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Nour El-Kebbi April 14, 2013

Qat Chews, *Dīwānīya*s, and Coffeehouses: Civic Traditions in Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt

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Abstract

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By Nour Mariam El-Kebbi

This study aims to challenge the skeptical view of some scholars, and indeed much of the Western world, regarding the possibility of functioning democratic states in the Middle East. In combatting the assumption that democracy cannot thrive in the newly liberated states of the Arab Spring, this study examines the informal networks and gathering traditions of three states, each with a history of authoritarian-style rule: Yemen under President Saleh (1978-2012), Kuwait under the rule of Al Sabah family (1756-Present), and Egypt under President Mubarak (1981-2011). In each state, the focus is placed on a traditional gathering that takes place on a regular basis and is a space that allows for dialogue, discussion, and debate—components of Habermas' public sphere that are critical to the creation of public opinion and political participation.

The goal in examining these traditions in each state was to explore whether these social institutions played a crucial role in the political culture and processes of these states, where formally organized political institutions—such as opposition political parties, civil society organizations, and political interest groups—were banned or severely restricted. The study aimed at ascertaining whether these informal, traditional networks served as important venues for political discussion, rational debate, and participation. Upon finding that these social institutions were in fact highly involved in the political culture of their respective state, this study sought to find evidence both historically and in the context of the recent Arab Uprisings that illustrated the ways in which these social institutions, most prominently the Kuwaiti *dīwānīya*, played important roles as informal political institutions.

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Introduction

In December of 2010, a seemingly isolated event in a working-class town in Tunisia sparked a revolutionary fire that spread across the country, spilling over into other Arab states such as Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Bahrain. On December 17, 2010 Muhammad Bū'azīzī, a poor produce vendor, set himself on fire in front of the local police station in Sīdī Būzīd in desperate protest of the confiscation of his vegetable cart— his sole means of livelihood—and subsequent public humiliation at the hands of a female police officer.[1] As Bū'azīzī was engulfed by flame, so too were the hearts and minds of his fellow Tunisians, who poured out into the streets in a fiery rage over the abysmal societal and economic strains that pushed Bū'azīzī to commit self-immolation. As protests spread across Tunisia, a unified mission evolved amongst the protestors, with a single call to President Zīne El 'Abidīne Ben Ali: *Ben Ali, Dégage!* ("Ben Ali, Get Out!").[2] These protests in Tunisia sparked empathy and similar sentiments and calls for regime fall in other Arab states suffocating beneath dictatorial regimes, most notably in Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen.

In three of these Arab states—Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya—the civilian population was successful in bringing down regimes that had long ruled by oppression, brutality, and suspension of basic freedoms and rights. However, with the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, and Muammar Qaddafi in Libya, the battle for democracy has only just begun in the Arab world. While toppling the dictators in power chronologically must precede democratic reform in these countries, the two processes are by no means intrinsically linked, nor does the former necessarily facilitate the latter.[3] For many states in the Arab world that have been ruled

[1] James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012),
[2] Peter Schraeder and Hamadi Redissi, "Ben Ali's Fall," *Journal of Democracy* 22(2011): 7.
[3] Heather Gregg, "The Prospects for Democratization in the Middle East," pp. 112-132 in *Governance in the Middle East and North Africa: A Handbook*, ed. Abbas Kadhim (Routledge: New York, 2013), 112-113.

historically by monarchies and in more contemporary times authoritarian regimes, many scholars have argued that the people of these states have little to no experience with democracy, thus deeply complicating their transformation into a civil democratic society.[4] Civil democratic society, and civil society in general, is understood as "the realm of private voluntary association, from neighborhood committees to interest groups to philanthropic enterprises of all sorts."[5]

However, what these scholars fail to acknowledge is the way in which they are defining democracy and democratic behavior. As Lisa Wedeen explains, "…scholars may want to avoid thinking about democracy as a thing at all, or a label that we affix to a state, and focus instead on the existence or absence of democratic practices."[6] The crux of Wedeen's argument is that the most minimalistic definition of a democracy as "a regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections,"[7] is too narrow and furthermore does not get to the heart of what a democracy truly entails.

An alternative and more representative definition put forth by Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset defines democracy as "…a political system, separate and apart from the economic and social systems to which it is joined, that meets the four conditions of: competitive, free and fair elections between multiple parties; a system highly inclusive of the population and the right of all adults to vote; a significant level of civil and political liberties

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[4] See Michele Dunne, "Libya's Revolution: Do Institutions Matter?" *Current History* 110(2011): 370-371; Anthony Cordesman, "Rethinking the Arab 'Spring,'" *Center for Strategic and International Studies* November 8, 2011: 1-13; Eva Bellin, "Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36(2004): 139-157; and Michael J Totten, "Arab Spring on Islamist Winter?" *World Affairs Journal* January/February 2012.

[5] Michael Foley and Bob Edwards, "The Paradox of Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy* 7(1996): 38.

[6] Lisa Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation: Qat Chews as Public Spheres in Yemen," *Public Culture* 19(2007): 80-81.

[7] Adam Przeworski et al., *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15.

including freedom of the press, speech and assembly; and the understanding that the rulers will be held accountable for their actions by the public, their citizens.[8]

Drawing upon this alternative definition of democracy, Wedeen argues that "aspects of substantive representation…such as citizen participation, modes of continual accountability, and informed publics whose participants engage in lively deliberation and criticism"[9] must also be included in an accurate definition of a democracy. Having contested elections is simply not enough to ensure a functioning, civil democratic state—as evidenced by the supposedly democratic states of Egypt under Mubarak and Russia under Putin. The word "civil" is key—this corresponds to the "citizen participation….and informed publics whose participants engage in lively deliberation and criticism" mentioned above.

Now the question that arises is, do these civil behaviors have any history in the Middle East? If so, do these behaviors amount to a challenge for the assumption that the Middle East has no experience with democratic norms, and therefore that democracy cannot flourish in the region? In this study I argue that several historic and traditional customs in the Middle East help to foster the civic culture, environment, processes, and practices that are necessary for the establishment of a civil democratic state.

While several scholars of political science who study the Middle East have argued that traditional customs do stimulate democratic behavior,[10] none have answered the question of why certain traditional sites have contributed to this behavior, nor have they devised a theory that explains why such spaces function as important sites of democratic discussion, debate, and in

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[8] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Lipset (eds), *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experience with Democracy* (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1995), 6-7.
[9] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 80.
[10] Lisa Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 59-84; Peer Gatter, *Politics of Qat: The Role of a Drug in Ruling Yemen* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012): 365-516; Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *The Journal of Modern History* 67(1995): 807-834.

some cases mobilization. In addition, I argue that these traditional gatherings, such as *qat* chews and *dīwānīya*s, are indicative of a deep-rooted, albeit limited, civic culture in these states, as they are an aspect of the civic culture prevalent among the citizenry and that in several ways can facilitate democratic behavior and political participation.[11]

In this study I will delve into both the historical and the theoretical reasons why certain traditional customs in the Middle East do in fact help engender democratic behavior, thereby dispelling the absolutist claim that the Middle East has no experience with democracy. In my research, I will focus on three countries, two with a traditional custom (within a traditional space) unique to that country, and one custom that spans the Middle East but takes a particular prominence in the country of my case study: *qat* chews in Yemen, *dīwānīya*s in Kuwait, and coffeehouses in Egypt.

In each of these countries, prior to the Arab Spring despotic rulers retained an ironclad grip on civil society and political participation.[12] Yemen under President Ali Abdullah Saleh (1978-2012), Kuwait under its current emir Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah (2006-Present), and Egypt under Mubarak (1981-2012) all shared the experience of being ruled by authoritarian regimes. In such an environment, where political participation is heavily restricted at best and completely suppressed at worst, citizens are forced to resort to proxy, traditional, and informal sites and networks to participate in politics—be that in the minimal form of political discussions or more actively in the form of political mobilization. These proxy sites often come in the form

[11] Peter Dahlgren, "The Internet and the Democratization of Civic Culture," *Political Communication* 17(2000): 336.

[12] Throughout this paper, I will be using the term "authoritarian" to describe the regimes of President Saleh (1978-2012), King al-Sabah (2006-Present), and President Mubarak (1981-2012). While all three of these regimes may have behaved more or less democratically over the years, in general their rule has been characterized, especially in recent years, as authoritarian. While Yemen and Egypt are republics and Kuwait is a monarchy, in reality the behavior of all three of these states' governments is much more characterized by autocracy than true democracy. Thus, while these three regimes may not be formally structured as authoritarian regimes, in reality whatever checks and balances exist are nominal and all true power still lies with one small, elite group of individuals.

of traditional means of gathering and organizing, such as mosques, coffeehouses, and teahouses. For the purposes of this study, I will focus on the aforementioned sites in order to illustrate the ways in which the traditional social institutions of *qat* chews in Yemen, *dīwānīyas* in Kuwait, and coffeehouses in Egypt facilitate democratic and civil processes. I will first construct a theory detailing why these sites provide opportunities for civil behavior, and then apply this theoretical framework as I delve into each case study.

It is well documented that coffeehouses, tea salons, pubs, and other informal, traditional meeting places have played instrumental roles in the political life and history of Europe and the United States.[13] There is a fairly limited body of scholarly work on how comparable informal networks in the Middle East have also served as civil social institutions,[14] and it is to this body of knowledge that I aim to contribute with this study. I will begin constructing my theory with elements of the theoretical framework from Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which he briefly delves into a theory that helps explain why *qat* chews, *dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouses, as both public and private spaces, can serve as centers for the creation of public opinion and by extension, political participation and mobilization. I will then incorporate commentary on Habermas' work by Markman Ellis (2008) and Craig Calhoun (1992), Doug McAdam's (1982) theory of cognitive liberation, and Robert Putnam's (1993) theory of social capital and its importance in democratization.

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[13] See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Boston: MIT Press, 1991); Gabrielle Robinson and Mike Keen, "Café Kultur: The Coffeehouses of Vienna," *Contemporary Review* 269(1996): 24-32; and Nina Luttinger and Gregory Dicum, *The Coffee Book* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 1-36.

[14] See Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 93-118; Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen: The Political Economy of Activism in Modern Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press,1998); Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East Volume Two* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 45-152, 259-316; Lisa Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation: Qat Chews as Public Spheres in Yemen," 59-84; Peer Gatter, *Politics of Qat: The Role of a Drug in Ruling Yemen* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012): 365-516.

Theory

Habermas is known for his pioneering work that defines and explores the various aspects of the public sphere. He defines the public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body."[15] While Habermas' analysis is largely based on European history, such a definition of the public sphere is also applicable to the Middle East. Amir Arjomand (2004) argues that this definition of the public sphere, and by extension civil society, is applicable to medieval Muslim societies in that the "sphere of social relations" was in principle guaranteed independence from the state by Islamic law, with its autonomous agency furthered by "well-developed laws of contract and commercial partnership."[16] Habermas strove in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989) to investigate when, and under what conditions, the arguments and debates that take place among a group of individuals could produce substantive foundations for political action.[17] Calhoun highlights that this question posed by Habermas is a crucial one for democratic theory, because it posits that a "public sphere adequate to a democratic polity depends upon both quality of discourse and quantity of participation."[18] Habermas addresses the first requirement by explaining that the "classical bourgeois public sphere" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was based largely on rational-critical debate, in which the validity and soundness of one's argument was of greater value than the identity or social class of the arguer. The term rational-critical is understood and

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[15] Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," pp. 73-78 in *Media and Cultural Studies:KeyWorks,* ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner (Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 73.
[16] Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Coffeehouses, Guilds and Oriental Despotism Government and Civil Society in Late 17th to Early 18th Century Istanbul and Isfahan, and as seen from Paris and London," *European Journal of Sociology* 45(2004): 24.
[17] Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Boston: MIT Press, 1992), 1.
[18] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 2.

used in this paper not as a judgment of the rationality or quality of an argument in a debate, as no one authority stipulates what qualifies as rational, given that it is a subjective term; rather, rational in this context will refer to the construction of an argument in a debate so as to prove a point, rather than the mere expression of an opinion. The expression and exchange of opinions, while inherent in the construction of an argument, cannot qualify as an argument and thus cannot be considered as rational-critical debate.

Fundamental to Habermas' theory of the development of the public sphere into public opinion and eventually into political action is the nature of the relationship between the state and the economy. Habermas argues that the freer an economy, or the less the state intervenes or controls economic activity, the greater the likelihood of the development of civil society and thus political activity.[19] Realistically, this is an oversimplification of the relationship between the economy, state interference, civil society, and democratization—instating a free market economy with little state interference in Egypt would more likely cause chaos than it would strengthen civil society or facilitate Egypt's democratic transition. Habermas' argument regarding this relationship is rooted in the transformation of the interaction between the private realm, the *oikos* in Greek thought, with the public realm. Habermas argues that attributes formerly unique to the private sphere, such as debates, complaints, and concerns traditionally only discussed in the household with family and close friends, slowly began to leak into the public sphere. Expanding on this concept, Calhoun explains:

> The bourgeois public sphere that Habermas explores shares some features with [that of the Greek conception of the public sphere], but it reverses a key element. It is defined as the public of *private* individuals who join in debate of issues bearing on state authority…Moreover, the private realm is understood as one of freedom that has to be defended against the domination of the state.[20]

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[19] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 6-9.
[20] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 7.

This understanding of the public versus the private sphere is applicable to the Middle East, where the public sphere is often dominated by the state (such as in Syria, in Egypt before the fall of Mubarak, and in Libya before the fall of Qaddafi), and it is only in the private sphere of the home, amongst one's family or closest friends, that whispers against the regime are exchanged. However, Markman Ellis (2008) notes that "the public sphere, despite its name, takes place in private, or in certain liminal regions on the borders of the public and private."[21]

This identity of the state authority and its different arms, as being "not for but 'before' the people,"[22] is what Habermas terms "representative publicity," and argues that this constituted the public sphere in Europe until the seventeenth century. However, as Calhoun highlights, with the rise in popularity of certain new social institutions such as salons and coffeehouses, a new set of social interactions began to take place between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. Calhoun notes that "Aristocrats played leading roles in the early bourgeois public sphere,"[23] namely by frequenting salons and coffeehouses and engaging in literary, philosophical, and eventually political discussions with members of society outside the king's court. Thus, certain societal groups began to intermingle and communicate as never before, leading to "an idea of society separate from the ruler (or the state) and of a private realm separate from the public."[24]

Habermas adds that, indeed, civil society itself in seventeenth and eighteenth century Western Europe became "the genuine domain of private autonomy [that] stood opposed to the state."[25] Thus, the public sphere was no longer synonymous with the state, or with the ruler; instead, participants in public discussions shifted the concept of society away from being regime-

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[21] Markman Ellis, "An Introduction to the Coffeehouse: A Discursive Model," *Language and Communication* 28(2008): 161.
[22] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 12.
[23] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 7.
[24] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 7.
[25] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 12.

centered to one based more on relationships and organizations focused on "rational-critical discourse on political matters."[26] This historic point is particularly relevant currently to the Middle East, where many authoritarian regimes in the region have stifled, if not completely outlawed, civil society and criticism of the government. Whereas in Europe this regime heavy-handedness began to subside in the seventeenth century,[27] in the Middle East many authoritarian regimes continue to infiltrate all levels of society with their *mukhabarat*, or domestic intelligence services—often creating a public sphere that is unsafe for political discussion or rational-critical debate.[28] In addition, another factor that made the public sphere unsafe for anti-regime activities and pro-democracy efforts, especially democratic transition, was the ability and willingness of the state coercive apparatus to crush democratic movements. As Eva Bellin describes, "The will and capacity of the state's coercive apparatus to suppress democratic initiative have extinguished the possibility of transition."[29]

Calhoun, critiquing the emphasis Habermas' places on the economy in his theory, nonetheless acknowledges that capitalist market economies formed the basis for civil society and that "transformations of the economy nonetheless produced transformations in all of civil society."[30] Calhoun stresses that civil society went on to incorporate "institutions of sociability," such as coffeehouses, which facilitated discourse that was only marginally related to the economy. These "institutions of sociability" and their relationship to civil society and the fostering of democratizing behaviors are the main focus of this study. Nevertheless, the relationship between the economy and civil society can be applied to the Middle East, where many of the states in this region continue to have an economy that is dominated by patrimonial

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[26] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 9.
[27] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 1-10.
[28] Schraeder and Redissi, "Ben Ali's Fall," 6.
[29] Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism," 143.
[30] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 8.

systems of appointments and favors doled out to select families or tribes in return for their support of the regime. Thus, it is possible to connect the historic lack of democratizing reform in the region to the state's iron grip on the economy, in addition to the aforementioned ban of civil society by the state apparatus.

