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## **World Society and the Middle East: Reconstructions in Regional Politics**

**Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies Series, Series Editor: Oliver P. Richmond**

**Houndsmill, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming**

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## Chapter 3

### Power and Contestations: Crossing the Lines between Power and Powerlessness in the Middle East

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*Doesn't matter what you see / Or into it what you read / You can do it your own way / If it's done just how I say*  
Metallica – Eye of the Beholder<sup>i</sup>

#### **Mystifications of Power in the Middle East**

Power is an omnipresent point of reference in the study of the Middle East in IR and neighbouring disciplines. Echoing a widespread sentiment in both academic and political circles, what distinguishes the Middle East from other world regions is the overt and blunt occurrence of interest politics, strategic thinking, zero-sum calculations, force, violence, conflict, insurgencies, war and suppression. As Louise Fawcett summarises, the Middle East ‘provides, for some, an illustration of the international state of nature described by Thomas Hobbes, a world which, in the absence of a Leviathan, sees the prevalence of anarchy, greed and power struggle’.<sup>ii</sup> Interestingly, this centrality of (bare) power dynamics bridges otherwise quite opposite theoretical strands in the analysis of Middle East politics. To borrow from Fred Halliday’s classification of the main theoretical categories on the study of the Middle East in IR, within various dominant theoretical traditions power politics indeed occupy a central space. For example, historical analyses on state emergence in the Middle East refer to the processes through which colonial powers, in particular Great Britain and France, have shaped regional borders, thereby institutionalising ongoing border disputes in the region.<sup>iii</sup> They also point to the linkages between state formation and armed struggle by nationalist movements, be it the Lebanese national movement around Charles Corm or, alternatively, the Jewish Yishuv in the 1940s or the Palestinian PLO since the 1960s.<sup>iv</sup> Moreover, the focus on the Middle East ‘as the last world region, whose theory-guided analyses are still dominated by realist schools of thought’<sup>v</sup> also renders power the central category in accounting for dynamics of Middle East politics in this intellectual tradition. Thus, the Middle East is observed as an unfriendly, anarchical environment in which states and, occasionally, other (rational) actors, such as for example Hizballah are obsessed with ‘security and the maximisation of power’.<sup>vi</sup> Likewise, through their focus on elite decision making, foreign

policy analyses shift the focus on rational actors, self-interest and zero-sum power games from the (anarchical) level of the inter-state system to the interplay of ‘a diversity of forces within a shifting complexity of contexts within and without’ the state.<sup>vii</sup> Finally, by addressing domestic power struggles below the state-level as well as the power of norms and ideas, both liberalist and social constructivist approaches add another nuance to this centrality of power in the Middle East.<sup>viii</sup> Thus, the Middle East is the playground of ‘an ongoing struggle in the region between multiple competing identities that can throw light on the process of identity formation’ and, indeed, account for regional political dynamics more general.<sup>ix</sup> This social constructivist outlook is thereby often conceptually linked with liberalist accounts of Middle East politics,<sup>x</sup> since the patchwork of religious, ethnic and political identities across all states in the region requires subtle deliberations (and, at times, violent interventions) in the relationship between the political centre and actors/structures at the periphery, be it local communities or pious religious movements in Syria and Jordan or the Palestinian population in Jordan and Israel, to pick but two examples.<sup>xi</sup>

If there is, thus, one connecting theme in the literature on the Middle East in IR and other social sciences disciplines, it is the assumption of the centrality of ‘power’ in accounting for Middle East politics at the domestic, the regional and the global levels. The Middle East is then one of the last pure Machiavellian terrains in world politics, a space par excellence of power politics, rational calculations and ruthless assertions of interest. In short, the region is primarily characterised by political actors aiming to secure their fragile survival vis-à-vis equally ruthless contestations nurtured by ‘the violent nature of the region’.<sup>xii</sup> While it is true that this narrative particularly attracts and renders plausible realist accounts, it also underlies several of the aforementioned alternative conceptual perspectives, be it in liberalist analyses on domestic power struggles or social constructivist focuses on the power of exclusionary norms and identities in the region.<sup>xiii</sup> This chapter does not aim to contradict the observation that ‘power’ has a central place in accounting for the dynamics of Middle East politics. Indeed, how could there be a social, let alone a political setting in which power would not be an essential resource? However, this chapter argues that without a clear theoretical elaboration on what ‘power’ as a crucial source of societal evolution entails, accounts of ‘power’ in Middle East studies risk falling into the trap of a mystification of power. This mystification of power shapes studies on Middle East politics on at least two dimensions. Firstly, power relations are often merely described in terms of alleged power resources and interests of states and other political actors, for example the autocratic *mukhabarat* system in Syria, military

superiority of Israel vis-à-vis its Arab neighbours, autocratic structures in the Palestinian Authority or the possession of arms and political capital by sectarian groups in Lebanon or by the violent confrontations between Hamas and the Al-Aqsa brigades in Palestine.<sup>xiv</sup> However, such a focus on resources and interests mystifies power insofar as it does not specify how ‘power’ as a central medium of communication in society depends on both the assertion of power *and* the acceptance of and acquiescence to power(lessness).<sup>xv</sup> In other words, power is not an objective category – tanks, ideology, troops, secret service personnel and leadership capacity – which simply is there and which is ‘exchanged’ between actors,<sup>xvi</sup> but is the result of societal communication in the first place.

Secondly, possible changes in power relations – such as those envisioned by Islamists or regional/extra-regional democratisation efforts - are regularly *problematized* in the literature, thereby often indirectly reifying official securitisation discourses and power relations. For example, such securitising practices by state authorities in Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan or Palestine are regularly implicitly justified in the literature by pointing to the threats posed by Islamist fundamentalist groups – thereby however more often than not replicating first-order narratives on legitimate and illegitimate power.<sup>xvii</sup> In a similar way, the widespread and often good-hearted reference to ‘cultural dialogue’ between the Middle East and the West ironically supports the labelling of specific political concepts, such as democracy and human rights, as being part of an external, Western culture, notwithstanding the existence of countless individuals and groups (as well as historical traditions) in the Middle East linked to democratisation and liberalisation.<sup>xviii</sup> It is also these accounts which, thus, risk consolidating official securitisation practices. In a nutshell, the mystification of power in the Middle East relates to all those instances in which power structures are observed through the lenses of (powerful) first-order observations rather than from a more general theoretical perspective on what ‘power’ as a key medium of communication in world society actually entails.

Based on this observation this chapter maintains that without a clear elaboration of the theoretical fundamentals of ‘power’, studies on power politics in the Middle East risk reifying existing power relations and securitisation dialogues. In more systems theoretical parlance, ‘power’ needs to be observed from a second-order perspective, which is able to transcend ‘the ontology of the present’ in the analysis of actual power relations, to borrow here from Derridean terminology.<sup>xix</sup> This shift of perspectives allows to detect the paradoxes, the ‘unmarked spaces’ and the excluded ‘traces’ of power inherent in all political communication.

Power is, thus, not a material capacity (for example, specific actors such as states, presidents or troops or specific structures and semantics such as oil-resources and nationalism) but an *empty signifier* for all those world societal communications which observe themselves on the basis of the distinction powerful/powerless. Transcending positivist notions of power as a material resource then allows addressing power as a global medium of communication. Thus, the distinction between different spatial levels of analysis – such as domestic, regional and global – might have some heuristic value<sup>xx</sup> – but is ultimately theoretically problematic. Not only because it contradicts the non-territorial status of all communications, but also insofar as such distinctions often go hand in hand with specific legitimisation strategies, such as the aforementioned replication of securitisation discourses or the reification of symbolic (culture, identity) and territorial borders.<sup>xxi</sup>

In order to elaborate on the role of power in Middle East politics, this chapter is divided in three sections. Section 2 further outlines the key theoretical premises underlying the way in which power is conceptualised in this book. Sections 3 then addresses the region-specific manifestations of power, thereby focusing in particular on the symbolisation and use of violence by power-holders, defined here as ‘frozen crossings’, while the final section concludes this chapter by putting these ‘frozen crossings’ into relation to the ‘hot contestations’ by *inter alia* Islamists and democracy/human rights movements. The main argument of this chapter is that the freezing of the (easy) crossing between power and powerlessness is, paradoxically, undermined by the structural world societal context in which all political communications in the Middle East are embedded. However, these frozen crossings not only lead to an excessive use and inflationary excesses of power, but also to an increase in the intensity of contestations to existing power relations. To put it in post-structuralist terms, it fosters a multiplication of antagonistic moments in Middle East politics and a creeping transformation of politics towards antagonism and conflict. In a nutshell, the two main features of these region-specific forms of power are a profound crisis of power as the medium of political communications in and on the Middle East, on the one hand, and a de-politicisation of Middle East politics, on the other.

### **Readdressing Cycles of Power and Powerlessness**

There are several possible strategies in order to demystify power and, thereby, reconstruct our understanding of the role of power in Middle East politics. Independently of the precise starting points, it is necessary to elaborate on the precise theoretical location of ‘power’ as a

meaningful scientific concept in the first place, rather than taking ‘power’ as a taken-for-granted or even objective category as this is often done in Middle East studies (and IR) with its reproduction of official or ‘realistic’ power semantics and mystification strategies referred to above.<sup>xxii</sup> Following this premise, a key argument of this chapter is that what can then be observed in the Middle East is not so much a particular centrality of power but rather a crisis of power and a de-politicisation of politics due to the clash between region-specific antagonistic transformations of power, on the one hand, and the operative logic of politics as a global functional system, on the other.

Modern systems theory is helpful for such an envisaged demystification of power for at least three reasons.<sup>xxiii</sup> Firstly, by adopting the communication theoretical perspectives outlined in detail in chapter 1, it becomes apparent that power as a societal phenomenon needs to be emptied of all stable properties and objective content, thereby avoiding to be blindfolded by the omnipresent symbolic displays of power in Middle East politics.<sup>xxiv</sup> In contrast, modern systems theory stresses the dynamic and contingent communicative processes through which power and powerlessness constantly have to reproduce themselves. Power is thus not an objective category, based on charismatic leadership capacities, various forms of legitimacy, weapons, money or other positivist ornaments of power but the result of communication as society’s basic unit only.<sup>xxv</sup> Yet, if communications – and not actors, structures or actions – are society’s basic unit, the question then is how power becomes a topical point of reference in world society in the first place. Moreover, what also has to be specified is the precise relationship between power as a topical form of communication, on the one hand, and politics as a central sphere of societal differentiation, on the other. As will be argued further below such a focus on power and politics proves to be particularly helpful for an identification of the processes responsible for the (always contingent and temporary) consolidation or loss of power.

Political communications, which use the medium of power, are those communications which constitute and observe themselves on the basis of the distinction between power/powerlessness. As modern systems theory postulates, this binary coding of power as a medium of communication underlies *all* political communications in which the one side of the distinction (power) has the function to ensure connectivity between communications, while the other side (powerlessness) enables contingency reflection.<sup>xxvi</sup> This unity of the distinction between power (order) and powerlessness (alternatives/contestations) in every single political

communications already directs attention towards the *problematique* in the relative neglect of powerlessness in Middle East studies with its strong positivist (and objectivist) focus on one side of the distinction, e.g. powerful state structures and securitisation practices. More precisely, the relative neglect of powerlessness falls into the trap of what Derrida has referred to as the ‘traditional version of metaphysics as the ontology of the present’,<sup>xxvii</sup> thereby favouring the observation of the connectivity of hegemonic power communications at the expense of the in-built contingency and fractures of all power. This essentialisation of power is, for example, evident in the mystification of the agenda-setting power of those actors in the Middle East who can, actually or potentially, successfully claim to exert power and physical forms of violence vis-à-vis others, be it the aforementioned *mukhabarat* apparatus in Syria, Lebanese faction leaders with their alleged disposal over peace or civil war, the domination of Palestinians by the Israeli army and Jewish settlers in the occupied territories or the ability of Hamas and the Al-Aqsa brigades to send suicide bombers or rockets into Israeli heartland. This is, of course, not to deny that all these actors possess power. Yet, what also becomes visible when adopting a systems theoretical perspective is that power as a medium of communication only emerges due to the constant presence of the (often unobserved) side of powerlessness and, consequently, the shadow of contingency and fragility accompanies all actual manifestations of power. As Luhmann puts it, ‘all peculiarities of the medium power rest on this presence of the excluded (or, in the words of Jacques Derrida: on the *trace*, which is left behind by the absent)’.<sup>xxviii</sup> The role of power – as of all other media of communication such as truth, money and love – then is to render the unlikely (i.e. the acceptance of or acquiescence to contingent communication offers in the light of countless alternatives) likely by establishing a specific medium of communication, namely power, which privileges the one side of the code over the other.<sup>xxix</sup> However, since power is based on communication, other potentialities and alternative power constellations always lurk from the horizon. Thus, while ensuring connectivity, power always remains fragile and open to contestations. This structural contingency of all power communications ‘implies that *both* sides have alternatives, the realisation of which they however want to *avoid*’.<sup>xxx</sup> Alter prefers anticipatory obedience by Ego but must have credible threats at her disposal in case Ego voices opposition. Similarly, Ego might or might not be aware of his possible contestations to Alter’s powerful demands, but prefers – for what reason ever – acquiescence over opposition. This is then also the basis for Luhmann’s claim that within all communications of power lies ‘the information that the power-holder rather wants *not* to realise his avoidance alternative – but is ready to do so’.<sup>xxxi</sup>

This stands in marked contrast with the powerless side which is less inclined to resort to her avoidance alternatives.

