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Polling and the Pursuit of Arab Public Opinion

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Abstract

This thesis explores the history and development of the field of public opinion inquiry relating to the Arab region. Interrogating epistemological questions of who claims the right to produce knowledge, and by what means, this thesis seeks to explain the rise of global public opinion polling, with a specific focus on the methods and practices by which Arab public opinion has been pursued, captured, claimed, and (re)presented by international pollsters. In the literature, engagement with the construct "Arab public opinion" has tended to focus on the hard results of polls and surveys, or the methodological obstacles that preclude the empirical pursuit of public opinion in non-democratic contexts. I argue that public opinion (in the form of hard results) cannot be divorced from the theoretical and epistemological legacies inherent in its construction. The pursuit of public opinion by empirical means is a political act, and must be analysed as such.

This thesis traces the development of the field of Arab public opinion inquiry in three stages through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, beginning with epistemic interventions into to the region by colonial actors, followed by the embedding of foreign inquiry in the local setting through the institutionalisation of social science research, and culminating in the rise of local, indigenous epistemic actors who seek in part to reclaim knowledge of the self through processes of localisation. The argument is supported with theoretical and empirical research, including in-depth interviews with over fifty international pollsters, practitioners, and public opinion experts. Overall, this thesis provides a sociological and epistemological account of the dominance of Western scientific norms in global public opinion inquiry, and explores the meaningful ways in which the local reclamation of knowledge on this front is taking place today.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

For my parents.

List of Abbreviations

AAI	Arab American Institute
AAPOR	American Association of Public Opinion Research
ALLBUS	Allgemeinen Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften
AUB	American University of Beirut
AUC	American University of Cairo
BAS	United States Bureau of Agricultural Statistics
BASR	Bureau of Applied Social Research
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BGI	Gallup de Opinião Publica Brazil
BIPO	British Institute of Public Opinion
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CAPI	Computer-assisted personal interviewing
CATI	Computer-assisted telephone interviewing
CENIS	Center for International Studies
CERES	Centre d'Études et de Recherches Économiques et Sociales
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Center for International Studies
CPRS	Center for Palestinian Research and Studies
CPS	Centre for Political Studies
CSES	Comparative Study of Electoral Systems
CSIS	Centre for International Strategic Studies
CSS	Center for Strategic Studies
DPS	Division of Program Surveys
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ESOMAR	European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research
ESS	European Social Surveys
GBS	Global Barometers Surveys
GIRI	Gallup International Research Institutes
GMA	Gallup Markedsanalyse Denmark
GSS	General Social Survey
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICPSR	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research
ICSVE	International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IFOP	Institut Français d'Opinion Publique
IISR	Institute for International Social Research
ILO	International Labour Organization
INR/OPN	Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Office of Opinion Research
IR	International Relations
IRI	International Republican Institute
ISR	Institute for Social Research

ISSP	International Social Survey Program
JMCC	Jerusalem Media and Communications Center
LAS	League of Arab States
LCPS	Lebanese Center for Policy Studies
MEMPSI	Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MEPI	Middle East Peace Initiative
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MORI	Market and Opinion Research International
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NCPP	National Council of Public Polls
NCSCR	National Center for Sociological and Criminological Research
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGI	Norsk Gallup Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIPO	Nederlands Instituut voor de Publieke Opinie
NORC	National Opinion Research Center
NSF	National Science Foundation
OPA	Office of Price Administration
OPOR	Office of Public Opinion Research
OWI	Office of War Information
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PCPSR	Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research
PIPA	Program on International Policy Attitudes
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PSC	Populations Studies Centre
RCGD	Research Centre for Group Dynamics
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNWRA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USIA	United States Information Agency
SCI	Web of Science Citation Index
SESRI	Social and Economic Survey Research Institute
SRC	Survey Research Centre
SSRC	Social Sciences Research Council
VOA	Voice of America
WAPOR	World Association of Public Opinion Research
WB	World Bank
WINEP	Washington Institute for Near East Policy
WVS	World Values Survey

List of Figures

Introduction

Western research is more than just research that is located in a positivist tradition. It is research which brings to bear, on any study of indigenous peoples, a cultural orientation, a set of values, a different conceptualisation of such things as time, space and subjectivity, different and competing theories of knowledge, highly specialised forms of language, and structures of power.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 42)

What do the people think? This deceivingly complex and evasive question represents the basic starting point for any attempt to understand public opinion, on practically any matter. How people have gone about answering this question unravels a history of the development and institutionalisation of particular modes of knowledge production and of the construction of public opinion. For many, public opinion is something of a holy grail from which we might source valuable knowledge about ourselves and others as members of social collectives. To capture public opinion is therefore to lay claim to knowledge about the social world.

This thesis is about the pursuit and capture of public opinion knowledge as it relates to the Arab region. Since the early 2000's, the term "Arab public opinion" has become increasingly prevalent in popular and political discourse. Particularly in the post-September 11 environment, an externally-driven fixation with recording the tides of opinion among societies in the Arab world has been palpable, and opinion polls as a technical means of obtaining this type of knowledge have proliferated. Predominately Western scholars, practitioners, politicians, and media outlets have contributed to this epistemic buzz. As Justin Gengler writes, "global interest in Arab public opinion has been spurred by dramatic events and trends, including the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the ensuing war in Iraq and more recently the Arab Spring uprisings. These and other events have highlighted the importance of how ordinary Arab citizens think and act, even if they may often have a limited influence on formal decision-making in

government" (2017). Indeed, in the wake of 9/11, the American research centre Pew broadened its global attitudes research to probe opinion relating to terrorism and Islam "on the eve of the Iraq war" in countries with significant Muslim populations (Pew Research Centre 2005). In 2002, James Zogby published his book *What Arabs Think* and in 2013 Shibley Telhami published *The World through Arab Eyes*, both of which relied on Arab-region polls and surveys that they had conducted. Marc Lynch wrote of changing ideas about the "Arab street" (2003a) and the need to take Arab opinion seriously (2003b). In 2006, the New York Times reported on a "tide of Arab opinion" (MacFarquhar 2006), while a study on the determinants of Arab opinion sought to uncover a theoretical basis for Arab attitudes toward the West, as found in the polls (Furia and Lucas 2006). In the same year, the Arab Barometer was launched in an effort to conduct systematic regional polls that provided "insight into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of ordinary citizens across the Arab world". And other major research initiatives have emerged: the Arab Reform Initiative launched in 2005, the Arab Opinion Index in 2011, and the Middle East Public Opinion Project in 2013, for instance.

