Media culture as counter-hegemonic strategy: the communicative action of the Arab minority in Israel

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This article argues that media globalization has a major impact on modes of social and political resistance of minorities against cultural and political control of nationalizing states. Minorities utilize globalized media, especially of their kin nations to overcome control, surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms set by their own state (Silverstone, 2006). This is especially true for minorities living in actively nationalizing states that constantly seek to deepen their control over their social and spatial environment (Brubaker, 1996, 2004). Nationalizing states seek to crystallize the collective imagination of their citizenry and construct their self-understanding in accordance with its own image, as belonging to and defending an ethnic nationality (Brubaker, 1996). Such states utilize various ideological mechanisms, one of which is the media, which is an effective disciplinary tool to shape the collective imagination of its citizens (Anderson, 1991; Deutsch, 1966). Minorities, on the other hand, who are sometimes characterized as trapped and marginal, develop their own strategies to counter state control and socialization policies (Brubaker, 1995). In the age of media globalization, minorities develop their own communicative action and media consumption culture as a strategy of resistance.[1] They show deep mistrust of the media of the dominant ethnicity of the nationalizing state and seek media spaces that meet their expectations. The globalization of media provides them with tools to form a counter-hegemonic cultural environment independent of state regulations and influence. This is especially true when we speak of national minorities that have either kin state/s or kin nations that have developed media systems.

To demonstrate this thesis, the article addresses the communicative action and media culture of a particular national minority. Minority media has

usually been addressed based on the experience of migrant minorities in different countries (Browne, 2005; Frachton and Vargaftig, 1995; Gillespie, 1995). These minorities seek to maintain their cultural and linguistic bonds with their kin nation (Silverstone and Georgiou, 2005). The experience of indigenous minorities has not attracted enough attention in the literature. Therefore, examining the impact of globalization of media space on the media culture of indigenous minorities, and the way in which this process influences these minorities, could contribute to our understanding of the cultural as well as political dimensions of globalization. It could also contribute to our understanding of the impact of media globalization on the shaping of collective imagination among minorities. It is claimed that indigenous national minorities seek to connect with their kin nation through consuming media outlets that provide them with the cultural repertoire they wish for. Thereby, they overcome the control and socialization policies orchestrated by the state and develop their own media culture.

The examination of Arab communicative action and media consumption culture in Israel will provide us with evidence that challenges previous theoretical conceptualizations of the Arab minority in Israel, as a 'trapped minority' or a minority that suffers from 'double marginality'. In the age of global media, minorities are able to overcome their immediate media space and as a result transcend their physical location. They are able to connect with their cultural group through media contents. The consumption of various media genres, especially news, movies and series, enable the minority to virtually share the social, political and cultural burdens of their own nation and be influenced by them. Although it is not claimed that this pattern of communicative action may lead to the total erosion of the nationalizing state's ideological power, it may lead to a steady and constant decline in state hegemony over the cultural repertoire of minorities living in it.

The Arab minority in Israel shares with the Jewish majority Israeli citizenship. Yet it differs from most of the Jewish majority by way of its nationality, culture and language, which form part of the larger Arab culture of the Middle East region. This dual reality raises many questions concerning the patterns of media consumption among this minority. Against the backdrop of a rise in Arab satellite TV networks, whose broadcast reach extends throughout the Middle East, one should ask about the correlation between media consumption patterns, the mistrust of Israeli media and the political and cultural consciousness of the Arab minority.

It is claimed that Arab patterns of communicative behavior may lead to 'double consciousness' among the Arab minority (Du Bois, 2003; Manning, 1986). Double consciousness, in this context, means the development of linguistic and cultural competence that enables the average person to understand and feel part of two different and sometimes even conflicting societal cultures (Thomas, 1966). Although this does not mean the overcoming of the daily hardships, resulting from state suppressive policies, it nevertheless enables

people the freedom of choice of where to feel at home, especially in a world where home is gradually becoming virtual. Double consciousness, as depicted by Du Bois, is of tragic nature. However, it could be viewed as a structural opportunity, where people are able to overcome the limitations of their physical and immediate cultural environment and feel part of a broader cultural environment to which they belong but to which they have limited physical access.

The examination of the communicative action and media consumption culture of the Arab minority in Israel demonstrates the practical communicative action that leads to the rise of double consciousness. This process is enabled on the context of the technological innovations over the last several decades that transformed the nature and meaning of media space (Rantanen, 2006). Whereas, until the early 20th century, sovereign state borders posed real limitations on media cultures, distribution and contents, today we witness a continuous degradation of state sovereignty over the field of communications and a rise in the transfer of media content all over the globe. The influence that media exercise over the formation of public agendas and collective memory has changed as a result of its globalization (Price, 2002).

In order to demonstrate the hypothesis of the article, I begin with a brief historical analysis of the Arab media landscape in Israel. Later I draw on a public opinion poll conducted among a random sample of the adult Arab population in Israel in December 2004 and January 2005.[2] A total of 594 interviews, each lasting 75 to 90 minutes were conducted.