A third critical insight put forth by Habermas and expanded upon by Calhoun is that as certain institutions, such as coffeehouses, became meeting places for literary discussion, these spaces become institutional bases for the literary public sphere that then provided the prime environment for the development of a political public sphere. As Calhoun highlights, "the greatest contributions of the literary public sphere to the political sphere lay in the development of institutional bases."[31] Calhoun then discusses the four features Habermas argues were crucial to the development of the political public sphere: social interactions in these bases were not limited by social class, rational argument was the highest authority in discussing an issue, topics or long-standing issues that had previously never been questioned were brought up and debated, and the emerging public characterized itself as inclusive, even if only in principle. Theoretically, anyone with access to education or literature was invited to join in on these discussions, although invariably several groups (most prominently women) were excluded from these male-dominated meeting places. However, both Habermas and Calhoun highlight that these public discussions by private individuals served to convert the public sphere from one centered in the world of letters to one focused on the world of politics, which in turn furthered the development of public opinion.[32]

Before delving further into this theoretical framework, the terms public, public sphere, public space, and public opinion must be defined and placed in a larger context of their

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[31] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 12.
[32] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 13-14.

importance to deliberative democracy. This is a crucial connection to make, because this study aims to demonstrate the ways in which traditional gatherings and informal networks—in *qat* chews, *dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouses—help to foster behaviors that are crucial to deliberative democracy. As Papacharissi (2002) notes, "In the truest form of democracy, negotiation of that which is considered public and that which is considered private takes places within the public sphere."[33]

In regards to the concepts of public and public opinion as they will be used and understood in this study, the public is defined as "individuals who assemble",[34] and public opinion defined as "the formation of political will."[35] The public sphere as defined by Habermas (1974) and Dahlgren (2005) is "a realm of our social life, in which something approaching public opinion can be formed"[36] or, more broadly, "a constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates—ideally in an unfettered manner—and also the formation of political will."[37] In addition to these two definitions Papacharissi adds that the public sphere is also a "domain of social life in which public opinion is expressed by means of rational public discourse and debate," whose ultimate goal is to achieve public accord through public decision-making, though these goals may not necessarily always be achieved.[38]

The concept of the public sphere must not be equated or used interchangeably with the public space, which provides the physical foundation for the public sphere to convene.[39] To demonstrate, a public space could be a physical establishment such as a coffeehouse or a *qat*

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[33] Zizi Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere 2.0: The Internet, the Public Sphere and Beyond," pp. 230-245 in *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*, ed. Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard (New York: Routledge, 2009), 231.
[34] Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," 78.
[35] Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication," 148.
[36] Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," 49.
[37] Peter Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation," *Political Communication* 22(2005): 148.
[38] Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere 2.0," 232-233.
[39] Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere 2.0," 233.

chew, which allows for individuals to gather and engage in rational-critical debate, thus creating a public sphere and working towards the generation of public opinion. However, the public sphere that is manifested in the public space of a coffeehouse or *qat* chew is usually not a healthy public sphere, as women are traditionally excluded from such public spaces. Thus, the existence of a public space does not always ensure a representative or balanced public sphere.[40] This is particularly a problem in the Middle East, where women are customarily excluded from most public spaces, especially those that are more traditional, and thus much of the public sphere. Unfortunately, this exclusion persists in the Middle East despite the Arab Spring and the central role women played in the organization and execution of the mass uprisings.[41] In addition, it is important to acknowledge that the public sphere is not just one sphere but more accurately an amalgamation of several different public spheres that occur across a variety of public spaces.[42]

Crucial to Habermas' theory of the creation of public opinion are the dialogues that began to take place between private individuals in public spaces. However, Habermas does not delve into *why* these discussions were crucial to the creation of public opinion, and by extension political discussions and activity. To answer that question, a portion of Doug McAdam's theory of "cognitive liberation" becomes particularly relevant. This theory states that cognitive liberation, or "a transformation of consciousness within a significant segment of the aggrieved population…[in which] people…collectively define their situation as unjust and subject to change through group action,"[43] is crucial to the development of social movements and insurgency. The crux of this theory is that, in situations in which structural inequities exist over a certain population, over time there is the likelihood that the population's "collective perception"

[40] Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere 2.0," 233.
[41] Isobel Coleman, "Is the Arab Spring Bad for Women?" *Foreign Policy*, December 20, 2011.
[42] Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication," 148.
[43] Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 50-51.

of the "legitimacy *and* mutability" of those conditions is likely to change.[44] It is this shift in the public's collective perception that provides the impetus for cognitive liberation, or the realization among a significant group of people that the status quo is unjust and most importantly, subject to change.

McAdam adds that cognitive liberation is most likely to occur and is most significant "under conditions of strong rather than weak social integration…[and] within established interpersonal networks,"[45] which will be shown to include *qat* chews, *dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouses later in this study. While McAdam's theory places emphasis on the importance of cognitive liberation in the development of social movements and insurgency, cognitive liberation can certainly also occur through the informal discussions that take place in the traditional, Middle Eastern gathering places of *qat* chews, *dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouses. The Arab Spring did not happen overnight, and neither did the cognitive liberation of the masses of people who took to the streets to oust their dictators. Tunisians, Egyptians, Yemenis, and Libyans were cognitively liberated in that they were certainly aware of their dire political situation, but it was not until the advent of new tools such as the internet and social media that they acquired the resources to circumvent their oppressive state security apparatuses in order to mobilize and execute mass protests.

When groups of private individuals come together in public to share private concerns, private concerns can then transform into shared sentiments, thereby stemming the creation of public opinion and political discourse. The traditional "institutions of sociability"[46] to be discussed in this paper play a central role in and are a significant portion of civil society in the authoritarian or formerly authoritarian states of Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt. It is to the

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[44] McAdam, *Political Process and the Development,* 35.
[45] McAdam, *Political Process and the Development*, 51.
[46] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 8.

importance of civil society in engendering both cognitive liberation and political discourse that this analysis will now turn, relying on the work of Robert Putnam and his theory of the crucial relationship between what he terms "social capital," democratic behavior, and the success of democratic institutions.

In *Making Democracy Work* (1993), Robert Putnam attempts to identify the societal factors that influence the "performance of democratic institutions."[47] The main focus of Putnam's research is to explore why Italy's northern regions house democratic institutions that function much more efficiently than those of the southern regions, a distinction that is key for readers to understand in order to comprehend Italy's political climate, due to the country's distinct regional differences.

Putnam argues that it is "social capital" that plays the determining role in both the economic and political culture of a region,[48] stressing that social capital is ultimately the key to "making democracy work,"[49] in Italy and elsewhere. Putnam defines social capital as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions."[50] He states that it is the level of "civic-ness,"[51] or the level of citizens' active participation in associations, politics, or interest groups and organizations, that truly determines the success of democratic government.[52] Putnam argues that the more social capital in a community, the greater its economic development, and consequently the better the performance of its democratic institutions.[53]

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[47] Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3.
[48] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work,* 178.
[49] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 185.
[50] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 167.
[51] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 91.
[52] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 87.
[53] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 84-90.

By distilling social capital down to the creation of "trust, norms, and networks" and then linking social capital to the healthy functioning of democratic society, Putnam illustrates the importance of informal networks in democracy. Putnam's theories can be adapted to explain why successful democracy has eluded the Middle East—not because Islam or Arab culture is incompatible with democracy, as some have argued, but because the region's regimes have barred the development of strong informal networks and civil society in general, and consequently the development of social capital. Without a more robust and state-sanctioned civil society, Arab citizens must resort to personal ties with those in power to achieve their goals, thereby strengthening patrimonial networks and undermining institutionalization.

Putnam also states that the more civic a community, the less client-patron relationships play a role in politics (client-patron meaning the nature of relationships between individuals and authority figures in a patrimonial system); effectively, he states that the less civic a region, the more reliant it is on client-patron relationships to enact change, and thus the less democratic it is.[54] This is because the less civic a region, the less accustomed individuals are to banding together to achieve common goals, and therefore the more reliant they are on exploiting personal connections to reach their individual goals. Thus, Putnam argues that a region with a history of horizontal relations and civic communities is better suited to the collaboration, compromise, and collective action required for effective, democratic self-government than regions with a track record of vertical, patron-client relations.[55] This last portion is particularly applicable to the Middle East, which is dominated by regimes that rely on patrimonial networks to remain in control. Putnam's logic is that the more the state apparatus is held together by patrimonial ties

[54] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 112-113.
[55] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 174.

and thus exhibits low levels of institutionalization, the less likely that state as a whole will successfully practice democracy.

In the Arab Spring, the countries whose people successfully overthrew their dictators were ones in which the state functioned less as a patrimonial system and more as an institutionalized entity. Tunisia and Egypt were not particularly closely linked either politically or socially but shared the common characteristic of a national army that is highly institutionalized. Therefore, the army's fate was not tied to that of the regime. This allowed the army to disobey orders to fire on protestors, both because the rank and file and the officers sympathized with the protestors as their fellow countrymen and because the army's leadership did not feel the need to protect the regime in order to keep their position in society. In rising up against authoritarian regimes, the protesters of the Arab Spring demonstrated cognitive liberation in their realization that they possessed the power to effect change; in not firing on the protesters, the army demonstrated cognitive liberation in their understanding that they were tied to the protesters by a complex network of interpersonal and familial relations, and that disobeying orders and reversing the status quo was more beneficial for the fate of the army post-Arab uprisings.

This is not to say that certain democratic behaviors, such as political discussion, activity, and methods to check the regime's power do not exist in the Arab world. As stated above, *qat* chews, *dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouses can and should be considered a significant portion of what limited civil society exists under many authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. Furthermore, these traditional gathering places are important not only for political discussions, but also for dialogue between those in power and their citizens. To illustrate this relationship, Putnam presents a simple model of government from which he bases his analysis: "Societal demands →

political interaction → government → policy choice → implementation. Government institutions receive input from their social environment and produce outputs to respond to that environment."[56]

In Western democratic countries, the ways in which government institutions receive these "inputs" may be through town hall meetings, elected representatives' corresponding or meeting with their constituents, or peaceful protest. In the Arab world, where such societal institutions are uncommon or even outlawed, the traditional *qat* chew, *dīwānīya*, or coffeehouse (albeit the upscale and selective versions of each) often serve much the same purpose—allowing the ruled to communicate indirectly their needs to the rulers. My aim in this study is to illustrate that these traditional gathering places are not only important centers for the growth of civil society and social capital, but also to highlight their dynamic and influential role in the political culture and processes of Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt.

[56] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 9.

Chapter One

The Role of Qat Chews in the Social and Political Life of Yemen

In Yemen, hardly any pastime is more culturally relevant and uniquely Yemeni than the chewing of *qat*. As noted by many scholars who have studied Yemen, "qat chewing is at the heart of nearly every social interaction in [Yemen] from business to governmental."[57] Some may argue that the *qat* chew, as a traditional and defined space, is not in itself an institution or a social custom, because it would seem that *qat* could be chewed anywhere and in any context, making *qat* more of an ingredient in different social contexts rather than shaping the nature of those interactions. However, as will be discussed in fuller detail later in this study, the *qat* chew itself and the places in which it is traditionally chewed is a specific space with a particular code of conduct and atmosphere. Furthermore, while *qat* is chewed at these gatherings, the primary reason for congregating is to socialize and to foster discussions, as will be discussed below.[58]

Qat is the Arabic name for *Catha edulis*, a plant whose leaves are consistently chewed by groups of Yemenis for hours each afternoon in a gathering called *majlis el-qat* ("gathering of *qat*")[59] or *maqyal* ("gathering", "discussion", or "*qat* session").[60] It is interesting to note that even outside Yemen in the United Kingdom, the venue from which expatriate Yemenis and people of other nationalities buy and where they chew their *qat* is also called a *mafraj*, pointing

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[57] Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 104.

[58] Interestingly, in a survey administered in the United Kingdom (UK) to measure and document *qat* consumption in the UK, it was found that 65% of the male and 62% of the female respondents who chewed *qat* did so primarily as a form of recreation and socialization. However, less than 9% of respondents stated that they chewed in mixed-gender groups, illustrating that even expatriates living in cultures with less emphasis on gender-specific spaces continue to abide by the traditional gender-segregation of *qat* chews. It would be interesting and enlightening to conduct a similar study in Yemen, given the lack of qualitative and survey-based sources on the behaviors associated with *qat* chewing. *Source:* "Khat (Qat): Assessment of Risk to the Individual and Communities in the UK," *Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs*, December 2005, 8.

[59] John G. Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987), 79.

[60] Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen: The Political Economy of Activism in Modern Arabia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 235; Moshe Piamenta, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic Part 2* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 422.

to the direct link between this specific name for the space and *qat* chews.[61] *Qat* is a stimulant drug that produces many of the same physiological and psychological effects as caffeine.[62] When *qat* is chewed, the alkaloids found in the fresh leaves of this plant induce three principle stages of influence: *tanabba*, in which the chewer experiences wakefulness, alertness, and energy, and then the two stages of *kayf*, in which the chewer first settles into a state of calm contentedness and eventually progresses into an introspective, introverted, melancholic despondency.[63]

In addition, chewing *qat* makes the chewer very thirsty, but suppresses appetite, thus effectively serving as an anorexic.[64] However, these reactions are dependent on the chewer's knowledge of the appropriate amount and type of *qat* to chew in one afternoon. Should too much *qat*, or that of poor quality, be consumed in one sitting, the chewer may experience a few of *qat*'s more negative effects: mental agitation, depression, paranoia, stomach discomfort, sleeplessness, and even hallucinations.[65]

There are several legends of the origins of *qat* in Yemen, but the predominant belief is that *qat* came to Yemen via trade from Ethiopia in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. A Yemeni legend recounts that an Ethiopian goatherd named Kaldi, upon seeing the excited behavior of his goats after having chewed on the leaves of an unknown wild plant, tried chewing the leaves himself and discovered their energizing properties.[66] Interestingly, the very same legend is common in Ethiopia, where a Yemeni goatherd with the same name is said to have discovered this unique plant, and this is also the same legend used for the discovery of coffee.[67]

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[61] "Khat (Qat): Assessment of Risk to the Individual and Communities in the UK," 7.
[62] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 63.
[63] Daniel Martin Varisco, "On the Meaning of Chewing: The Significance of Qat (Catha edulis) in the Yemen Arab Republic," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18(1986): 5-6.
[64] Varisco, "On the Meaning of Chewing," 6.
[65] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 122-127.
[66] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 60.
[67] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 62.

Putting aside these conflicting legends, the first undisputed mention of *qat* lies in a historical text by Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʻUmarī (1301-1349), who wrote that the plant first appeared in Yemen during the reign of Rasulid Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Dawud ibn Yusuf, who died in 1321 CE.[68] By the early 1500s the legality of *qat* chewing was being debated by Muslim scholars who had lived or travelled to Yemen, as a consequence of its ability to produce intoxication-like effects.[69] However, despite the potentially problematic effects produced by chewing *qat*, as well as the modern-day Yemeni government's officially negative policy against the drug, the chewing of these tender leaves is an extremely important and popular practice in Yemen—and can even be viewed as an institution in itself.

Before launching into the importance of *qat* gatherings in Yemeni society and political culture, an overview of the Yemeni political sphere and civil society sector is in order. Prior to 1990, the contemporary Republic of Yemen was two separate states—the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the northwest, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in the southeast.[70] President Ali Abdullah Saleh (1978-2012) served as president of the YAR until its unification with the PDRY in 1990, after which he assumed the role of president of the newly merged state, the Republic of Yemen.[71] However, while in rhetoric President Saleh and his party, the General Popular Congress (GPC), pledged their allegiance to the principles of democracy and human rights (including the right to political participation and civil society), since the end of the 1994 civil war in Yemen and until the end of the recent uprising, President Saleh and the GPC were the dominant actors in Yemeni politics.[72] This has resulted in a Yemen with a hybrid political system—one that allows for some dissident voices and limited participation, but also

[68] Varisco, "On the Meaning of Chewing," 3.
[69] Varisco, "On the Meaning of Chewing," 3.
[70] Cavatorta and Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization*, 97.
[71] Cavatorta and Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization*, 98.
[72] Cavatorta and Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization*, 100.

entails heavy restrictions that inhibit the establishment of auxiliary sources of power seen as threatening the authority of the ruling elite.[73]

One area in which restrictions are particularly constricting is that of civil society. While Yemen boasts an abundance of officially registered organizations, from trade unions to political organizations to social welfare groups, the repressive number of legal constraints placed on such groups severely limits their effectiveness in promoting any type of substantial political reform.[74] While advocacy and political organizations generally hold more ambiguous ties to the government, they remain severely restrained in their activities because of the need to maintain a working relationship with the state to survive.[75] Indeed, the amount of dependency on and compromise with the regime needed for these organizations merely to function on any level has driven some, such as Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac, to argue that civil society in Yemen actually serves as an arm of the state more than as a sector that challenges government authority.[76] However, the problem with this statement lies in Cavatorta and Durac's classification of civil society solely in terms of organizations. In this study, I argue that such a definition of civil society is far too rigid, and that the more informal, traditional *qat* chew ought to be regarded as a uniquely Yemeni institution that is strongly tied to both civil society and political life in Yemen.