The sudden fascination and fetishisation of Arab public opinion seems to suggest that prior to the surge in interest, it eluded capture or understanding. This phenomenon of the rapid proliferation of polling and survey research provides the impetus for this thesis. As a study of the rise of global polling and the pursuit of Arab public opinion, the thesis explores the development of the field of inquiry. By interrogating the production of knowledge and claims to knowing, I seek to understand the actors, methods, and practices by which Arab public opinion has been pursued, captured, claimed, and (re)presented by the world of polling. I argue that the practice of inquiry itself is a political endeavor, and that the field of Arab opinion research must be held accountable for the construction of Arab publics, just as global opinion research has contributed to the construction of global publics.

1   The Question

Stated simply, this thesis is about public opinion inquiry pertaining to the Arab region and its peoples. More precisely, it is driven by the fundamental question:

How can we explain the rise and proliferation of public opinion data relating to the Arab region in recent years?

Toward answering this question, a research agenda was devised that generated sub-questions: First, what constitutes the field of public opinion inquiry, which produces this data? Second, who are the actors involved in the conduct of inquiry, and where are they positioned—geographically, historically, commercially, or epistemologically?

An effort to define and map the field followed from these two sub-questions. Together with that of the rise and proliferation of public opinion data in the Arab region, a final, broader question was raised; namely, what is this a case of? This final question asks what the phenomenon of Arab public opinion inquiry tells us about the construction of the political world more broadly, and gathers the conceptual and theoretical resources necessary for locating this research agenda within the realm of International Relations (IR).

Whereas the main driving question seeks to uncover a particular social and political phenomenon, the sub-questions lead me to demarcate the field of inquiry at the heart of it. Mapping this field requires disentangling the practices, ideas, and assumptions by which knowledge of public opinion in the Arab region is and has been pursued. In considering the above questions, I wish to de-essentialise the very concept of "public opinion" as an object of analysis, and refocus the analytical gaze toward the historical and cultural conditions that have shaped how particular processes of knowledge production develop, spread, and evolve. I take the exploration of the current field of Arab public opinion inquiry as an opportunity to interrogate actors and practices in the field. As such, understanding the pollster and the act of polling are central to my research agenda.

As a form of knowledge production and as a political artefact, public opinion polls and surveys are interesting for at least two reasons. First, we are interested in what they tell us about our political and social realities, which means to say, we rely deeply on the *content* of public opinion research. It is this content—what people say that they think, feel, believe, and hope—that has traditionally been of interest to political theory. Scholarship relating to public opinion and polling has

largely focused on the end-product, i.e., the results of questions asked, perceptible trends and anomalies, the cognitive effects of question wording, the representativeness or randomness of samples, insights and accounts from focus groups, scalar rankings, agree/disagree, yes/no, aware/unaware, and other classificatory schemas used to simplify and demystify political attitudes.

Theories of public opinion relating to issues such as the use of military force (Lian and Oneal 1993; Jenleson and Britton 1998; Eichenberg 2005; Williams and Slusser 2014; Dieck 2015; Everts and Isernia 2015), international governance (Herberichs 1966; Flynn and Rattinger 1985; Bell and Quek 2018), immigration (OECD International Migration Outlook; Ureta 2011), and human rights (Davis, Murdie, and Steinmetz 2012; Allendoerfer 2016) have been developed to better understand the relational link between public opinion, political elites, and domestic and foreign policy. More recent theoretical turns analyse the relationship between public opinion and the media (Soroka 2003; Entman 2004; Baum and Potter 2008; Shapiro and Jacobs 2011; Moy and Bosch 2013), the influence of political elites (Foyle 1997; Isaacs 1998; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Guisinger and Saunders 2017), and global ideological shifts in polls (Leiserowitz et al. 2013; Adamczyk 2017; Fowler 2017; Goren and Chapp 2017). Traditional political scholarship on public opinion has thus keenly sought, by and large, all possible explanans of these relational or causal links (Lippmann 1922; Campbell et al. 1960; Nincic 1992; Page and Shapiro 1992).

A second, though less explored reason that polls and surveys are interesting has to do with what they actually are (i.e., political artefacts) and what they actually do (classify, control, and govern bodies). While traditional scholarship has tended to take public opinion as given—as something out there which is readily available to capture, measure, and record and as something that can be subjected to different analytical treatments in order to explain political behaviour and outcomes—this *a posteriori* approach precludes us from asking more fundamental questions, like what are the tangible differences between public opinion as a conceptual idea and public opinion as the end result of a research agenda? Are all individuals represented through public opinion inquiry, or are some systematically prioritised over others? And how do pollsters and researchers

intervene in or help to construct ideas about publics? In a nutshell, how do these political artefacts come about and what do they do?

It is in this strain of thought, at the crossroads of politics and epistemology, that my research agenda is embedded. On the nature of public opinion, I take a cue from "non-traditional" constructivist and critical accounts which have sought to problematise public opinion by looking to the ways through which statistical data enacts politics and creates power struggles. These include insights from Pierre Bourdieu, for whom public opinion is a manufactured myth and does not exist *per se* (1979), Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, whose theory on the spiral of silence has been used to explain fear of expression in the case of minority opinion (1993), Ian Hacking's work on the empirical implications of counting individuals and creating social categories (1982), and research on the social construction of public opinion (Osborne and Rose 1999; Lee 2002; Krippendorff 2005). I also find inspiration in reflexivist critiques of positivism and empiricism (for instance, Keller 2001) and the decentring and decolonising of IR and its dominant methodologies (Acharya 2015; Smith 1999). This thesis is therefore an exercise in bringing public opinion into the fold of ideas relating to global knowledge production.

This thesis comes on the heels of a rapidly-expanding market for public opinion data pertaining to people in the Arab region, ignited in part by a renewed preoccupation with Western foreign policy and intervention in the years since September 11, 2001 and the subsequent invasion of Iraq, and boosted as well in the post-Arab Spring environment. Shining a light on the Arab region is about far more than just selecting a novel case study. For one, the analytical potential for political public opinion knowledge from the region has largely been ignored in scholarship. Indeed, the vast majority of existing research on public opinion has engaged with democratic publics in the West (unsurprisingly, American public opinion forms the lion's share of material). Although there has been case-based research conducted in non-Western countries and regions, including in the Middle East, it has emerged in a piecemeal fashion and it remains unclear how these studies fit into larger narratives and macro-theorising about public

opinion.[1] It is precisely the primacy and centrality of Western scholarship that exposes immense gaps in our explanatory frameworks.

But deeper than this is a sense of urgency around understanding and demystifying Arab public opinion. From Orientalist discourses that incite a fascination with and fetishization of the "Arab mind" and the "Arab street", to the revolutionary uprisings that began 2010 and transformed public spheres, to the ways in which social media is altering communication and power dynamics, it feels as if the region is more closely watched, measured, and studied (from outside as from within) today than ever before. This thesis therefore seeks to understand the ways in which we come to know about publics and public opinion, and how this knowledge contributes to the dominant empirical constructions of the region.