Media history of the Arab national minority

By 1952, most Arabs who remained in what became the State of Israel were officially made citizens of a new state defined in Jewish ethnic terms. In terms of geography and communication, Arabs in Israel have for long periods of time been cut off from their kin in the Arab cultural and physical landscape extending beyond Israel's borders. Their status as a minority was defined and controlled by a military government body established in 1948 and formally disbanded in 1966. Much energy was invested by the state into divorcing the Arab society that remained within Israel's borders from both its past, and its present natural geopolitical space. The state and its semi-official supportive institutions, such as the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor) launched cultural policies aiming to resocialize the remaining Arab citizens and transform them from Palestinians into submissive Israeli Arabs (Rabinowitz, 1993).

During the war, Arab political, cultural and economic elites were exiled, and all Arab urban centers were destroyed (Gahnem, 2001; Haider, 1995; Jiryis, 1976; Lustick, 1980; Rouhana, 1997; Shafir and Peled, 2002; Zureik, 1979). As a result, the vast majority of Arab public institutions collapsed, including those vehicles of mass communication that had developed prior to 1948 (Kabha, 2004). It should be noted that from the first decade of the 20th

century up until 1948, the number of Arab journalists active in Palestine had increased continually and many newspapers were published, principally in major urban centers such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa and Acre. These newspapers generally expressed the sentiments of the Palestinian people in the face of the approaching threat posed primarily by Zionist immigration and settlement in Palestine. Among the most widely disseminated and well-known newspapers of that era were: *Filistin*, *Al-Karmel* and *Al-Mufid* (Khalidi, 1997).

In the wake of the 1948 war, a deep cultural and communication vacuum suddenly emerged with the severance of the local population from Palestinians and Arabs living in neighboring regions and countries outside Israel. This isolation intensified the sense of crisis and powerlessness among the indigenous Arab minority, and geographic and socioeconomic factors exacerbated their predicament: as the majority of Arabs remaining in Israel were rural peasants, they were dependent on information disseminated by state propaganda organs. All Arabic newspapers – with the exception of *Al-Ittihad*, an organ of the Communist Party – had ceased operations. Due both to the pressure the government exerted on the opposition Communist Party – a political home for many of the Arab citizens at the time – and to the fact that only a small percentage of the population was literate in Arabic, *Al-Ittihad* was oftentimes reduced to a very small circle of readers, limiting its influence. In an atmosphere of fear and defeat, and especially in light of a developing collaborator culture – that is, Arab citizens who collaborated with the Israeli military and the General Security Services (*Shabak*) (Cohen, 2006) – most members of Arab society did not dare openly reveal having listened to radio programs broadcast from Arab countries or having read *Al-Ittihad* (Ozacky-Lazar, 2006).

Until the abolition of the military government in 1966 and the 1967 war, the small group of educated Arabs in Israel was sustained primarily by *Al-Yom* – an Arabic-language newspaper that the Histadrut began publishing immediately after the 1948 war out of the offices of the now defunct *Palestine,* a newspaper published prior to the 1948 war. After *Al-Yom* ceased publication in 1968, it was replaced by *Al-Anbaa*, which continued *Al-Yom*'s agenda, but in a more sophisticated form. These two newspapers, together with several other party newspapers – e.g. *Al-Marsad*, published by Mapam (the United Labor Party) – repeated state propaganda. Local broadcast information was available in Arabic only after 1958, when Kol Yisrael ('The Voice of Israel') initiated radio news and other limited programming in the form of Sawt Israel (Jamal, 2005).

Like other hegemonic regimes, the State of Israel transformed the media into one of its principal ideological organisms and socializing mechanisms, second only to the education system (Althusser, 1990; Gitlin, 2003). The re-socialization policy was directed by the Prime Minister's office, which worked rigorously to inculcate awareness and acceptance of the new reality

throughout the Arab population for the purpose of quashing dissent. Official media policy therefore attempted to construct an Arab collective memory divorced from its cultural environment and historical past.[3] Moreover, the elite-affiliated media made great efforts to extol the cultural supremacy of Jewish society, messages that implied the cultural, economic and social back-wardness of Arab society. All these ploys were contrived to justify the cul-tural, political and military colonization of Arab society and its geographic space (Shafir and Peled, 2002). Further, the aim was the construction of a new 'Israeli Arab' citizen, whose identity and consciousness would be disconnected from the historical and ontological past (Cohen, 2006; Rouhana, 1997).