The *qat* chew in Yemen provides not only a social gathering, but also serves an important role in Yemen's political culture. Indeed, it has been observed that the setting of nearly every meeting of government officials, particularly those in the afternoon, is a *qat* chewing session. Even President Saleh and his council have been known to chew *qat* as they conduct their

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[73] Cavatorta and Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization*, 100.
[74] Cavatorta and Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization*, 111.
[75] Cavatorta and Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization*, 113.
[76] Cavatorta and Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization*, 111.

afternoon deliberation sessions.[77] These government *qat* chews can exhibit several attributes of Western-style committee meetings, with individuals being elected to leadership positions, agendas being set, and the rules of order being established.[78] Furthermore, the *qat* chew can also be utilized as a unique public space in which political figures can connect with their constituents, particularly those of considerable influence and affluence, to discuss politics and hear their views on governmental policy. These *qat* chews, which are more formally integrated into governmental procedures, provide fora in which both economic and political agreements are frequently negotiated, young and aspiring officials can make crucial political connections, and important information regarding political affairs can be disseminated to the general public.[79]

Outside of government, *qat* sessions also provide a platform for the cementing of business decisions, arranging marriages, and among the older, religious elites, the debating of theological concepts, tribal law, or events in history.[80] Historically, the best example of the intertwining of civil society and *qat* chews lies in the Academic Democratic Gathering, a group of faculty and researchers closely linked to the leftist Yemen Center for Research Studies (YCRS) in Sana'a, that formed in October 1993, and held weekly symposia on a variety of political issues.[81] While many of these symposia took place in the seminar rooms of the YCRS, the discussions evolved, particularly in Ramadan, into late-night *qat* chewing sessions that extended well into the early morning, and were held at the Sana'a offices of the Writers' Guild.[82] Furthermore, these talks had measurable products: a formal paper presentation on the weekly topic, followed by active discussion and debate—all with hope of influencing government

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[77] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 5-12; Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen*, 162.
[78] Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen*, 163.
[79] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 91.
[80] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 91.
[81] Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen*, 159.
[82] Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen*, 159.

policy.[83] However, it became increasingly evident as time wore on that during the early nineties the Saleh regime tolerated such political commentary and participation but made no serious attempt to integrate the products of such discussions into national policy.

The unique structure, both physically and socially, of *qat* chews is the reason such a variety of interactions and decisions can take place within such gatherings, and thus the *qat* chew lends itself to a Habermasian analysis, in which it will be considered a public space. As discussed earlier in this study, both Habermas and Calhoun place a particular emphasis on certain public spaces, such as coffeehouses and tea salons, as social institutions that provided a forum for the creation of public opinion and eventually political activity. In the context of Yemen, *qat* chews play much of the same role in Yemeni society and politics that the coffeehouses and tea salons of London, Paris, and Vienna did. Groups of individuals meet publicly to engage in rational, critical discussion of topics ranging from Islamic history to current politics, sharing personal views that can then be realized as broader trends in public opinion. In fact, *qat* chews arguably share more characteristics with political institutions than these European gathering places, as evidenced by the fact that government meetings take place in the very context of a *qat* session.[84]

Several elements of *qat* chews satisfy the Habermasian model of the public sphere: groups of individuals, some of whom may be strangers, gather daily in public or semi-public places to chew this stimulating plant and partake in political, literary, or religious conversations. However, *qat* chews also have certain characteristics that limit their application to the Habermasian model: when they take place in a private home, individuals must be invited to attend by the holder of the *qat* chew or someone who has already been invited; in addition, the

[83] Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen*, 159.
[84] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 12.

realistic degree to which an individual is able to actively participate in the conversation is measured by their social status relative to other individuals in the *qat* chew. It is also key to understand that the actual chewing of *qat*, while it certainly may stimulate and help facilitate prolonged discussions, is secondary to the actual goal of the gathering—to meet with other individuals and have collective discussions and debates. In this way, *qat* chews meet the two requirements central to Habermas' conception of the public sphere: citizens engaging in critical discussion and the role that such "minipublics" play in producing the broader public opinion of anonymous citizens.[85]

In the large room of a house especially set aside for *qat* sessions, called a *manẓer* ("place of viewing," because of its many windows and its placement on the house's top floor) or a *mafraj* (usually on the first floor),[86] or in the offices of a civic association or government official, a group of individuals that varies in size and composition gathers to discuss, debate, and disseminate information, much as in the coffeehouses and tea salons of Western Europe.[87] The seating position at a *qat* chew typically reflects each individual's social status relative to others in the room, with the most prestigious guests seated at the head of the usually rectangular room, the other high-ranking attendees sitting along the walls, and those of humbler status occupying the spaces closest to the door.[88] Thus, a *qat* chew is inherently paradoxical, in that it is not only an event that reinforces social hierarchies but also an occasion for people of varying classes to interact and share information.

At least in the context of the male gatherings, Wedeen highlights that *qat* chews foster the horizontal relationships to which Putnam ascribes a central role in the functioning of a successful

[85] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 66.
[86] Ahmed Al-Mottareb et al., "Khat: Pharmacological and Medical Aspects and its Social Use in Yemen," *Phytotherapy Research* 16(2003): 410.
[87] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 63-64.
[88] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 65.

democracy. While some authors have argued that "patron-client relations…are pervasive in Yemen because the bleak economic situation limits people's options for political independence,"[89] Wedeen's research and findings offer an alternative view of *qat* chews that chips away at the assumption that collective action is not possible in Yemen. In Putnam's Italian case study, participation in civil society associations, such as special interest groups and political organizations, proved to be a significant indicator of democratic institution performance. Putnam explained this connection by pointing to the horizontal relationships and culture of communal efforts towards change that these civil society organizations espouse in their members.[90]

In Yemen, *qat* chews are often frequented by groups of people who are tied to one another by more than just friendship or kinship. For instance, craftsmen in the same profession will often flock to the same *qat* chew to discuss issues relevant to their work and make trade-related decisions,[91] making the attendees of the gathering similarly tied to one another as members of a special interest group with shared concerns and goals. However, since Yemen is a highly tribal society in which kinship ties are still extremely important, members of the same family and tribes usually frequent one another's *qat* chews. The connection between Putnam's theory of civil society and democratic success in Italy and Yemen's public life is highlighted by Lisa Wedeen, who argues that "In *qat* chews, the accessibility of officials and the openness of everyday *qat* sessions are qualities suggestive of the horizontal or equality-inducing aspects of Yemeni public life (at least for men)."[92]

Since *qat* chews are nearly always gender-segregated events, the properties and characteristics of male gatherings differ greatly from those of females. Male gatherings are

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[89] Sarah Phillips, *Yemen's Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective: Patronage and pluralized authoritarianism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 130.
[90] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 174.
[91] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 91.
[92] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 65.

generally open to the public in the sense that theoretically, anyone can attend regardless of class or relation, though, as with coffeehouses, it is more common for men who share some sort of previous association to attend the same sessions.[93] The *tafrīta,*[94] or female *qat* chew, is usually held on Thursdays[95] and differs from the kind of "minipublics" constituted by male *qat* chews in the following two ways: they are not open to the public, and they are customarily the gathering of women who nearly always are either friends or relatives.[96] Consequently, a *tafrīta* functions less as a "minipublic" than a male *qat* chew.[97] However, they can be just as political, but usually focusing on the existing relations between family members or the politics of a marriage rather than the examination of abstract political ideas or current events.[98] In addition, the *tafrīta* is one of few opportunities for Yemeni women to interact and socialize with other women in a socially acceptable manner. At such gatherings there is often singing, dancing, and food brought in a potluck style. Particularly in rural areas, *tafrīta*s are a chance for the women of a village to receive and share local gossip, as well as scout out suitable wives for their sons.[99]

As I have discussed above, this gender-segregation of such a vital institution of Yemeni political life often results in the marginalization of female politicians and aspiring female leaders in Yemen's political process. It creates a social barrier that prevents women from taking part in an activity that is key to the work of male politicians, and limits their access to opportunities for rational debate and decision-making that take place in *qat* chews.[100] This culture of political and civic exclusion of women has been likened to the smoke-filled men's clubs that dominated

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[93] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 64.
[94] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 98.
[95] Ahmed Al-Mottareb et al., "Khat: Pharmacological and Medical Aspects," 410.
[96] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 64.
[97] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 64.
[98] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 64.
[99] Kennedy, *The Flower of Paradise*, 98-100; Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 64. While the *tafrita*s described by Kennedy and Wedeen seem to largely revolve around domestic politics and familial concerns, it cannot be assumed that all *tafrita*s function in this manner, or that certain *tafrita*s do focus on state-level politics.
[100] Wedeen, "The Politics of Deliberation," 65.

Western political history.[101] In this way, women are not only barred from crucial aspects of political life but also unable to participate in Yemeni civic culture, which is deeply rooted in *qat* chews.

However, it cannot be said that women are completely excluded from participating in politics and the public sphere in Yemen, illustrated most prominently but not solely by Yemeni Nobel Peace Prize winner Tawakkul Karman. Lauded by Yemen's opposition movement as the "Mother of the Revolution," human rights activist Tawakkul Karman emerged as crucial figure in the organization and mobilization of the Yemeni uprising against President Saleh in January 2011 and is a member of the Islamic opposition Islah Party.[102] A journalist and avid critic of the Saleh regime long before the Yemeni uprisings, Karman had been jailed several times in the past for her dissident pieces and open disdain for the Saleh regime.[103] After winning the Nobel Peace Prize Karman became one of the most widely publicized faces of the Yemeni uprising, with her picture displayed on billboards, walls, all over *Taghyīr* Square, worn by male and female protesters alike, and even pinned to the walls of the tent in which a traditional, elderly group of only men gathered to chew *qat.*[104]

As noted above, many scholars have highlighted the importance of *qat* chews in Yemeni social, civic, and political life, and thus it is difficult to envision greater women's empowerment in Yemen in such a strictly segregated society. Without participation from both the men and women of Yemen in such forums, it is likely that women will continue to be marginalized in Yemeni society and politics. By creating these "minipublics" in *qat* chews that are extremely

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[101] Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen*, 163.
[102] Tom Finn, "Tawakkul Karman- Profile," *The Guardian*, October 7, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/07/tawakkul-karman-profile.
[103] Finn, "Tawakkul Karman- Profile," *The Guardian*.
[104] Atiaf Alwazir, "Yemen: No Spring Without Women," *Alakhbar English*, February 14, 2012, http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/4195.

male-dominated, gender-segregated, and that bar women from participating in civic behavior, the disenfranchisement of women in public life cannot be challenged or begin to be understood as a problem. Women must be integrated into public life at the grassroots level, for instance in *qat* chews, in order to make gains at the societal and state levels as well. Greater political and social participation for women will first have to be preceded by a culture shift in Yemen, one that includes women in the "minipublics" constituted in male *qat* chews. This culture of exclusion is especially problematic in the context of the Arab Spring, where *qat* sessions and women played several crucial roles in the context of the uprising.

Since the beginning of the protests, women like Tawakkul Karman were crucial to the uprising's organization and mobilization, and throughout the uprisings continued to further the movement by treating the injured, cooking meals for protesters camped out in *Taghyīr* Square and other revolutionary hot spots, providing monetary donations, and leading rallies.[105] In one of the most memorable events of the uprising, 10,000 women marched en masse in Sana'a, calling for the resignation of President Saleh in response to his slanderous statements on the behavior of female protesters in the uprising.[106] Despite the active and crucial roles women played in the Yemeni uprising, as well as the liberty, dignity, and political and civil rights they courageously fought for, women continue to be marginalized in post-Saleh Yemen. Without more focused and meaningful efforts towards integrating women into Yemen's public sphere, it may be that the active cooperation between and communal gathering of men and women, for example in the context of a *qat* chew, will unfortunately resume their pre-uprising rarity.

Interestingly, *qat* chews played a role on both sides of the popular uprising that began in Yemen in January 2011. On January 14, 2011 large wedding tents were set up in *Mīdān al-*

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[105] Alwazir, "Yemen: No Spring Without Women," *Alakhbar English*.
[106] Tom Finn, "March of the Yemeni Women," *Foreign Policy*, April 19, 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/19/march_of_the_yemeni_women?page=0,0.

Taḥrīr, Yemen's own *Taḥrīr* Square ("Liberation" Square), though in contrast to the *Taḥrīr* Square protests in Egypt, the Saleh regime had secured this square by force and bussed in regime supporters to occupy it instead of the protestors.[107] As the number of tents increased to twenty, an estimated 800 regime supporters occupied the square, benefitting from the regime's handouts of food, water, and *qat* as well as a daily allowance that was well over the average Yemeni laborer's daily wage.[108]

Some of these tents exhibited plastic window-like *qamarīya*s,[109] a traditional Yemeni window design, to imitate the atmosphere of a traditional *mafraj.* The fact that pains were taken to include plastic *qamarīya*s in the tents on the square point to the importance of the actual architecture of a *mafraj* and the ways in which this architecture stimulate a certain response or mindset in those seated within it—in this case, *qat* chewers. It supports the idea that it takes more than just *qat* to have a *qat* chew—a certain aesthetic, the traditional design of a *mafraj* or *manẓar*, is important because it is the very characteristics of these spaces, such as the traditiona; *qamarīya*s and floor-level seating cushions, that creates the atmosphere of a *qat* chew and stimulates the dialogue and interactions that such gatherings occasion.

As more and more supposed regime supporters flooded the square, many attracted by the promise of free food and *qat*, the regime's ability to match supply with demand dwindled, driving some regime supporters to threaten to join the opposition should the government not deliver on their promises.[110] It is estimated that in February 2012 alone, Saleh's regime spent

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[107] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 573.
[108] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 573.
[109] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 573.
[110] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 573-574.

between $15-20 million American dollars to provide provisions for regime supporters in *Taḥrīr* Square, with an estimated third of that amount being spent on *qat* alone.[111]

On the other side of the uprisings, in *Mīdan al-Taghyīr* or "Change Square," anti-Saleh protesters gathered in the hundreds of thousands to protest against the regime. And, as with their counterparts in *Taḥrīr* Square, *qat* held a constant presence among these protesters as well. However, whether the effects of *qat* were beneficial or detrimental to the revolutionary fervor was hotly contested. Many international newspapers and Yemeni protesters bemoaned the stalling of protest activity in the afternoon, with headlines such as the *Washington Post*'s "Laid-back attitude leavens the revolution,"[112] and *Reuter*'s "Qat Addiction may stem Yemen protests."[113] These admonitions against *qat* chewing were largely driven by the apparent pause in protests for the afternoon *qat* chewing sessions, which lasted for hours and afterwards were followed by the depressed, listless, and introspective moods of the *sā'a sulaymanīya* ("Solomon's hour"), the aftereffect of *qat* chewing.[114]

On the other hand, *qat* also served as a mobilizing force for the protesters, particularly the young college students of Sana'a University, where the initial plans for mass protest were hatched. As protester Fakhr al-'Azāb, a twenty-three year-old student at Sana'a University, explained, "Sure we use Facebook like kids in other countries, but a lot of the protests that were organized, students planned at khat sessions. Khat has a positive role in political mobilization."[115] Indeed, as the revolutionary fire spread across Yemen, *qat* maintained its presence at the epicenter of protests in Sana'a—at Sana'a University. Gradually, the area around

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[111] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 575.
[112] Sudarsan Raghavan, "Laid-back Attitude Leavens the Revolution," *The Washington Post* (February 2011).
[113] Khaled Abdullah, "Qat Addiction May Stem Yemen Protests," *Reuters* (February 2011).
[114] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 573.
[115] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 576.

the university transformed into a city within a city—with its own communal kitchens, restaurants, sanitation facilities, playgrounds, hospitals, and even 24-hour *qat* markets.[116]

Large tents, similar to those that had been installed in *Taḥrīr* Square, were put up in Change Square to shelter opposition protesters. However, unlike the regime supporter tents in *Taḥrīr* Square, the opposition's tents not only housed *qat* chewing but television sets, wireless internet, political awareness seminars, and skill-building workshops.[117] In these tents, Yemenis of all backgrounds mixed, learning to live in close quarters and under difficult conditions. United by their anti-Saleh stance, they managed to put tribal, ethnic, and political differences aside, chewing *qat* together as they debated Yemen's future after Saleh.[118] This environment of individuals from mixed backgrounds interacting in a common public space closely parallels the Habermasian coffeehouse model. The conversations that occurred in such a space provided a forum for the cognitive liberation key to collective behavior and mobilization, and for the realization that a change in the status quo was possible, as one Yemeni remarked: "People who had given up on the prospect of change had their spirits lifted."[119] Lastly, the relationships and feelings of community forged in *qat* chews made such gatherings a conduit for the building of social capital, championed by Putnam as a crucial factor in democratic governance. This is due to the forging of horizontal relationships in these gatherings and the instilling of a culture that prioritizes exercising communal efforts to achieve shared goals.

These gatherings became increasingly important as widespread electricity cuts prevented protesters from connecting with the outside world via televisions or the internet, by providing a space in which protesters could gather to share information and observations on the day's

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[116] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 578-579.
[117] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 579.
[118] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 579.
[119] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 787.

events.[120] The hopeful discussions and lengthy debates that took place in these large *qat* sessions, which were largely gender-segregated but not always, focused on how to govern Yemen after Saleh.[121] The product of these *qat* sessions was a document titled "*Demands of the Revolution*", in which over 150 youth movements from all over Yemen had participated in drafting through communal *qat* chews, and which provided a list of demands to the Yemeni government. The protesters stated that unless the government fulfilled these demands, they would refuse to discontinue their peaceful resistance.[122] Admittedly, this document was the product of a "minipublic" limited to the demographic of these *qat* sessions—namely university-educated youths, and primarily male students at that. Nonetheless, the process by which this document was forged, i.e. by prioritizing consensus and compromise in decision-making, is indicative of key democratic behaviors.