2   The Argument

This thesis will show that public opinion data cannot be divorced from the complex contexts and legacies from which it has emerged. I identify a field of inquiry pertaining to the Arab region, one in which the object pursued is knowledge of public opinion. I explore the ways in which the development of this field comes as a result of externally-driven historical, imperial, and market forces. In the absence of context and legacies, public opinion data and theory can only ever be taken "as is"—as something static and analytically removed from social and political forces—when in fact it plays a role in the engendering of the political world. Paying attention to context allows for broader theorising and helps us to understand the rationale behind the pursuit of global public opinion, as well as the power dynamics and hierarchies of knowledge embedded in the pursuit.

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[1] For instance, on Russia, see Inkeles (1950), Wyman (1997), Gerber (2015); on China, see Lin (1936), Tang (2005), Shi and Lu (2010), Reilly (2012); on Latin America, see Lagos Cruz-Coke (2008), Stein (2013); on Sub-Saharan Africa, see Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005), Van Der Westhuizen and Smith (2015), Keuleers (2015); on Southeast Asia, see Pietsch (2014); finally on the Middle East, see Tessler and Jamal (2006), Furia and Lucas (2006), and Tessler (2011).

My central argument is that Arab public opinion inquiry has been pursued and created by different actors to different ends and can be characterised by stages of development. This development unfolds in three successive stages from the early twentieth century until today. For the purposes of my argument, it begins with a colonial mode of inquiry serving as a representation of modern power, then enters a transformative phase where foreign inquiry becomes deeply embedded in development and social science institutions in the region, and finds itself most recently in a stage of reclamation (of practices and knowledge) by local actors. The reclamation of local claims to local knowledge represents one of the central messages of this thesis. This is therefore a story of how externally-driven claims to knowledge evolve to become locally-driven ones, painting an agential "arc of return" in the pursuit of public opinion knowledge. In identifying this agential arc, I am not making the normative claim that the stages of development of inquiry signals progress. My goal is simply to examine the trajectories of knowledge production, rather than weigh the legitimacy or accuracy of that knowledge.

3   The Contribution

As I see it, this thesis reckons with dominant knowledge structures embedded in the international system. It contributes to the broader question about how knowledge production shapes the conduct of international relations—not so much the relations between states, but the relations between epistemic actors and the international societies that form the object of their inquiry. The aim of this thesis is to advance the idea that the trajectory of knowledge production responsible for the emergence of public opinion inquiry relating to the Arab world is part of a larger story about the production of global publics, and specifically about a transformation from colonial modalities of control to the local reclamation of knowledge. This thesis addresses three general gaps in the literature. The first is a lack of understanding about the field of Arab public opinion inquiry, while the second is the limited and generally outdated theoretical research on public opinion in non-Western and non-democratic settings. But the third and larger contribution of this project is a sociological intervention into the (re)production, fascination, and fetishisation of public

opinion data relating to the Arab region, which has been sustained for quite some time by different epistemic actors and generative practices of scientific research.

Given that there is little in the way of existing research on Arab public opinion research (and certainly, the term "Arab public opinion inquiry" is not found in any literature) this project has often struggled to find a theoretical home. While I draw on many ideas and theories from different literatures, there are no seminal texts upon which we can build an agenda for the study of Arab public opinion inquiry. Nevertheless, as an emerging theoretical field, International Political Sociology (IPS) invites us to problematise the "geo-cultural epistemologies" from which particular disciplines emerge (Guillaume and Bilgin 2017, 1). In the spirit of IPS, I am interested in the ways that public opinion manifests itself through the act of inquiry (polling) and through "specific sites, temporalities and modes of deployment as forms of power" (Guillaume and Bilgin, 3). Importantly, then, I argue that we must consider how the empirical contours of public opinion have been shaped by the history of American social science, steeped in rationalist and liberal ideals that privilege a positivist epistemology (Ross 1991; Delli Carpini 2011). In constructing a historical and sociological account of public opinion inquiry, I emphasise the role of situated knowledge (with its own set of epistemological assumptions) in shaping fields and disciplines. The thesis adopts the general framework and methods of IPS scholarship in order to contribute to discussions about forgotten or supressed legacies of knowledge about the international.

J. Ann Tickner writes that to advance a truly global IR, we must become aware of the methodological constraints that keep disciplinary IR from being freed of its Eurocentric (and often neo-positivist) stronghold (2016). This requires focusing "on the link between knowledge and power—that is, whose knowledge, and what kind of knowledge, is counted as legitimate (and 'scientific') by the mainstream of the discipline" (Tickner 2016, 157). Advancing a global IR requires us to contend with issues of race, empire, and historical accounts that have been omitted from IR knowledge, as well as to question the epistemological footing of "legitimate" scientific inquiry.

In building a research agenda around the rise of public opinion inquiry in the Arab world, I wish to contribute to the task of forging a more global IR in two

small but, I believe, meaningful ways. First, I wish to highlight the power relations implicit in the production of public opinion knowledge, allowing for a critique of the epistemology, methods, and technologies that foster dialogue between people and their political representatives. Second, I want to tell a story about the widespread diffusion and adoption of specific (American) neo-positivist social scientific methods beyond the Western, democratic context. The relationship between knowledge and power is nothing new to IR—we know the ways in which knowledge legitimates power and, likewise, the ways in which knowledge is legitimated by power (Weiler 2011, 210). Hierarchies and power asymmetries are always embedded into the production of knowledge: different forms of knowledge, different institutions, and different knowledge-producing actors have varying degrees of importance and influence. Public opinion as a form of knowledge production is always *for something or someone* (which is why I choose to consider the power dynamics embedded in the processes and practices of producing public opinion knowledge). This is something we may have guessed at the outset, but with no critical theoretical literature on the globalisation of polling, it is an idea in need of careful appraisal.

Challenging dominant (Western) ways of knowing, measuring, categorising and defining publics and public opinion is also related to efforts to decolonise methodologies, i.e., to advance a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values that inform dominant methodological practices. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes, "what counts as Western research draws from an 'archive' of knowledge and systems, rules and values which stretch beyond the boundaries of Western science to the system now referred to as the West" (1999, 42). Smith's deep interrogation of that place of intersection between imperialism and research awakens a type of critique about the epistemic privilege of the West. And while I do not mean to reframe Smith's emancipatory work only to suit this research project, this "hook" of power structures embedded in Western research is far more compelling to me than other approaches that I have wrestled with. In this background of this thesis, then, the relationship between power and knowledge is ever-present.

4   The Methodology

Conceptual development lies at the heart of all social science work (Gerring 2012, 112). In order to conceptualise, deconstruct, and then *re*conceptualise and *re*construct a subject, we must start with at least a neutral or descriptive meaning of a concept as a way of understanding or explaining phenomena, processes, outcomes, and the like (Guzzini 2002). There are some important lessons about concept development from Guzzini (2002) and Berenskoetter (2016) that inspire my approach to disentangling and attempting to uncover and develop the concept of public opinion, which is the most basic and fundamental idea around which my thesis is constructed. One lesson is that concepts should be seen as context-bound. They are constantly in motion, demonstrated by how uniquely they can be employed across history and geographies, motivated by different interests or treated with theoretical exclusivism (Splichal 1999, 4). Acknowledging the historical, geographical, cultural, epistemological, and socio-political fields that shape a concept encourages "a more critical attitude towards the categories and terminologies we use and the mentalities behind them" (Berenskoetter 2016, 2).

