

Abstract

Producing the New Regressive Left: The Case of the Pan-Arab TV Station al-Mayadeen is the first comprehensive research work conducted on the Beirut based TV station, an important representative of the post-2011 generation of Arab satellite news media. The launch of al-Mayadeen in June 2012 was closely linked to the political developments across the Arab world in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings, and can be seen as a direct reaction to the editorial line that al-Jazeera followed in covering those very events. Drawing on a wide variety of programmes from the station's first four seasons on air, as well as interviews conducted with several of the station's staff members, this thesis investigates a growing political trend and ideological discourse in the Arab world that I have called *The New Regressive Left*. On the premise that a media outlet can function as a forum for ideology production, the thesis argues that an analysis of this material can help to trace the contexture of *The New Regressive Left*.

If the first part of the thesis lays out the theoretical approach and draws the contextual framework, through an exploration of the surrounding Arab media- and ideoscapes, the second part is an analytical investigation of the discourse that permeates the programmes aired on al-Mayadeen. Through five chapters, I investigate the public celebration of the former Algerian resistance fighter Jamila Bouhired; the station's approach to Palestine and its relaunch of a heroic resistance narrative; the cultural talk show Bayt al-Qasid and the discussion of what it means to be a committed artist, and how that translates into supporting al-Assad's rule in Syria; the Ramadan programme Harrir Aqlak's attempt to relaunch an intellectual renaissance and to promote religious pluralism; and finally, al-Mayadeen's cooperation with the pan-Latin American TV station TeleSur and its ambitions about establishing a media network across 'the revolutionary global South'. All of this shows, I argue, the contextures of an ideological discourse that promotes progressive values inherited from a leftist tradition, although it often translates this heritage into regressive political realities.

What becomes clear from the analytical chapters is the emergence of the new cross-ideological alliance of *The New Regressive Left*. This emerging coalition between Shia Muslims, religious minorities, parts of the Arab Left, secular cultural producers, and the remnants of the political, strategic resistance coalition (Iran, Hizbollah, Syria), capitalises on a series of factors that bring them together in spite of their otherwise diverse worldviews and agendas. *The New Regressive Left* is united by resistance against the growing influence of Saudi Arabia in the religious, cultural, political, economic and military spheres alike; the depiction of Syria and *bilad ash-Sham* as the manifestation of this resistance; the rejection of the 'Arab Spring'; the belief that a global outlook is a necessary strategy to counterbalance Western imperialism; and, not least, fear for the future. This fear is rooted in the self-perception of the entities that form *The New Regressive Left*; they all see themselves as minorities constantly under threat and thus opt for the preservation of the status quo.