Christian presence in particular countries. This should include the political and socio-economic context of Christian communities, particularly since many of these communities now complained of being marginalised. Intra-denominational politics had long been a feature of particular Christian communities in the Arab world. So when had the need for these channels and their voices emerged? Similarly, more background was needed to substantiate the argument that Christian broadcasting was a reaction to political Islam. What precisely about "political Islam" were the channels a reaction to? When did particular channels start? Where did their funding come from? Fund-raising events in the diaspora, and the dynamics of migration, might be important here. Who and where were the audiences: were they local or transnational? Some channels for example had been established to cater for Lebanese Christian communities in the diaspora. How far were particular channels influenced by tele-evangelist channels in the USA, and the rising prominence of the figure of the preacher?

If Christian religious broadcasting was a reaction to political Islam, it was not a reaction to religious symbols (such as veiling or naming) but to marginalisation: the sense of being a second-class citizen in one's own country. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood had argued that the Head of State could not be a Christian. But if marginalisation was an important

dynamic in different Christian communities, it was important to remember that Islamist voices also sometimes spoke of marginalisation. It was sobering to reflect on the hate rhetoric of *al-Hayah* and what it was like to be on the receiving end of such discourse. This only underlined the need for inter-cultural dialogue: not just in the media, but also in education and everyday life. This should base itself on concepts that supported common dialogue (such as human rights, or common economic concerns) rather than exclusionary discourses. It might be interesting to study the figure of the convert in this context: converts were figures who crossed boundaries, but were also often deployed in inter-religious polemics.

SECTION 12

Jewish Religious Broadcasting on Israeli Television

MASS MEDIA IN Israel were consumed largely by the following groups: "secular", "*Masorti*-Conservative"[13], and "modern" Zionist-religious Jews. Ultra-Orthodox (*Haredi*) viewers were rare because the consumption of "secular" popular media was considered by many to be forbidden. The lack of *Haredi* viewers, and the lack of interest in religious content among the majority of Israeli viewers ("secular" and *Masorti* Jews) had resulted in the low popularity of all-religious broadcasting within Israeli mass media. Such broadcasts were rare among the commercial channels, and within Channel One (the national public broadcaster) they were considered to be low-rating programmes, produced under the channel's requirement to broadcast a certain number of hours of religious content under the general title of "Jewish heritage".

The channels set up by Israeli cable television and labelled as religious-Jewish channels had sought to follow a formula which would attract Jewish people who were not *Haredi*. Religious programmes did not aim exclusively at an orthodox audience, but actually at the *Masorti* Jewish and even "secular" societies. These programmes stressed the combination of feeling "nationally" Jewish and "religiously" Jewish. Religious content was connected to contemporary life, and the language of these programmes combined "secular" terminology with religious expressions. Crucially, programmes brought together religious and non-religious Jewish participants and highlighted the similarities between the two communities, not the differences.

The all-religious channel that had been selected as a case study was the *Hidabroot* channel. It had begun broadcasting in 2008, and was part of the *Hidabroot* organisation whose declared message was "to bring religious and secular Jews closer together, through pleasant

conversation, and from an attitude of openness, friendship and closeness."[14] It had been selected for study as it was the most popular all-religious channel on Israeli television, and was broadcast across Israel on cable free of charge. It was watched by a significant percentage of people who defined themselves as "secular", and had an even split of male and female viewers.

One of the programmes studied, *Tzerufim* ("Linkages"), was a weekly evening primetime show that brought together two people, one secular and one religious. They discussed different issues ranging from dating to spirituality and the search for a career. The selected guests on *Tzerufim* were well-known within Israeli society, and were selected in order to boost the programme's ratings. The set was designed in order to create an atmosphere of dialogue, openness and ease: the guests were seated next to each other on a couch. In none of the programmes did any conflicts or arguments erupt, even though in Israeli society there were many basic themes about which secular and religious Jewish Israelis usually argued. These included debates such as: service in the Israeli Defence Force and the exemption given to *Haredi* youngsters; the budgets and allowances allocated by the government to rabbinical colleges called *Yeshivas*; and the stereotypical secular view of religious life as backward, against the stereotypical religious view of secular life as sinful. Instead, the guests chose to keep their statements general and to speak vaguely about a need to "unite", "understand", and "accept". The message was clear: forget about right-wing, or left-wing, secular or religious – "we are all Jews". This amounted to a de-politicisation of the religious-secular conflict in Israel.

In fact, the programme aimed to make Israeli "secular" or *Masorti* sectors of society more observant and religious, and possibly also to create sympathy among secular viewers for the religious section of society, thereby diminishing secular opposition to the religious political agenda. The programme's "secular" guests declared that they observed some (but not all) religious practices, whereas many of its religious participants had originally grown up in secular (or at least non-orthodox) families. Viewers did not hear about the "good values" of being secular, but only about the values of being religious. The appearance of the religious guests was not typically orthodox: they wore jeans, suits and

long-sleeved shirts. The only visible difference between them and their counterparts was the kippa they wore on their heads. In summary, the show aimed to make a "religious" lifestyle non-threatening and appealing to "secular" Jews.