A second lesson is that "basic concepts fulfill a cognitive function and are central parts of knowledge production in modernity" (Berenskoetter 2016, 18), which means that concept development has a role in artificially ordering the world. What I take from this is the need to "explore how concepts form and become reified through their use across society" (Berenskoetter 2016, 18). The starting point for the analysis of public opinion in thesis was to ask the fundamental question: What are the ways in which existing conceptualisations of public opinion have shaped how and what kinds of knowledge are produced? Problematising the ways of knowing a concept thus naturally leads to issues of its production. Where knowledge production and public opinion intersect, we find the public opinion research industry. I believe that any interrogation of (contemporary) public opinion must consider, then, the ways in which it is brought into being by particular practices, tools, and methods.

While there is a strand of literature that approaches public opinion from a more critical lens, problematising its construction and inclusivity as a concept (i.e.,

whose opinions count), there is little at our disposal that interrogates the role of the pollster at the level of the international. Pollsters, practitioners, and pundits are often quoted and misquoted—their data, analyses, and forecasts are used to provide background knowledge and justify and legitimate claims. But *they* themselves have evaded critical interrogation as actors in the international arena who shape discourse and knowledge about the political world (particularly in IR scholarship). One reason for this might be that they are a nebulous and extremely heterogeneous *they*. Pollsters and related actors operate at different levels, are accountable to a diverse set of agents, and work in competition. On an individual basis, their training and professional trajectories are perhaps too disparate to warrant analysing them as a single, unified group. When taken as individual experts, their knowledge is authoritative. When they are mentioned collectively, it is often on the basis of a common (sometimes sinister) agenda, i.e., as spinners, political mouthpieces, and sensationalists. I do not approach this thesis assuming that pollsters are inherently spinners, or that the machinery of data production relies on the ability to spin data and give it a journalistic flair, though that may sometimes be part of it. Pollsters are my methodological "in" into the study of public opinion inquiry because they are key to the process, through which we come to know and understand publics and social groups that we are and are not made members of. Their daily bread involves the repeated collection, systematic processing, and thorough analysis of some number questions asked to masses of individuals, creating polaroid snapshots of the social and political world (and like a polaroid snapshot, each photographer takes a different angle, orientation, and viewpoint).

The research question at the heart of the thesis—namely, how can we explain the rise and proliferation of public opinion knowledge on the Arab region?—dictated careful methods selection. I began by documenting published polls and opinion studies on the Arab region, and recorded the actors responsible for creating them. In this way, I identified as many pollsters as possible who are presently working on public opinion relating to the Arab region and found that they were geographically stretched between the United States and countries in the Arab world (with a small number located in Europe). Analytically, this inspired a mapping of the field and generated questions about why the American-Arab nexus was reproduced in the practitioner's world. This list of practitioners that I

identified is small enough sample to analyse as a self-contained body of epistemic actors on the basis of their shared object of analysis (Arab public opinion).

In Chapter 1, I provide clear terminological definitions relating to this field of inquiry. While the Arab case analysis in Part 3 of the thesis builds a narrative from historical to contemporary practices of inquiry (Chapters 5 through 7), the empirical work involved in this thesis required me to work backward from the current state of the field to its origins. The research process went as follows: 1) preliminary research to identify actors working in the field by collecting published polls and sourcing the authors of studies, 2) a geographic mapping of these actors, 3) a study of their individual characteristics and the nature of their polling/research operations, 4) in-person interviews with pollsters in the field, and 5) "piecing together" the findings and the broader narrative using historical and other secondary sources.

The interview process deserves a mention. The mapping exercise helped to locate relevant actors based in North America, Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf. Due to time and budget constraints, I narrowed my interview selection down to the countries which were the most prolific producers of Arab-region polls: the United States, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Qatar (Egypt would have been included but conducting fieldwork was considered risky and so it was eliminated, and Tunisia was a planned site for research if not for budget constraints). Within the countries visited, I contacted as many polling centres and senior pollsters and practitioners as I could identify. Respondent selection was limited to senior-level actors as they likely have the experience to reflect on the field more critically. In some cases, snowball sampling led to more interviews than planned. I triangulated the pollster interviews by also meeting with scholars considered experts in relevant fields in each country (public opinion, sociology, and methodology).

My methodology comprises of semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with pollsters and public opinion experts, combined with secondary research. It is thus a qualitative approach to a generally quantitative subject matter. Semi-structured interviews generate open and exploratory conversations and give interviewees the freedom to express themselves on their own terms. I chose to

use certain anchors or ideas to guide the interviews along common trajectories. These anchors included questions about the usefulness and value of public opinion, the definition of public opinion, the nature of the interviewee's work as far as it pertained to public opinion (procedures, objectives, timelines, and personnel), their career backgrounds and histories of their institutions, the perceived impact of their own work on the field, their professional connections in the field, and where they saw themselves positioned within the market for Arab public opinion data.

In all, fifty-seven interviews were conducted across six countries over the course of three separate field research trips. All were conducted in English. About two-thirds of interviews were with pollsters or survey research practitioners, while the remainder were with scholars working in academic institutions or in the policy field. Most interviews were conducted in the respondent's place of work, while five were conducted either through Skype, or over coffee. It was important to be able to spend time inside the workplaces in order to view the data production set-up (participant observation), meet other researchers, get a sense of how busy or large their operations were, and learn about workplace culture. The average interview length was one and a half hours and the interviews were conducted in an open-ended fashion. I determined provisional questions based on the anchors mentioned above, but left room to cultivate trust and allow for the free-flow of conversation.

The first wave of field research took place over two weeks in May 2016 in Jordan and Qatar. I conducted thirteen interviews and spent time observing the daily practices of one main research centre in each country. This first trip was both introductory and exploratory. A second trip took place over three weeks in February and March 2017 in the United States, specifically in Washington D.C. (fifteen interviews), Maryland (one interview), New York (three interviews), and Ann Arbor (four interviews). In addition to these, I conducted one Skype interview with a Princeton-based pollster/scholar, one Skype interview with a senior American counterintelligence expert, and one in-person interview in Baltimore with an American government attorney. The third and final trip took place over four weeks in November and December 2017 in Lebanon (eight

interviews), Jordan (five interviews), Israel (one interview), and Palestine (four interviews).