As a result of the geopolitical changes initiated by the 1967 war, and in tan-dem with technological advances and transformations that overtook Israeli media, the conditions of Arab society in Israel's media space altered, but not necessarily for the better. Control of the collective Arab memory continued to occupy the attention of those in charge of Israeli media policy and practice. This policy received added impetus when Israeli television was introduced within the framework of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA). The Israel Broadcasting Authority Law (1965), the institution's legal foundation, expounds the official position regarding the Arab audience. Section 3 of the law refers to Arabic-language broadcasts, to be conducted for the benefit of 'Arabic-speaking residents' and so as to promote and support mutual under-standing and peace with neighboring countries. The use of 'residents' rather than 'citizens' and the focus on propaganda aims vis-a-vis neighboring Arab countries and audiences reflected state policies and intentions. The Arabic-language broadcasts were not aimed at meeting the needs of Israel's Arab cit-izens, but were rather aimed at ensuring the Arab population's loyalty and subjugation by means of a hegemonic media regime (Bar-Haim, 1958).[4]

In time, Israeli authorities partially achieved their goals in this regard and large parts of Arab society adapted themselves to Israel's media map. The process was driven by increasing levels of education among Arabs, and their increasing integration into Jewish Israeli society; a process evident too, in the ubiquity of spoken Hebrew among the Arab population. Yet, like other accommodations, the spread of Hebrew was not by choice; rather, it was the outcome of total political and economic dependence on state institutions and the Jewish economy. The number of Arab readers of Hebrew-language news-papers increased, as did the number of Arab listeners to Hebrew-language radio broadcasts and Arab viewers of news broadcasts on Channel One – the sole Israeli channel operating until the early 1990s.

Until the 1990s, the competitors to these sources of information available to the Arab community originated in the Arab world, primarily Sawt Al-Arab (Voice of the Arabs) radio broadcasts from Cairo, and television broadcasts from Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon (until the eruption of the civil war there in 1975). The attraction of Egyptian and Lebanese television broadcasts

decreased, however, with the decline of Nasserism and the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war. Jordanian television became the primary Arab provider of programming to Arab viewers in Israel and for many years it was the only bridge linking Arab society in Israel to the Arab world prior to the satellite era.

As for print media, literate Arab citizens were sustained, as noted, first by the weekly *Al-Ittihad* and then by the daily *Al-Anbaa*. These newspapers continued to attract relatively large groups of readers from the literate minority. *Al-Ittihad* was widely read among Communist Party members and supporters, whose numbers increased steadily. This newspaper became a unique voice on the Israeli media map, articulating the Arab population's heart and soul and serving as a platform for intellectuals and cultural commentators excluded from the Israeli state-controlled press. *Al-Ittihad* shifted from weekly to daily publication in 1984 and served as a school nurturing generations of Arab journalists with nationalist political leanings. Nonetheless, the newspaper was unsuccessful in garnering broad popular support and distribution has remained limited to circles close to the Communist Party.

Some in the Arab community were exposed to other local nationalist publications, such as the newspaper circulated irregularly by the Al-Ard ('The Land') movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Jamal, 2005). Despite the importance of these publications in terms of content, they never achieved widespread distribution, largely because of policies employed by the Israeli authorities against them. The efforts of the Al-Ard movement to acquire a license to issue a newspaper were continually rejected by the Interior Minister, the sole authority empowered to authorize the publication of newspapers in Israel to the present day (Jamal, 2005: 97–121). Publications produced by the Al-Ard movement were therefore issued as sporadic, separate one-time publications – a format exempt from licensing requirements or permissions under Israeli law (Lustick, 1980).

In contrast, *Al-Anbaa* was an establishment newspaper, financially supported by official sources. It was distributed among political groups close to the ruling Labor Party and to teachers who were indirectly forced to buy and read it. The newspaper – which experienced severe economic problems with the decline of the Histadrut and the beginnings of privatization and liberalization of the Israeli economy – closed in 1984.[5] By the time of its closure the newspaper had already made an impact, at least as regards the political attitudes of an important group of Arab citizens; specifically, those appointed as teachers in the education system.

The construction of a national media space

The early 1980s marked a turning point in the media history of the Arab community in Israel. Not only did *Al-Ittihad* begin appearing as a daily, but also in 1983 a new weekly newspaper began to appear in Nazareth, *Assennara.*

This newspaper, which began as a marketing vehicle for a large Nazareth advertising company was established by an experienced journalist and quickly carved out a new niche in the Arab media landscape. *Assennara* gradually developed into a weekly newspaper providing important information and sensational news. *Assennara*'s success as a private commercial weekly blazed the way for the foundation of two similar weekly newspapers, *Kul al-Arab*, founded in 1987, and *Panorama*, which began publication in 1988. These three weeklies have gradually come to dominate the Arab newspaper market. No substitutes for *Al-Ittihad*, the three represent a different type of publication, that strives to adapt itself to the competitive market conditions now characterizing the local, as well as global economy (Jamal, 2006a).