Before the revolution, it was widely known that *qat* chews encompassed political discussion and debate, but it was difficult to ascertain whether these discussions resulted in any kind of political action or mobilization. However, in the 2011 Yemeni revolution, it is evident that *qat* chews played an integral role in facilitating discussions between protesters with measurable yields—in this case the organization of large-scale, successful protests and the "*Demands of the Revolution*." Increasingly, *qat* became used in other contexts than seated chews, as evidenced by protesters' capitalizing on the leaves' energizing effects to sustain them during long marches, as a painkiller for protesters who had been injured or shot by agents of the regime, or as a way to cope with the emotional and psychological strains of living in the protest-tent city.[123] While *qat* and *qat* chews have been denounced as one of the biggest obstacles to

[120] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 581.
[121] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 581.
[122] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 581.
[123] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 577-581.

Yemen's economic, political, and social development because of its drain on Yemen's limited groundwater and arable land, household budgets, and productivity,[124] there is substantial evidence pointing to the integral and in several ways beneficial role of *qat* chews in Yemen's Arab Spring.

[124] Gatter, *Politics of Qat*, 585-598.

Chapter Two

Kuwaiti *Dīwānīya*s: Where the Ruled Meet their Rulers

Of the three traditional meeting places discussed in this study, the Kuwaiti *dīwānīya* is by far the tradition that is most institutionalized and incorporated into the political system of Kuwait and most crucial to the functioning of the government. Unlike Yemen's *qat* chews or Egypt's coffeehouses, the *dīwānīya* is inextricably interwoven into the political culture of Kuwait, from the civilian level to the ministerial meetings between royal family members. Given that Kuwait's governmental system is that of a hereditary, constitutional monarchy, the *dīwānīya* tradition in Kuwait provides a unique space in which political discussion and opposition can be freely voiced, the royal family can be held accountable for its policy choices, and the Kuwaiti citizenry can participate in politics—even if only in a limited sense. The State of Kuwait is a constitutional emirate, ruled since 2006 by King Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, and boasts the longest history of democratic reform of all the Middle East monarchies—with a history of elections that dates to the 1920s.[125]

Elections in modern Kuwait are held every four years for its fifty-seat unicameral parliamentary body, *Majlis al 'Umma* (National Assembly), unless the Emir exercises his constitutional power to dissolve parliament and by doing so to necessitate that elections be held earlier.[126] The *Majlis al 'Umma* boasts representation, though not necessarily representative, of many different facets of Kuwaiti society, including women, Sunni, Shi'a, and liberal opposition parties.[127] After women received the right to vote in 2006, suffrage became universal for adults twenty-one and over in Kuwait who have been citizens for at least twenty years, unless they are

[125] Gregg, "Prospects for Democratization," 116.
[126] Gregg, "Prospects for Democratization," 116.
[127] Gregg, "Prospects for Democratization," 116.

males serving in the military or police.[128] Despite the rights and duties granted in the constitution to the National Assembly, the fact that the Emir holds the power to dissolve parliament and to suspend the constitution assures that the monarchy retains a firm grip on Kuwaiti politics and government.

The uniquely integrated role of the Kuwaiti *dīwānīya* in the state's government and politics is partly what sets Kuwait apart from its monarchical Gulf neighbors, and what has won it special recognition among scholars of Middle East politics as the most politically transparent and in many ways democratic state of the Gulf monarchies. The term *dīwānīya* refers to both a physical space as well as a type of gathering, which is not unique to Kuwait, but only in Kuwait is it held with great frequency and does it constitute a fundamental aspect of Kuwaiti political processes and culture.

*Dīwānīya*s traditionally take place in a special room or section of a house that is expressly built to accommodate these traditional meetings. The room is generally long and rectangular with ample seating along the walls so as to accommodate the large groups of men or women, and at times mixed company, that attend these meetings.[129] Traditionally, *dīwānīya*s have been largely male-dominated affairs, as are most public gatherings in the Middle East. As we have seen in *qat* chews in Yemen, the exclusion of women from this traditional gathering significantly limits female participation in politics and civil society, a point that will be elaborated on later in this chapter. A history of the *dīwānīya* in Kuwait will now be presented,

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[128] "CIA World Factbook: Kuwait," last modified March 26, 2013, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ku.html. The fact that men in the military or the police, effectively those in the service of the monarchy, are not allowed to vote is a fascinating aspect of Kuwaiti election law. This could be seen on the surface as a safeguard against flooding the voting pool with staunch regime, anti-opposition supporters (as these two service sectors are intricately tied to the monarchy, and thus more likely to be pro-regime), but it could also point to the patrimonial and uninstitutionalized nature of the relationship between the monarchy, the military, and the police. If that is the case, then the military and the police are not independent of the regime but rather arms of it, thus explaining why they are barred from participating in democratic elections.

[129] Abdullah Mohammad Alhajeri, "The Development of Political Interaction in Kuwait Through the "*Diwaniya*s" from Their Beginnings Until the Year 1999," *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 12(2010): 29.

which will outline the process by which it evolved into the crucial informal political institution that it currently serves in contemporary Kuwaiti society.

The *dīwānīya* is one of the oldest social institutions among the Gulf states, and is also one of the deepest rooted both socially and politically. It is traditionally held in the home, and all socio-economic classes take part in this tradition on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. As noted by ʿAbdullāh Muhammad Alhājerī, the characteristic that makes the *dīwānīya* such a significant player in the political life of Kuwait is its role "not solely, or even primarily, [as] a political institution—it is equally a center of traditional culture, daily social life, and political activity."[130]

While it is difficult to ascertain when Kuwait City was first founded, with some sources claiming the city's establishment dates to the seventeenth century, the role of the *dīwānīya* in Kuwaiti society and governance can be traced to the very beginnings of the modern Kuwaiti state. According to Kuwaiti historian Shaykh Husayn Khalaf Khaz'al and official Kuwaiti history, it was in a *dīwānīya* in the early eighteenth century that the leading Kuwaiti tribes of Al Sabah, Al Khalīfa, and Al Jalahema met and unanimously elected Sheikh Sabah I (1718-1762 CE) as the first emir of Kuwait.[131] As the Al Sabah family has remained the ruling family of Kuwait, it is significant that such a landmark and historic decision was reached in the context of a *dīwānīya*, further exemplifying the importance of this cultural tradition in the political history of Kuwait. Thus, since the very foundation of the Kuwaiti state, the *dīwānīya* has played a pivotal role in Kuwaiti politics and governance.

The reported election of Sheikh Sabah I through deliberation and consensus, rather than through the unilateral seizure of power, set a standard on which to model Kuwaiti social and political order. At this *dīwānīya* gathering and preceding his election, Sheikh Al Sabah I vowed

[130] Alhajeri, "The Development of Political Interaction," 24.
[131] Shaykh Husayn Khalaf Khaz'al, *Tarikh al-Kuwayt al-Siyasi* [The Political History of Kuwait] (Beirut: Dar al-Hilal, 1962), 43; *The State of Kuwait Website*, http://da.gov.kw/eng/index.php (May 2012).

to ensure that every tribal leader would have a seat at his *dīwānīya* to raise concerns and work towards solutions. This promise is extremely significant, given that it was made long before the principles of democracy or representative government were well-known in the Arab world. Because the royal family's *dīwānīya* had this characteristic at the very beginning of Al Sabah rule, it has been argued that the *dīwānīya* in Kuwait took on a quasi-parliamentary role by providing a space for issues to be voiced, discussed, and resolved, much like in a democratic institution.[132]

Because the *dīwānīya* has never officially been politically institutionalized, I argue that throughout Kuwaiti history and recently in the events of the Arab uprisings, the *dīwānīya* has served as more of a Habermasian public space for the collective discussion and political contestation that facilitate collective political action. Furthermore, the significance of the *dīwānīya*'s role in Kuwaiti society challenges our understanding of an authoritarian state. Despite Kuwait's hereditary and monarchical style of government, at all levels of Kuwaiti society, from the grass-roots to the political elite, we can observe through the traditional *dīwānīya* the very same political discussion, contestation, and organization that is characteristic of political institutions in democratic states.

As Mary Ann Tétreault notes, Kuwait's constitution and parliament are the two official institutions that define the formal structure of the political public space in Kuwait.[133] However, the informal structures, of which the *dīwānīya* is one, are acknowledged by Tétreault and other scholars of Kuwaiti politics as being crucial to political participation in Kuwait. This is largely due to their ability to remain functioning political entities even in times of political instability or suspension of political life, and their independence from the state as protected in the Kuwaiti

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[132] Alhajeri, "The Development of Political Interaction," 28.
[133] Mary Ann Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 59.

Constitution. In fact, only two social, public spaces are strongly protected by tradition and law in Kuwait: the home (and by extension the *dīwānīya*, which is considered part of the home), and the mosque.[134]

The mosque is also an important political and mobilizing institution in Kuwait, as it is in many countries in the Middle East, given that it is protected from the state by Kuwaiti law. The concept of mosques serving as political mobilization centers is not a new concept, particularly mosques that are either protected from the state by law, as in Kuwait, or that are private mosques and therefore outside the control of the state's religious affairs department. Scholars of the Middle East, such as Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, have written about the vast network of private, local, non-state-run mosques in Egypt as constituting a "parallel Islamic sector," and their role in political mobilization and regime opposition.[135] It is conceivable to apply this same concept to the *dīwānīya*, and to view the networks and political activities taking place in Kuwait's *dīwānīya*s as constituting a parallel, informal political sector.

Such political activity is enabled by Articles 38 and 44 of the 1962 Constitution, which states that the home is the only secular space in Kuwait that benefits from explicit protection from the state.[136] This formal protection at the constitutional level logically makes the *dīwānīya* an extremely attractive space for members of the opposition or leaders of a political movement to gather and organize, an ironic consequence of these articles. However, even in times of intense political turmoil, such as the period between 1989 and 1990 when pro-democracy movements shook the country, rarely was the protection of the autonomy of the Kuwaiti home and *dīwānīya* dishonored.[137]

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[134] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 62.
[135] Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 93-118.
[136] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 62.
[137] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 62.

As discussed above, because *dīwānīya*s are protected under Kuwaiti law, it has served as a crucial social institution for political participation in Kuwait. Whether daily, weekly, or intermittently throughout the week, men host these gatherings or flock to the *dīwānīya* of their friends and family to debate, discuss, and share information on a variety of cultural, religious, and political issues.[138] *Dīwānīya* are not always political in nature; some focus on religious debate and discussion and are attended by religious scholars (*'ulemā*), while business *dīwānīya* are attended by businessmen and focus on financial matters and building business relationships.[139]

While my focus in this study is the role of *dīwānīya*s in the political sphere of Kuwait, regardless of the focus of the gathering the common and most significant aspect of all *dīwānīya*s is the open dialogue, exchange of views and opinions, and creation of public opinion through cognitive liberation espoused in these gatherings. Furthermore, the conversations and collective activity that take place in the *dīwānīya* help to create and strengthen relationships among individuals, thereby strengthening a sense of community. In Kuwait under the authoritarian regime of the Al Sabah family, civil society and voluntary organizations are legal but not truly autonomous, as they are both highly regulated by the state and dependent upon it for much of their funding.[140]

Before the formal legalization and institutionalization of civil society groups in Kuwait, although these two processes may have been driven by the monarchy's goal of bringing civil society under state control, the voluntary gatherings at *dīwānīya*s approximated in many ways the purpose and activities of modern civil society organizations. Indeed, many of Kuwait's civil society organizations functioning today have their roots in specialized *dīwānīya*s, and the

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[138] Alhajeri, "The Development of Political Interaction," 29.
[139] Alhajeri, "The Development of Political Interaction," 31
[140] Tétreault, "Civil Society in Kuwait: Protected Spaces and Women's Rights," *Middle East Journal* 47(1993): 276.

tradition of the *dīwānīya* in Kuwaiti culture and governance is the central pillar supporting contemporary Kuwaiti civil and political life.[141] Because of the *dīwānīya*'s importance in strengthening civil and political participation in Kuwait, particularly in a state in which civil behavior is otherwise limited, the *dīwānīya* itself is a democratizing institution. It allows the ruled to congregate and share their concerns and opinions regarding state policies and actions, and to present these opinions to their rulers. To the Al Sabah family's credit, many royal family members hold weekly *dīwānīya*s in which they receive their subjects or their representatives to discuss their concerns and work to agree on possible solutions.[142] In this way, the *dīwānīya*s serve as an informal and uninstitutionalized supplement to Kuwait's National Assembly, and thus can be viewed as democratic social institutions themselves.

A key component of a democracy, or at least a functioning democracy, is the right of the populace to contest politically the rule of their government. In Kuwait, this right is legally curtailed by Article 25 of the Penal Code of 1970, which sets a maximum prison term of five years for anyone who publicly "objects to the rights and authorities of the emir or faults him."[143] However, this article of the Penal Code is significantly mitigated by the aforementioned loophole provided in the constitution that protects the privacy of the home from state intervention. As a result of that constitutional protection, the *dīwānīya* —which is a fusion of public and private space in that it is part of the home, and thus private, but yet also public, in that groups of individuals can gather to voice and discuss their opinions openly —has historically played a critical role in the activities of political opposition groups in Kuwait. Ironically, by providing a

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[141] Shafiq Al-Ghabra, *Al-Kuwayt: Dirasa fi Aliyat al-Dawla al-Qutriya wa-al-Sulta wa-al-Mujtama'a* [Kuwait: A Study in the Mechanisms of the Regional State, Authority and Society] (Cairo: Markaz Ibn Khaldun lil-Dirasat al-Inmaniyah, 1995): 19.
[142] Alhajeri, "The Development of Political Interaction," 31.
[143] Human Rights Watch, *Kuwait, Quash Convictions for "Offending Emir*" *Human Rights Watch Online*, February 7, 2013, 1-2.

state-protected space that allows for political contestation, the Al Sabah regime has sanctioned the *dīwānīya* to serve and continue to serve as a crucial democratizing social institution in Kuwait. The irony lies in the fact that a non-democratic, monarchical state has provided legal safeguards in its constitution for the *dīwānīya*, and thus basis for the functioning of an informal institution that allows for dissent and political opposition organization.

The Kuwaiti *dīwānīya* took on a significantly more political role following the adoption of the Kuwait Constitution and the establishment of the National Assembly, for which the first elections were held in 1963. In order to garner support and connect with voters, candidates running for National Assembly seats made visits to *dīwānīya*s around the country a significant part of their campaigns.[144] In the early 1990s, soon after the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation and the reinstatement of the Kuwaiti Constitution, candidates running for National Assembly seats would hold campaign *dīwānīya*s, which were protected spaces for the expression of ideas and political views that allowed the candidates to engage in open dialogue with their potential constituents.[145] While *dīwānīya*s are traditionally gender-segregated spaces, a few of these campaign *dīwānīya*s were unique in that they not only included men and women in their audience (albeit in physically separated seating areas) but also featured prominent women as the main speakers.[146] The Emir has suspended the constitution twice in Kuwaiti history, from 1976 to 1980 in response to widespread National Assembly opposition to monarchy policies and then again from 1986 to 1992 as a result of political unrest and the Iraqi occupation.[147] During these two periods, the *dīwānīya* came to serve as the primary site of political activity. This was

[144] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 70.
[145] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 101-103.
[146] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 105.
[147] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 67-73.

because public political gatherings were banned, the National Assembly was suspended, and any political messages in the Kuwaiti press were heavily censored.[148]

During these periods in which political activity was heavily suppressed, certain *dīwānīya*s that were specifically aimed at mass mobilization began to be held on successive Monday nights. These specialized gatherings were always held in private homes in the *dīwānīya*s of opposition leaders, and thus protected by law, with the first taking place in the home of Jasīm al-Qatānī on December 4, 1989.[149] The significance of this meeting, and the reason it posed a particular threat to the Kuwaiti monarchy, was the fact that it occurred concurrently with the Constitutional Movement of 1989-90, a pro-democracy movement that called for the reinstatement of the constitution.

Despite the legal protections of the home and consequently the *dīwānīya*, the government intervened in these gatherings in variety of ways—including sending riot police with dogs to prohibit entry into the home in which the *dīwānīya* was to be held, beating those who tried to force their way through, arresting the opposition members in whose homes the *dīwānīya*s were being held, and—in a particularly barbaric show of force—shooting chemical foam and tear gas at Kuwaitis trying to enter an opposition *dīwānīya* on January 22, 1990.[150] However, in the wake of overwhelming public outcry at this violent intrusion of what is considered the private realm of Kuwaiti society and the violation of both traditional and legal rights, the government retreated by dropping charges and releasing those who had been arrested, but continued to implement the strict censorship of media outlets.[151] With the reinstatement of the protection of the home and *dīwānīya* from state intervention, *dīwānīya*s have developed increasingly into what Mary Ann

[148] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 105.
[149] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 105.
[150] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 70-71.
[151] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 73.

Tétreault has described as "a highly institutionalized and protected network of *dīwānīya*s [that] are important arenas for direct political participation."[152]

The importance of *dīwānīya*s in Kuwaiti political life can be seen to this day, not least in the recent political turmoil in Kuwait sparked by the Arab Spring uprisings in other Arab states. While there is no national-level data on *dīwānīya* attendance in Kuwait or on the activities which take place in such gatherings, online Kuwaiti newspaper articles provide a significant amount of evidence that opposition *dīwānīya*s served a crucial role in spreading information about the Kuwaiti uprising and the mobilization of Kuwaiti dissidents for mass protests.