I must mention that the interviews were by no means exhaustive. I did not meet every pollster that I would have liked to in an ideal case, though this leaves room for future research. Additionally, as mentioned, the sphere of actors operating within this field is self-contained, and many pollsters and polling centres are readily identifiable. The actors operating within this sphere are linked relationally, through training, education and mentorship, conferences, commissioned projects, and word of mouth. Many of my respondents knew or were aware of each other, each other's work, clients, and reputations. Some actors work in partnership, others in competition. This raises issues of confidentiality and explains my decision to withhold identities, company names, and other details, unless the information provided to me was already publicly available. I stress that in my aim to uncover a field of research and trace its roots and its effect on our perceptions about public opinion and publics in the Arab region, I wish to steer clear of compromising the work or reputations of these actors. I am more interested in the collective insights gained from the manifold discussions rather than interrogating actors on an individual basis.

Issues of confidentiality are part and parcel of the trappings of qualitative interview-based research for this subject. While the interviews were extremely insightful, I met with each actor one occasion only. In almost all interviews, I had to first gain the respondent's trust before they were willing to share information, and while each pollster opened up to candid conversation, it was clear that this is a competitive market full of closely guarded secrets (in two instances, I was met with extreme distrust and repeatedly asked who I was working for. And while eventually some level of rapport was achieved, only one of those two interviews was fruitful). This requires the researcher to tread carefully within a small window of time, as some questions are simply off limits. These include questions about clients, especially when those clients are foreign governments, certain questions about funding sources, questions about ties to the state, and questions about personal politics. It often seemed that the most politically interesting information was the least accessible to me.

Outside of the semi-structured interviews, I relied heavily on secondary research and digging through digital archives and old research compendiums for published polls and surveys on the Arab world prior to 2001 (after this point, published studies can usually be obtained on the websites of research companies or commissioning bodies). Beginning with insights from the interview process, I traced back the histories of actors to when they first emerged, following the trail as far back as records were available, and then building on the early history of Arab public opinion inquiry with supplementary research.

One final (and perhaps glaring) methodological issue with the thesis is the bracketing of the authoritarian dimension. Interestingly, what I once thought would be of central importance to this thesis—namely, the ways in which authoritarianism shapes pollsters and the conduct of their work, as well as how it changes the dialogical relationship between publics and researchers—was rarely discussed in interviews (regardless of where those interviews took place). Authoritarianism may well be a key constitutive element of knowledge production in the field, however, the interviews showed that it has not precluded political opinion research altogether (instead the field is growing) and is therefore not a primary matter of concern in the mind of the pollster. While it is true that politically sensitive questionnaires and data on Arab publics has been censored in many cases, the general silence from the pollsters themselves on this issue is one key methodological reason that the authoritarian dimension does not play a central role in this thesis.

5   Personal Considerations

Every project has its limitations and I have tried to consciously and carefully consider those that I am bound by, as well as the boundaries that I have imposed on this project. There are a few micro- and macro-level restraints worth noting that I have, in some way or another, come to accept.

At a Micro-Level:

Language was at times a limitation. All of the interviews were conducted in English, my mother tongue, and due to low competency in Arabic, the people I met in Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and (some) in Qatar (while all at least

bilingual), only had the option of expressing themselves in English. The natural questions that emerge are: What is the influence of my own language on the interview process? Am I marginalising others' ways of knowing or languages for knowing? Rapport-building, the flow of conversation, and sociocultural differences in verbal and non-verbal styles will change based on language choices made by the researcher. While I am aware of some of the limitations, an awareness is all I can have in this case.

Related to language is the paucity of texts and studies about public opinion inquiry relating to the Middle East or North Africa. By this, I do not mean polls or survey results, but rather information about the conduct of polls and surveys, the history of trying to record or attain some sense of collective opinion, accounts of the contemporary industry of public opinion research, or theoretical discussions of public opinion specifically relating to the region and relevant to my research position. I have found few formative texts on which to build my project (the language barrier may be a culprit here). Without formative texts or existing scholarship to build on, it feels a bit like reaching in the dark for an anchor, searching for grounding. Acknowledging that this thesis is an attempt at mapping a particular phenomenon, finding ways to conceptualise it is important. I see this as a first sketch, and I am encouraged by the many routes that this project can branch into in the future.

Finally, while I have actively sought to draw on diverse voices in compiling the research, the overwhelming presence of Western and male authors in the bibliography is a cause for concern. It speaks, in part, to the developments and limitations of the disciplines that I draw from, and must, in time, be remedied.

At a Macro-Level:

The macro-level considerations worth mentioning are personal ones. First, my interest in studying public opinion inquiry stems from my experience working over five years in polling and data analysis. I began a career as a research assistant at Ipsos in survey research, bright-eyed and eager to be immersed in the activity of professional research. The complexity of the method and the rigorous research process made it feel meaningful—data could be reproduced, hypotheses could be tested, claims could be supported with data, and conclusions seemed

sound. Public opinion seemed to matter because global operations like Ipsos expended vast amounts of resources extracting data and selling insights to clients. Sometimes, a figure was exaggerated here or there to make a story more consistent or compelling, poor results were omitted, or statistically insignificant numbers sometimes drove decision-making. Only after I moved on from this role did I realised that I had been socialised into a particular way of knowing and way of speaking about data. This thesis has helped me to reverse that process of socialisation, allowing me to critically re-learn or un-learn about data and uproot my own epistemological assumptions. While this is not a limitation per se, it might explain some of the research choices I have made over the course of the project.

Second, coming to terms with my positionality has made me conscious of the limits of my own knowing, especially across cultures. Since I am not "of" the region, what is my claim to knowing or attempting to know it? When the researcher encounters a cultural or geographic framework beyond her own, a series of questions may arise:

"What is my place in asking these questions?"

"What are my own embedded assumptions about truth-seeking?"

"What gives me the power to make knowledge claims?"

I continue to work through these issues of agency, and measure myself by my openness to listen, observe, and to be changed as a researcher, realising that a critical epistemological engagement with public opinion researchers through the method of interviews risks reproducing some of the very same underlying assumptions that I attempt to critique with this thesis. I do not expect to have clear answers to these questions yet, but they are always in the background.

6   Chapter Summaries

This thesis unfolds in three parts. The first part introduces the concepts and theories used to develop an account of the rise of Arab public opinion inquiry. The second part explores the field of global public opinion inquiry, with a focus

on actors (pollsters and public opinion practitioners) and the dominant epistemological issues at the heart of their work. The third part offers a narrative of the development of public opinion inquiry pertaining to the Arab region, following a trajectory of colonial to contemporary forms of knowledge production.

Chapter 1 ("Public Opinion: Disentangling a Contested Concept") is an exercise in sorting through theoretical debates and overlapping assumptions about public opinion, as they are found in the literature. Problematically, I find that the ideal of public opinion is commonly conflated with its empirical reflection, i.e., the set of epistemological practices that produce the idea sense of public opinion. In seeking to bring clarity to the concept of public opinion and resolve this problem, I propose a reconceptualisation of public opinion that separates the ideal-type from the empirical pursuit. This reframing allows me to situate the thesis as fundamentally concerned with the latter. Further, it helps to reveal the extent to which legacies of Western scientific thought are embedded in the concept of public opinion.