Modern systems theory's focus on power as the asymmetrical communication of avoidance alternatives, referred to as the power of negative sanctions, has received some criticism in being too narrow a definition of power.<sup>xxxii</sup> Thus, power does not only comprise 'power to' (negative sanctions) but also operates via incentives (positive sanctions) and other, often more subtle forms of exerting influence ('power over').<sup>xxxiii</sup> Yet, at closer inspection it becomes evident that modern systems theory does not claim that political communication could not resort to incentives and subtle forms of influence, such as inter alia Foucaultian structural practices of governmentality, diffuse and relational forms of power in international relations as analysed by Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall or Steven Lukes famous third dimension of power in which 'the dominated acquiesce in their domination'.<sup>xxxiv</sup> However, what happens if incentives, structural imperatives or taken-for-granted practices are not successful in convincing Ego to pursue Alter's agenda?<sup>xxxv</sup> This is the basis for Luhmann's argument that 'a second order observer sees that every political communication is based on threat communication. Thus, on the willingness to threaten and force if need be; since otherwise this would not be political action but an academic discussion, a seminar, a beauty competition [...] with indirect political consequences at best'.<sup>xxxvi</sup> What matters for the discussion in this chapter then is the observation that power, understood as the communication of asymmetrical avoidance alternatives, does not need to be implemented and in fact tries to avoid the implementation (and even the explicit visibilisation)<sup>xxxvii</sup> of its threat alternative, e.g. by offering positive incentives, relying on structural conditions or referring to established notions of legitimacy. To summarise, while both sides always have avoidance alternatives at their disposal, the side with the higher avoidance interest is subordinate and, consequently, power is a binary coding based on the distinction between powerful/powerless. To caution against any positivist reading of this distinction, the actual processing of the code powerful/powerless always remains a communicative affair and neither side can thus be attributed to a specific structure or actor. Similarly, the powerful cannot be sure whether the other side would not, for what reason ever, follow her more costly avoidance alternative. Thus, power and powerlessness are not static categories but communicative artefacts constantly open to change, thereby underlining the contingent and fragile character of each creation and stabilisation of (political) order.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

This argument also points to another central observation in modern systems theory, namely that power actually increases if there are alternatives. Thus, power as an available resource of societal communication augments if it is able to assert its status 'vis-à-vis attractive alternatives [...]. And power can only be increased in parallel to an increase in the freedom of those subject to power', i.e. if Ego subordinates himself in spite of *attractive* alternatives.<sup>xxxix</sup> Accordingly, power dissolves 'when it comes to the realisation of the avoidance alternative'.<sup>xl</sup> In this case power either 'switches' sides due to the successful challenge by the previously powerless side or is replaced by conflict and, possibly, violence in case power resorts to implementing its avoidance alternative of threat and force. This might then also be the reason why the functionally differentiated world society, 'which requires much more power than traditional societies', tends to relegate the blunt and violent implementation of power to its edges (war zones, prisons, etc.) and why the 'carceral continuum' of power in modern society usually appears in its structural rather than open and violent form, i.e. without the need to implement the avoidance alternative of the underlying threat to use force and violence.<sup>xli</sup> These arguments once more caution against being dazzled by the often unvarnished symbolic display and rough execution of power in the Middle East. Part of any demystification of power is, hence, to observe the proportionally high recourse to the (forceful and violent) avoidance alternative in Middle East politics not as an argument in favour of a particular 'powerful' status of power in the region but rather as an indication of a crisis in the operation of power as a medium of communication, on the one hand, and politics as a social system, on the other – and argument which will be returned to with more empirical data in detail further below.

Secondly, power – as all other media of communication – unfolds in society through paradoxical and cyclical operations.<sup>xlii</sup> More precisely, the paradox of power lies in the moment of the very constitution of the code. Thus, in order for power to be established as a medium of communication, a decision has to be made to distinguish power/powerlessness. But how can this powerful [*sic!*] decision be made *prior to* the establishment of the code power/powerlessness? This long shadow of the founding paradox is then 'remembered' in every subsequent operation of the code.<sup>xliii</sup> Thus, one of the main problems of power is to ensure that the paradox of the code – and the daunting question of whether the distinction powerful/powerless and its subsequent empirical manifestations really are powerful - becomes temporarily invisibilised in each actual operation of the code.<sup>xliv</sup> While such deparadoxification strategies are necessary for all system-specific codes (e.g. invisibilising the

question of whether the legal code legal/illegal is legal or whether the scientific code true/false is true) power, arguably, occupies a central role. Thus, while each social system has established its own, code-related practices of invisibilisation, the initial constitution of any code ultimately is a political act, a paradoxical ‘decision of writing’ in a moment of fundamental undecidability, thereby underling the ‘double inscription’ of power and politics in society.<sup>xlv</sup> As Slavoj Žižek notes in a somewhat bloomy way, ‘the “political dimension” is thus doubly inscribed: it is a moment of the social Whole, one among its subsystems, and the very terrain in which the fate of the Whole is decided’.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Thus, the mere fact that power communications can be related to one or the other side of the code is not enough in order to capture the complexities of power as a medium of communication in world society. Being based on its founding paradox, the code alone does not say how to decide and to which side to attribute power and powerlessness. Consequently, specific programmes and legitimisation strategies are needed in order to invisibilise the paradox of the code and ensure the actual operation of the code on the basis of cyclical processes of self-referential connectivity of those communications which observe themselves on the basis of the distinction power/powerlessness. In that context, the code thus functions as an empty signifier, deprived of all objectivist and stable content. While programmes and legitimacy strategies – as well as other forms of governmentality – ensure the actualisation of power in society, the code of power itself always has to constantly oscillate between (systemic) closing and (environmental) openness. Thus, code-oriented ‘communication reproduces in its operative execution [...] the closeness of the system. Through the characteristics of its observations [...] it [however also] reproduces the difference between closeness and openness. And that is how a system emerges that is open to its environment because of its closeness, because its basal operations are set to observe’.<sup>xlvii</sup> As Luhmann concludes, if a system, which ensures closeness on the basis of self-referential operations, interrupts its openness towards the environment, and thereby towards the uncountable potentialities to current actualisations of power, this ‘no-longer communicating’ would lead to ‘the end of the operations of the system’.<sup>xlviii</sup> In other words, ensuring the undistorted operation of the code depends on two key requirements. Firstly, the invisibilisation of the code’s founding paradox; and secondly, the emptying of the code so that the code is able to ensure the on-going operation of the code (closeness), on the one hand, and the flexibility of the code towards (unforeseen) potentialities and environmental perturbations (openness), on the other. Power, as all other media of communication, thus crucially depends on the

dislocation of the code, i.e. the emptying of the code from all a prior commitments which would only limit the flexibility and openness in the way power operates in society. This disposition (and vulnerability) of the functionally differentiated world society towards contingencies and potentialities then explains the natural drift of code communication towards operational closeness and cognitive openness vis-à-vis its environment. Even more important for the purpose of this chapter, 'coding is powerful in particular if the change between the two code-values, the crossing of the border between them, happens quasi-technically, without being e.g. socially or psychically particularly conditioned' for this dramatically increases both the operational closeness and the cognitive openness towards environmental information and other potentialities of any system, such as *inter alia* politics.<sup>xlix</sup> In a sense, in its very operation a system always communicates its dislocation since potentialities always threaten the fragile unity established through the hegemonic initial constitution of the code and its subsequent re-articulations. Ernesto Laclau, thus, directly relates this impossibility of total closure to the constant dislocation of the system, i.e. the failure of each hegemonic order of discourses in the light of the impossibility to establish immaculate discursive systems.<sup>1</sup>

In that context, programmes and legitimacy strategies have a double function. They not only (temporarily) invisibilise the founding paradox of the code but also provide for concrete mechanism of crossing between the two sides of the code, thereby supporting the cognitive openness and flexibility of the system towards its societal environment.<sup>li</sup> However, if the programmes and legitimacy structures dis-prefer easy crossing – such as in Middle East politics - this distortion leads to an inflation of the code and, ultimately, growing antagonisms. Thus, 'the crossing of the code becomes more difficult since the antagonism of negation, which was implicit in the "original" code, becomes radicalised and prevent thereby technical and automatic crossing of sides'.<sup>lii</sup> Recall that in each communication of power 'both sides pursue selections while being aware of these selections by the other'.<sup>liii</sup> Yet, even in situations of frozen crossings, both sides still have countless (potential) alternatives while the very contingency of all selections structurally 'increases the temptation of negation', i.e. independent of the roughness of power to ensure obedience.<sup>liv</sup> In other words, frozen crossings run in parallel with a decrease of alternatives for both the powerful, who has to maintain visible threat structures in order to ensure obedience in any case - thereby permanently displaying her actual or potential ability to resort to the monopoly of violence - and the powerless who either has to acquiesce or to enter into open (and costly) antagonism and conflict with the established power.

The prize paid for such frozen crossings between power and powerlessness, thus, is the constant visibilisation and display of the naked paradox of the code. In a sense, cementing power by erecting frozen crossings overburdens and undermines power at the same time. Since challenges to power are ubiquitous in a world society based on communication as its basic unit, the result of frozen crossings most likely is the increase of hot contestations and antagonisms which, however, cannot evaporate due to the enduring grip to power of specific actors or structures. This freezing of the code leads to a crisis of the system in which power *as* structurally debordered power<sup>lv</sup> is constantly challenged, while the proper operation of the code can no longer be organised by the system and its programmes. Thus, the naked visibility of power and the decrease of alternatives in particular for the powerful ultimately lead to a de-politicisation of politics. As Urs Stäheli has elaborated in detail, in such situations of frozen crossings and hot contestations, the politics of deparadoxification are no longer based on programmes and other smooth strategies of invisibilisation. The code powerful/powerless itself becomes rearticulated in an antagonistic fashion and, thereby, ‘filled’ with material content, such as inter alia sharp distinctions between Self and Other, solid structures of inclusion and exclusion and, ultimately, the usurpation of politics – and other social systems – by conflict dynamics.<sup>lvi</sup> Thus, with dramatic societal consequences, crossing can no longer be assured.

Thirdly, the continuous communicative interconnectivity between those communications which recognise themselves on the basis of power leads to the establishment of politics as a global functional system. The world, as outlined in detail in chapter 1, always is the double horizon of all (power) communications, i.e. by ensuring structural global interconnectivity, on the one hand, and by constituting an open horizon of potential communications, on the other. Thus, frozen crossings are for basic structural reasons not able to shut off contestations. Due to the world societal embedding of all political communications, there always are possible alternatives and alternative power constellations which doze at the world societal horizon. This is precisely the context of frozen crossings and hot contestations in Middle East politics and a world society framework consequently allows to address these dynamics better than state-centred or multi-level approaches or notions of regional exceptionalism.<sup>lvii</sup> Finally, power also has a specific function in world society and vis-à-vis other systems, namely to provide societal capacities for collectively binding decision, in specific, and to determine situations of undecidability, more generally spoken.<sup>lviii</sup> In other words, the systems of politics

is not a closed, quasi-institutional segment of society, consisting of actors or organisations, but an open, decentralised and debordered system which self-referentially constitutes itself anywhere and anytime communications observe themselves on the basis of the distinction between power and powerlessness. Theoretically spoken, politics is thus one of many systems which constitute world society as a primarily functionally differentiated society. Empirically, it is of course evident that politics – in some world regions more than in others - aims to reach out to other systems, thereby claiming a privileged position vis-à-vis other societal spheres. The price for these hierarchical practices of domination is, however, either a mal-functioning of other systems – as this has been well documented in various Arab Human Development Reports – or a replacement of functional differentiation by antagonistic structures of inclusion/exclusion and severe structures of conflict.<sup>lix</sup>

### **Frozen Crossings: The Naked Visibility of Power in Middle East Politics**

This and the following sections address in greater detail the place of power in Middle East politics. This section looks on the basis of the systems theoretical framework developed above at the centrality of ‘frozen crossings’, i.e. the impediments to a quasi-technical crossing between power and powerlessness in political communications in and on the Middle East. It starts with a discussion on the overall limited effect of liberalisation and peace processes in the Middle East since the 1990s in fundamentally altering these dynamics. Seen from this perspective, there are two main consequences of ‘frozen crossings’ for political communication in the region, namely the inflationary symbolisation of politics, on the one hand, and the ubiquitous implementation of the threat of force and presence of violence, on the other. Yet, rather than consolidating power in Middle East politics, these dynamics point to a deep crisis of power and, consequently, politics in the region. Thus, power is forced to constantly take recourse to extraordinary means in order to ensure the maintenance of the existing borders between power and powerlessness. The resulting securitisation of political communications in and on the Middle East deprives the system of politics of much of its required openness and flexibility. Moreover, the general world societal embedding of all political communications further contributes to this fragility of ‘frozen crossings’. On this basis, the final section shortly assesses the role of Islamist and democratic movements and looks at the world societal horizons of ‘hot contestations’ in the Middle East, i.e. the peaceful or violent, but always power-threatening contestations to these ‘frozen crossings’.