Arab society, located at the margins of the Israeli economy, has adopted economic patterns of behavior that are considerably influenced by norms dominant in Jewish society. Improvement in the quality of life of Arab society in Israel, accompanied by the growth of a large lower middle class, has enabled the spread of consumer culture. The three weeklies just referred to provide clear indications of this trend. They are more commercial than informative; that is, almost 50 percent of their space is allocated to advertising (Jamal, 2006a). The format of these newspapers is similar to that of popular Israeli newspapers such as *Yediot Aharonot* and *Maariv*. Tabloid in character, they present news with a sensational twist. They do not conduct in-depth, investigative reporting and mostly publish short reports, some of which are obtained from recognized news agencies or electronic media, especially the internet.[6] Despite these limitations, their distribution is relatively wide, especially when compared to party-affiliated newspapers (Jamal, 2006a). The three newspapers have thus successfully restructured the Arab media landscape, a sphere distinct from the Hebrew media landscape in language and the contents addressed, but similar in its exposure to profit-driven journalism, a by-product of globalization.

A market spirit and considerations of profit inform management at the three weeklies and their status as privately owned enterprises free of any ideological commitments has turned them into 'supermarkets' for news-seekers. Notwithstanding their commercial bent, the owners of all three newspapers profess to represent the interests of the Arab society, each according to his style and outlook. The language of national consensus that leaps from the pages of the commercial press should be considered, however, at least partially, as a mechanism for the accumulation of wealth, stemming more from a savvy understanding of their target market, rather than the earnest putting forth of political visions. Content analysis of the texts appearing in the newspapers indicates that they do represent Arab society, but rather superficially (Jamal, 2006b). The language of national commitment and demands for recognition of the rights of Arab society as a national minority seem to be motivated largely by pragmatic interests. Further indications of such pragmatism can be found by examining the space allotted to official announcements

emanating from the Government Publications Bureau (*Lapam*). This body controls the government publications/advertising market, which serves as an important source of income for Arab newspapers due to the paucity of funds available to the Arab advertising market from the private sector. In order to obtain advertising contracts, the Arab press often succumbs to the Bureau's demands. The latter utilizes its economic power to pressure Arab newspapers into softening nationalistic language and minimizing their critique of government policies. Acquiescence allows the Arab commercial press to benefit from close to 1 percent of all advertising expenditures in Israel, including its share of the rather paltry government publication budget (Jamal, 2006b). It is this tiny piece of the advertising pie that fuels the raging competition for revenues between commercial press outlets in the Arab sector, a phenomenon that has become increasingly blatant in recent years.

Since the early 1990s, the number of Arab newspapers published has steadily increased. Most of these newspapers are commercial ventures, indicating that advertising revenues are a good source of income. Other newspapers established are party-affiliated and began publication with the fragmentation of the Arab party structure in Israel (Jamal, 2006a). In 1989, *Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya*, published by the Islamic Movement, began appearing; in 1997, *Fasl Al-Maqal* of the National Democratic Assembly was established. The privately owned newspapers, *Al-Midan* (1994), *Al-Ain* (1999), *Hadith An-Nas* (1999), *Al-Akhbar* (2001), *Al-Ahali* (2004) and *Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed* (2004) followed. In addition to these newspapers, a chain of local newspapers and monthly magazines began publication, among them *Al-Manbar*, *Lilac* and *Lady*, with a more limited circulation. In the last few years a wave of new internet news sites were initiated by commercial and political forces, such as Panet, owned by *Panorama*; Arabs48, affiliated with the National Democratic Party; Farfesh and Al-Arab, affiliated with *Kul al-Arab*; and Assenara, owned by the newspaper *Assenara*. These developments mirror the rise of an almost autonomous Arab public sphere, outside direct state control. This emerging sphere plays a major counter-hegemonic role, constructing an Arab collective memory different from that wished-for by the state.

Communicative action in the satellite age

Radio and television consumption in Arab society in Israel has also undergone enormous changes since the early 1990s, in tandem with massive changes in the media environment of the Arab community in Israel. Liberalization of the Israeli economy facilitated media empowerment, transforming it into a market niche. Numerous regional radio stations have joined Kol Yisrael and Galei Zahal (the IDF Airwaves), as a consequence of Israel's Second Broadcasting Authority Law (1990). A considerable number of illegal radio stations have also sprung up. In addition, Israel has witnessed a revolution in television

broadcasting over the last two decades. At the close of the 1980s, cable television was introduced in Israel, adding a long list of channels to the system. At the beginning of the 1990s, after a short experimental phase, Channel 2 began broadcasting and Channel 10 was added in 2002. With the advent of satellite broadcasting, television transmitted from all over the globe came into many if not most Israeli homes (Weinman, 1996).

The technological and regulatory changes of the 1990s made it possible to receive television broadcasts originating in Arab countries with previously unknown clarity, on a very broad range of subjects. Today's Arab audience is exposed to dozens, perhaps hundreds, of private Arabic-speaking television channels (Alterman, 1998; Miles, 2005). Channels broadcasting programming for the entire family, or providing leisure entertainment and coverage of well-known icons among the Arab population include Orbit, ART and Rotana networks and their affiliates. Furthermore, there are news channels, such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya that broadcast non-stop news, providing an in-depth picture of developments in the Arab world, as well as in the world at large.