In Chapter 2 ("The Development of Arab Public Opinion Inquiry: Elements of a Conceptual Framework"), I tether together theoretical elements related to the idea of "Arab public opinion" and propose a conceptual framework that considers the complex legacies of knowledge at the heart of its construction. This requires contending with ideas about the empirical construction of the Arab world by different epistemic actors who engage in specific practices and modes of inquiry. Very little has been written to date on the field of Arab public opinion inquiry. Rather than simply filling gaps in our knowledge with descriptive information, the proposed conceptual framework provides a fresh historical and sociological account which considers the politics of knowledge production. I also consider the generalisability of this account beyond the case of the Arab region.

While the contestation over public opinion in the literature is well-documented, we have only a faint understanding of how pollsters as practitioners come to define and operationalise public opinion. In Part 2 of the thesis, Chapter 3 ("Searching for Public Opinion: Insights from Pollsters") seeks to remedy this, drawing on interview research with international pollsters. Rather than a uniform view of the concept, I identify three competing narratives among

international pollsters: one that sees public opinion as scientifically objective and absolute, a second that sees public opinion as a malleable social construct, and a third that understands public opinion as a form of emancipatory power. Contestation over public opinion as a concept is therefore found to extend beyond the bounds of scholarly debate, into the practitioner's realm.

Chapter 4 ("On the Global Ascendancy of Polling") follows a trail of practices dedicated to the systematic production of data on populations, culminating in a global public opinion industry. With a focus on actors and practices, I consider the ways in which polls are extensions of other acts of counting and control (i.e., enumerations and census productions). I evaluate what exactly it is about polls and pollsters that has granted polling "sovereign status" in the area of opinion research, and I trace the hegemonic ascendency of polling and survey research through the twentieth century from its origins in the American social science tradition to its global application.

Part 3 (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) is dedicated to analysing the case of Arab public opinion inquiry. Applying the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 2, I trace the rise of the field of inquiry as it unfolds in three successive stages. Chapter 5 ("Stage 1 | Arab Opinion in the Colonial Imaginary") examines early colonial and post-colonial epistemic interventions into the Arab region. These epistemic interventions were definitive political acts using questionably sound methods, designs, and assumptions. I illustrate early attempts to capture and control ideas about Arab opinion with the cases of the King-Crane Commission of 1919, Daniel Lerner's 1958 study of Middle Eastern modernisation in *The Passing of Traditional Society*, and the question of Palestine as it appeared in Western polls from the creation of the state of Israel to the Six-Day War.

Chapter 6 ("Stage 2 | Great Transformations: The Rise of Embedded Institutions and Practices") covers transformative ground and new ways of thinking and doing public opinion research. From the Bellagio Conference on survey research in Arab countries in 1983 to the invocation of Arab public opinion in American policy circles during the Bush years, I outline a period characterised by the rapid institutionalisation of Arab public opinion inquiry.

Finally, drawing on in-depth interviews with pollsters in Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine, Chapter 7 ("Stage 3 | The Local Reclamation of Public Opinion Inquiry") describes the reclamation of public opinion inquiry by indigenous actors, wherein we begin to see the workings of a self-sustaining and self-serving approach to producing public opinion knowledge through the emergence of a networked and inwardly-focused field of pollsters. The findings suggest an "arc of return", where agency and knowledge production—i.e., who claims the right to produce knowledge, and by what means—see a return to the local context.

Chapter 8 ("Conclusion") briefly considers the implications of this thesis, both in terms of its findings and its aim to disrupt conventional approaches to the study of public opinion. I discuss some "missed opportunities" that present avenues for future research, which could serve to build on the state-of-the-art of Arab public opinion inquiry presented in this thesis.

Part One

Concepts and Theories

Chapter 1
Public Opinion: Disentangling a Contested Concept

There are few terms used more frequently or with more assurance than Public Opinion. It is constantly upon our tongues to explain the most ordinary social and political occurrences. […] Were it to be lost from our daily vocabulary it would be quite impossible to make ourselves understood in any discussion or conversation about political matters. And yet, I venture to say, few terms are so incapable of exact definition or, indeed, carry with them so indefinite and misty a significance, even to those who employ it most frequently.

Walter J. Shepherd (1909)

What exactly is meant by the term "public opinion"? Fraught with ambiguity and with no singular, accepted definition, the term has proven notoriously hard to unpack. In the most general sense, there is an understanding that public opinion encompasses the views, values, and attitudes of "the majority", or those that political actors perceive, are made aware of, and heed. Within "public opinion" is an emphasis on the individual's role as central to the workings of political behaviour, and to speak of public opinion is to assume its "importance if not decisive power" in the world (Shapiro 2011). The term has been used interchangeably with the "*common will, public spirit* and *public conscience* to refer to the political aspects of mass opinion"—not simply an aggregate of individual opinions but a social force greater than the sum of its parts, with the effect of wielding power over government and influencing the process of politics (Erikson and Tedin 2016, 1 [emphasis in the original]). The shape of this effect has depended to some extent on changing ideas about public opinion in contemporary intellectual thought. Robert Peel, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, described "that great compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy, and newspaper paragraphs, which is called public opinion" (in Durant 1955, 150). British pollster Henry William Durant famously wrote that public opinion was "awkward to describe, elusive to

define, difficult to measure, and impossible to see" (1955, 152). And political scientist Susan Herbst has called it one of the most elusive and complex concepts in democratic theory (1998). Its conceptual muddiness has generated theoretical refinement and backtracking time and again, and its different articulations through the years surely complicate its seeming simplicity.

Ideologically, public opinion derives from archetypes and assumptions about democracy and civic participation, where everyday citizens are considered "a prime force in political life" (Shapiro 2011). This archetypal sense of public opinion presupposes that people are directly and/or indirectly affected by the consequences of political transactions and that they carry with them the potential to create and participate in forums for public discourse and deliberation through which politically informed collective judgements are expressed. Public opinion in this sense is an abstract construct rooted in the proverbial idea of *vox populi, vox Dei*—"the voice of the people is the voice of God"—or else, the voice of the people dictates the laws of the social world (Crespi 1997). And there have long been conflicting ideas about whose voices belong to "the people", whose are silenced or neglected, what amount of political sway "the people" have, if any, and under which conditions.