Interestingly, the reasons that the pro-democracy movement of 1989-1990, and a similar uprising in 1938-1939, gained such popularity are similar to the reasons for which the Arab Spring uprisings erupted all over the Arab world, including Kuwait. Both the 1989-1990 and the 1938-1939 movement called for greater democratic governance in Kuwait and were largely driven by the widely held belief that the government was corrupt, inept, and unresponsive to domestic concerns.[153] Unlike the Arab Spring, both these past uprisings had been led by the elite of Kuwaiti society,[154] making it easier for the government to identify which class to threaten with infringements on their political autonomy and societal status in order to quell these opposition movements.

In the recent case of the Arab Spring uprisings in Kuwait however, the movement was driven largely by university-educated youth but also included the elite, professional, and lower classes of society as well. This more diversified membership made the Kuwaiti protesters appear to be a more cross-sectional representation of society, thus complicating the ability of the reigning monarchy to know which class to target in order to stamp out the revolutionary blaze.

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[152] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 146.
[153] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 68.
[154] Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 68.

Furthermore, this greater representation of all levels of Kuwaiti society further legitimated the demands made by the protestors, as they were not coming from any one class but from what appeared to be Kuwaiti society as a whole. Despite these differences, a characteristic that all of these uprisings shared was the central role of the *dīwānīya* in the organization and consolidation of these movements.

The Kuwaiti uprising began in December 2010, when police beat members of parliament and demonstrators protesting an alleged government plan to alter the constitution. In 2011 the conflict escalated, with demonstrations led by Kuwait's youth beginning in March and the emir's dissolution of parliament and replacement of his despised Prime Minister in December. In February 2012, elections were held for a new parliament, in which the Islamist-led opposition won the majority of parliamentary seats. After the emir's blocking of a proposal by members of parliament to require all legislation to be in compliance with *sharīa'* law in May 2012, the Constitutional Court ruled to dissolve most powers of the Islamist-controlled parliament in June, with the emir fully dissolving parliament in October 2012. In response to the dissolution of parliament, thousands of Kuwaitis protested against both the dissolution and the redrawing of constituency boundaries (political gerrymandering) to the disadvantage of the opposition.[155] In December 2012, both youth activists and opposition leaders declared a boycott of any upcoming elections, in protest of the changes to the electoral law.

Throughout all of these events the *dīwānīya* continued to play a crucial role in the planning, mobilizing, and executing of the protests. After the November 2011 storming of the National Assembly, opposition leaders held a series of *dīwānīya*s, which were attended by

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[155] "Kuwait Profile," *BBC News Middle East*, last modified December 5, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14647211; Ahmed Hagagy and Angus McDowall, "Kuwait's Main Opposition Said It Would Boycott Parliamentary Elections Set for December 1 After the Cabinet Announced the Poll Date and Changes to the Voting System on Saturday," *Reuters,* last modified October 20, 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/20/us-kuwait-elections-idUSBRE89J08N20121020.

eighteen members of parliament, resulting in the decision to hold further protests calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al Ahmad Al Sabah and the dissolution of the National Assembly that was largely seen as tainted by corruption and inefficiency.[156] In addition, the *Kuwait Times* cited that "A number of *dīwānīya*s…issued separate statements strongly criticizing the storming of the Assembly, calling the action as barbaric and those who did it as anti-democracy."[157] By making public statements as a collective body, *dīwānīya*s not only serve as arenas for political activity but can act like special interest groups or even political parties—an interesting political adaptation in a state where political parties are officially banned.

This political behavior is made evident by another article that reported that at the opposition *dīwānīya* of Abdulaziz al-Ghannam, "At least 48 representatives of *dīwānīya*s from different areas and constituencies attended the [*dīwānīya*]."[158] In 2012 before the parliament was dissolved, the opposition bloc met regularly in the *dīwānīya*s of various opposition MPs in order to draft laws, discuss which issues to prioritize for legislation, and draft proposals to present before the National Assembly.[159]

In terms of planning a demonstration or other mass form of political expression, *dīwānīya*s yet again have proved extremely important. The "Youth for Change" charter, jointly compiled by several youth activist groups in Kuwait, called for a number of constitutional and electoral reforms, and these groups toured a multitude of *dīwānīya*s in early 2012 to garner

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[156] B. Izzak, "Barrak Challenges Khorafi," *Kuwait Times*, November 21, 2011, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2011/11/21/oppn-pro-govt-rallies-to-be-held-in-one-place/.
[157] Izzak, "Barrak Challenges Khorafi."
[158] Nawara Fattahova, "'Focus on Kuwait While Choosing Candidates' – Representatives of Diwaniyas Meet," *Kuwait Times*, January 22, 2012, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/01/22/focus-on-kuwait-while-choosing-candidates-representatives-of-diwaniyas-meet/.
[159] B. Izzak, "Opposition Agrees on Priority List as Assembly Resumes – Saadoun Reinstates Journalists Next to Chamber," *Kuwait Times*,
February 28, 2012, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/02/28/oppn-agrees-on-priority-list-as-assembly-resumes-saadoun-reinstates-journalists-next-to-chamber/; "Opposition MPs Struggling to Find a Common Ground," *Kuwait Times*, April 21, 2012, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/04/21/opposition-mps-struggling-to-find-a-common-ground-support-for-al-shamali-grilling/.

support and signatures for their petition.[160] In August 2012, opposition leaders, labor, and student unions met at the *dīwānīya* of MP Dr. Walīd Al Tabtabāej, in order to plan and mobilize their members for a demonstration on August 27, 2012 that would call for the dissolution of the parliament that had been elected in 2009 and fresh elections according to the current electoral law.[161]

One of the most interesting developments that took place in the Kuwaiti uprising was the opposition's decision to resume the aforementioned Monday *dīwānīya*s, which were so crucial during the late 1980s in the protest movement against the suspension of the 1985 National Assembly.[162] MP Ahmad Al Saa'doun, an experienced opposition leader, announced that the opposition bloc, which ruled the majority of parliament, would be holding weekly public *dīwānīya*s every Monday starting July 9, 2012, in order to discuss a response to the government's plans to rework the electoral system or constituencies, and to prepare for a movement calling for fundamental democratic reforms.[163] This first Monday *dīwānīya* was held at the home of Osāma al-Munāwer, a former member of the annulled 2012 National Assembly.[164]

The *dīwānīya* is certainly not without its limitations as a representative social institution. As mentioned above it is nearly always a gender-segregated gathering, with men attending

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[160] Al-Rai, "Youths Back Candidates Campaigning for Reform," *Kuwait Times*, Janurary 1, 2012, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/01/01/youths-back-candidates-campaigning-for-reform-major-tribe-to-hold-consultations/.
[161] "Opposition Puts Final Touches on Monday's Demonstration," *Kuwait Times*, August 22, 2012, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/08/22/opposition-puts-final-touches-on-mondays-demonstration/.
[162] B. Izzak, "Battle Lines Drawn as Opposition Revives 'Monday Diwaniyas,'" *Kuwait Times*, July 9, 2012, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/07/09/juwaihel-freed-on-bail-lawyer-urges-halt-to-kac-flights-battle-lines-drawn-as-oppn-revives-monday-diwaniyas/.
[163] "Amir Re-appoints Sheikh Jaber to Lead New Government, Opposition Plans 'Monday Diwaniyas,' Threatens Poll Boycott," *Kuwait Times*, July 5, 2012: http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/07/05/amir-reappoints-sheikh-jaber-to-lead-new-govt-oppn-plans-monday-diwaniyas-threatens-poll-boycott/.
[164] "Amir Re-appoints Sheikh Jaber to Lead New Government."

*dīwānīya*s nearly always separate from those for women.[165] It is evident that *dīwānīya*s play a pivotal role in the political life, culture, and process of Kuwait, and thus the fact that women are barred from participating in the male-dominated sphere of informal politics in Kuwait is an extreme disadvantage for female politicians. However, it appears that Kuwaiti women have found a way around this barrier through social media. Dr. Nada al-Muṭāwa, a professor at Kuwait University, describes social media as an "electronic *dīwānīya*" that has allowed female candidates running for office to post election news, campaign, and communicate with voters in ways that traditionally have been reserved for the male-dominated *dīwānīya*.[166]

The role of the *dīwānīya* —as a semi-public space in which anyone can participate, in principle, and that provides a forum for exchanges, debates, and information sharing—is not only crucial to Kuwaiti political life, but also challenges our understanding of democracy and of a democratic state. On the national level, Kuwait is considered a semi-constitutional monarchy—"semi-" because while a parliament exists and does hold a significant amount of influence in government affairs, the monarchy continues to hold the true reins of power and frequently violates legal processes to circumvent meaningful democratic reform. However, at the grass-roots level, it is evident that Kuwaitis enjoy and participate in democratic behavior on a regular basis through social institutions like the *dīwānīya*. Thus, despite living under an authoritarian

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[165] There are few mixed-gender *diwaniya*s that do take place, such as the campaign *diwaniya*s for female National Assembly candidates mentioned in Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 104-15 and those occasionally reported in the *Kuwait Times*. In general, there is little documentation of these mixed-gender gatherings, likely due the fact that they are a rarity and overwhelmingly the exception to the rule. These are the limits of the information I was able to gather on mixed-gender *diwaniya*s, as there is a surprising dearth of sources on this subject. These gatherings are further limited by the fact that even if men and women are attending the same *diwaniya*, Tétreault notes that they are often physically separated by a wall, and that the women's side is significantly smaller than that of the men, creating physical discomfort for the women and inhibiting them from breaking off into smaller groups for discussion as the men were able to do, limiting their discussions to those who were seated or standing directly next to them (Tétreault, 105).

[166] Nawara Fattahova, "Seminar focuses on modern media's influence on politics," *Kuwait Times*, May 27, 2012, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/05/27/seminar-focuses-on-modern-medias-influence-on-politics-intellectual-dialogue-with-ngos-2/.

regime, there are deep-rooted democratic traditions that Kuwaitis fiercely protect as a civil right and that they continue to practice with earnest.

Chapter Three

Drinking the Roasted Seeds of Revolution: Coffeehouses in Egypt

Coffeehouses are one of the few social institutions that are found in abundance across all the different states of the Middle East and North Africa. From the mimosa tree-lined streets of Tripoli, Libya, to the dusty alleys of Cairo, Egypt, to the corniche of Beirut, Lebanon, scarcely a block can be found that does not house at least one, often cramped, coffeehouse. The wooden or plastic chairs of these neighborhood establishments are often worn smooth from years of patrons, often the same ones over decades, sitting and drinking coffee with friends or colleagues to debate, discuss, and scheme. Throughout their history these aromatic public spaces, where the smell of coffee intermingles with that of cologne, sweat, and shisha smoke, have housed everything from literary debates to political *tête à tête*s and revolutionary strategizing. This study aims to dissect the role of coffeehouses theoretically, historically, and in terms of the Arab Spring as unique public spaces with a profound influence on Egypt's political culture.

While a variety of theories exist regarding the origins of coffee,[167] it is widely accepted that the origin of the coffee bean lies in the highlands of Ethiopia. There, the beans were most likely chewed or the plant's leaves boiled for tea in elaborate ceremonies, some of which continue to be held.[168] At some point before the sixteenth century, coffee spread from Ethiopia to Yemen, and from there to the rest of the Middle East and eventually Europe. Besides the lively trade between Ethiopia and Yemen that would certainly have facilitated the introduction of this commodity to the Arab world, it has been suggested that Ethiopians themselves built and cultivated coffee plantations during their invasion and ensuing half-century rule of Yemen in the

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[167] For a more in-depth discussion of the different sources for the origins of coffee in the Middle East, see Salah Zaimeche, "The Coffee Trail: A Muslim Beverage Exported to the West," *Foundation for Science Technology and Innovation* (June 2003), 2-4.
[168] Stewart Lee Allen, *The Devil's Cup: The Driving Force in History* (New York: Soho Press, 1999), 47-48.

sixth century.[169] Indeed, an Islamic hermit from Yemen is credited with first having made a drink from the coffee bean itself.[170] However, the general consensus is that coffee came to Yemen via Ethiopia most likely in the mid-fifteenth century. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī (fl. 1558) wrote that coffee came to Yemen from the “country of the Abyssinians and of the Jabart, and other places in the land of the ‘Ajam, but the first [use] of it is unknown, nor do we know the reason.”[171]

As coffee plants spread throughout Yemen, Sufi Muslims, who imbibed the drink in order to stay awake and vigilant during late night prayers, are largely credited with spreading the practice of coffee drinking. The Sufis, deeply pious men, are known to have travelled both as missionaries and businessmen to every corner of the Arab world, east into Central Asia, and west to Anatolia and Europe. As a result, their practice of coffee drinking was introduced throughout the Middle East, transcending its largely religious context and becoming popular in homes, public bathhouses, souks, and workplaces. While ornate “coffee rooms” existed in the homes of the rich in Ottoman Turkey, coffeehouses, or *kaveh-kanes*, were opened for the common people to meet and enjoy coffee as well.[172]

With the introduction of coffeehouses that were open to all levels of society, a new space was created in the Ottoman public sphere that allowed for both the public meeting of individuals in a socially acceptable place and for individuals of different socioeconomic levels to gather in the same space. While people from different classes did not necessarily meet as one group, merely sharing the same space chipped away at the societal barriers that exist between individuals from different classes.

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[169] Mark Pendergast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed our World* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 6.
[170] Allen, *The Devil's Cup*, 47.
[171] ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī, *‘Umdat al-ṣafwa,* ed. de Sacy, (Paris: Chrestomathie arabe, 1826), 145 in Ralf S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 13.
[172] Pendergast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 6.

While coffeehouses were common in Ottoman Turkey, the first documented report of a public meeting place for drinking coffee comes from Mecca in 1511. This account is also the first documentation of opposition to coffee drinking in the Muslim world. In response to reports of rowdy and improper behavior on the part of coffeehouse customers, the young governor of Mecca, Khair-Beg, likened coffee's mind-altering effects to that of alcohol; he declared coffee to be outlawed by the Quran and that all the coffeehouses in Mecca should be closed. However, it has been suggested that this ruling may have been the result of satirical verses about Khair-Beg composed in coffeehouse gatherings.[173]

In *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*, Ralf S. Hattox explores the introduction of coffeehouses into the Middle East, the religious debates on the subject of coffee-drinking, and the social, political, and religious implications of the rise of coffeehouses as public gathering places. Accounts from the ninth, tenth and eleventh century are believed to have promoted coffee's medicinal attributes, with such renowned Arab physicians as Avicenna and Rhazes documenting that "bunchum" (believed to have been some edible preparation of the coffee bean) was both good for the stomach as well as possessed other healing properties.[174] More recent scholarship on the health effects of coffee consumption have shown that coffee consumption in moderation may help prevent the development of chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and liver disease, but also that it is associated with increases in a variety of cardiovascular disease risk factors, such as blood pressure and plasma homocysteine.[175] However, coffee and coffeehouses were not welcomed by everyone in society, as with most new phenomena, and debates raged on whether the

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[173] Pendergast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 6.
[174] William H. Ukers, *All About Coffee* (New York: Tea and Coffee Trade Journal Company, 1935), 8.
[175] For a more detailed discussion of the health effects of coffee consumption, see Jane Higdon and Balz Frei, "Coffee and Health: A Review of Recent Human Research," *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition* 46(2006), 101-123.

introduction of this dark drink and its potentially murkier institutions would benefit or corrupt society—particularly on religious terms.

Arguments based on Islamic principles were used to advocate both for and against the consumption of coffee. For the affirmative, legends were spread that the Archangel Gabriel, commanded by God, had served the Prophet Muhammad the dark drink to alleviate his sleepiness; another recounted an Arab goatherd named Kaldi, after observing his goats' excited behavior after eating an unknown berry, had tried the berry himself and had become so exhilarated that he rushed to the nearest mosque to spread the news of this magical fruit that provided the energy needed for long nighttime prayers.[176] There are several instances where coffee and coffeehouses became the subject of religious condemnation—because the drinking of this stimulant was likened to that of alcohol, or because coffeehouses sometimes attracted entertainers and "wanton" women, or because men began to spend more time in coffeehouses than in the mosque—and consequently these establishments were banned for periods of time.[177] However, the demand for coffee and coffeehouses was never stamped out, and these bans never lasted long.

Hattox and many others have hypothesized that these negative reactions were not so much a debate on the Islamic legality of the drink, but rather driven by wariness of the social changes to which coffeehouses gave rise.[178] For the first time, coffeehouses provided a potentially licit nighttime meeting place, creating a similar social environment to that of a tavern, but without the alcohol that prohibited Muslims from visiting such establishments. Coffeehouses also provided a new venue for certain activities and entertainment, such as backgammon and

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[176] Louis Levin, *Phantastica. A Classic Survey on the Use and Abuse of Mind-Altering Plants* (New York: Park Street Press, 1964), 11; Ukers, *All About Coffee*, 10.
[177] Ralf S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 30-40.
[178] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 40-45; Pendergast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 6; Steven Topik, "Coffee as a Social Drug," *Cultural Critque* 78(2009): 90-91.

performances by dancers and singers, as well as less socially-acceptable endeavors such as gambling, prostitution, and homosexual encounters.[179] These disreputable activities that some coffeehouses attracted, in addition to competing with mosques as centers of social gatherings, drove many religious and political leaders to ban the murky drink and the places in which it was served.