The various political and societal reforms and changes in the region since the 1990s have initially fed the expectation that after decades of enmity between authoritarian governance within Middle Eastern states, at least a gradual ‘defrosting’ of political communication in the region would take place. This was based on the observation that in the wake of cautious reform efforts in Arab countries, economic liberalisation led to the emergence of a new, and politically conscious middle class, while the extension of press freedoms and other basic rights, such as the right to association, increased the space for civil society movements, legal political opposition and less confrontational public debates in these countries.<sup>lx</sup> This positive assessment was only exacerbated by the rise to power of a young and allegedly more reformist generation of new leaders in countries such as Jordan and Syria at the turn of the century. Moreover, various peace processes in the region, such as the 1989 Ta’if agreement, which formally ended the Lebanese civil war, or the 1993 Oslo accords between Israel and the PLO raised hopes that established structures of conflict would give way to normal political competition and even cooperation in the region, both within and between Middle Eastern states.<sup>lxi</sup> This went in parallel with a marked increase of elections and constitutionalisation processes in the region, such as in Palestine, but also in Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>lxii</sup> Finally, there was the hope that these regional changes would also have global repercussions and decrease tensions and mutual suspicions between the Middle East and outside powers, in particular the EU and the US.<sup>lxiii</sup> However, while it is true that all these developments are evidence of some limited increases with regard to the openness of political communications in and on the Middle East, they cannot conceal the pertinence of those forms of political communications which continue to significantly obstruct the crossing between power and powerlessness in regional politics. Thus, the overall societal effects of political and economic reforms, leadership changes or peace processes were relatively meagre. The Arab countries still suffer from a tremendous democratic and reform deficit; structures of domination and violence still characterise relations within and between Middle Eastern states; Israel still resembles more an ethnic democracy than a polyarchic democracy;<sup>lxiv</sup> and, in the context of the ‘war on terror’, inter-regional and global relations involving the Middle East have soured.<sup>lxv</sup> Thus, the changes of leadership and the promise these entailed for greater liberalisation soon made way to the observation that the traditional firm grip of leaders and the neopatrimonial governing-style of ruling elites remained the defining feature of politics even after this ‘false spring’ in the region.<sup>lxvi</sup> As Glenn Robinson has argued with a view to developments in Jordan, political liberalisation efforts in the region are often not more than ‘defensive’ reactions<sup>lxvii</sup> of beleaguered political elites hoping to foster their political

domination (and survival) through tactical concessions with regard to some limited economic and political freedoms.<sup>lxviii</sup> Moreover, the honeymoon between conflict parties, be it between Israel and Palestine, between Lebanon and Syria or between ethno-religious factions in Lebanon and Palestine (but also in Jordan, Syria and Israel) soon made way to disillusion. Thus, the potential of peace accords to reshuffle the distribution of power in the region and to overcome the deep alienation between identity groups within the region as well as between the Middle East and outside powers remained low.<sup>lxix</sup> In sum, despite manifold liberalisation efforts, rudimentary forms of greater inter-regional cooperation and various peace processes, political communication in and on the Middle East remains heavily securitised and so do the borders between power and powerlessness.<sup>lxx</sup>

Consequently, the reform debates and peace efforts of the early 1990s did not succeed in altering the main dynamics of Middle East politics. As a result, the borders between power and powerlessness are not regulated by quasi-technically, institutionalised mechanism of crossing, but rather by solid structures which continue to impede on the open and flexible crossing between both sides in political communications in and on the Middle East. Liberalisation in the region can, thus, be regarded as ‘not an end in itself; rather its purpose is to maintain the regime’s hold on power’.<sup>lxxi</sup> However, due to these ‘frozen crossings’ power in the Middle East paradoxically is fragile and precarious power. Thus, the ‘frozen crossings’ underpin the status quo orientation of Middle East politics, the lack of societal development in the region and the asymmetric distribution of power to specific societal groups both within as well as between Middle Eastern states. Theoretically spoken, power in the Middle East does not operate as an empty signifier but is locked in with regard to the power of *specific* programmes, ideologies, charismatic and traditional leaders or identity-groups. This close linkage between political communication, on the one hand, and a remarkably inflexibility of the code, on the other, has led many scholars to argue that there is a profound de-politicisation of Middle East politics inherent in these dynamics. Thus, Katarina Dalacoura’s observation that these dynamics contribute ‘to the emergence of “rhetorical” politics which pays inordinate attention to morality and high principle, to the detriment of actual workings of power and domination’ is not only true for the study of Islamist politics but characterises Middle East politics on a more general level.<sup>lxxii</sup> Thus, power communication is ‘frozen’ insofar as it is based on a profound status quo orientation which requires to uphold a solid distinction between the powerful and the powerless in the region. As Mehran Kamrava explains, power-holders ‘have succeeded in depoliticising society through repression and

enticing fear of political endeavours among the population. Inclusionary states, having turned streets and neighbourhoods into political theatres, have successfully diverted popular political energies into projects that actually sustain the very basis of the regime'.<sup>lxxiii</sup> In other words, political communication is not based on operative closeness and cognitive openness of the code of power but on 'frozen crossings' hampering the regular operation of the code and the system of politics in the region, more generally.

As convincing as this narrative on the problems of crossing in Middle East politics is, there is also a problematic dimension to it, namely its inherent reification – and overestimation - of existing power relations and subtle securitisation strategies in the region. Thus, too close a first order perspective on the rigorous borders between power and powerlessness, as this characterises many mainstream approaches on the Middle East, privileges the one side of the distinction, namely the side of power, when accounting for the main dynamics of regional politics. This becomes particularly evident when power becomes attributed to specific actors rather than being analysed as a form of observation of communication as society's basic unit. As, for example, Raymond Hinnebusch argues with a view to political dynamics in the Middle East, 'robust modernized forms of authoritarianism' – or more generally, massive power asymmetries - on the national and regional levels are the 'local form of governance' which enables power-holders to 'manage their societies' in 'a political process in which a relatively autonomous state elite has the last word'.<sup>lxxiv</sup> While such mainstream perspectives are ready to acknowledge that due to these 'frozen crossings' power-holders are in a precarious situation insofar as they are forced to adopt various Machiavellian techniques in order to secure their fragile political survival against more or less ruthless contenders, this reification and overestimation of power shapes the power-bias of mainstream accounts on Middle East politics nevertheless on at least two crucial dimensions.<sup>lxxv</sup> Firstly, as far as the analysis of domestic politics is concerned, there is a heavy focus in mainstream approaches on elites, decision makers and rulers, suggesting that an understanding of the main dynamics of Middle East politics primarily requires to assess the strategic rationales of these concrete actors. Thus, Volker Perthes notes that notwithstanding some rudimentary pluralisation in the region, such an elite perspective is central in understanding the main dynamics of regional politics since these elites 'wield political influence and power in that they take strategic decisions or participate in decision making on a national level, contribute to defining political norms and values [...], and directly influence political discourse on strategic issues'.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

As part of this elite bias, such perspectives also stress the ways in which incumbents and rulers control political processes – and the status quo orientation in the distribution of power – both in their countries and in regional politics more general. This relates, for example, to the way in which politics in Arab countries become ‘competition over patronage’ rather than competition over power.<sup>lxxvii</sup> On a different level, these dynamics also shape the ‘frozen crossings’ in a democratic state such as Israel, in particular but not exclusively between Israel’s Jewish and non-Jewish citizens.<sup>lxxviii</sup> This reification of power relations is, however, not only characteristic of state-centred perspectives. Thus, while it is true that notwithstanding the significant features of an ‘ethnic democracy’,<sup>lxxix</sup> Israel is the only democratic state in the region, the mantra-like insistence on this narrative invisibilises existing power relations on the supra-national level. Thus, it blinds out the domination by Israel of those territories and people it occupies since the Six Days War. As an interesting side note, the equally widespread reference to a Palestinian right to resistance does then not only bear the problematique of blurring the border between violence and political opposition but, more interesting for the purpose of this chapter, actually underpins this first order observation of allegedly absolute Israeli power – to which then only extraordinary (and violent) means of resistance by the disenfranchised can respond. Finally, as already referred to in previous chapters, this narrative of asymmetric and permanent (and unjust) power distributions also features prominently in widespread discourses amongst many Arabs on being dominated and subjugated by the West.<sup>lxxx</sup>

This chapter does not want to deny the political prevalence of all these dynamics. And neither does it suggest ignoring the obvious power asymmetries in the region. Indeed, while there are both ruthless and enlightened authoritarian rulers and regimes in the Arab countries in the region, when push comes to shove, all these regimes keep a firm grip on power; moreover, despite the reference to shared Arabness, bilateral relations between most Arab countries in the region, be it between Syria and Lebanon, Syria and Jordan or Jordan and Palestine have traditionally been tense; on another level, Israel struggles with the contradiction between its democratic and Jewish character in domestic politics; it occupies Palestinian land and people and its bilateral relations with its neighbours are characterised by suspicion and regular threats; at the same time, Israel is largely excluded by its Arab neighbours from even rudimentary forms of regional cooperation on the governmental or societal levels and subject to many violent attacks on its population – which is not a very friendly environment for triggering significant de-securitisation. Finally, there are powerful stereotypes against

Muslims, Arabs, Jews and Israelis in the region itself, the West and elsewhere, which often constitute powerful political narratives and contribute to the overall status quo orientation of Middle East politics, not least because such narratives provide the background for Western support of authoritarian elites in Arab countries and specific conflict parties in the region.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Yet, what is problematic about such mainstream perspectives is that, to varying degrees, they all build on a positivist understanding of power which equates power either with a classical Weberian enforcement of power against opposition or with objectivist materialisations of power with regard to specific rulers, political institutions or structures of domination and control. Thus, they reify rather than critically deconstruct first order observation on power in political communication. Playing on a theme by Nazih Ayubi, Middle East studies in IR should, hence, not only wary over-stating the Middle Eastern state,<sup>lxxxix</sup> but also of implicitly empowering power in the Middle East. What these approaches thus fail to observe is the way in which this alleged centrality of power in Middle East politics actually inhibits the constant emptying as well as the necessary flexibility of the code of power, thereby de-politicising and undermining power in political communication in the region. Thus, a systematic second order observation on the actual workings of power in the Middle East not only adds another account on the institution of and contestation to these ‘frozen crossings’ but allows identifying the fundamental crisis of power and politics in the region which accompanies these widely acknowledged ‘frozen crossings’.