The ambiguity of public opinion is compounded by popular definitions. In the very first issue of the journal *Public Opinion Quarterly*, published in 1937, public opinion was defined as a "multi-individual situation" in which people express their support for or opposition to "some definite condition, person, or proposal of widespread importance, in such a proportion of number, intensity, and constancy, as to give rise to the probability of affecting action, directly or indirectly, toward the object concerned" (Allport, 23). A few short years later, Harwood Childs, one of the journal's founding editors, argued that "there is no such thing as the public except in the sense that there may be a particular group of persons about which we are speaking" (1940, 41). To study public opinion therefore meant nothing more than to study "collections of individual opinions, wherever they may be found" (in Oskamp and Schultz 2005, 16), which hardly amounted to a vital political force. Scholars like Francis Graham Wilson have similarly stressed that "there is no organic entity which can be called public opinion. A person is inevitably a member of several or many publics", which

leads to the conclusion that "the voice of the people is neither the voice of God nor the utterance of Belial—it is simply the cry of man" (in Morley 1963, 211). Today, Google as a tool for the dissemination of information to mass publics defines public opinion as "views prevalent among the general public" where "the public" means "ordinary people in general; the community" having particular interests or connections.[2] Public opinion is categorised as a "mass noun", i.e., a noun denoting something which cannot be counted, though counting is an almost indispensable part of contemporary public opinion inquiry.

As we will see, there is no consensus on the meaning or explanatory role of public opinion, and a tension exists between its normative claims, namely what its political role should be, and how it actually manifests in the real world (in both democratic and non-democratic contexts). Further, public opinion in the archetypal sense undergoes a transformation once it becomes an empirical pursuit. Locating the "views, values, and attitudes of the majority" might at first seem an uncomplicated methodological task (simply ask people what they think about an issue and take note). But this exercise becomes far more complex once we begin to question what constitutes a majority, whose views to count and how, what happens to the views of non-majorities, what might the positionality be of those who do the asking, and why and how some issues become prioritised over others. Normative considerations and epistemological trends are both very much at the heart of why certain conceptualisations of public opinion have prevailed over others. The contestation over public opinion is therefore related to changing contextual fields (historical, scientific, cultural, sociopolitical, and geographical) that the concept has inhabited through time and space. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the concept itself has been claimed by competing ideas through different empirical means.

This chapter is dedicated to first unravelling the thoroughly contested concept of public opinion, and second to reframing it in order to bring clarity to the ways in which we speak about it. This is important because public opinion is sometimes treated as a tired concept in political theory; as something done and dusted with

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[2] Google search, March 2019.

little room for radical reconceptualisation. Despite the global proliferation of new forms of media in the past decade, treatment of public opinion in the literature has evolved only minimally. With the exception of the Foreign Policy literature (see, for instance, Goldsmith and Horiuchi 2012; Tomz and Weeks 2013; Everts and Isernia 2015; and Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017), the concept has not invited much in the way of new theory-building. And yet public opinion today provides us with a unique problem: it is at once an abstract idea and an empirical object. I contend that one casualty of taking public opinion as given is that we lose sight of the ways in which it manifests through "specific sites, temporalities and modes of deployment as forms of power" (Guillaume and Bilgin 2017, 3). Specifically, there is a missing understanding of the inherently political character of the rise of global public opinion inquiry.

The themes and concepts drawn from this analysis are broad-spectrum and cover a gamut of literature, not only within International Relations (IR) and Political Science, but also in Sociology, History, Political Philosophy and Philosophy of Science, Science and Technology Studies (STS), and Media Studies. Disentangling the many overlapping ideas, theories, and assumptions circulating through my research agenda provides clarification and allows for a discussion of the more central conceptual and thematic components and the relevant scholarly debates.

A note on terminology: in this thesis, I understand "public opinion inquiry" to represent the manifold activities concerning the creation, commissioning, funding, design, collection, production, analysis, and dissemination of information, data, and knowledge about public opinion. The consolidation of these activities under the banner of "polling" points to an epistemic industry at work. I am concerned with public opinion inquiry inasmuch as it relates to the political. I therefore do not include market research in my purview, which shares considerable overlap in terms of actors and methods. In this thesis, I use the term "industry" in a loose sense to say that public opinion inquiry can be undertaken as an economic activity where data and storytelling (ideational factors) and the instruments and methodologies used to procure data (material factors) are commercially acquired, sold, and shared by commercial actors, and subject to operational and quality standards. Usually, the instruments and methodologies mobilised in the pursuit of public opinion are large-N aggregative polls, surveys,

or interview-based studies conducted through face-to-face, online, telephone, or mail-out methods. A poll is simply a record of public opinion. I designate public opinion actors (sometimes referred to as polling actors in this thesis) as professional pollsters, practitioners and public opinion experts, private research firms, state-affiliated research bodies, scholars, academic entities and research groups, media spokespeople, think tanks, and business intermediaries (i.e., vendors), all of whom are, to some extent invested and/or implicated in the political potential of public opinion. "Actors" in this thesis can therefore refer to individuals or entities. While I do draw a distinction between commercial actors in the field of polling and non-commercial actors, both types are included in my analysis. Throughout the thesis, I understand "public opinion research" to be an investigative process that invokes a clear set of epistemological assumptions and methodological practices, while "public opinion inquiry" can be thought of as the institutionalised curiosity about public opinion more broadly. Public opinion in this sense refers to the views and attitudes of segments of the population, pertaining to specific issues and propositions. Finally, while in the past there was a clearer distinction between polls and surveys, the two are generally used interchangeably today. The original distinction was that polls referred to shorter political or public policy-related studies, while surveys were broader in scope and concerned with explanation. In any case, I use the two synonymously in this thesis, following on Moon (1999, 24): "opinion polls are surveys just like any other".

In what follows, I first tackle the challenge of disentangling the concept of public opinion by exploring its conceptual roots (Section 1.1) and the various schools of thought that have helped to shape the concept (Sections 1.2 to 1.4). In Section 2, I present a new way of thinking about public opinion that, I believe, frees it from a conceptual rut (at least in the field of IR). This requires disaggregating public opinion as an ideal from public opinion as an epistemic object and practice. Parsing this important distinction helps us to answer the research questions at the heart of this thesis, which fundamentally focus on the latter.

1 Public Opinion: Competing Definitions, Classifications, and Debates

Let's return to the question, What do the people think? This represents the fundamental guiding question that has accompanied any and every attempt to understand the social pulse and identify patterns in the collective streams of consciousness of political societies on practically any matter. With respect to the collective opinions of members of a state regarding issues of the state or international affairs, a natural extension of the question "what do the people think?"—namely, "*how* do the people think?"—has given rise to competing claims about the nature of public opinion and the extent to which it shapes and is shaped by the political world. This question of how peoples' individual assessments of matters of the state and international affairs are formed has taken theorists down different avenues. Whether individuals in society are considered to be politically informed and rational or unpredictable and emotionally-driven has led to diverging approaches to defining the concept.