One such example is Sultan Murat IV (1623-1640), who came to the conclusion that the excitable effects of coffee combined with the conversational atmosphere of the coffeehouse made these establishments the perfect breeding grounds for sedition. Known for his brutal methods of enforcing his rule, in 1633 Sultan Murat IV ordered that all the coffeehouses in Istanbul be torn down and announced that the punishment for operating a coffeehouse in Istanbul would be cudgeling; if someone were caught a second time for this offence, his punishment would be to be sown in a leather bag and tossed into the Bosphorus.[180] By creating a new public space for sociability and conversation, and possibly the discussion of ideas detrimental to the populace's loyalty to the sultan, coffeehouses were conceived as posing a unique threat to the governing powers.

From Sultan Murat IV's decree, it is clear that the threat to a state's stability posed by coffeehouse meetings was in no way underestimated. However, these bans did not last long and were eventually repealed, as one sees from the continued success of coffeehouses in the region today. Indeed, some rulers such as Muhammad Abu Numay (II) Nazīm ad-Dīn, governor of Mecca from 1525 to 1583, and the Ottoman Sultan Selīm I (1512-1520) strongly approved of

[179] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 98-111; Topik, "Coffee as a Social Drug," 89.
[180] Topik, "Coffee as a Social Drug," 90.

coffee, allowing coffeehouses to flourish and thereby garnering both political popularity as well as benefitting from the revenue supplied by taxes levied on coffeehouses.[181]

While a breadth of literature exists on the theory of public versus private space in the context of coffeehouse in Europe, there it little scholarly work on such spaces in the Middle East. It is to a theoretical discussion of the coffeehouse as a space, drawing on the writings of scholars such as Jürgen Habermas and H.D. Lewis, that this study now turns.[182]

Today, in order to update one's knowledge of current events or to learn about local happenings, one can simply click to the internet and read volumes of information, often finding more than is desired or accurate. However, before this internet age, the place to gather information was the coffeehouse. This was true for both the Middle East and Europe, and in the Middle East the coffeehouse continues to be an important meeting place to swap news and gossip.

As Jürgen Habermas notes, the coffeehouse historically provided a space for groups of individuals to meet and discuss particular issues, which then "branched out into affairs of state administration and politics."[183] While Habermas' analysis of the role of coffeehouses in the public sphere is Eurocentric, with the only mention of the Middle Eastern origins of coffeehouses being that a "coachman of a Levantine merchant" opened the first coffeehouse in London,[184] the very same trend is visible in the Middle East. In fact, it is safe to say that the neighborhood coffeehouse in the Middle East continues to serve a very important role as a place to gather information, largely because internet access is not nearly as wide-spread or reliable in the Middle East as it is in Europe. According to a December 2011 survey of internet usage in the

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[181] Ukers, *All About Coffee*, 16; Levin, *Phantastica*, 250.
[182] Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," 136-142; H. D. Lewis, "Private and Public Space," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 53(1952 - 1953): 79-94.
[183] Habermas, *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, 12.
[184] Habermas, *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, 32.

Middle East, only 35.6% of the population of the region has access to internet.[185] This is in contrast to the approximately 63.5% of the population in the European Union[186] and the 78.3% of the population in the United States with access to internet. Thus, nearly two-thirds of the Middle East still relies on more traditional methods of gathering information, such as by television, radio, newspapers, or by word of mouth.

As of 2009, only approximately 23% of Middle Eastern households own televisions.[187] However, nearly every café in the Middle East has at least a small television, and often the local café provides the sole television access for an entire neighborhood. When a television is in a coffeehouse rather than in the home, thus in a public rather than a private space, the congregation of people to watch the news together provides the perfect environment for commentary and the sharing of opinions on the content of news stories.

This environment that engenders public commentary can then easily lend itself to critical debate and discussion of issues on a larger scale. For instance, it is not difficult to conceive that a news story about the rising costs of bread could easily instigate a discussion on the state of the economy as a whole. This harkens back to Doug McAdam's theory of "cognitive liberation,"[188] whereby individuals' mentalities towards change or rather the possibility of enacting change through their own agency becomes a reality. By publicly airing one's individual grievances, one may find that others share these same concerns, and by doing so the individual realizes that his or her problems are not unique, but rather part of a larger, widespread issue. This realization is a

[185] "Middle East Internet Users," last modified October 11, 2012, http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm.
[186] "European Internet and Population Statistics," last modified October 29, 2012, http://www.internetworldstats.com/europa2.htm.
[187] Sara Leckner and Ulrika Facht, *International Media and Communication Statistics 2010* (Göteborg: Nordicom, 2010): 190.
[188] See original discussion of McAdam's theory earlier in this study.

key step in the process of moving from the discussion of issues to taking action towards righting these problems.

The coffeehouse, as a space and as a social institution, shares similarities with the other two institutions examined in this study, *qat* chews and *dīwānīya*s. Coffeehouses, *qat* chews, and *dīwānīya*s are similar in that usually the same people frequent the same coffeehouse, *qat* chew, or *dīwānīya* regularly, and they are all public spaces in which individuals can meet to discuss what are traditionally private matters. They all provide a forum in which members of different levels of society and can meet and discuss issues, and they are traditional gathering spaces that have a long history of informal influence on and a role in political culture.

However, there are important differences to note as well: coffeehouses are a more definitively public space than *qat* chews or *dīwānīya*s, because the latter two social institutions are held in private homes, whereas coffeehouses are businesses that are entirely open to the public. Interestingly, Ellis (2008) states that coffeehouses are a paradigmatic example of a physical space in which the public sphere exists, as coffeehouses lie in the liminal regions between the public and the private because in them individuals come together in a space that is intimate, and therefore private, but also open, and therefore public.[189]

In addition, an individual must know at least one person at a particular *qat* chew or *dīwānīya* in order to be invited and attend, whereas coffeehouses are technically open to anyone to enter. However, each coffeehouse, especially those in more residential areas, generally has the same regular clientele, and thus outsiders are quickly identified and the subject of scrutiny.

Egypt is a country with a long history of coffeehouses, and of the importance of coffeehouses in literary and political life. Of these cafes, none in Cairo have been immortalized in the hearts and minds of Egyptians like Café Riche. A small, *belle époque* café on *Ṭal'at Ḥarb*

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[189] Ellis, "An Introduction to the Coffeehouse," 161.

street in central Cairo, Café Riche has a long history of being frequented by such famed Egyptians as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Naguib Mahfouz, and Taha Hussein, among many other political elites and literati. In this petit café, literary discussions often gave way to political debates, voicing of dissatisfaction with the current government, and even the planning of revolutions.

Café Riche was opened in 1908 by a German businessman (or possibly an Austrian—reports are unclear), who then sold it to a Frenchman, who then passed it along to a string of Greeks before it was bought by Abdel Malak, a frequent patron of the café and a Christian Cairo native.[190] His two sons, Magdi and Michel, run the famous coffeehouse to this day. Unlike the cement coffee shops of little distinguishable character that line Cairo's streets, Café Riche's architecture and atmosphere are reminiscent of another time. The dark wood panels that line the walls and facade, the large, spotless front windows, and the old-fashioned globed lights hanging from the ceiling harken back to a time before the standardized, mass-produced, and Western-designed cafés like Starbucks or Costa Coffee, two chains that can now be found in Egypt. It is under the yellow glow of Café Riche's lamps that the intellectual and political elite of Egypt would meet to discuss, debate, and conspire.

Why Café Riche? What about this space made it a desirable and attractive haven for the writers, businessmen, politicians, and revolutionaries of Egypt? To begin, Café Riche opened in a time of political turmoil—the period shortly before the 1919 Revolution that formally ousted British rule from Egypt and instated a monarchy in its stead, though the monarchy continued to be heavily influenced by the British.[191] Café Riche provided a private yet public meeting place where those discontented with the Egyptian puppet government under the British could gather to

[190] "A Riche History," *The Economist*, December 17, 2011.
[191] Panayiotis Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992), 263-267.

discuss political affairs, both openly and sometimes under the veil of literary dialogues. It was here on December 15, 1919 that a young medical student, Iryan Yousef Iryan, sat waiting for the Egyptian Prime Minister to make his daily visit to the café; when he arrived, Iryan exited the café and threw a bomb at the Prime Minister's car, failing to kill him but succeeding in sparking nationalist protests across the country.[192]

With battles and protests against British rule raging outside, Café Riche became a refuge for the revolutionaries, and its basement served as their secret hideout.[193] It functioned as the social network of its time, a space in which activists could meet, coordinate, swap information and strategy, and keep tabs on one another.[194] An old printing press was recently found in the basement of the café, hidden in a secret wine cellar, and while no leaflets have been found, it is rumored that this printing press was used by the 1919 revolutionaries to print seditious pamphlets for circulation within and outside the café.[195] While this may only be a myth, the fact that this machine was hidden suggests that it did serve some sort of subversive purpose. Furthermore, the presence of this printing press highlights a role shared by coffeehouses in both the Middle East and Europe: that of centers for the dissemination of information to the general public.

As a public space, Café Riche embodies many of the attributes Habermas' ascribes to the coffeehouses of Europe as unique public spaces that changed the public sphere by providing a prime environment for mixing of the social classes, literary and political discussion, and political mobilization. In the past, Café Riche was known for its diverse clientele from all professions. According to Café Riche's longest serving waiter, Filfil (who has served the café faithfully since

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[192] "A Riche History," *The Economist*, December 17, 2011.
[193] Abdel Rahman Rafeiy, *Fi a'qab al-thawra al-Misriyya thawrat 1919* [In the Aftermath of the Egyptian 1919 Revolution] (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1988), 125-127.
[194] Joseph Dana, "The Café and the Unfinished Revolution," *The Los Angeles Review of Books* (August 2012).
[195] Peggy Bieber-Roberts and Elisa Pierandrei, "Cafe Riche: Memory in the Formation of Egyptian National Identity" (paper presented at the IAMCR Conference, Barcelona, Spain, July 22, 2002).

1943 and as of December 17, 2011 was still working at Café Riche), in the 1940s lawyers, businessmen, writers, and lower-level employees used to congregate at Café Riche and would sit together, not divided by profession, to chat and drink coffee.[196] In addition, Filfil described how before the 1952 revolution patrons of all nationalities and religions would frequent Café Riche—with Egyptians, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Italians sitting together and conversing over cups of hot coffee.[197]

Although Gamal Abdel Nasser and his Free Officers are said to have hatched their plans for the 1952 revolution in Café Riche,[198] after seizing power Nasser effectively banned political dissent, thus ending the viability of Café Riche as a meeting place for the intellectuals, politicians, and revolutionaries of Egypt. This political suppression continued under Mubarak, and after Café Riche closed from 1990-1999 to repair damages the café had sustained from an earthquake, it never resumed its formerly prominent role in Egypt's political and literary scene.[199] Thus, the café nostalgically remains a famous institution in the intellectual and political history of Egypt, but is largely viewed as a relic of the past and not the revolutionary lair it once was.

Still, some evidence shows that coffeehouses in Cairo, including Café Riche, played a role in Egypt's 2011 uprising that toppled President Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011). Having come to power in 1981 after the assassination of Anwar Sadat, Mubarak and his party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), imposed military-style rule over Egypt for decades by keeping the country under emergency law, which gave the state wide-ranging powers to stifle dissent and

[196] Bieber, "Cafe Riche: Memory in the Formation," 6.
[197] Bieber, "Cafe Riche: Memory in the Formation," 6.
[198] Patrick Werr, "Missing out on Growth," *Business Monthly* (September 1999): 6.
[199] Bieber, "Cafe Riche: Memory in the Formation," 11.

civil society, and to curtail basic freedoms.[200] The regime was able to sustain its ruthless rule by arguing, to both Egyptians and the international community, that Mubarak served as a bulwark against Islamists and terrorist organizations, and highlighted that without Mubarak Egypt's greatest ally, the United States, would lose one of the few Arab rulers that had signed and honored a peace treaty with Israel. However, in the last decade, US backing of Mubarak and his regime began to wane, with pressure mounting against him to stand aside and allow for a transition of power to a more democratic system.[201]

By 2011, Egyptians had had enough of Mubarak and the NDP's authoritarian-style rule over Egypt. Inspired by events in Tunisia and the ousting of President Ben Ali, beginning in January 2011 thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and eventually millions of Egyptians peacefully protested across Egypt, demanding that Mubarak step down and that genuine democratic rule be established in Egypt. On February 11, 2011, seventeen days after the beginnings of the protests, it was announced that Mubarak was stepping down and that his son would not be succeeding him. Instead, power was handed over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), and the vast majority of Egyptians rejoiced that they had finally ousted their tyrant of thirty years.

Under Mubarak, all civil society actors lived under the constant, watchful eye of the regime. Political opposition groups, religious organizations, and human rights activists were closely monitored, documented, and regularly terrorized.[202] These organizations and individuals were often heavily restricted in their activities, because the 1958 Emergency Law enforced since Mubarak came to power banned any type of non-governmental political activity, non-approved

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[200] "BBC Profile: Hosni Mubarak," last modified March 3, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12301713.
[201] "BBC Profile: Hosni Mubarak."
[202] Wael Ghoneim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is Greater Than the People in Power: A Memoir* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2012), 2.

political organizations, and unregistered financial donations.[203] The public space itself was completely infiltrated with the eyes and ears of the regime, the Egyptian State Security apparatus. Under the Emergency Law of 1958, all protests and public gatherings of any group of people were banned.[204]

Thus, political and oppositional organizing in the traditional public spheres, that of Cairo's cafes for instance, was extremely risky and often too easily penetrated by informants of the regime. As Gelvin states in *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know*, "real space was not available in…Egypt for anti-regime activity."[205] This terminated the ability of Egypt's cafés to serve as viable spaces for the political organization and mobilization that they once facilitated. The organizing and mobilizing tools that the cafés once provided were made further antiquated and even inefficient as social media provided the organizers with a more efficient, effective, and safer way to mobilize the masses for protests. However, cafés did prove important for disseminating information through fliers and mobilizing people in lower-income neighborhoods, which have less access to internet and social media and rely more on traditional means such as the café for information.[206]

The heavy presence of regime spies in Egypt's public sphere is primarily the reason that social media was such a crucial organizational tool for the activists of the 2011 revolution. The importance of social media in Egypt's uprising will be briefly summarized in the next chapter of this study. However, while social media's role in the uprisings' organization eclipsed that of traditional organizing venues like Egypt's coffeehouses, some evidence suggests that these

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[203] Sadiq Reza, "Endless Emergency: The Case of Egypt," *Boston University School of Law New Criminal Law Review* 10(2007): 538-539.
[204] Wael Ghoneim, *Revolution 2.0*, 2.
[205] James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford Univesity Press, 2012), 50.
[206] Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings*, 54-55; Ghoneim, *Revolution 2.0*, 143.

coffeehouses, particularly Café Riche, did in fact resume their revolutionary roles to a certain extent, especially during the most heated and violent moments of the Arab Spring uprising in Egypt. Tentative evidence also hints at the possibility of Cairo's coffeehouses re-emerging in post-Mubarak Egypt as the civil and informal political institutions they once were.