These developments have had a major impact on the communicative action and media consumption culture of the Arab society in Israel. They provided new media platforms that attracted the Arab audience in Israel, thereby intensifying the withdrawal of the Arab society from the Israeli public sphere into an autonomous one characterized by new patterns of media consumption. Arabs in Israel are viewers of Arab satellite TV channels from the Arab world and readers of local Arabic newspapers and at the same time still read and watch Israeli media outlets. This pattern of split media spheres feeds the double consciousness of this population, something that is manifested in the information gathered in the public opinion poll conducted in it.

One of the first questions presented to interviewees, and aimed at examining their TV viewing patterns, was whether they watch TV and how often. Of the interviewees, 81.7 percent claimed to watch television daily, or almost every day. Another 7.1 percent watch television every few days and 7.5 percent watch infrequently. Only 3.6 percent of the interviewees answered that they did not watch television at all. Among these, 41.9 percent indicated that they did not own a television set and 30.2 percent stated that television did not interest them, or that they did not have the time. When television viewing rates are compared with rates of daily Arabic (9.3%) and Hebrew (17.4%) newspaper reading as drawn from the poll, a large difference in the frequency of consumption of the respective media is evident.

In order to examine what is viewed by the Arab public, interviewees were asked to rank the three television channels that they watched most. The findings indicate that the Arab television viewing audience in Israel watches many different channels that include both Israeli and Arab TV programming. This mix clearly indicates the Arab consumer's tendency to sample from both Arab and Israeli spaces, the two being perceived as complementary, rather than opposing spheres. The most popular choices were: Al-Jazeera, Channel 2,

MBC, Channel 1, LBC, Rotana, Future, Iqraa, Al-Arabiya, MBC2, Channel
10, Jordan TV, the Sports Channel, the Film Channel, and the Abu Dhabi
Channel. The range of content broadcast by these channels was very rich,
including news, family, film, sports and religious matters. Some of these
channels originate in Israel and are broadcast in Hebrew; others originate in
the Arab world and are broadcast in Arabic. The potpourri of preferences also
reflects the impact of technology on media consumption patterns. Many of
the most popular channels are broadcast from places far away in the Middle
East and the Persian Gulf, a fact that reflects the media's globalization as well
as the increasing erosion of government control over national media and cul-
tural spaces (Price, 2002).

   The research found that Al-Jazeera was preferred by more Arab television
viewers than any other channel. Among the respondents, 29.6 percent ranked
it in first place, 12.9 percent in second place, and 8.6 percent in third place.
Further, a total of 50.9 percent of all television-viewing respondents watched
Al-Jazeera with varying frequency. Channel 2, the leading Israeli channel
watched by the Arab public, was ranked in first place by 11.5 percent of the
respondents, in second place by 12.5 percent and in third place by 6.1 percent.
A total of 29.4 percent of all the television-viewing respondents reported that
they watched Channel 2 with varying frequency. These data indicate the pop-
ularity of Channel 2 and its penetration into Arab society despite Arab alien-
ation from its contents and the criticism leveled at its programming (see
details in next section). It is likewise important to note that 84.5 percent of
Channel 2's viewers also reported that they watched Al-Jazeera. A similar
finding was obtained among Channel 1 viewers, 79.5 percent of whom also
watched Al-Jazeera. This pattern indicates a tendency to balance several alter-
native sources of broadcast news. Consumers are thus able to construct a
more well-rounded view of the events by comparing the information obtained
about regional developments from different regional sources. The advantage
provided by this utilization of the opportunity to compare alternative sources
of information is generally unavailable to Jewish society in Israel, since they
largely lack Arabic-language skills, diminishing their ability to balance infor-
mation received against other sources.

   Another channel that achieved a respectable ranking by Arab viewers in
Israel was MBC, formerly broadcast out of London and now out of Dubai: Of
respondents, 10.2 percent ranked it in first place, 10.2 percent in second place
and 8 percent in third place. These rankings indicate this channel's stability
within its niche. A total of 28.3 percent of all television viewers watch this
channel with varying viewing frequency. MBC, the oldest satellite television
channel received by Arabs in Israel, is a general channel, mixing news with
Arab cultural and comedy programs, and many series in Arabic that are pro-
duced in Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

   Among the other channels that attracted a stable viewing audience was the
Lebanese LBC: 4.8 percent of television viewers rank it in one of the three

leading places, and it garners a total audience of 14.4 percent. The fifth most popular channel, ranked in first place by 4.8 percent of the Arab public, was the religious channel, Iqraa, although only 3.1 percent and 2.6 percent of the respondents ranked it second and third, respectively. The music channel Rotana was ranked in first place by 4.3 percent of the viewers, and in third place by 6 percent. Overall, 13.7 percent of all television viewers watch this channel with varying frequency.