The necessity of such a deconstruction of power for a systematic analysis of Middle East politics becomes particularly evident when embarking in greater detail on the two main consequences of ‘frozen crossings’ for this crisis of politics in the region, namely the inflationary symbolisation as well as the open display of violence in Middle East political communication. While it is true that the inflationary symbolisation and violent display of power at first sight solidifies the borders between power and powerlessness, it simultaneously reifies both sides of the border thereby depriving power as a medium of communication of much of its potential flexibility and openness.<sup>lxxxix</sup> More specific, these two dynamics do not only limit the alternatives of the powerful – thereby undermining the power of politics to constantly threaten but not to resort to force – but also invite constant opposition, either by peaceful or violent but always power-threatening means. It is in that context that Kamrava has referred to the ‘politics of weak control’ in the Middle East; thus, power holders are able to play the ‘theatre of power’ but because of rather than in spite of the reality of violent

domination and suppression in the region, they ultimately fail in successfully lowering the avoidance interests of the powerless.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

### **The inflationary symbolisation of power in the Middle East**

In order to counter these omnipresent power-threatening challenges, power has thus to constantly take recourse to extraordinary means in order to ensure the maintenance of its borders. This securitisation of political communication in the Middle East has two main dimensions. Firstly, to a much greater degree than in other world regions, power needs to make recourse to inflationary symbolisations of power. Such symbolisations should, however, not be mistaken for the widely studied visibility of material symbols, such as flags, mythologies on the nation, the clan and the religion or narratives of charismatic and traditional forms of legitimacy of specific rulers and political orders in the Middle East.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Thus, the systems theoretical understanding of symbolisations of power, as it has been outlined in this chapter, goes one crucial step further and highlights the inflationary and code-oriented symbolisation of the threat of force in political communications in and on the Middle East. One clarifying remark is, thus, paramount at this stage. Such an understanding of symbolisation does not refer to the distinction between the production and the presentation of politics, in which case production relates to the ‘tangible’ results with regard to collectively binding (and effective) decisions while presentation relates to the symbolic politics of spin-doctoring and selling politics to an audience in order to ensure (temporary) legitimacy for specific political programmes.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Indeed, identifying this distinction as a central feature of Middle East politics is crucial for a wide range of literature on the region, e.g. when talking about the aforementioned Middle Eastern ‘political theatres’ in which rhetorical politics insufficiently cover the Middle Eastern ‘state’s limited capacities to fulfil the tasks it sets for itself’<sup>lxxxvii</sup> or Yazigh Sayigh’s observation that ‘the state is the source of patronage and is the prize for social contenders, for whom control over power rather than production remains the key asset.’<sup>lxxxviii</sup> However, notwithstanding the obvious deficits of politics in the Middle East to provide society with effective collectively binding decisions and (social) security,<sup>lxxxix</sup> this distinction between tangible results and rhetorical, symbolic theatres is misleading insofar as politics as a functional system is *always* based on the unity of the distinction between production and presentation, as this has been emphasised by Klaus Japp and Isabel Kusche.<sup>xc</sup> In other words, the symbolisation of politics is an integral part of (the self-description of) *all* political communications. It is, thus, not merely the over-emphasis on ‘Byzantine’ ornaments of power vis-à-vis ‘occidental’ rationality in decision-making, which underpins the crisis of

power and the de-politicisation of politics in the Middle East. Following the theoretical reflections at the beginning of this chapter, this crisis of power rather relates to the increased visibility of the violent moment of the institution of the founding paradox of all political orders in the context of this inflationary symbolisation, in other words the ‘noise of the founding paradox’ echoing in Middle East political communications. To recall what has been said above, the functional objective of quasi-technical programmes and other strategies of de-paradoxification is to (temporarily) invisibilise the founding paradox of political orders rather than highlighting it. This mechanism is than significantly hampered in the Middle East since the ‘violent inception of the code’ is visibilised by the specific types of symbolising the threat of force in political communication in and on the region, thereby allowing to identify more precisely than other approaches why there indeed is an underlying crisis of power in regional politics.

This is, of course, not to argue that there are no successful strategies of de-paradoxification in Middle East politics. To pick but two examples from the field of educational politics, narratives of leaders and ruling families in Jordan or Palestine serve a powerful role in invisibilising the founding paradox of political order in both countries. Thus, as Betty Anderson has shown in her study on history textbooks in Jordan, the Hashemite monarchy’s strategy of de-paradoxification not only builds on the ancestral links of the family with the prophet Muhammad or its negotiating-skills with tribal leaders,<sup>xci</sup> but, more importantly here, on the fact that political narratives in Jordan attribute sole subjectivity for the foundation and survival of the country to the Hashemite kings, which historically came from outside territories from within the Arabian peninsula. Hence, ‘the only actors the Hashemite kings recognize are themselves. As the Hashemites are the only players in this tale, they appear as larger-than-life embodiments [...]. Thus, their activities serve as the *source of origin* for the Jordanian nation’.<sup>xcii</sup> In a similar way, Nathan Brown has argued that the main purpose of history-telling in the Palestinian educational system ‘goes beyond inculcating a sense of Palestinian identity to supporting the *authoritative structures* in Palestinian society’, foremost the personal rule of Yassir Arafat and of the PLO-leadership, but secondly, a much wider understanding of authority and political order relating to clan-structures and family-models.<sup>xciii</sup> Hence, the point here is not to argue that there are no successful strategies of de-paradoxification in Middle East politics, of which there are countless other examples,<sup>xciv</sup> but rather that due to the ‘frozen crossings’ in Middle East politics many of these strategies simultaneously need to resort to an explicit and constant visibilisation of the underlying threat

of force, in order to keep the specific political orders in tact. This ‘noise’ of the underlying threat of force can then be detected in many instances of political communication in the Middle East. Take, for example, analyses on Alawite rule in Syria, where even presidential amnesties for political dissidents are not so much an expression of an occasional clemency of the ruler.<sup>xcv</sup> They are rather a constant reminder of the omnipotent capacities of the Syrian president and the Syrian state elite to arbitrarily arrest whoever is considered a danger to the regime. The public knowledge and visibility of – and the ‘noise’ of the collective silence on – the powerful role of the Syrian army and the Syrian secret service are thus a central theme when studying the question of ‘who’s afraid of Syrian nationalism’.<sup>xcvi</sup> Thus, the literature stresses ‘the relevance of institutions that have been established within the last three decades’, i.e. since the rise to power of Hafiz al-Asad, which consolidate Alawite rule by constantly visibilising the threat of force communicated by power-holders rather than embarking on political programmes which *successfully* invisibilise the founding paradox of Alawite rule.<sup>xcvii</sup> This ‘public memory’ of the violent potential, i.e. the echoes which past violence produces in political communication, is then also the deeper background of Volker Perthes’ remark on the long-term impact on Syrian politics of the raid by the Syrian army against Islamist movements in the city of Hama in 1982, when more than 10,000 inhabitants were killed. Thus, ‘Syrians remember too well the events of 1979-82, when a series of violent confrontations between the regime and the Islamist opposition shook the country, and nobody wants a reply’.<sup>xcviii</sup> Yet, how this reply would look like is precisely communicated through the inflationary symbolisation of the threat of force in Syrian politics, it has become the omnipresent noise of political communication.

Such an explicit visibility of the threat of force does, however, also relate to more pluralistic states, such as Jordan and the kingdoms subtle mechanisms of communicating to the opposition where the ‘red lines’ of opposition lie.<sup>xcix</sup> But it also affects the politics of a democratic country, such as Israel. As Uri Bar-Joseph explains, the ‘paradox of Israeli power’ is ‘primarily the product of an erroneous national security concept in which military force is regarded as an almost exclusive answer to external threats’,<sup>c</sup> e.g. with regard to the territories conquered in 1967 or Israel’s constant reminders towards Syria (and vice versa) that it is prepared for war. It also shines through in collective identity politics, in which the symbolisation of the underlying threat of force occupies a central place. Take, for example, the public display of martyrdom myths, such as the Massada-narrative, which symbolises Israel’s willingness to forcefully counter *all* fundamental challenges, even if the price for

resistance is total annihilation.<sup>ci</sup> Seen from this perspective, the unofficial nuclear potential of Israel increases – rather than minimises – the ‘noise’ of the explicit threat of force in political communication in the region precisely because of its unofficial and nebulous status. But it is not only with regard to outside powers that this explicit symbolisation of the underlying threat of violence bears prominence. As Yoav Peled has argued with a view to the riots in Northern Israel between Israeli Palestinians, protesting against the killing of Palestinians in the Al-Aqsa Intifada, and the Israeli police in October 2000 – during which 14 Israelis were killed, 13 of Palestinian and one of Jewish origin – the Or Commission, which had the task to investigate this outbreak of violence, unintentionally reified the ‘frozen crossings’ between Jewish and non-Jewish Israelis. Thus, while the commission report elaborated in detail on the various levels of discrimination against Israeli Palestinians, in general, and criticised the behaviour of Israeli authorities and police in the riots, in specific, it firmly ‘restored ethnic democracy’ by suggesting that in order to enjoy full citizenship rights, Palestinian Israelis need first to ‘adhere to their obligation to protest this violation within the narrow confines of the law’.<sup>cii</sup> As Peled outlines in greater detail, the Or report provided the basis for a subsequent solidification of the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish Israelis in Israeli legislation and, consequently, challenges to this political order could now more easily be framed as a security threat to which the Israeli authorities and police would have the right to respond forcefully.<sup>ciii</sup> In other words, the report did not provide answers to the question how protest against ‘frozen crossings’ should be possible at all if the ‘narrow confines of the law’, on the one hand, and these ‘frozen crossings’ between Jewish and non-Jewish Israelis, on the other, coalesce. Thus, the naked visibility of the underlying threat of force serves as central function not only in legitimising the specific case at hand, but also to project the need to forcefully guard and uphold the borders of ethnic democracy, as a specific political order, in the future.

In that context, a comment by Yezid Sayigh on the linkage between state formation and armed struggle in Palestine is highly intriguing. Thus, Sayigh critically addresses the gap between the ambitious political rhetoric of the PLO, on the one hand, and the overall meagre concrete political results, on the other.<sup>civ</sup> While Sayigh’s arguments closely resembles the critic by Amal Jamal and others on bad governance and corruption by the PLO and lacking socio-political development in Palestine after the establishment of the PA,<sup>cv</sup> his argument is intriguing for another reason. Thus, ‘the fact that the Palestinian movement was able for so long to accommodate such a marked discrepancy between rhetoric and reality, between slogans and capabilities, and between nationalist myth and social requirement suggests that

performance was not measured in conventional military terms and that armed struggle served other primary functions',<sup>cv</sup> namely to uphold the frozen crossings between the PLO-leadership, on the one hand, and its various contenders in Palestine and the diaspora, on the other. Consequently, Palestinian politics relied to a large extent – and not only in order to counter Israeli occupation - on the constant visibilisation of the threat of force. This constant presence and visibility of the founding paradox of political order is then amplified – rather than softened – by the fuzzy borders between political and military factions in Palestinian politics. Thus, the debate on whether the 'political' or 'military' wings of Fatah and Hamas inside and outside Palestine are more central for a solid understanding of Palestinian politics, misses the crucial point that it is precisely the nebulous form of this distinction which ensures the constant symbolisation and societal noise of the threat of force in political communication. A similar argument has then been made by Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders on the role of Hizballah in Lebanese politics. Thus, they argue that the question of whether Hizballah is in a process of moving from a 'professional guerrilla to a political party', is misleading.<sup>cvii</sup> Different framings of Hizballah as a 'terrorist organisation' or a 'Lebanese factor' oversee that only taken together both dimensions not only adequately describe Hizballah's *political* role but also that precisely this nebulous division amplifies the centrality of the threat to force as the central 'noise' in political communication involving Hizballah. Thus, 'the *variety* of institutions Hizballah has been carefully elaborating and readapting over the past decades' is the basis of Hizballah's power, in which its 'social and political activities operate as an integrated and holistic policy network, disseminating the values of resistance while constructing a collective identity derived from the notion of the hala al-islamiyya, or "Islamic sphere"' .<sup>cviii</sup>

Two clarifying comments are central at this stage. Firstly, the naked visibility of the founding paradox of the code does not correspond with objectivist or actor-centred readings of powerful and powerless. It would thus be premature to attribute the naked visibility of the underlying threat of force to the allegedly powerful actors in the region, such as, amongst others, the armies, secret services, police and governments of states like Israel, Syria or Jordan. Thus, as the aforementioned arguments on political-military factions such as Hizballah, Fatah, Hamas or Islamic Jihad underline, the naked visibility of the threat of force extends to those actors which build large parts of their political capital on the claim that they represent the allegedly 'powerless', be it the Shiite population in Lebanon, the Palestinian population in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Palestinian refugee camps throughout the

region or the orthodox Muslim community in Jordan. Thus, Dag Tuastad's argument that 'Palestinians are victim of symbolic violence in two ways', namely due to allegedly external framings of Palestinians as 'terrorists' and 'traditional people' misses the point that the naked visibility of the founding paradox of the code (and consequently the symbolic violence of such political orders) relates to politics as the unity of the distinction powerful/powerless.<sup>ciX</sup> In other words, it not merely affects specific actors but characterises political communication in its entirety, thereby relating to *both* sides of the borders. Secondly, building on the arguments of the previous chapter, this naked visibility of the founding paradox of all political orders does not only relate to political communication in the Middle East, for this would only reify untenable notions of the Middle East as a regional container or the notion of cultural exceptionalism of Middle Easterners, as this has been criticised in chapter 2. Thus, a world society perspective allows observing the centrality of the explicit symbolisation of the underlying threat of force in political communication in *and* on the Middle East – in other words, on the place of the Middle East in politics as a global functional system. Seen from that perspective, the widely referred to securitisation and orientalisation of the Middle East by outside powers, such as the EU or the US, as for example in narratives of 'cultural' differences, the Middle East as a 'security threat' or a place of 'bad governance', only underlines the centrality of symbolisations of the threat of force in political communication in and on the region insofar as these discourses provide the basis not only for political, economic or military interventions but also for increased security measures against Middle Easterners in Europe, America and elsewhere.