As in the past, Café Riche was at the fore, in terms of coffeehouses, of the 2011 uprising in Egypt. Even prior to January 25, 2011, the first day of the mass protests that seventeen days later would force Mubarak to step down, students, young intellectuals, and activists would frequent Café Riche—attracted by the sale of alcohol in part, but also by the ability of Magdi, the owner, to keep out secret policemen and thereby allow for conversations centered on politics.[207] Hoda Baraka, a young environmental activist, commented that during the revolution Café Riche once again became an extension of politics, with protesters retiring from *Taḥrīr* Square to the café for a quick bite, a coffee, and further discussions amongst their fellow demonstrators.[208]

Café Riche further became a haven for protestors and a makeshift hospital, when one of the café's regulars, a doctor named Hussain Gohar, treated wounded protestors *pro bono* as they either stumbled into the café or were brought there from *Taḥrīr* Square.[209] The café became a shelter for protesters; the establishment sustained a few bullets itself, and its sturdy iron shutters were brought down when events outside took a turn for the worse.[210] Even during the most violent days of the uprising, the café continued to serve up steaming cups of coffee until the early morning to protesters; older, veteran political activists gave advice to their younger counterparts

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[207] "A Riche History," *The Economist*.
[208] "A Riche History," *The Economist*.
[209] "A Riche History," *The Economist* (December 2011); Joseph Dana, "The Café," *Los Angeles Review of Books* (August 2012).
[210] "A Riche History," *The Economist*.

on how to avoid violence; even a judge that was sympathetic to the protesters and the goals of the revolution regularly sat at a table to offer legal advice for Café Riche's patrons.[211]

In this way, Café Riche became once again a locus of revolutionary activity during the uprisings, and continues to be a site for political activity. The uprisings revitalized Café Riche, with coordinators of the revolution and the protests that continue to shake Cairo now regular patrons. In addition, political parties have used it as a venue to garner political support, with a parliamentary candidate from the *hizb al-'adl*, or Justice Party*,* holding an election rally at the café in October 2011.[212]

While Café Riche is the most widely and historically renowned coffeehouse in the political and cultural history of Egypt, newer coffeehouses and areas of Cairo replete with sidewalk cafés also served as refuges for protesters and demonstration organizers. Activists and protest organizers met and still meet in Café Groppi, another famous Cairo coffeehouse also near *Ṭal'at Ḥarb* Square, founded in 1908 by a Swiss chocolate manufacturer.[213] However, Café Riche and Café Groppi, as establishments of an older and more conservative time, do not allow just any passerby to enter into their historic coffeehouses. As Filfil explains, "Magdi [the owner of Café Riche] has a philosophy…when a man enters with a woman to drink coffee, he evaluates them. He says I don't want money, I want good people. I can't have people come here who do improper things, like hold each other."[214]

This more rigid atmosphere led younger patrons to avoid these older establishments, in which they found members of the older generation to be narrow-minded and more interested in

[211] "A Riche History," *The Economist*.
[212] "A Riche History." *The Economist*.
[213] Martin Eiermann,"The People Who Might Still Make the Egyptian Revolution," *The Utopian* (August 2011).
[214] "A Riche History." *The Economist*.

chatting rather than instigating reform.[215] In addition, the exclusivity of Café Riche and Café Groppi complicates the degree to which they serve as public spaces and therefore public spheres, where in theory anyone, regardless of class, gender, or background, should be entitled to enter and participate in that public sphere. Thus, it is more common for young activists and revolutionaries (who may not be welcome in Café Riche's or Café Groppi's more conservative café culture) to haunt the nearby Bourse café district, a sprawling network of sidewalk cafes whose walls exhibit graffiti art of slogans from the protests and sketches of martyrs' faces.[216]

The Bourse cafes, a short walk from *Taḥrīr* Square, are so affiliated with political activity and opposition activism that even before the uprising the district was the target of the Mubarak regime, when in 2010 regime thugs smashed all the area's shops and cafés and stole televisions and other equipment.[217] During the protests, these cafés provided food, coffee, first aid, and even showers to protestors.[218] Then, in August 2012, over a year after the January 25th protest movement, security forces and police swarmed the area in an attempt to move street vendors into the Bourse neighborhood so as to take up sidewalk space. This was seen by the owners of the area's cafés as a move to shut down the Bourse cafes effectively because of the activist clientele they attract.[219] The owner of the Revolution of 25 January Café, Essam El-Sherīf, commented that the Bourse cafes were one reason why the 2011 uprisings succeeded in toppling Mubarak, and it is because of the area's political and revolutionary activity that the authorities (and, as he

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[215] "A Riche History." *The Economist*.
[216] "A Riche History," *The Economist*.
[217] Yasmine Fathi, "Café Owners in Activist Hotspot: Area Under Threat," *Al-Ahram Online*, August 27 2012, accessed December 10, 2012, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/51413/Egypt/Politics-/Cafeowners-in-activist-hotspot-area-under-threat.aspx.
[218] Fathi, "Café Owners in Activist Hotspot," *Al-Ahram Online*.
[219] Fathi, "Café Owners in Activist Hotspot," *Al-Ahram Online*.

alleges, the Muslim Brotherhood) want to stamp out business—so activists (who he claims hate the Muslim Brotherhood) no longer have a place to gather and organize.[220]

The café of the five-star Semiramis InterContinental Hotel that overlooks *Taḥrīr* Square also became a center for political activity during the protests. Disputatious debates took place in the café between Egyptians of differing political views and social backgrounds, footage of the protests was played in real time on the café's televisions, and the bathrooms were crammed with protesters charging their phones, exchanging news, and attempting to predict what was to come next.[221] In terms of a space, the Semiramis' café could be seen as a bridge between the cultures of the older cafés (such as Café Riche) and the newer cafés of the Bourse district, by offering a café-culture middle ground. This more moderate café culture may have been made possible by its placement in a well-respected hotel, the Semiramis Intercontinental, and because of its location in a hotel is usually frequented by patrons from different cultural backgrounds, genders, and political views.

After Mubarak fell, Egyptians crowded into similar cafes across Cairo to discuss and speculate what the next phase of the revolution would entail.[222] A debate was held just before the June 2012 presidential runoff election in which three sides—supporters of former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafīk, supporters of the Muslims Brotherhood's Muhammad Mursī, and activists calling for a boycott of the election—at Bikya Café in Ma'ādī, an upscale residential area of Cairo.[223] Outside Cairo in Port Said, a beach resort city that sits at the Mediterranean entrance to the Suez Canal, young activists and veteran members of parliament who oppose the Muslim

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[220] Fathi, "Café Owners in Activist Hotspot," *Al-Ahram Online*.
[221] Lauren E. Bohn, "Egypt's Revolutionary Narrative Breaks Down," *Foreign Policy*, January 26 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/01/26/egypt_s_revolutionary_narrative_breaks_down.
[222] Dan Murphy, "Is Egypt's Revolution Over?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 22 2012, http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0622/Is-Egypt-s-revolution-over.
[223] Dena Rashed, "Shafiq, Morsi Supporters and Vote Voiders Engage in Debate in Maadi," *Al-Ahram Online*, June 14 2012, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/36/122/44945/Presidential-elections-/Presidential-elections-news/Shafiq,-Morsi-supporters-and-vote-voiders-engage-i.aspx.

Brotherhood's government have begun to meet in coffeehouses to organize against the Brotherhood.[224]

Thus, while social media certainly played a central role in the organizing and execution of the protests that began in Egypt on January 25th 2011, the role of coffeehouse discussions, gatherings, and clandestine organizing cannot be dismissed. As in the past, the coffeehouses of Cairo and other cities across Egypt proved to be loci of political activity, revolutionary fervor, and hubs for protest organization.[225] It is with the help of Egypt's coffeehouses, as unique public spaces that allowed for the gathering of Egyptians even under Emergency Law, that organizers were able to mobilize the hundreds, then thousands, then millions of Egyptians to take to the streets and demand their freedom, civil rights, and human dignity.

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[224] Sam Kiley, "Port Said: Bloody Scenes Expected In Egypt," *Sky News*, February 1 2013, http://news.sky.com/story/1045964/port-said-bloody-scenes-expected-in-egypt.

[225] This statement is made with the understanding (explicitly stated earlier in this chapter) that revolutionary activity in coffeehouses during the Arab Spring was not to the same extent as it has been in previous uprisings in Egypt, but nonetheless that such activities did take place during the Arab Spring.

Chapter Four

The Internet: Virtually Revolutionizing Public Space in the Middle East

This chapter discusses the complex ways in which the internet and social media have contributed to and shaped the public sphere in the later half of the twentieth century, particularly in the Middle East. In addition, I will provide a brief overview of the ways in which the internet and especially social media were used in the uprisings in Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt that began in January 2011 and arguably continue to this day, and how the internet has revolutionized political life in these authoritarian states.[226]

While many studies have been written on the role of the internet and social media in the Arab Spring,[227] it must be emphasized that these were not so-called "Facebook revolutions."[228] To claim so would be to undermine the valiant efforts, incredible bravery, and individual agency of the many Tunisians, Egyptians, Kuwaitis, Libyans, and Yemenis who either sacrificed or risked their lives to end the authoritarian rule of their respective country's dictator by protesting in the streets or combatting regime forces. Such a distinction is especially crucial because it highlights the importance of interactions in physical public spaces—such as the streets and coffeehouses—in the creation and the vitality of a public sphere.

Nevertheless, the impact of social media as a tool used by these organizers cannot be overlooked; indeed, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter served as crucial online platforms that aided protest organizers in their efforts to mobilize the masses. Social media

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[226] While Kuwait continues to be ruled by an autocracy monarchy, I am referring in this sentence to the periods in which Yemen was under President Saleh's authoritarian rule and Egypt under that of President Mubarak. I am using the term "authoritarian" to describe the method and nature of rule in these states and not the formal structure of these governments, for while Egypt and Yemen were technically republics, for all intensive purposes the Saleh and Mubarak governments functioned as authoritarian regimes.
[227] See Ghoneim, *Revolution 2.0*; Phillip Howard and Muzammil Hussain, "The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: The Role of the Digital Media," *Journal of Democracy* 22(2011): 35-48.
[228] Halim Rane and Sumra Salem, "Social Media, Social Movements and the Diffusion of Ideas in the Arab Uprisings," *Journal of International Communication* 18(2012): 97-111.

provided a scaffolding for already established civil society actors, stifled by years of regime suppression, to further and consolidate their organizing efforts by granting them a communication platform that was not easily infiltrated by the state and coordination tools embedded in an already trusted network of friends and family.[229] It is generally accepted that social media itself has allowed for the greatest expansion of freedom of expression and association in the Arab world in modern Arab history.[230] Social media documented and magnified the revolutionary uprisings that were taking place on the streets. Throughout the protests, social media were used to collect, disseminate, and communicate vital information quickly to protesters and organizers alike.

Deep-seated social ills, not social media sites, were the drivers of the uprisings that recently swept the Arab world.[231] While it is inaccurate to state that these uprisings would not have happened had it not been for the internet and social media sites, it is a fair to state that both were powerful tools used by the organizers that helped to further the success of these uprisings. Therefore, I now turn first to a theoretical discussion of the role of the internet in shaping and altering the public sphere and then to a discussion of the role of social media in the uprisings that took place in Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt.

Many scholars have argued that the internet has been a significant player in the reshaping and evolution of the Habermasian public sphere.[232] Peter Dahlgren, who breaks down the public sphere into three key dimensions—the structural, the representational, and the interactional—

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[229] Howard and Hussain, "The Role of Digital Media," 48.
[230] Jeffrey Ghannam, "In the Middle East, This Is Not a Facebook Revolution," *Washington Post*, February 18, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/18/AR2011021802935.html.
[231] Ghannam, "In the Middle East."
[232] See Kasun Ubayasiri, "Internet and the Public Sphere: A Glimpse of YouTube," (Thesis, Central Queensland University, 2006); Dahlgren, "The Internet and the Democratization of Civic Culture"; Peter Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation," *Political Communication* 22(2005): 147-162; Jürgen Gerhards, "Is the Internet a Better Public Sphere? Comparing Old and New Media in the US and Germany," *New Media and Society* 20(2009): 1-18.

focuses on the internet's effects on the interactional dimension of the public sphere.[233] This dimension is the most relevant to this study, since this aspect of the public sphere forms the core of civic behavior and thus civil society, both of which are crucial to the functioning of a democracy. Therefore, it is essential to investigate and acknowledge the ways in which the internet has revolutionized the interactional dimension of the public sphere.

Dahlgren (2005) describes the public sphere in Habermasian terms as a "constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates—ideally in an unfettered manner—and also the formation of political will (i.e., public opinion)."[234] He then dissects the interactional dimension of the public sphere by distinguishing its two parts, the first being "the citizens' encounters with the media—the communicative processes of making sense, interpreting, and using the output."[235] The second aspect of the interactional sphere is the interactions that occur between citizens themselves, which can include anything from one-on-one conversations between two people to large meetings with hundreds of individuals present.[236]

Both of these aspects are relevant to this study. The second aspect, that which occurs between citizens themselves, is the focus of the three case studies presented above that examine the traditions of *qat* chews, *dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouse gatherings in Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt, respectively. However, this chapter aims to examine Dahlgren's first aspect of the interactional dimension of the public sphere, that of the individual's interactions with media, of which the internet and social media are increasingly key parts. The relationship between the internet and the public sphere is extremely relevant to studies of democracies and democratic

[233] Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres," 147-148.
[234] Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres*,"* 148.
[235] Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres*,"* 149.
[236] Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres*,"* 149.

behavior, because the deliberative and civic behaviors that are inextricably linked to a democracy's success take place in the public sphere.[237]

There are two sides to the debate on whether or not the advent of the internet has significantly altered the public sphere and by extension civil society and democratic behavior. The opposing view argues that while the Internet has elicited some noteworthy changes in the nature of the public sphere and democratic behavior, on the whole the Internet's impact has been modest.[238] However, besides the fact that most of these studies had been conducted in the early 2000s before the advent of social media and the consequent explosion of online deliberative activity, they only examine the role of the internet in Western, veteran democracies and thus fail to analyze the internet's role in the public sphere of less institutionally democratized countries like those of the Middle East.

Arguably, at the time these articles were written, internet penetration in the region was far lower than its present-day levels, and thus perhaps the internet's role in the public sphere and political activity in the region was negligible. However, the prominent role the internet and social media played in the success of the Arab Spring uprisings indicates that it would now be very difficult to discount the significant relationship between the internet and social media and the public sphere, civic behavior, and consequently democracy.

The affirmative position in this debate argues not only that the internet has a significant impact on the interactions that take place in the public sphere but also that it has significantly altered the ways in which democracies function. Many scholars have acknowledged that democracy is transitioning to a new stage, one in which informal, extra-parliamentarian politics

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[237] Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere 2.0," 231-233.
[238] See Michael Margolis and David Resneck, *Politics as Usual: The Cyberspace "Revolution"* (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati Press, 2000); Steven Clift, "E-democracy: Lessons from Minnesota," in *The Civic Web: Online Politics and Democratic Values*, ed. D. M. Anderson & M. Cornfield, 157–165; and Gerhards, "Is the Internet," 4-15.

(that is to say, the politics that takes place in everyday conversations, gatherings, or on the street), are increasingly important.[239] This lends further credence to the importance of the informal and traditional gatherings discussed previously in this study, the *qat* chew, the *dīwānīya*, and the coffeehouse, as key sites of political activity. It is because of this burgeoning realm of informal political activity that the internet has also been able to alter the public sphere and democracy significantly, by providing a virtual space for civic behavior and informal, uninstitutionalized political expression, activity, and mobilization.

The internet and social media sites have created new, virtual spaces that allow for more interactive communication than any other mass media form in history. When an article is posted on an online news site, readers can immediately post comments and reactions to that article directly, as well as engage in debates with other readers—all online, and practically instantaneously. Online chat forums allow for questions to be posed, debates to ensue, and opinions to be voiced. Government officials may set up websites that allow for constituents to contact them directly or their office to make their concerns known or to voice their support for the official's actions. In this way the internet and, in particular, the deliberative and interactive nature of social media have facilitated communication both among citizens themselves and between citizens and the power holders of society.[240] Virtual public spaces, much like the traditional public spaces discussed in this study, are increasingly becoming crucial sites for enabling informal political action.

While the internet and social media have introduced a new medium for interactions to take place in the public sphere, it must also be emphasized that a strong civic culture must

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[239] See Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres," 154; Ulrich Beck, *The Reinvention of Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); W. L. Bennet, "Lifestyle Politics and Citizen-Consumers: Identity, Communication and Political Action in Late Modern Society," in *Media and Political Style: Essays on Representation and Civic Culture*, ed. J. Corner & D. Pels (London: Sage, 2003), 137–150.
[240] Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres," 148.

already be entrenched for social media to have a significant effect on a society. Civic cultures and behaviors, as many scholars have emphasized, are crucial to the functioning of successful democracies.[241] If civic behavior and customs are not already entrenched in everyday life, the introduction of social media will not provide the impetus for civic behavior. However, in societies in which civic traditions are common, social media can have and have had a revolutionizing effect.

This is particularly true for the Middle East, where the introduction of the internet and social media has allowed for formerly stifled interactions between citizens, activists, and government officials to take place—a new level of civic life that was previously unattainable under authoritarian regimes that heavily monitored and dominated the public sphere. The introduction of the internet has enabled civic interactions, practiced to varying extents in the traditional public spaces discussed in this study, to take place in a virtual sphere that authoritarian governments are less able to monitor and control, given its vastness and complexity. This in turn has created a new platform through which to mobilize the masses—which is precisely what we observed in the recent Arab uprisings. Across the three countries highlighted in this study, Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt, the internet and particularly social media were certainly a venue for political activity, albeit to varying degrees in each country. It is to a brief overview of the significant role of social media in the uprisings that took place in Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt that this discussion now turns.[242]

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[241] See Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 1995; Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere 2.0," 2002; and Dahlgren, "The Internet, Public Spheres," 2005.

[242] While the internet and social media certainly played a key role in the public spheres, political activities, and uprising organization in these three countries, I have deliberately chosen not to delve extensively into this aspect of the Arab Spring because it is beyond the scope of this paper. This paper is meant to focus on the traditional networks and customs of Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt and how those spaces influence the political culture and activities in those states. However, at the end of each paragraph discussing the role of social media in each state, I will provide a list of sources for further reading on the role of social media in the Arab Spring uprisings in Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt.

Yemen, a country with a population of approximately 25 million people,[243] has an estimated 14.9% internet penetration rate as of June 2012— which is to say that approximately 3,700,000 Yemenis are internet users.[244] Of those 3,700,000 internet users, approximately 633,000 have Facebook accounts.[245] While only 14.9% of Yemenis are internet users and only 17% of those internet users hold Facebook accounts, what must be noted is the rapid increase of internet users in just two years. The number of internet users rose from 420,000 in 2010 to 3,670,000 in 2012, or from 1.8% penetration to 14.9%, while the entire population increased by over a million as well.[246] While further research is needed to establish why such a sharp increase in internet penetration occurred and how this stark change impacted Yemeni civil and political behavior, it is reasonable to suggest that a 13.1% increase in internet penetration in just two years must have had a significant effect on Yemen's interactional public sphere and thus civil society and political activity.