In order to identify differences not only as regards viewing frequency, but also as regards the amount of time spent watching each channel, respondents were asked to note the average number of hours that they watched each channel in the last week before conducting the interview.

Analysis of the average viewing hours daily for each of the 10 channels ranked in first place indicates that entertainment channels lead in terms of viewing time. The average number of hours spent viewing each channel were: 2.5 hours for MBC2, a film channel; 2.08 hours for Rotana, a music channel that broadcasts video clips and entertainment news; 1.75 hours for MBC; and 1.6 hours for Al-Manar, Channel 2 and LBC, channels that mix news and entertainment.

To further deepen our understanding of media consumption patterns, respondents were asked to categorize the television channels they watched according to the type of programming broadcast.

In comparing the viewing patterns for Israeli channels with those of the Arab satellite channels, a clear division in the television spheres was found. As regards news and political programming, 80.7 percent of respondents stated that they were interested in news to a great or very great extent, and 74.2 percent expressed interest in political programming, although this high level of interest was manifested in varied viewing patterns. Arab television viewers preferred to watch programs dealing with political issues – such as the Israel-Palestinian conflict or the American occupation of Iraq – on Arab news channels, the most outstanding example of which was Al-Jazeera. Among Arab television viewers, 65.4 percent preferred to watch news about the Israel-Palestinian conflict on Arab channels, compared to 27.3 percent who preferred to watch Israeli channels on this subject. Regarding the American occupation of Iraq, 80.7 percent preferred to watch Arab channels, as opposed to 8.9 percent who preferred viewing Israeli channels.

A similar picture emerged with respect to cultural, entertainment and music programs: 67.5 percent of Arab television viewers in Israel watch such programs on Arabic channels, while only 3.6 percent watch such programs on Israeli channels. The principal reasons for this trend are the identification of these viewers with the Arab world and its culture, coupled with the remoteness felt with regard to Jewish society and the culture that it has produced – a culture foreign to the Arab Middle East in general, and to local Arab society in particular.

On subjects directly related to daily life – e.g. education, the economy, health, the environment and sports – a large percentage of the Arab public

watches Israeli channels. Among respondents, 45.9 percent preferred to watch economic news on Israeli channels, compared with 19.8 percent who preferred to do so on Arab channels; 39.0 percent preferred to watch Israeli channels for programming on health and the environment, compared with 28.5 percent who preferred to watch such programs on Arab channels; 51.0 percent preferred Israeli programs on education, compared with 24.7 percent who preferred Arab programs; and 33.0 percent preferred Israeli channels for viewing sports, compared with 9 percent who preferred to watch sports on Arabic channels.

These viewing patterns are reflective of the duality of the media landscape and dual positioning adopted by the Arab society in Israel, while also highlighting the different functions that each television sphere serves. Further, these findings constitute one concrete example of Arab society's lack of trust in the Israeli channels and the strong trust placed in Arabic channels, attitudes directly explored in poll questions reviewed below.

The influence of Arab satellite television on Arab society

The findings on Arab society's television consumption patterns reported thus far indicate a clear trend, i.e. the high consumption of content and programs broadcast by Arab satellite television. In light of this trend, the question of whether and how much the Arab public believes the content broadcast by these channels is relevant to an exploration of how they might work to affect the community's self-image and perceptions of its political and cultural environment. Of particular interest in this article is the question of to what extent the viewing of Arab satellite TV channels influences the attitudes of Arab society in Israel towards the Israeli environment. In order to explore these issues, participants in the research were asked to answer a number of questions regarding the effect of satellite television on these variables. Among the questions asked were: to what extent the interviewees believed that Arab satellite channels represent their views and their interests and/or strengthen their identification with the Arab world and its problems; and how consumption of these channels influences their viewing of Israeli TV channels.

When the interviewees were asked to determine whether Arab satellite TV channels represent their views and interests, 39.5 percent of the respondents replied positively. An additional 20.5 percent expressed an intermediate position. Among the remainder, only 33.8 percent, answered in the negative, that is, they did not believe that the Arab satellite channels represented them, whereas 6.2 percent did not know (had no opinion). These responses indicate that the majority of the interviewees tend to believe that Arab satellite television does, in fact, represent their views and interests, despite the fact that they are broadcast from the Arab world and do not involve Arab society in Israel in any way whatsoever in formulating their media policies. The perception

that Arab satellite channels represent Arab society is reflected in the loyalty the Arab public exhibit towards these channels and in the kind of content viewed therein.

In order to better understand the Arab public's position on this issue, several statements were presented to the respondents who were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The findings indicate that the Arab satellite television channels do have a considerable impact on Arab public opinion in various subject areas, such as their self-awareness, political positions and interest in cultural matters.