### **The centrality of violence in the Middle East reconsidered**

Closely related to this crisis of power induced by the inflationary symbolisation of the threat of force is the widely documented centrality of open recourse to violence in Middle East politics and one would only have to think on topics such as the violent suppression of Islamist and democratic opposition movements in Syria throughout the last decades, the violent suppression of the Palestinian national movement in Jordan in the 1970s, or the establishment of the separation wall/fence, army checkpoints and road blockages by the Israeli army in the West Bank.<sup>cx</sup> However, violence is not the *domaine réservé* of secular or monarchic leaders or state institutions. Thus, recourse to open violence equally structures large parts of intra-communal relations in Lebanon or Palestine and also shapes the rhetoric and actions of those groups claiming to be 'resistance movements' such as the military sections of Fatah, Hamas or Hizballah.<sup>cxI</sup> The open display of violence does, finally, also relate to interventions by

extra-regional powers, for example since the beginning of the so-called ‘war on terror’. In that context, some authors have also referred to the more subtle and structural forms of violence shaping intra-regional and, in particular, Western-Middle Eastern relations.<sup>cxii</sup> As Yasir Suleiman has elaborated in a related context, the subtle uses of language, which put in place specific cognitive frames, not only structures conflicts in the Middle East (what Suleiman refers to as a ‘war of words’) but also rationalises and legitimises recourse to open uses of violence in the region.<sup>cxiii</sup> This is, however, not the place to elaborate in greater detail on the rich literatures on this centrality of violence in political communications in and on the Middle East. The more narrow purpose of this section is instead to put this violence into a comprehensive theoretical perspective which allows addressing the linkages between power (i.e. the medium of communication of the political system), on the one hand, and violence as the symbiotic mechanism of politics, on the other.<sup>cxiv</sup>

When addressing this role of open ‘violence in the system’ two main dynamics come to the fore.<sup>cxv</sup> Firstly, the aforementioned frozen crossings between power and powerlessness in Middle East politics render the entry of violence into political communication in and on the region more likely. Thus, the frozen crossings significantly facilitate the ‘societal search for the actor’,<sup>cxvi</sup> since the attribution of actions, in other words the specific forms of causality attributions in regional politics, can relate to concrete *and* relatively stable (and, therefore, highly contested) addressees.<sup>cxvii</sup> The cycle of violence in Middle East politics crucially builds on such inter-connected attribution processes. As Dirk Baecker explains, ‘violence is the communication of an unavoidability of an attribution to a [specific] action’ in which ‘this attribution is not left to communication but is enforced by action itself’.<sup>cxviii</sup> This argument should not be misread as an action-centred deviation from the communication theoretical framework of this book. Thus, the point here is not that violence is a situation in which bare actions would replace communicative unpredictability but rather that the occurrence of ‘violence in the system’ leads to the emergence of communications which are based on the *communication* of an unavoidability of attributions to specific actions. In other words, ‘as long as the communicative structure is characterised by violence, the reproduction of this [violent] situation orients itself alongside the almost tangible thread of the reproduction of actions’ and the subsequent causal attribution of actions to concrete actors.<sup>cxix</sup> In such a situation, the usual systemic processing of (double) contingencies loses much of its power<sup>cxx</sup> and, as will be further outlined in chapter 5, the ability to deconstruct notions of the Self and the Other by keeping the horizons of attribution in political communication relatively open

and vague, diminishes rapidly. Thus, the frozen crossings in the Middle East not only facilitate the entry of open violence into politics but also ensure the constant communicative reproduction of this violence. However, once actualised in the form of violence, power loses much of its flexibility as a medium of communication and it is for this reason that a creeping replacement of politics in the Middle East by antagonism and conflict can indeed be observed.

Secondly, the centrality of violence in Middle East politics not only constantly reifies the observation of frozen crossings and the associated power asymmetries between concrete actors. As already insinuated above, the massive occurrence of violence also leads to a decrease of alternatives in political communication. What is then interesting here is that this decrease of alternatives and the subsequent ‘communication of unavailability’ limits in particular the ability in effectively communicating power. Thus, responding to potential or actual challenges and contestations, power in Middle East politics not only makes recourse to the inflationary visibilisation of the (un-actualised) *threat* of force. Additionally, and encapsulated in the aforementioned cycle of recurring causal attributions to specific actions (in which self-observations always frame actions as re-actions, while other-observations always observe actions as actions to which the Self is *forced* to respond), power needs to resort to the (actualised) implementation of violence in order to uphold the frozen crossings. Such an understanding of the linkage between politics and power in the Middle East cautions against a Weberian understanding of power in which power is merely equated with the successful realisation of one’s will against resistance. When looking at the linkage between power and violence from the systems theoretical perspective developed above, it can thus be seen that this regular open recourse to violence in Middle East politics in fact limits the ability of power to operate as the code of the political system. The role of violence in ‘deoptionalising’ political communication<sup>cxxi</sup> and, thereby, undermining the role of power in the Middle East, therefore provides a comprehensive theoretical underpinning to the often raised claim of a de-politicisation of and paradoxical power in Middle East politics.<sup>cxxii</sup> In other words, the powerful become entrapped in a heavily securitised atmosphere in which causal attributions for their own violent actions are communicated as *unavoidable* reactions to concrete and forced upon actions by specific Others. Such self-fulfilling prophecies are part-and-parcel of Middle East politics, in which there are countless semantics of reactive unavailability which construct the region as a violent universe of its own which does, regrettably, not leave any space for more benevolent practices and in which the Other’s

violence is framed as onslaughts of ‘random violence’ in contrast to merely reactive and restraint violence by the Self.<sup>cxxiii</sup>

Analyses on the role of terrorism in Middle East politics are a prime example of this creeping encroachment of violence into the system of politics. From the outset it is crucial to emphasise that this chapter does not seek to establish a causality of terrorism, which either frames national or religious ‘resistance’ as a reaction to occupation and (structural) domination by, alternatively, Israel/Jews, the West/Christians or corrupt Middle Eastern state elites – and neither does it seek to identify the ‘war on terror’ as a forced upon reaction of those states and entities physically attacked by ‘terrorists’. Following the theoretical observations made above, the central point here is that the prevalence of the semantic form ‘resistance/terrorism’ in political communication in and on the Middle East is based on recurring communications which observe themselves in relation to the aforementioned ‘unavoidability of an attribution to a [specific] action’ in which ‘this attribution is not left to communication but is enforced by action itself’.<sup>cxxiv</sup> The frozen crossings in Middle East politics then structurally facilitate this de-optionalisation of political communication because violence can much more easily be *causally* attributed to relatively time-consistent communications on asymmetries in the distribution of power.<sup>cxxv</sup> These similarities in the semantic form of the resistance/terrorism distinction and how this distinction feeds into political practices have been analysed by Gertrud Brücher who has argued that the challenge of the terrorist attacks on New York on 11 September 2001 primarily lies in continuing to talk peacefully about peace, while escaping the vicious circle of responding to (and talking about) violence within a violence-prone, bivalent action/reaction scheme.<sup>cxxvi</sup> In a similar vein, Tamir Bar-On and Howard Goldstein have argued that ‘far too often the tactics deployed to combat terrorism come eerily close mirroring the very violence they seek to eliminate’, thereby instituting a culture of violence at the expense of politics.<sup>cxxvii</sup> The fact that this is not limited to a simplistic Western/Muslim distinction becomes, for example, clear when addressing the violence between Islamists and autocratic Arab governments in the Middle East, the public knowledge of which might, in particular outside the region, be constrained by both the lack of information on the actually massive outbreaks of violence and by being superseded by the overarching Western/Muslim paradigm.<sup>cxxviii</sup> To pick but one example, ‘when a December 1996 bomb blast [allegedly instigated by Islamists; St.St.] killed eleven people in Damascus, the government press did not even report its occurrence, much less any associated communiqués from those responsible’ – public knowledge about this event – and

subsequent government insurgencies against Islamists – remained low in Syria, let alone outside the country, and this is true for many other confrontations within the terrorism/resistance frame between autocratic Arab states and oppositional Islamist movements within Arab countries.<sup>cxxix</sup>

This focus on the resistance/terrorism distinction is not meant to propagate an indifferent equidistance between both sides since such perspectives more often than not tend to belittle or legitimise violent excesses by the allegedly powerless in the Middle East. However, when addressing the effects of violence by resistance movements/terrorists on political communication in and on the Middle East, a normative starting point would only obstruct observing the dynamics of both de-optionalised communications and unavoidable attributions within the reaction/action scheme.<sup>cxxx</sup> While Western/Israeli observations often stress the immediate *physical form* of violence (e.g. suicide attacks, marching militants, hijacked planes), Middle Eastern/Arab readings tend to stress the more structural notions of violence (e.g. colonialisation, dominance, conspiracies). While it should be noted that already the distinction Western/Muslim is problematic insofar as it easily reifies notions of a given and, therefore, *unavoidable* distinction between both sides, and therefore might indeed be a violent inscription itself, the empirical reality of the usage of this distinction in world politics, media and science can hardly be disputed. This distinction can then well be related to Dirk Baecker's third perspective on violence, which overcomes these more one-dimensional notions of violence as either physical or structural violence.<sup>cxxxi</sup> Thus, in contrast to this distinction, the communication theoretical understanding of violence developed above allows addressing both dimensions simultaneously, without taking recourse to non-communicational concepts of violence (physical violence), on the one hand, or to assumptions of world society as *generally* violent, thereby ignoring the high incentives for non-violent communication in a functionally differentiated world society, on the other. In other words, a systems theoretical perspective allows to observe the dynamics of violence 'as the other side of communication' *within* the comprehensive framework of the communication *and* differentiation theoretical framework outlined in chapter 1.

Following this understanding, 'this means that terrorism must be put into the context of the political system of society. As much as politics tries to denounce terrorism as a mere criminal activity, and as much as it presupposes in recent times more religious and therefore allegedly cultural motives rather than political ones, so are both attempts of distancing moves within the

context of an already political game, which is not centring around murderers and criminals and not only around jihadists or cultural defenders but always about political opponents'.<sup>cxxxii</sup> It is from this perspective that Gary Gambill's claim that 'the centrality of terrorism to political conflict in the Middle East has tremendous implications for the study of international relations' and one could now add: for the study of politics in world society more generally, becomes particularly plausible; thus, the 'study of the utility of terrorism is a small, but necessary, step toward the development of a more comprehensive theoretical paradigm that will reflect accurately the dynamics of modern international conflict. Such an undertaking has been severely impeded by "terrorism experts" who continue invariably to attribute the prevalence of terrorism in the Middle East to specific ideological, religious, or ethnic group' – be it Muslim/Arab terrorists or Western/Israeli colonialists - rather than addressing the role of violence in the system from a more system(at)ic perspective.<sup>cxxxiii</sup> The same is then, however, also true with regard to justifications of (physical) violence by Islamist movement and their discursive entrapment in political communication of alternativelessness and unavoidable attributions, e.g. when Shayk Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah from Lebanon argues that the confrontation between the 'West' and 'Islam' is 'a war of the arrogant against the downtrodden, a war of international [*sic!*] interests against those who may threaten these interests'.<sup>cxxxiv</sup> Seen from that perspective, suicide operations – as a widespread method of communicating an absolute and non-negotiable de-optionalised alternativelessness and necessity of attribution in the context of this confrontation – then appear as an 'ultimate form of communication'<sup>cxxxv</sup> insofar as they are firmly conditioned (and re-conditioned) within a violent reaction/action scheme.<sup>cxxxvi</sup> Thus, those 'who annihilate themselves in order to kill would appear to face a condition in which their suicidal choice has become ontologically – and not only strategically – the only one available'.<sup>cxxxvii</sup> Paradoxically, the upholding of frozen crossings becomes the main concern of political communication and, most interestingly, this applies also to those claiming to be (un-legitimately) located on the side of powerlessness. It is on this basis that Sheik Yusuf al-Qardawi, a leading Sunni scholar, makes a widely accepted argument in the Middle East, namely that 'if jihad for the liberation of occupied nations is considered "terrorism", then God raise me as a terrorist, and martyr me as a terrorist'.<sup>cxxxviii</sup> Upholding the frozen crossings has, thus, become part-and-parcel of political communication in and on the Middle East and *both* sides of the border operate within and, subsequently, stabilise its (violent) confines. These communicative dynamics are well documented in a statement by Sadiq Al-Azm, a leading liberal Syrian philosopher, who has voiced his amazement and embarrassment about his immediate reaction to the attacks of 11

September 2001. Thus, while on the one hand, he felt immediately repelled by this massive outbreak of violence and while he realised that this event would in the end only solidify the power asymmetries between the West and Arab countries, he 'could not help experiencing a strong emotion of *schadenfreude* that I tried to contain, control, and hide'.<sup>cxxxix</sup> It is for that reason that 'the primacy of conspiracy' as a popular mode of observation in Middle East politics cannot be regarded as a mere mis-perception or mis-understanding, which could be resolved by more (emphatic) communications, but rather as a self-referentially produced mechanism which allows continuously re-inscribing violence into the systems.<sup>cxli</sup>

To summarise, a systems theoretical framework helps to see how politics is transformed by massive recourse to violence in Middle East politics. Attribution processes, either to Western colonialism or to a specific religion such as Islam - what Dag Tuastad refers to as 'neo-orientalism and the new barbarism thesis'<sup>cxli</sup> - are already part of the creeping transformation insofar as they fail to observe the communicative processes which continuously structure this incorporation of violence into the system up to the point at which violence, paradoxically, constantly challenges *and* (re-)stabilises the 'frozen crossings' characteristic of Middle East politics. This is not a moral judgment about the legitimacy of violent interventions and neither is it an 'objective' statement of who precisely is located on the side of the powerful and the powerless, but merely the observation of the extent to which political communication is characterised by violence and how this violence translates into the communication of a lack of alternatives and unavoidable attributions, thereby further undermining power as the code of the political system in its capacity to ensure a quasi-technical crossing between both sides.