However, because of the relatively low percentages of internet penetration in Yemen, it is not surprising that social media was not used as extensively and as vigorously in the uprisings there as it was in Egypt and Tunisia. That being said, Facebook and Twitter were used by Yemeni youth leaders, such as university student Ala'a Jabrān (who started a Facebook group calling for political change) and Atiāf Alwazīr (a prominent blogger who tweeted under the name of Woman from Yemen), to voice their generation's frustrations, call for political change, and organize protests throughout the revolution.[247] In fact, it was Yemeni youths using social media

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[243] "CIA World Factbook: Yemen," last modified March 26, 2013, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html.
[244] "Yemen Internet Usage Statistics," last modified December 11, 2012, http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/ye.htm.
[245] "Yemen Internet Usage Statistics."
[246] "Yemen Internet Usage Statistics."
[247] Martha Raddatz, "Social Media Fuels Protests in Iran, Bahrain and Yemen," *ABC News*, Februay 15, 2011, http://abcnews.go.com/International/social-media-fuels-protests-iran-bahrain-yemen/story?id=12926081#.UVt0HFv5n7E; Mohammed Jamjoom, "Yemen's Youth Find Their Voice," *CNN*

in the very beginnings of Yemen's uprisings who first called for the resignation and removal of President Saleh, having been inspired by recent events in Tunisia and Egypt.[248]

On the other side of the internet penetration spectrum is Kuwait. Internet penetration in Kuwait is one of the highest in the Arab world, for a country with a population of just over 2.5 million people has nearly 2 million internet users, or 74.2% of the population.[249] The jump in the percentage of internet users in Kuwait between 2010 and 2012 was not as drastic as that in Yemen, but it did rise from 39.4% penetration to 74.2%— a significant increase.[250] Kuwaitis engage significantly more with social media as well; nearly 900,000 Kuwaitis, or one third of the population, had Facebook accounts as of December 31, 2012.[251] However, I have found little conclusive evidence to show that social media sites were crucial to the planning, organizing, and executing protest activities during the Kuwaiti uprising.

One area in which Kuwait's high internet penetration has been especially beneficial is in expanding the ability of women to interact in the public sphere and in politics. Dr. Nada al-Mutawa, a professor at Kuwait University, stressed that the advent of social media has allowed for greater female participation in Kuwait's political culture by providing an online platform through which female candidates running for office can garner support, post election information, and communicate with their constituents.[252] In an exceptional connection to my previous discussion of the role of the *dīwānīya* in Kuwaiti politics, Dr. al-Mutawa argues that

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World News, March 10, 2011, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-03-10/world/yemen.youth.protests_1_yemen-mohammed-abulahoum-sana-a?_s=PM:WORLD.

[248] Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings*, 79. For further reading on the role of social media in Yemen's uprisings see: Rane and Salem, "Social Media, Social Movements," 97-111.

[249] "Internet World Statistics: Kuwait," last modified December 12, 2012, http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/kw.htm.

[250] "Internet World Statistics: Kuwait."

[251] "Internet World Statistics: Kuwait."

[252] Nawara Fattahova, "Seminar Focuses on Modern Media's Influence on Politics – Intellectual Dialogue with NGOs," *The Kuwaiti Times*, May 27 2012, http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/05/27/seminar-focuses-on-modern-medias-influence-on-politics-intellectual-dialogue-with-ngos-2/.

social media has allowed for the creation of "electronic *dīwānīya*"[253] from which women are not barred, and has thus enabled them to overcome at least partially the gender-segregation barrier that usually inhibits them from fully engaging in political activity. [254]

Of the three states examined in this study, the case of Egypt most prominently demonstrates the role of social media in planning, organizing, and executing the uprising. Egypt has an internet penetration of 35.6%, which is nearly 30,000,000 people and just over 12 million Facebook users.[255] Therefore, it is not surprising that social media played such a central role in disseminating and collecting information throughout Egypt's uprising. Political and civil activity through social media sites began well before the 2011 uprisings that led to the fall of Mubarak, with important opposition leaders and movements, such as civil rights activist Mohammad el-Barāde'ī and the youth-led April 6 Movement, creating Facebook pages through which to strengthen networks of opposition to the Mubarak regime.

The murder of Khaled Said, a young small businessman who was publicly beaten to death by plain-clothed Egyptian police for posting a video of policemen splitting up confiscated contraband, pushed former Google executive Wael Ghoneim to create the "Kullena Khaled Said" page, a Facebook group that evolved into the epicenter of the social media side of the protest movement.[256] Through this page, that of the April 6 Movement, and those of other civil society organizations, Egypt's tech-savvy youth and community organizers were able to mobilize first

[253] Fattahova, "Seminar Focuses on Modern Media's Influence."
[254] For further reading on the use of social media in Kuwait's uprising: Jeffrey Ghannam, "Social Media in the Arab World: Leading up to the Uprisings of 2011," *Center for International Media Assistance*, February 3, 2011.
[255] "Internet World Statistics: Africa," last modified December 12, 2012, http://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm.
[256] Ghoneim, *Revolution 2.0*, 59-60.

hundreds, then thousands, and eventually millions of people to participate in Egypt's mass revolt to topple Mubarak.[257]

It is difficult to say whether the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 that toppled dictators such as Tunisia's Ben Ali, Egypt's Mubarak, and Yemen's Saleh would have occurred without the help of the internet and social media. This is not to say that these are Facebook or Twitter revolutions, because social media did not organize and lead protests—individuals did. However, regime brutality documented on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter galvanized Arabs across the region to rise up and call for regime change.[258] It was pictures on Facebook and Twitter of Khāled Said's mutilated face, of Muhammad Bū'azīzī's self-immolation, and of other atrocities that finally made it impossible for citizens under these authoritarian regimes to ignore the injustice and cruelty of their rulers.

Social media also allowed for documentation of these cases of regime brutality, as well as the defiant pictures of protesters and demonstrations, to spill across national borders into neighboring states with shared experiences of repressive, authoritarian rule. Thus, social media not only spurred citizens within one country to rise up against their regime but also provided a platform for Arabs across the region to recognize their shared grievances and in so doing unite, exchange strategies for mass mobilization, and together chant *ash-sha'b yurīd isqāt an-nizām* ("The people want to topple the regime").

By providing a new platform for the virtual gathering of individuals to exchange ideas, voice concerns, and engage in arguments and debates, as well as to facilitate political activity

[257] For further reading on the role of social media in Egypt's uprising, see: Ghoneim, *Revolution 2.0*; Nadine Kassem Chebib and Rabia Minatullah Sohail, "The Reasons Social Media Contributed to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution," *International Journal of Business Research and Management* 3(2011): 139-162; Dubai School of Government, "Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter," *Arab Social Media Report* 1(2011), www.arabsocialmediareport.com; Xioaolin Zhuo et al., "Egypt: The First Internet Revolt?" *Peace Magazine* (Jul/Sep 2011): 6-10.
[258] Howard and Hussain, "The Role of Digital Media," 48.

and mobilize the masses in protest against deeply entrenched authoritarian regimes, the internet and social media played a central role in the Arab Spring uprisings. The internet also had a revolutionizing effect on public space and consequently the public sphere of the Middle East, for while it may appear that the internet eliminates the physical space aspect of the public sphere, in reality the internet has supplemented, diversified, and strengthened the interactions that can take place in the physical spaces of the public sphere.

This relationship is best demonstrated by the fact that while much of the organization and mobilization of the Arab Spring uprisings took place online through social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, it was not online demonstrations that brought down the regimes of President Saleh and President Mubarak or put serious pressure on the Al Sabah monarchy to enact democratic reforms. It was online-organized protests, marches, and sit-ins that occurred in the streets, city squares, and government buildings of Yemen, Egypt, and Kuwait, the physical spaces that allow for manifestations of the public sphere, which ushered in political change. Thus, the virtual public sphere enhanced the physical public sphere.

Conclusion

This study aimed to challenge the skeptical view of some scholars, and indeed much of the Western world, regarding the possibility of functioning democratic states in the Middle East. In combatting the assumption that democracy cannot thrive in the newly liberated states of the Arab Spring, this study examines the informal networks and gathering traditions of three states, each with a history of authoritarian-style rule: Yemen under President Saleh (1978-2012), Kuwait under the rule of Al Sabah family (1756-Present), and Egypt under President Mubarak (1981-2011). In each state, the focus is placed on a traditional gathering that takes place on a regular basis and is a space that allows for dialogue, discussion, and debate—components of Habermas' public sphere that are critical to the creation of public opinion and political participation.

The goal in examining these traditions in each state was to explore whether these social institutions played a crucial role in the political culture and processes of these states, where formally organized political institutions—such as opposition political parties, civil society organizations, and political interest groups—were banned or severely restricted. The study aimed at ascertaining whether these informal, traditional networks served as important venues for political discussion, rational debate, and participation. Upon finding that these social institutions were in fact highly involved in the political culture of their respective state, this study sought to find evidence both historically and in the context of the recent Arab Uprisings that illustrated the ways in which these social institutions played important roles as informal political institutions.

The theoretical framework that provides structure to this study's analysis of these informal political institutions relied upon several sources of public space theory, collective mobilization theory, and democratic behavior theory. Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural*

Transformation of the Public Sphere provided the theoretical base of why *qat* chews, *dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouses, as both public and private spaces, can serve as centers for the creation of public opinion and by extension, political participation and mobilization. Doug McAdam's (1982) theory of cognitive liberation was then incorporated to supplement the process by which publically gathering and discussing issues leads to mobilization, and then Robert Putnam's (1993) theory of social capital that highlights its importance in espousing democratic behavior and functioning democracies.

This theoretical framework was applied to three case studies: *qat* chews in Yemen, *dīwānīya* gatherings in Kuwait, and coffeehouse meetings in Cairo. *Qat* chews are an ancient tradition in Yemen, and since *qat* chews usually take up four to five hours every afternoon, they are certainly a key social institution in Yemeni culture. However, the evidence suggests that certain *qat* chews also function as civil societies, such as *qat* chews whose participants share the same trade, or as political entities, such as the high-level ministerial meetings that take the form of *qat* chews and those in which Yemen's youth planned the mass protests that would lead to the topple of President Saleh.

Of the three traditional gatherings, the *dīwānīya*s of Kuwait proved to have the greatest informal role in state-level politics. Not only do *dīwānīya*s function as important social and civil institutions, in which individuals meet to discuss, debate, and form opinions on issues, but royal family members and members of parliament even hold *dīwānīya*s that are open to their constituents to attend. Furthermore, press coverage demonstrates the important role *dīwānīya*s play in Kuwaiti opposition politics and the uprisings that took place during the Arab Spring, largely due to the traditional and legal protection from the state and its recognition of the right to gather in *dīwānīya*s. My research reveals that certain *dīwānīya*s produced statements, held

coordinating meetings, and constructed initiatives, thus behaving much as political parties or civil society organizations. Because political parties are banned in Kuwait, this study posits that Kuwaiti society worked around that obstacle by adopting the traditional and legally protected *dīwānīya* to serve as a proxy political institution in order to participate in politics.

The last case study is that of coffeehouse culture and meetings in Egypt—specifically Cairo. Historically, coffeehouses such as Café Riche have served an extremely prominent role in the literary and political culture of Egypt, and such famed writers and politicians as Naguīb Mahfouz and Gamal Abdel Nasser were frequent patrons. However, increasingly oppressive measures on civil society and restrictions on free speech in Egypt in the last few decades have curtailed the political activity that once took place in Cairo's cafés. Against a background of increased state policing and censorship of public spaces, social media offered a virtual, public platform on which these conversations could continue, circumventing the state's surveillance and consequent stifling of traditional gathering spaces. Thus, the use of social media in organizing Egypt's uprising was decisive. However, some evidence reveals that protests were planned in hushed coffeehouse meetings, and that coffeehouses like Café Riche and others near *Taḥrīr* Square served as havens, makeshift hospitals, and recharging and refueling stations for protesters throughout the uprisings.

The ways in which the internet and social media have altered the public sphere and public space are briefly discussed in this study as well, including a short overview of the role social media played in the uprisings of Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt. Of these three case studies, the use of social media had the greatest impact on Egypt's uprising, partly because Egypt has the highest number of active social media users of these three states. However, in Kuwait social media has interestingly allowed for the greater participation of women in politics, by providing them an

alternative platform to campaign and communicate with constituents besides the male-dominated *dīwānīya*s from which they are barred entry.

The persistent marginalization of women in the public sphere, these traditional gatherings, and politics will continue to be a barrier to the establishment of lasting, functioning democracies in the Middle East. If the participation of women both in society and politics continues to be severely restricted, thereby politically excluding half of the entire population in these states, true democracy will never be achieved. However, democracy is possible in the Middle East, only perhaps not democracy as practiced or understood in the West. As Heather S. Gregg suggests, certain values and political preferences, such as the inclusion of religious political parties, would conflict with the US model of liberal democracy but may not hinder the healthy functioning of a democratic government and society.[259] The three case studies discussed above demonstrate the existence of deeply entrenched social institutions that facilitate democratic behavior and enable political participation in effectively authoritarian states, but are made less democratic by their exclusion of women.

The traditional sites of the *qat* chew, *dīwānīya*, and coffeehouse proved to be not only important for political participation, but also crucial venues for the dissemination of information and mobilization. This finding is heightened by the fact that even in Kuwait, the country with the highest internet penetration of 75% of the population (and thus seemingly the country most likely to utilize social media for political participation and mobilization), the Kuwaiti *dīwānīya* has the most entrenched informal role in state-level politics of the three sites considered in this study.

The implications of this study are numerous, but one of the most important is that it aides in deconstructing the view that many people outside the Middle East hold of the region as one devoid of civil society and without a history of democratic norms or behavior. While modern

[259] Gregg, "The Prospects for Democratization," 113.

authoritarian rulers were able to suppress to varying degrees the opposition politics and organizing that took places in the traditional spaces examined in this study, democratic, civil behaviors and political activity continued to take place in these informal networks. While the role of civil society across the countries of the Middle East is well documented in academia, the general public continues to be largely unaware of its presence and influence. This lack of knowledge concerning the workings and dynamics of modern Arab societies among the general public is one factor that contributed to the genuine shock and surprise many experienced in response to the Arab Spring.

Contrary to received wisdom on the subject, democratic behaviors are deeply entrenched in Middle Eastern society, and thus there is the possibility that such behaviors may be channeled through traditional pathways in order to apply them to democratic, state-level politics. Gregg highlights the two main processes that must take place for democratization to be successful: democratic transition and democratic consolidation.[260] Democratic transition refers to the adoption of democratic practices such as holding elections and the creation of constitutions that legally enshrine democratic principles; democratic consolidation is the internalization and repetition of democratic practices and procedures.[261] Furthermore, as discussed above, several scholars of democracy have emphasized that it is undergoing a transition, in which informal politics are becoming increasingly important to the functioning of successful democracy.[262] Therefore, the traditions and behaviors practiced in the informal gatherings of *qat* chews, *dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouses become especially relevant in this context, as they can be utilized to

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[260] Gregg, "The Prospects for Democratization," 114.
[261] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 13-26.
[262] See original discussion earlier in this study, in the chapter on the role of social media in the public sphere.

facilitate and strengthen the two processes of democratic transition and especially democratic consolidation.

To speculate on the future of the Arab states that experienced mass uprisings and in some cases regime change during the Arab Spring, and specifically the three states examined in this study, one cannot overlook the worrisome and daunting obstacles to peaceful, democratic transition that these countries now face. Yemen suffers from weak state institutions; a population divided along tribal, sectarian, ethnic, and regional lines; and a dearth of resources.[263] These localized identities and allegiances come at the expense of national unity, which further inhibits weak states such as Yemen from democratic transition by seriously limiting the ability of new governments, even those freely elected, to govern these fractured states. Kuwait does not suffer the resource or financial woes of Yemen due to its rich oil industry, but certain members of the royal family continue to push undemocratic policies (such as the change to electoral rules in December 2012) and to block meaningful democratic reform that would further limit the royal family's influence in Kuwait's governance.[264] As the opposition that had been united against President Mubarak continues to fracture under President Mursi, the vehement disagreements on the balance of secularism versus Islamic law in Egypt's constitution and overall path moving forward will continue to be a volatile debate that severely hinders Egypt's transition.[265]

While the informal, traditional networks and gatherings examined in this study help to foster the feelings of community, illuminate shared concerns, and facilitate the mobilization necessary to address these issues, the deeper fissures and national-level obstacles to reform present in Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt must first be tackled and remedied before *qat* chews,

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[263] Gregory Gause, "The Year the Arab Spring Went Bad," *Foreign Policy*, December 31, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/12/31/the_year_the_arab_spring_went_bad?
[264] David Hearst, "Kuwait's Protests Remind Us of the Arab Spring's True Spirit," *The Guardian*, November 2, 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/nov/02/kuwait-protests-arab-spring.
[265] Gause, "When the Arab Spring," *Foreign Policy.*

*dīwānīya*s, and coffeehouses can play a potentially significant role in democratic transition and national-level politics.

If these traditional pathways are acknowledged for their importance and applicability to political participation and further developed, a more democratic outcome in Yemen, Kuwait, and Egypt may be more likely. However, such a process will take time. The revolutions in Yemen and Egypt did not conclude with the fall of their dictators; on the contrary, they only began at their ousting. The on-going uprisings in Kuwait never called for the fall of the Al Sabah family, but for deep-seated government reforms, in which they are making advances. These revolutions are a work in progress. Nevertheless, this study illustrates that a more democratic outcome is possible in these states, not just at the state level but at the societal level as well, by strengthening and politically integrating the traditions of public engagement already present in these societies.

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