Arab satellite broadcasts were designated by 40.7 percent of the respondents as enhancing the sense of belonging to the Arab world to a great or very great extent; however, 17.4 percent did not agree and a further 38.2 percent replied that they agreed with this statement only to a small or very small degree. This distribution indicates that the majority of Arab society in Israel agrees that the Arab satellite broadcasts reinforce their sense of community with the Arab world, at least to some extent. It should be noted that one explanation for the lack of support for this statement among some respondents could be the strong sense of belonging to the Arab world felt by many of the study's participants well before the satellite broadcasts began – though the availability and programming of these broadcasts can be assumed to have enhanced existing feelings.

Another statement presented was: 'Arab satellite broadcasts influenced my identification with problems in the Arab world.' Among respondents, 57.3 percent agreed with this statement while an additional 29.6 percent of respondents reported being affected by these broadcasts only to a moderate or small degree. Only 9.7 percent of the respondents replied that they did not agree with the statement at all. These findings support characterization of Arab society in Israel as part and parcel of the wider Arab regional space which forms an object of national, cultural and emotional affinity.

Respondents were also asked to address the effect of Arab satellite television broadcasts on their self-confidence as Arabs living in Israel. The responses were as follows: 39.5 percent stated that the broadcasts did reinforce their self-confidence, 32 percent answered that the broadcasts reinforced their self-confidence to a moderate or small degree, and 25 percent replied that the broadcasts did not reinforce that feeling at all. On this issue as well, it is possible that some of the respondents had felt very self-confident as Arabs before the study and therefore did not believe that the satellite broadcasts could enhance that attitude much further.

A statement addressing the influence Arab satellite channels had on viewing rates for Israeli television broadcasts in Arabic received these responses: 43.9 percent affirmed that the Arab satellite broadcasts definitely reduced their viewing of Israeli television broadcasts, 28.4 percent stated that their viewing of Israeli television was affected to a moderate or small degree, while 24.3 percent reported no effect. A similar, even clearer picture emerged

regarding the effect of these broadcasts on the viewing rates for Israeli cultural programs: 47.5 percent responded that the Arab satellite broadcasts reduced their viewing of Israeli cultural programs, 25.5 percent responded that their viewing was affected to a moderate or small degree, while 22.3 percent stated that the broadcasts had no effect.

Mistrust of Israeli media outlets

Parallel to the information solicited on viewing patterns with regard to Arab satellite TV channels among Arab society in Israel, respondents were asked to rate their trust in the Israeli media system. Many questions were presented in this vein, some of which are presented herein. One such question asked of interviewees was: 'To what extent do you think that the Hebrew media represent Arab citizens of Israel?'

A majority of the respondents (58.4%) indicated that Hebrew media do not represent them. Only 18.2 percent of respondents indicated that Hebrew media do represent them, and 17.4 percent did not express an unequivocal opinion (i.e. they expressed the mid-point position). In contrast to the responses to previous questions, only 6 percent of the respondents indicated that they did not know (or had no opinion). Arab media consumers therefore tend to have unambiguous opinions of how the Hebrew media relates to their society, and thus tend to make more definitive assessments of the extent to which that media represents or, more precisely, does not represent them (Abraham et al., 2004).

The data acquire added salience when we consider the findings regarding the extent to which Arab media consumers perceive Hebrew media as representing official government positions. Hebrew media have developed in complex interaction with the state. Although today's leading Hebrew newspapers were founded as private newspapers and have consistently functioned from that position, their relationship with the state, formed through informal as well as formal administrative and institutional arrangements, has created the impression of partnership, if not cooptation (Jamal, 2005: 97–121).

Given this context, it was important to survey the Arab public's view of the Hebrew media with respect to the representation of official government positions. The majority of the interviewees (64%) indicated that from their perspective, Hebrew media represented official government policy. Only 8.7 percent did not agree with that statement, 13.7 percent did not express an unequivocal opinion and the same percentage responded that they did not know (had no opinion). One can therefore conclude that Arab media consumers in Israel do not believe that the Hebrew media operate as free and open arenas divorced from state dictates. Instead, Hebrew media are viewed as forming part of the state's ideological apparatus – i.e. as mechanisms for expressing Israel's goals and furthering its interests.

The data also shows that the Arab public is heavily alienated from Israeli cultural programming. A high percentage (62.5%) of respondents indicated that they were not at all interested in Hebrew films and television series. A much smaller percentage (17.8%) responded that they were somewhat interested, with 11.8 percent stating that they were moderately interested, and only 7.9 percent stating that they were very interested in this type of programming.

The research also sought to directly compare the level of trust of Arab audience in the news provided by Arab satellite channels (primarily Al-Jazeera), with their level of trust in the news provided by the Israeli channels (primarily Channel 2 due to its higher preference rating among viewers of Israeli news programming). To this end, the following hypothetical scenario was presented to respondents: 'Al-Jazeera reported on the death of two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip from Israeli army fire while Channel 2 reported on the same incident, but claimed that the Palestinians were killed when an explosive device that they were preparing blew up.' Respondents were asked to indicate which channel's report they would believe.