The second studied show was chosen as a point of comparison. *She'elat Rav* ("A Question for the Rabbi"), was a weekly religious afternoon show broadcast on "non-religious" Channel One, Israel's public channel. Channel One was part of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority (similar to the BBC in the UK) and was mandated in its charter to "reflect the state and its achievements". Palestinian citizens of Israel and the *Haredi* Jewish community were not a "natural" part of Channel One's target audience, which consisted mainly of secular, *Masorti* and national-religious Jews. The channel and the programme embodied the concept of *mamlakhtiyut*, which called Israeli citizens to put national concerns before others, and thus not to encourage debates about social injustices, or radical change in Israeli politics. Instead, this discourse, which was dominant among Israel's official circles, called on citizens to remember their common ground: the state of Israel, its one army, one government, and one Supreme Court.

Viewers at home telephoned in to ask the programme's rabbi questions relating to Jewish life, tradition and law. The programme's Rabbi had a military background, which was unusual for a *Haredi* rabbi and helped to confer legitimacy and status on him as someone who had willingly participated in Israeli society's activities and accepted Israel's statehood. The Rabbi embodied the concept of *mamlakhtiyut*. Accordingly, most questions dealt with personal, non-political, and non-controversial issues. The programme only approached topics which were "neutral" and which did not relate to points of disagreement on the national level. The majority of questions (around 60%) dealt with social, family, and business problems which people faced and on which they wanted to consult a religious authority. Even though the callers did not reveal their religious background, it is likely that they were not Orthodox, but rather "*Masorti*" Jews, because of the type of questions (on family and contemporary social issues), and because several callers were seeking a second opinion on their question, which was less usual for Orthodox Jews.

In both the studied cases, the programmes were not conversations between religious experts (as one might expect) but dialogues between *Masorti* Jews and Orthodox Jews. This insight shed light on the nature of religious broadcasting in Israeli mass media: it lacked *Haredi* content due to the lack of *Haredi* viewers; it was aimed at a *Masorti* Jewish audience; it could not contradict Jewish-Zionist discourse; and there were very few women participants, despite the increasing trend in broader Israeli television to have men and women presenting together.

Discussion

In analysing the target audiences for the two channels studied, the presentation posited categories such as secular, traditional, national religious, orthodox, and ultra-orthodox Jews. Although these categories and others were commonly deployed in Israeli society, it was important to use them cautiously as they were politicised and could lead to over-generalisation. For example, Jews were categorised in the presentation as "traditional" if they would be likely to ask a Rabbi for a second opinion on an issue; but in fact Orthodox Jews might do the same. And was it possible to say that secular and *Masorti* Jews were uninterested in religious content on television? The category of "Orthodox Jews" also needed more discussion: would they for example lobby Parliament for particular content on public channels? More generally, in commenting on Israeli society, the tendency to categorise Middle Eastern and North African Jews as "traditional" brought negative connotations, since it was taken to imply that they were neither secular nor religious enough. Even categorising someone as "secular" rather than "religious" – as in surveys that claimed a certain percentage of Israeli society were "secular Jews" – raised the question: how did polls define "religious"? There was potentially a political element to this definition, as a stereotype in Israeli society assumed that a "religious Jew" was politically right-wing. Researchers would inevitably categorise, but it was important to do so critically: to be aware of the history, implications and political uses of particular categories.

On the question of why the Jewish state remained silent about the fundamentalist nature of some of its Rabbis, it was noted that Channel One was a public channel promoting a limited Zionist discourse that

put the nation before any other concerns, and in this context a discussion of fundamentalism was not seen as appropriate by the channel. More generally, many Israelis did not consider Jewish rabbis capable of "fundamentalism", this being associated in the popular imagination in Israel with the Muslim "other". On the financing of the channels, Channel One was funded by tax revenue in Israel, whereas the *Hidabroot* Channel was funded almost entirely by rich Jewish donors, especially from the USA. Both channels undertook surveys of audience numbers. It was unlikely that either had large audiences outside Israel: *Hidabroot* could not be viewed by satellite abroad, and Channel One tended to focus on issues of local interest in Israel. Neither promoted much discussion about ethnic minority Jewish or Palestinian Arab issues. *Hidabroot* was concerned with bringing secular Jews back to religion; Channel One with promoting the idea of one Israeli nation.

While the presentation had illuminated many valuable issues, it might not be possible to draw general conclusions about the nature of religious broadcasting in Israeli mass media on the basis of the case studies presented.