### **Hot Contestations: Paradoxes of Power and Powerlessness**

However, notwithstanding this communication of a lack of alternatives in Middle East politics, which directly derives from the effects of 'frozen crossings' referred to above, both sides do, of course, have countless (potential) alternatives. Thus, as described in detail in chapter 1, the double world societal horizon of all (political) communications ensures the structural availability of such alternatives. Yet, due to the effects of 'frozen crossings' this world societal horizon relates to both sides in a radically different way. Thus, as already alluded to above, 'frozen crossing' runs in parallel with a decrease of power and a limitation of the alternatives in particular of the powerful. Thus, since power has to constantly visibilise *and* implement its threat structures in order to ensure obedience - a dis-empowering of the role of power as the (empty) medium of communication in Middle East politics takes place.

While contestations to power, of course, remain risky, and the powerless are confronted with the hardly attractive alternative to either enter into acquiescence or open (and potentially dangerous) confrontation and conflict with the established power, ‘frozen crossings’ nevertheless do not to the same extent undermine the alternatives of the powerless. Recall that the very contingency of selections with regard to all (political) communications structurally ensures the prevalence of ‘the temptation of negation’, independent of the roughness of power-holders to ensure obedience.<sup>cxlii</sup> Since challenges to power are, thus, ubiquitous in a world society based on communication as its basic unit, ‘frozen crossings’ limit in particular the one side of the code, namely power, while the other side of the code, namely powerlessness, is structurally in a more advantageous position insofar as the double world societal horizon provides a constant template for (alternative) communications. More precisely, both the structural global interconnectivity as well as the inexhaustible possibility of alternative (actualised or potential) power communications ensure that lacking alternatives on the side of power are confronted with an inexhaustible horizon of alternatives on the side of powerlessness.<sup>cxliii</sup> However, since such contestations cannot evaporate due to the enduring grip to power of *specific* actors or structures, the freezing of the code leads overtime to a crisis of the system in which power is constantly challenged, while the proper operation of the code (ensuring both temporary closure and structural flexibility between power/powerlessness) can no longer be organised by the system and its programmes.

At this point, it becomes again obvious why *sui generis* approaches which view the Middle East as a somewhat separate political universe, operating according to allegedly regional logics of politics, are highly problematic. Thus, they pay inordinate attention to the observation that due to the world societal horizon of *all* communications, the Middle East cannot be thought of as detached from world society in structural terms, more generally, and the inexhaustible pool of sense-making (actualised or potential) communications in the functional system of (world) politics, more specific. Thus, although, as argued above, the crossings in Middle East politics are indeed severely hampered, the system nevertheless constantly has to process contestations, either from within or from outside the region. Independently of whether they are violent or peaceful, contestations in Middle East politics are, therefore, regularly ‘hot contestations’, because they are always threatening power in its concrete manifestation rather than operating within the logic of power being the unity of the distinction between power/powerlessness. In other words, political communication always produces – and the political system depends – on contestations, while the facilitation of

crossings as well as temporal closure ensure the operation of politics as a functional system in world society. The fact that these crossings are severely blocked in the Middle East does then turn almost all contestations into *hot* contestations which further amplify the aforementioned securitisation of Middle East politics. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that such hot contestations are indeed widely documented in the literature, which focuses primarily on ‘hot contestations’ to established power in the region emanating from both Islamist/orthodox religious and democracy movements.<sup>cxliv</sup>

What is less addressed, however, is how these hot contestations exactly relate to a comprehensive theoretical perspective on power. This is not the place here to analyse in detail the role of Islamist movements or democracy/liberalisation-oriented groups in Middle East politics for this would clearly go much beyond the more narrow purpose of this chapter. To repeat what has been said above, this is not to equate the democracy-movement and Islamist/religious groups in the Middle East. Both movements are internally highly fragmented; partially they do overlap, as for example the case of the Meimad-party in Israel illustrates,<sup>cxlv</sup> but often they are mutually exclusive with Islamists striving for political system subject to the encompassing rules of Sharia law or orthodox Jews supporting a society based on Halacha law; moreover, both movements have a different relation to the use of violence in politics, with many religious (Muslim or Jewish) groups being linked to armed militias.<sup>cxlvi</sup> However, what contestations by Islamists (and other orthodox religious) or democracy-movements share, is that they are regularly observed as directly power-threatening rather than as being part of the unity of the distinction between power/powerlessness and, therefore, part of the regular operation of politics. This is then also the deeper reason for the noteworthy securitisation of oppositional movements in Middle East politics, not only in political discourse but, interestingly, also in many academic writings which, either implicitly or explicitly, uncritically subscribe to such securitising strategies. This can, for example, be seen when addressing the role of democracy movements in the Middle East, which are often analysed against the backdrop of an alleged (violent) encounter of a Western concept with a local tradition. The problem here is not only that such approaches fail to explain why there are indigenous Middle Eastern democracy and human rights movements. More important for the argument of this chapter, such territorial/cultural framings implicitly legitimise powerful strategies by incumbents to uphold the ‘frozen crossings’ in Middle East politics by framing democracy either as an external intervention or as a threat to stability and, ultimately, peace. Similar observations can then be made with regard to the problematisation of contestations by

Islamist movements. Notwithstanding the often illiberal political agenda of such movements, the swiftness with which contestations by these groups become framed as a security threat, are indeed striking. This was, for example, evident in the immediate reaction of the PLO, the government of Israel, the EU, the US – but also many academic commentators<sup>cxlvii</sup> - to the election victory of Hamas in the Palestinian parliamentary elections of January 2006. The velocity with which these and other contestations – e.g. by Hizballah in Lebanon or by the Muslim brotherhood in Jordan<sup>cxlviii</sup> - are regarded as ‘hot contestations’, justifying extraordinary responses by national governments or the international community, only underlines the degree to which the aforementioned ‘frozen crossings’ permeate political communication in and on the region and how political communication is actually gauged to constantly fortify these very crossings.

It is then precisely at this point, that the distortion of the code of power in Middle East politics comes to the fore. Recall that both power (order) and powerlessness (contestation) jointly constitute the code. Earlier in this chapter it was therefore argued that the ‘power of power’ lies in its operation as an empty signifier of political communication. More specifically, while contestations thus challenge specific orders they are not a threat to power as the empty signifier of all political communications. These dynamics are then constrained in Middle East politics, since the ‘frozen crossings’ over-burden the code insofar as power becomes equated with upholding specific orders rather than the unity of the distinction between power/powerlessness. That is then why contestations almost automatically resurge as power-threatening ‘hot contestations’ which augment the crisis of politics in the region.<sup>cxlix</sup> It is against this background that contestations to power in Middle East politics often tend to appear in a non-political outfit. Such an ‘out-sourcing’ of politics to allegedly non-political spheres – e.g. the establishment of functionally-oriented services in the educational and health sectors by Islamist or Orthodox Jewish movements,<sup>cl</sup> the rise of pietistic movements, such as the Salafi movement,<sup>cli</sup> or the rapid growth of associational life with regard to the business community or the women and environmental movements,<sup>clii</sup> – does, however, not solve the problematique of ‘frozen crossings’. While such movements are often successful in escaping constant surveillance by the powerful and while they do indeed fulfil certain tasks the Middle Eastern state is unwilling or unable to provide, the very fact that power remains wary of the activities of these groups – combined with the huge interest these movements attract in political science – cast serious doubts on the un-political nature of these movements and whether they are ultimately able to overcome the ‘frozen crossings’ of Middle East politics.

While such movements might feed into a romantic modern ‘imaginary of autonomy’<sup>cliii</sup> of the life-world, it is hardly evident why they should constitute a sphere separate from ‘real’ political communication. Seen from a world societal perspective, the inherently political role of such developments can then be seen on at least two dimensions. Firstly, such allegedly non-political spheres allow to *actualise* powerful narratives of powerlessness in world society, e.g. of women in Arab countries, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon or pious Muslims in Jordan. Secondly, such frameworks also serve a crucial role in keeping the horizon of *alternative* political orders open, by imagining less non-antagonistic and peaceful political spheres, be it a pure Islamic state or a polyarchic democracy. Seen from that perspective it becomes once more evident why the popularity of taking recourse to the Islamic tradition is not a confrontation between modern and traditional worlds, but rather (one) possible way of imagining a less distorted operation of politics according to the requirements of a functionally differentiated world society.

To sum up, the main argument of this chapter was that a comprehensive theoretical perspective on power allows moving away from the widespread mystifications of power (and states) in Middle East politics. This chapter has suggested that the freezing of the (easy) crossing between power and powerlessness is, paradoxically, shaped and undermined by the world societal context in which political communications in the Middle East are embedded. However, ‘frozen crossing’ not only lead to an inflationary symbolisation of power and an increased use of violence in political communication, but also to an increase in the intensity of contestations to existing power relations, which have therefore been described as ‘hot contestations’. To put it in post-structuralist terms, the prevalence of ‘frozen crossings’ foster a multiplication of antagonistic moments in Middle East politics and a creeping transformation of politics towards antagonism and conflict. This process then leads to a profound crisis of power and a subsequent de-politicisation of Middle East politics. Hence, rather than viewing these ‘frozen crossings’ as a manifestations of a particular centrality of power in regional politics, this section maintains on the basis of the theoretical framework developed above, that these dynamics underline the overall weak and fragile status of power in the region. Thus, the constant need of power-holders to visibilise and implement the threat of force significantly limits the alternatives of the powerful, thereby depriving power of much of its societal capacities. Moreover, the naked visibility of power, resulting from both the inflationary symbolisation and the constant implementation of the threat of force, structurally undermine the invisibilisation and, therefore, the successful de-paradoxification of political

orders in the Middle East. Power is, thus, overburdened by its symbiosis and association with concrete empirical constellations and, therefore, loses much of its necessary flexibility as the code of the political system. As a result, the code powerful/powerless becomes rearticulated in an antagonistic way. It is this creeping transformation of politics, which can inter alia be seen in the extension of solid (frozen) structures of inclusion and exclusion across various functional spheres, in the sharp distinctions between Self and Other as well as the centrality of identity in Middle East politics, and, ultimately, in the usurpation of politics – and other social systems – by conflict dynamics, which the subsequent chapters will therefore address in greater detail.

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<sup>i</sup> From the album ‘...And Justice for All’ (1988), Vertigo Records.

<sup>ii</sup> L. Fawcett, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>iii</sup> To pick but one example, Syria does until today not recognise parts of its borders with neighbouring Turkey and holds no diplomatic relations with Lebanon and Israel. See also M. Ma’oz, J. Ginat and O. Winckler (eds), *Modern Syria: From Ottoman Rule to Pivotal Role in the Middle East*, Brighton: Sussex University Press, 1999.

<sup>iv</sup> See A. Kaufman, ‘Tell Us Our History’: Charles Corm, Mount Lebanon and Lebanese Nationalism, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40, 3, 2004, pp. 1-28; R. Khalidi, *op. cit.*; N. Rejwan, *op. cit.*

<sup>v</sup> M. Beck, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

<sup>vi</sup> F. Halliday, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28; see also R. Hinnebusch and A. Ehteshami (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002.