Given this scenario, 64.4 percent of the respondents said that they would believe Al-Jazeera, compared to 4.3 percent who would believe Channel 2. Only 12.1 percent responded that the trust placed in the two channels would depend on the circumstances surrounding the reports. This sizeable gap in the level of trust attributed to the news broadcasts by the two channels indicates the depth of the crisis of confidence in Israeli television on the part of Arab society in Israel, particularly as regards new reports related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Arab population of Israel does not trust Israeli media broadcasts that, as noted above, they perceive as partial to the government's position.

Towards a conclusion

Although it has yet to finalize its geopolitical boundaries, the State of Israel has exerted considerable effort to control and define the limits of political and cultural awareness of its citizens. In everything concerning Arab society in Israel, Israel has acted energetically, utilizing ideological mechanisms to inculcate the dominant Jewish worldview amongst members of the Arab indigenous minority. The state attempted to discipline Arab society by colonizing the Arab mind, after it had succeeded in dominating the Arab economy and political system. One of the obvious expressions of these efforts is the use of media broadcasts in Arabic, as well as Hebrew, to cultivate the preferred image of the 'Israeli Arab'. The research findings reviewed here however, have demonstrated that success has been limited. Arab society in Israel has culturally and politically overcome official Israeli cultural control and socialization policies. This society has developed its own autonomous public sphere in its own language and consumes media from the wider Arab world. It

mistrusts Israeli media institutions and consumes their contents in fields necessary for its practical needs.

The data reviewed in this article clearly indicate that Arab society in Israel has developed a unique communicative action and media consumption culture. Although this data is not conclusive, it is telling. It adds a new way of looking at the political and cultural behavior of minorities. By means of media consumption patterns, Arab society crosses the borders of concrete space to inhabit virtual spaces that transcend those same boundaries and demonstrate its double consciousness, facilitated by its dual location in the opportunities structure opened to it with the globalization of the media. The communicative action and media culture of Arab society in Israel reflect the rise of socio-cultural double consciousness that counters the physical and political entrapment established by the state. Instead of falling within the limitations of double marginalization, the Arab minority takes advantage of the diverse media opportunities available among the plethora of accessible newspapers, radio stations and television channels, both cable and satellite, in order to share with both societies it is affiliated with – Israeli and Arab – some of their cultural productions. The fact that the Arab community does not influence this cultural production and is not invited to shape it does not mean that it does not share it as passive consumer. The two-ness of the Arab community or its 'in-betweenness', translated into double consciousness may have impact on the political behavior of this community, something that is beyond the scope of this article.

For the time being, the objective of Arab viewers in Israel is to obtain the greatest benefits and amounts of information available in their media space. While preferring the entertainment, films, series, music programs and talk shows offered by Arab satellite broadcasters from the Arab world that speak to their identity as Arabs, and expressing high levels of confidence and satisfaction with the content on politics, nationality, culture and sociolinguistic identity provided by the same, Arab society in Israel continues to rely on Israeli media for coverage of domestic politics and social developments in Israel that are important to the planning of their daily lives, living as they do within the larger framework of Israeli society. This mixed consumption enables Arab viewers to be involved in two political and cultural spaces. This fine perception of the multiple functions served by television programming, translated into the broad distribution of viewing patterns between the diverse and numerous channels, clearly demonstrates the one-dimensionality of models that view minorities as objects of state policies. The data indicate that media consumption patterns are determined by deliberate, rational behavior, manifesting the complex, multi-layered and variegated nature of Arab communicative action in Israel. Although it is hard to characterize the nature of the impact that such communicative action and media consumption culture may have on the relationship between the Arab minority and the state of Israel, it is possible to say that, in the long run, Arab media space will be

increasingly shaped by satellite television contents from the Arab world, setting challenges to the cultural dimensions of Israeli citizenship among Arab citizens, especially at a time when the nationalizing efforts of the Israeli state are increasing.

Notes

1. Following the literature, I use the concept 'consumer' and 'consumption' rather than audience (see Silverstone, 1996).

2. The public opinion poll formed part of a comprehensive media research project for I'lam Media Center for Palestinian Arabs in Israel; the project was implemented by a team led by me.

3. See letter of intentions written by Samuel Bar-Haim regarding the issuing of a newspaper in Arabic for the Arab public in Israel (18 September, 1958; see file G 5498/12 in the Governmental Archives in Jerusalem).

4. Letter of intentions written by Samuel Bar-Haim (see note 3).

5. On the financial difficulties of *Al-Anba'a*, see file GL 17084/13 in the Governmental Archives in Jerusalem.

6. Personal interviews with journalists and editors working in the Arab newspapers in Israel (Nazareth, 10–12 October, 2006).

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