APPENDIX

Participants: Presenters, Discussants and Chairs

PRESENTERS

Ms Gihan Abou Zeid (Policy Adviser, Ministry of Family, Cairo, Egypt)
Dr Atef Alshaer (School of Oriental and African Studies, London)
Professor Muhammad Ayish (University of Sharja)
Ms Farah Dakhlallah (University of Cambridge)
Mr Rafid Fadhil (Researcher, London)
Mr Sameh Fawzy (Alexandria Library, Egypt)
Dr Ehab Galal (University of Copenhagen)
Dr Khaled Hroub (Organiser; University of Cambridge)
Mr Ilan Manor (University of Tel Aviv)
Mr Yoni Mendel (University of Cambridge)
Dr Abeer al-Najjar (American University of Sharja)
Ms Juman Quneis (University of Birzeit)
Professor Naomi Sakr (University of Westminster)
Ms Olfa Tantawi (University of Cairo)

DISCUSSANTS

Mr Ehab Bessaiso (University of Cardiff)
Dr Anissa Daoudi (University of Durham)
Dr Zahera Harb (University of Nottingham)
Dr Khaled Hroub (University of Cambridge)
Dr Dina Matar (School of Oriental and African Studies, London)
Dr Noureddine Miladi (University of Northampton)

Dr Basim Musallam (University of Cambridge)
Professor Madawi al-Rasheed (King's College, London)
Dr Tilde Rosmer (University of Oslo)
Dr Tarik Sabry (University of Westminster)
Professor Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (University of Copenhagen)
Ms Maria Way (University of Westminster)

CHAIRS

Dr Khaled Azab (Alexandria Library, Egypt)
Dr Abduallah Baabood (University of Cambridge)
Mr Ehab Bessaiso (University of Cardiff)
Dr Zahera Harb (University of Nottingham)
Dr Dina Matar (School of Oriental and African Studies, London)
Dr Abeer al-Najjar (American University of Sharja)
Dr Tilde Rosmer (University of Oslo)
Dr Sara Silvestri (City University London, and University of Cambridge)
Professor Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (University of Copenhagen)
Professor Christina Slade (City University London)
Professor Yasir Suleiman (Organiser; University of Cambridge)

NOTES

[1] Ende, W. 1994. Entry on "*Salafiyya*" in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol.VII, pp900-909. Leiden: Brill.

[2] The three talk shows were: *Bi-l-'Arabiy, Nuqtat Nizam*, and *Panorama.*

[3] News Corporation has reached an agreement to acquire a 9.09% stake in Rotana Sat, according to a Press Release issued by News Corporation on 23 February 2010 (available at http://www.newscorp.com/news/news_444.html, accessed 22 March 2010)

[4] Lynch, M. 2006. *Voices of the New Arab Public*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

[5] In Arabic, *fiqh al-waqi'*.

[6] The top Shi'ite clerics (*Maraji' al-Taqlid*) are those who are qualified to issue fatwas. They are promoted to this rank after many years of theological studies in Shi'ite theological seminaries (called Hawza). Every adult Shi'ite has to choose one of the principal clerics and follow his rules and statements. In addition to the usual Muslim tax (*zakah*), well-off Shi'ah have to pay an additional tax (*al-khums*) to the *Marji'* whom they follow.

[7] Interview available at http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite? c=ArticleA_C&page name=Zone-Arabic-ArtCulture/ACALayout&cid=1178724215057, accessed 22 March 2010.

[8] The following link provides an example of Farfour and of the controversy the series generated: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gi-c6lbFGC4&feature=related

[9] The Taef Agreement was signed in 1989. It covered political reform in Lebanon, the disarming of militias, the end of the civil war, relations with Syria, and a framework for the withdrawal of Syrian troops, as well as the abolition of sectarianism. It had not been fully implemented at the time of writing. For the full text visit: http://www.undp-pogar.org/publications/other/lebanon/taef-e.pdf accessed January 28 2010

[10] On the third, fourth and fifth days of Sha'ban (the 8th month of the Islamic calendar), Shi'is mark the birth of the three Imams known as the Three Moons: Imam Hussayn, Imam Abbas, and Imam Zayn al-'Abidin.

[11] Note that this programme has been discontinued.

[12] Deeb, L. 2006. *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[13] The term *Masorti*. which literally means "traditional", is used here to mean Jewish people who observe some religious practices, but who do not consider themselves – in the Israeli context – to be religious Jews. In the American context, the term Conservative Judaism would probably be the closest equivalent. *Masorti* comes from the word Masoret, which in Hebrew – and the Jewish context – means "Jewish heritage".

[14] See the official *Hidabroot* website: http://www.*hidabroot*.org/About.asp

Since the mid-1990s, the influence of satellite television broadcasting in the Middle East has become central to the shaping of public attitudes in the region and beyond. While many of the main influential mainstream satellite channels are news-focused, entertainment and religious broadcasting are also significant. *Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East* offers a synopsis of a conference held at Cambridge in January 2010. It focuses on the discourses of a selection of Islamic, Christian and Jewish religious broadcasting channels, as well as the wider factors and structures that sustain them.

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