<sup>viii</sup> See also R. A. Del Sarto, *Contested State Identities and Regional Security in the Euro-Mediterranean Area*, Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

<sup>ix</sup> R. Hinnebusch, ‘The Politics of Identity in Middle East International Relations’ in L. Fawcett, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>x</sup> See Del Sarto, *op. cit.*

<sup>xi</sup> See A. H. Al Husban, ‘The Place of Local Councils in the Power Network: A Case Study of the North of Jordan (Halid bin el-Walid Municipality)’, *Orient*, 46, 4, 2005, pp. 565-580; A. N. Hamzeh, ‘Lebanon’s Islamists and Local Politics: A New Reality’, 2000, *Third World Quarterly*, 21, 5, pp. 739-759.

<sup>xii</sup> M. Benvenisti, ‘The Stale Myth of Battlefield Bravado’, *Ha-Aretz*, 14 April 2006.

<sup>xiii</sup> See in particular E. Lust-Okar, *op. cit.*; M. Barnett, *op. cit.*

<sup>xiv</sup> See P. Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 1988, Berkeley: University of California Press; T. Gongora, ‘War Making and State Power in the Contemporary Middle East’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29, 3, 1997, pp. 323-340; J. Amal, ‘Political and Ideological Factors of Conflict in Palestinian Society’, in H.-J. Albrecht, J.-M. Simon, H. Rezaei, H.-C. Rohne and E. Kiza (eds.), *Conflicts and Conflict Resolution in Middle Eastern Societies: Between Tradition and Modernity*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot; T. Scheffler, ‘Religious Communalism and Democratization: The Development of Electoral Law in Lebanon’, *Orient*, 44, 1, 2003, pp. 15-37.

<sup>xv</sup> See S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, London: Macmillan, 1974; K. Dowding, ‘Three-Dimensional Power: A Discussion of Steven Lukes’ *Power: A Radical View*’, *Political Studies Review*, 4, 2006, pp. 136-145; M. Barnett and R. Duvall, ‘Power in International Relations’, *International Organization*, 59, 1, 2005, pp. 39-75.

<sup>xvi</sup> See M. Albert, O. Kessler and S. Stetter, *op. cit.*

<sup>xvii</sup> See F. Halliday, *op. cit.*

<sup>xviii</sup> See J. P. Arnason and G. Stauth, *op. cit.*; R. Bahlul, ‘Toward an Islamic Conception of Democracy: Islam and the Notion of Public Reason’, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 12, 1, 2003, pp. 43-60; N. Ghabbian, *Democratization and the Islamist Challenge in the Arab World*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1997; A. R. Norton, ‘Associational Life: Civil Society in Authoritarian Political Systems’, in M. Tessler, J. Nachtwey and A. Banda, *op. cit.*

<sup>xix</sup> See N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>xx</sup> See B. Buzan and O. Wæver, *op. cit.*

<sup>xxi</sup> See also chapter 2.

<sup>xxii</sup> See also footnote 15. See also S. Newman, ‘The Place of Power in Political Discourse’, *International Political Science Review*, 25, 2, 2004, pp. 139-157; the special issue of *Political Studies Review*, 4, 2006 on Steven Lukes’ *Power: A Radical View*; S. Guzzini, ‘Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Analysis’,

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*International Organization*, 47, 3, 1993, pp. 443-478; J. Hart, 'Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations', *International Organization*, 30, 2, 1976, pp. 289-305.

<sup>xxiii</sup> This is not to deny that other theoretical concepts of power would not be helpful for this analysis. Building on the arguments made in chapter 1, this chapter thus also draws from other deconstructivist and post-structuralist notions of power which do share many similarities (besides all differences) with modern systems theory. See also U. Stäheli, *op. cit.*

<sup>xxiv</sup> See S. Telhami, 'Power, Legitimacy, and Peace-Making in Arab Coalitions: The New Arabism', in L. Binder, *op. cit.*; M. Kedar, 'In Search of Legitimacy: Assad's Islamic Image in the Syrian Official Press', in M. Ma'oz, J. Ginat and O. Winckler, *op. cit.*

<sup>xxv</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Note that these two sides relate to communications and not to actors, see also chapter 1. See also N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-241.

<sup>xxvii</sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>xxviii</sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 47, emphasis in the original.

<sup>xxix</sup> Note that the privileging of one side of the distinction in a binary coding (and the subsequent distinction between a positive and a negative value) is not a designation of a specific legitimacy for either side of the distinction but rather a statement on how the on-going connectivity of (unlikely) systemic operations is ensured in communications. See N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-62.

<sup>xxx</sup> N. Luhmann, *Macht*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 2003, p. 22. Note that it is not important here whether Alter and Ego consciously know about these alternatives. What rather matters is that the world societal horizon of all communications ensures the structural availability of alternatives, see also chapter 1.

<sup>xxxi</sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 50, my emphasis.

<sup>xxxii</sup> In particular S. Guzzini, *op. cit.*

<sup>xxxiii</sup> *Ibid.*, see also U. Stäheli, *op. cit.*

<sup>xxxiv</sup> K. Dowding, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Note again that Alter and Ego do not represent persons or actors. They Ego/Alter distinction rather relates to the communicative processing of double contingency and the establishing of order, see M. Albert, O. Kessler and S. Stetter, *op. cit.*

<sup>xxxvi</sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> See also the next section.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> See U. Stäheli, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

<sup>xxxix</sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>xl</sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>xli</sup> M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979. See also N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>xlii</sup> To borrow from Derrida, politics thus appears in all those 'determinations in given situations to be stabilized through a decision of writing', quoted in U. Stäheli, *op. cit.*, p. 233. Power - and politics - accordingly operates in situations of undecidability in which this undecidability is resolved by resorting to the underlying threat of force inherent in all power communications. Therefore, a decision is, in a sense, always heterogeneous to a system, since the decision comes from the outside, which lies beyond the logic of undecidability. Power is thus, a paradoxical operation, since on the one hand it constitutes politics as a powerful [*sic!*] system of society, while on the other hand, it remains foreign to the very undecidable decision it confronts by reintroducing a new hegemonic reading. As Kierkegaard thus pointedly argues, 'the instance of the decision is a madness', *ibid.*, p. 237. It is this communicative understanding which reveals that the 'double inscription' of the political into society, i.e. politics as the political system and politics in the sense of radical, hegemonic decisions, is not anathema to modern systems theory. In fact, limiting politics to the institutionalised politics or the state-centred distinction between government/opposition is a much too narrow reading of what modern systems theory has to say about politics.

<sup>xliii</sup> See N. Luhmann, 'Die Paradoxie als Form', in *Aufsätze und Reden*, edited by O. Jahraus, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2001.

<sup>xliv</sup> The code of the political is thus not government/opposition, as U. Stäheli, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-261 argues.

<sup>xlv</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>xlvi</sup> S. Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as Political Factor*, London: Verso, 1991, p. 193.

<sup>xlvii</sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>xlviii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>xlix</sup> D. Krause, *Luhmann-Lexikon: Eine Einführung in das Gesamtwerk von Niklas Luhmann*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 2001, p. 115.

<sup>l</sup> U. Stäheli, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>li</sup> Arguably, democracy, understood as the distinction between government/opposition, is a particularly successful programme insofar as it regulates both de-paradoxification (legitimacy by the people) and a quasi-

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technical crossing between both sides of the code power/powerless, based on the communication of clear time horizons.

<sup>lii</sup> U. Stäheli, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

<sup>liii</sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>liv</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>lv</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>lvi</sup> U. Stäheli, *op. cit.*, 297-308. See also chapters 4-6.

<sup>lvii</sup> That is also the deeper reason why programmes and legitimacy strategies based on clear-cut territorial or cultural inside/outside distinctions are rather unstable invisibilisation strategies since they too obviously contradict with the world societal embedding of all political communication.

<sup>lviii</sup> This is not a statement on the effectiveness of collectively binding decisions and neither about the territorial or functional scope of decisions. What the 'collective' in collectively binding decisions is is decided self-referentially by (political) communication.

<sup>lix</sup> See Stetter, *op. cit.*

<sup>lx</sup> See also B. Korany, R. Brynen and P. Noble, *op. cit.*; N. Ghabbian, *op. cit.*; A. Ehteshami, *op. cit.*; R. Hinnebusch, 'Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization Theory and the Middle East: An Overview and Critique', *Democratization*, 13, 3, 2006: pp. 373-395. Note that some authors have also pointed to the linkages between (limited) liberalisation and the consolidation of authoritarian rule in Middle East 'corporatist states', see A. Ehteshami and E. C. Murphy, 'Transformation of the Corporatist State in the Middle East', *Third World Quarterly*, 17, 4, 1996, pp. 753-772.

<sup>lxi</sup> See amongst many others J. Palmer Harik, 'Democracy (Again) Derailed: Lebanon's Ta'if Paradox', in B. Korany, R. Brynen and P. Noble, *op. cit.*; A. Shlaim, Avi, 'The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process', in L. Fawcett, *op. cit.*

<sup>lxii</sup> A. Jamal, 'State-Building, Institutionalization and Democracy: The Palestinian Experience', *Mediterranean Politics*, 6, 3, 2001, pp. 1-30.; E. Lust-Okar, 'Elections under Authoritarianism: Preliminary Lessons from Jordan', *Democratization*, 13, 3, 2006, pp. 456-471; T. Scheffler, *op. cit.*

<sup>lxiii</sup> See for an overview of the pros and cons of such a change in trans-regional relations the discussions in L. Guazzone, *op. cit.*; V. Perthes (ed.), *Germany and the Middle East: Interest and Options*, Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung / Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2002; G. Nonnemann, *op. cit.*

<sup>lxiv</sup> On the concept of ethnic democracy see S. Smooha, 'Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype', *Israel Studies*, 2, 2, 1995, pp. 198-241; see also A. Ghanem, N. Rouhana and O. Yiftachel, 'Questioning "Ethnic Democracy": A Response to Sammy Smooha', *Israel Studies*, 3, 2, 1997, pp. 253-267; see also R. Cohen-Almagor, 'Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building Ideology', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27, 4, 1995, pp. 461-484.

<sup>lxv</sup> R. Nathanson and S. Stetter (eds.), *The Middle East Under Fire? EU-Israel Relations in a Region between War and Conflict Resolution*, Berlin and Tel Aviv: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2007.

<sup>lxvi</sup> E. Zisser, 'A False Spring in Damascus', *Orient*, 44, 1, 2003, pp. 39-61.

<sup>lxvii</sup> G. E. Robinson, 'Defensive democratization in Jordan', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 30, 3, 1998, pp. 387-410.

<sup>lxviii</sup> Y. Sayigh, *op. cit.*; R. Hinnebusch, *op. cit.*

<sup>lxix</sup> I. S. Lustick, *op. cit.*; A. N. Hamzeh, 'Clientelism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37, 3, 2001, pp. 167-178.

<sup>lxx</sup> This is not to say, that powerlessness could not be a powerful resource in political communication. Thus, reference to alleged asymmetries are a powerful empowering factor in the world wide (media) struggle between Israelis and Palestinians and can also be found in many other conflicts. See also R. D. Kuperman, 'Strategies of Asymmetric Warfare and Their Implementation in the South Lebanon Conflict', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2, 1, 2006, pp. 1-20.

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<sup>lxxii</sup> K. Dalacoura, 'Islamist Terrorism and the Middle East Democratic Deficit: Political Exclusion, Repression and the Causes of Terrorism', *Democratization*, 13, 3, 2006, pp. 508-525.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> M. Kamrava, 'Non-Democratic States and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East: A Structural Analysis', *Third World Quarterly*, 19, 1, 1998, pp. 63-85.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> R. Hinnebusch, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

<sup>lxxv</sup> This includes an overemphasis on the power of the political centre, be it Damascus, Amman or Jerusalem at the expense of local/peripheral political developments which are equally relevant for understanding Middle East politics. Such an overemphasis on political centres easily reifies first-order narratives of centralisation and control, see also A. Bank, 'Re-ORIENTING IR: Innerstaatliche Gewaltkonflikte als Treffpunkt Internationaler Beziehungen und Vergleichender Orientforschung', paper presented at the Offene Sektionstagung der Sektion Internationale Politik der Deutschen Vereinigung für Politische Wissenschaft, Mannheim, September 2006.

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- <sup>lxxvi</sup> V. Perthes, 'Editorial: Elites in the Orient, or: Why Focus on Middle Eastern Elites', *Orient* 44, 4, 2003, p. 533.
- <sup>lxxvii</sup> See also Y. Sayigh, *op. cit.*
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> S. Lowrance, 'Deconstructing Democracy: The Arab-Jewish Divide in the Jewish State', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 13, 2, 2004, pp. 175-193.
- <sup>lxxix</sup> See footnote 64 above.
- <sup>lxxx</sup> S. J. Al-Azm, *op. cit.*
- <sup>lxxxi</sup> A. Le More, 'Killing with Kindness: Funding the Demise of a Palestinian State', *International Affairs*, 81, 5, 2005, pp. 981-999.
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> N. N. Ayubi, *op. cit.*
- <sup>lxxxiii</sup> This translates, for example, in the lacking ability of politics to be sufficiently irritated by environmental 'perturbations', be it economic or legal communications or the issue of preventing massive forms of exclusions as this has been addressed in the Arab Human Development Reports (see also chapter 4). As Sass and Ghawri argue in a somewhat related context, 'the fundamental break to be faced by Arab societies today may concern the opening of society and the very establishment of a political public able to lead a debate on reform, in the first place, which is not merely academic but politically salient', Y. Ghrawi and P. Sass, 'The Political Reform Debate in the Middle East and North Africa: Arabic Newspapers and Journals June 2004-February 2005', Working Paper FG 6, 2005/01, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2005, p. 6.
- <sup>lxxxiv</sup> M. Kamrava, 'The Politics of Weak Control: State Capacity and Economic Semi-Formality in the Middle East', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 22, 1&2, 2002, pp. 43-52.
- <sup>lxxxv</sup> K. Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*. London: I.B. Tauris; M. Ma'oz, J. Ginat and O. Winckler, *op. cit.*
- <sup>lxxxvi</sup> See P. D. Hoyt, 'Legitimacy, Identity and Political Development in the Arab World: Book Review', *International Studies Review*, 42, 1998, pp. 173-176.
- <sup>lxxxvii</sup> M. Kamrava, *op. cit.*
- <sup>lxxxviii</sup> Y. Sayigh, *op. cit.*
- <sup>lxxxix</sup> This theme was particularly stressed in the Arab Human Development Reports.
- <sup>xc</sup> K. P. Japp and I. Kusche, 'Die Kommunikation des politischen Systems: Zur Differenz von Herstellung und Darstellung im politischen System', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 33, 6, 2004, pp. 511-531.
- <sup>xc1</sup> See K. Salibi, *op. cit.*; L. L. Layne, *op. cit.*
- <sup>xc2</sup> B. S. Anderson, 'Writing the Nation: Textbooks of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 21, 1&2, 2001, p. 13.
- <sup>xc3</sup> N. J. Brown, 'Democracy, History, and the Content over the Palestinian Curriculum', Washington, D.C.: Adam Institute, 2001, p. 15.
- <sup>xc4</sup> For a classic account see M. C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- <sup>xc5</sup> See the regular publications on the human rights situation in Syria of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network on <http://euromedrights.net/>.
- <sup>xc6</sup> E. Zisser, *op. cit.*
- <sup>xc7</sup> V. Perthes, 'The Political Economy of the Syrian Succession', *Survival*, 43, 1, p. 152.
- <sup>xc8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>xc9</sup> See R. E. Lucas, 'Press laws as a survival strategy in Jordan, 1989-99', *Middle Eastern Studies* Volume, 39, 4, pp. 81-98; Q. Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- <sup>c</sup> U. Bar-Joseph, 'The Paradox of Israeli Power', *Survival*, 46, 4, 2004, pp. 137-155.
- <sup>ci</sup> N. Ben-Yehuda, 'The Masada Mythical Narrative and the Israeli Army', in E. Lomsky-Feder and E. Ben-Ari (eds.) *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, SUNY: Albany, 1999; see also M. Azaryahu, 'Mount Herzl: The Creation of Israel's National Cemetery', *Israel Studies*, 1, 2, 2005, pp. 46-74.
- <sup>cii</sup> Y. Peled, 'Restoring Ethnic Democracy: The Or Commission and Palestinian Citizenship in Israel', *Citizenship Studies*, 9, 1, 2005, p. 90.
- <sup>ciii</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>civ</sup> Y. Sayigh, 'Armed Struggle and State Formation', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, 4, 1997, p. 17-32.
- <sup>cv</sup> A. Jamal, *op. cit.*; S. Stetter, *op. cit.*; A. Badawi, 'Policy Failure, Power Relations and the Dynamics of Elite Change in Palestine', *Orient* 44, 4, 2003, pp. 555-577.
- <sup>cvi</sup> Y. Sayigh, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
- <sup>cvi</sup> M. Harb and R. Leenders, 'Know the Enemy: Hizbullah, "Terrorism", and the Politics of Perception', *Third World Quarterly*, 26, 1, 2005, pp. 173-197.
- <sup>cvi</sup> *Ibid.*, my emphasis.
- <sup>cix</sup> D. Tuastad, 'Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict(s)', *Third World Quarterly*, 24, 4, 2003, pp. 591-592.

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- <sup>cx</sup> J. A. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of Jordanian National Identity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001; J. Rynhold, 'Israel's Fence: Can Separation Make Better Neighbours?', *Survival*, 46, 1, pp. 55-76; R. Nasrallah et al., *The Wall: Fragmenting the Palestinian Fabric to Jerusalem*, Jerusalem: International Peace and Cooperation Centre, 2006.
- <sup>cx<sup>i</sup></sup> See M. Mushlih, ' Hamas: Strategy and Tactics', in L. Binder, *op. cit.*; A. N. Hamzeh, 'Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation', *Third World Quarterly*, 14, 2, 1993, pp. 321-337; M. Harb and R. Leenders, *op. cit.*
- <sup>cx<sup>ii</sup></sup> S. A. Muscati, 'Reconstructing "Evil": A Critical Assessment of Post-11 September Political Discourses', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 23, 2, 2003, pp. 249-269.
- <sup>cx<sup>iii</sup></sup> Y. Suleiman, *A War of Words: Language and Conflicts in the Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- <sup>cx<sup>iv</sup></sup> See N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63; N. Luhmann, 'Symbiotische Mechanismen', in N. Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung 3: Soziales System, Gesellschaft, Organisation*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1981.
- <sup>cx<sup>v</sup></sup> D. Baecker, 'Gewalt im System', *Soziale Welt*, 1, 1996, pp. 92-109.
- <sup>cx<sup>vi</sup></sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103
- <sup>cx<sup>vii</sup></sup> On causality and regionalisation dynamics in world society see N. Luhmann, 'Kausalität im Süden', *Soziale Systeme*, 1, 1, 1995, pp. 7-28.
- <sup>cx<sup>viii</sup></sup> D. Baecker, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
- <sup>cx<sup>ix</sup></sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>cx<sup>x</sup></sup> See N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, 148-190.
- <sup>cx<sup>xi</sup></sup> D. Baecker, *op. cit.*
- <sup>cx<sup>xii</sup></sup> K. Dalacoura, *op. cit.*; T. Gongora, *op. cit.*
- <sup>cx<sup>xiii</sup></sup> G. C. Gambill, 'The Balance of Terror: War by Other Means in the Contemporary Middle East', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 28, 1, 1998, p. 59.
- <sup>cx<sup>xiv</sup></sup> D. Baecker, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
- <sup>cx<sup>xv</sup></sup> Note that this is not a statement about 'objective' power but rather about powerful political framings in which either side justifies its violent actions by claims of powerlessness/vulnerability.
- <sup>cx<sup>xvi</sup></sup> G. Brücher, 'The Irony of Terror: The Morality-Sensitive Nerve in the Criticism of Violence', in S. Stetter, *op. cit.*
- <sup>cx<sup>xvii</sup></sup> T. Bar-On and H. Goldstein, 'Fighting Violence: A Critique of the War on Terrorism', *International Politics*, 42, 2005, p. 43.
- <sup>cx<sup>xviii</sup></sup> N. Ghabbian, *op. cit.*; J. Clark, 'Social Movement Theory and Patron Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions and the Middle Class in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen', *Comparative Political Studies*, 37, 8, 2004, pp. 941-968.
- <sup>cx<sup>xix</sup></sup> G. C. Gambill, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- <sup>cx<sup>xx</sup></sup> See also P. Fuchs, 'Kein Anschluß unter dieser Nummer oder Terror ist wirklich blindwütig', [http://www.fen.ch/texte/gast\\_fuchs\\_terrorismus.htm](http://www.fen.ch/texte/gast_fuchs_terrorismus.htm).
- <sup>cx<sup>xxi</sup></sup> D. Baecker, *op. cit.*, p. 93-100.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxii</sup></sup> D. Baecker, 'Die Gewalt des Terrorismus', unpublished paper. Such an approach thus firmly places violence within a social context. For a radically different concept see A. Açıkgöç, 'An Evaluation of Violence from Islam's Perspective', *Alternatives - Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 1, 4, 2002, pp. 16-29.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxiii</sup></sup> G. C. Gambill, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxiv</sup></sup> Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah and J. Massad, '11 September, Terrorism, Islam, and the Intifada', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 31, 2, 2002, p. 79.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxv</sup></sup> K. P. Japp, 'Zur Soziologie des fundamentalistischen Terrorismus', *Soziale Systeme*, 9, 1, 2003, p. 68.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxvi</sup></sup> For the very vast literature on fundamentalist terrorism and debate on the role of Islam see H. Khashan, 'Collective Palestinian Frustration and Suicide Bombings', *Third World Quarterly* 24, 6, 2003, pp. 1049-1067; J. Alagha, 'Hizbullah and Martyrdom', *Orient*, 45, 1, 2004, pp. 47-74; M. Ferrero, 'Martyrdom Contracts', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50, 6, 2006, pp. 855-877. In contrast to communication theoretical approaches (see K. P. Japp, *op. cit.*), a huge part of the literature focuses in particular on the individual motivations of 'terrorists', see for this debate D. Gholamasad, 'Zur Sozio- und Psychogenese der Selbstmordattentate der Islamisten', *Orient*, 43, 3, 2002, pp. 383-400; L. Andoni, 'Searching for Answers: Gaza's Suicide Bombers', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26, 4, 1997, pp. 33-45.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxvii</sup></sup> Quoted in F. S. Hasso, 'Discursive and Political Developments by / of the 2002 Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers / Martyrs', *feminist review*, 81, 2005, p. 44.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxviii</sup></sup> J. Alagha, 'Hizbullah, Terrorism, and September 11', *Orient*, 44, 3, 2003, p. 409.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxix</sup></sup> S. J. Al-Azm, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- <sup>cx<sup>l</sup></sup> A. Hamzawy, *op. cit.*
- <sup>cx<sup>li</sup></sup> D. Tuastad, *op. cit.*
- <sup>cx<sup>lii</sup></sup> N. Luhmann, *op. cit.*, p. 14

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<sup>cxliii</sup> Note again that this is a statement about communications and not about actors.

<sup>cxliv</sup> N. Ghadbian, *op. cit.*; A. Ali, 'Islamism: Emancipation, Protest and Identity', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 20, 1, 2000, pp. 11-28; B. Korany, R. Brynen and P. Noble, *op. cit.*; F. Volpi and F. Cavatorta, 'Forgetting Democratization? Recasting Power and Authority in a Pluralist Muslim World', *Democratization*, 13, 3, 2006, pp. 363-372.

<sup>cxlv</sup> For the relationship between Islam and democracy see R. Bahlul, *op. cit.*; see also Q. Wiktorowicz and S. T. Farouki, 'Islamic NGOs and Muslim Politics: A Case from Jordan', *Third World Quarterly*, 21, 4, 2000, pp. 685-699.

<sup>cxlvi</sup> It is paramount to note that the existence of armed militias does not only relate to some Muslim groups but also shapes the politics of many secular political parties, e.g. in Palestine or Lebanon.

<sup>cxlvii</sup> See for a similar discussion H. Baumgarten, 'Die Hamas: Wahlsieg in Palästina: Islamistische Transformation zur Demokratie in einem neopatrimonialen Rentier-System', *Orient*, 47, 1, 2006, pp. 26-59.

<sup>cxlviii</sup> Q. Wiktorowicz, *op. cit.*; S. Fathi, 'Jordanian Survival Strategy: The Election Law as a "Safety Valve"', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 41, 6, 2005, pp. 889-998.

<sup>cxlix</sup> That might also be one of the reasons why the introduction of more or less democratic elections has, until today, hardly contributed to less confrontational politics in the region.

<sup>cl</sup> One might think here of the health and educational services linked to Hizballah or Hamas. For orthodox Jews see D. C. Jacobson, 'The Ma'ale School: Catalyst for the Entrance of Religious Zionists into the World of Media Production', *Israel Studies*, 9, 1, 2004, pp. 31-60.

<sup>cli</sup> Q. Wiktorowicz, *op. cit.*; P. Mandaville, 'Sufis and Salafis: The Political Discourse of Transnational Islam', in R. W. Hefner (ed.), *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

<sup>clii</sup> A. R. Norton, *op. cit.*

<sup>cliii</sup> C. Houston, 'Islamism, Castoriadis and Autonomy', *Thesis Eleven*, 76, 2004, pp. 49-69.