The general understanding is that public opinion relates to how individuals in a society form political opinions or perceptions (thus a type of behaviour), and how they self-identify and merge into collectives, whether rationally or otherwise. Through collectives, individuals dialogically engage with their political world and seek representation *en masse*. Majorities, minorities, and hierarchies of opinion form, either organically or through the influence of external and indirect factors (i.e., elite discourses, media, or critical events), resulting in perpetually shifting assemblages of collective perceptions, attitudes, and opinions (Oskamp and Schultz 2005). But even this general understanding leads to analytical complexities.

Considering the amount of scholarly, political, and popular attention directed toward the subject of public opinion and its role in the shaping of everyday political dynamics, it may surprise that there is no consensus in the literature as to how to define and operationalise it. Its conceptual complexity is well documented, and while this has not inhibited theorising, it has generated competing discourses. The concept of public opinion has undergone several

stages of transformation in contemporary scholarship from the eighteenth century through till today and is best treated as an interdisciplinary concept. The historical purview of public opinion as an empirical object and a practice—as something that we attempt to locate, observe, and measure—is a more recent development. Importantly, the empirical contours of public opinion research have been greatly shaped by the American social science tradition, steeped in liberal and rational ideas that have privileged the individual, the exact sciences, and statistics[3] (Ross 1991; Delli Carpini 2011). But the cultural and epistemological backdrop against which the study of public opinion has emerged is generally taken for granted in mainstream literature and in popular discourse. This is especially evident in practices of public opinion inquiry in non-Western and non-democratic contexts, where we commonly see a universalist application of assumptions and methodologies of the American social science tradition, transplanted elsewhere without a deeper interrogation of whether this can or should be done, or of the reasons and implications for doing so.

In the following sections (1.1 through 1.4), I explore the historical roots of the concept, paying particular attention to the qualities of public opinion which have made it so difficult to define, as well as the main schools of thought in the public opinion literature. Amid the conceptual confusion, I myself argue that "public opinion" cannot be divorced from the theoretical and epistemological traditions from which it has emerged. The inherent Western-centricism of these traditions raises a methodological challenge. Namely, the architecture of global public opinion inquiry is and has been dominated by actors who have been socialised into certain patterns of thinking (*theoria*) and doing (*praxis*) that shape how people (publics) are empirically identified, categorised, treated, and expected to behave. This is of critical importance, if only because sometimes the data these actors produce is all that we have (empirically-speaking) and fills the universe of what we come to know about people. Understanding the limits of empirical research is not enough; we must go beyond and consider the ways in which the *thinking* and *doing* are inherently political and situated.

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[3] Etymologically derived from the Italian *statista* (one who deals with the affairs of the state) and the German *Statistik* (science or knowledge of the state).

1.1   Conceptual Roots

The conceptual development of "public opinion" until the late nineteenth century, as the literature will have it, is a European story, while in the twentieth century, it is an American one. There are limits to our understanding of non-Western histories of public opinion, which present challenges when attempting to think beyond the dominant definitions and practices. We can negotiate these limitations in a pragmatic way. Edward Said warns against imposing boundaries demarcating "West" or "East" or "Third World" on conceptual development: "To prefer a local, detailed analysis of how one theory travels from one situation to another is also to betray some fundamental uncertainty about delimiting the field to which any one theory or idea might belong" (in Bayoumi and Rubin 2012, 197). Yong-Soo Eun advocates for broadening our theoretical horizons beyond the binaries of West and non-West in order to encourage global theoretical and epistemological dialogues (2018). Amitav Acharya argues that it is not enough to say that IR suffers from Western-centricism or that bringing in concepts and theories from non-Western contexts is the solution; pluralising the discipline should rather "involve multiple but overlapping conversations" (2015). And while it is a tricky exercise not to reify the binaries of West/non-West in the process of critiquing the conceptual development of public opinion and the field of research that has followed from it, what should be stressed are how hierarchies and hegemonies of knowledge come about as a result of the historical development of the discipline of IR and its core concepts.

As the socio-political term that we recognize and use in popular discourse today, "public opinion" is a relatively recent construct. There is a rough consensus that the contemporary rendition of the term gained currency in late seventeenth-century Europe, around the time of the Enlightenment. At the time public opinion meant something like an "opinion disclosed to others" of a general concern or concerning the *res publica*, i.e., public affairs (Speier 1950, 376). Though "public opinion" is recent, its constituent elements have far earlier roots (Price 2008). The "public" (as opposed to "private") signifier is found in the ancient Roman sense of *publicus* (pertaining to the people; usually adult males) or *populus* (people; "things that concern the people as a body are public, and such concerns require public exhibition") and in the ancient Greek political institution of the

polis, or city-state, where public life was lived out (Peters 1995, 7). From early on then, an idea persisted that whatever was public was open and visible to the eyes of all (including the state), as opposed to private lives, thoughts, opinions, and behaviours.

Part of the difficulty in generalizing public opinion today is surely rooted in the problem of pinning down the elusive public. Rather than an identifiable homogeneous body or organised crowd, the "public" is and has long been thought of as a dynamic pastiche of societal members with variable interests, positions, voices, and worldviews, which at times overlap and at times diverge, not always in tandem with the unfolding political environment.[4] At the turn of the twentieth century, Walter J. Shepherd contended that it was modernity that made publics, as only with the advent of printing, the telegraph, and processes of industrialisation did a sense of solidarity and unity propel the creation of what he called "intellectual publics", i.e., those who could readily communicate, read, and access printed materials and were bound by a common knowledge of social and political issues (1909, 36). Public opinion here is an imaginary; it is the idea of a site where informed members of societies convene and enact political dialogues.

Meanwhile, readings of "opinion" are found in the distinction between Plato's *doxa* (opinion) and *episteme* (knowledge), where the former equated with unintellectual popular belief (belonging to the many) and the latter with unchanging, eternal knowledge (belonging to the few) (Peters 1995, 4). *Doxa*, in the sense of "consensus or views held in common" was considered to be a non-scientific cognitive classification, as something in "the realm of prejudice, probability, and authority, as opposed to 'science'" (Hacking in Peters 1995, 5). Whether the term "opinion" is truly the right fit for public opinion has been questioned, with alternative terms like "attitudes", "perceptions", "sentiments", "beliefs", and "impressions" sometimes used as substitutes. The distinctions here may seem trifling, but conflating these different terms has empirical implications. Attitudes relate to individual predispositions and orientations; perceptions to

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[4] An early account of the sociological position of multiple publics is found in Ruskin (1880): "There is a separate public for every picture, and for every book" (in Wilson 1962).

personal assessments; sentiments to feelings and judgements; beliefs to strong convictions; and impressions to imprinted feelings. Opinions, rather, are closer to judgements lacking certainty, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge; stronger than impressions but weaker than beliefs. Statistical measurements of public opinion have never really paid attention to these nuances, capturing more variations in individual positions, opinion formation, and intervening cognitive biases than the study of public opinion can account for. While there are many mental acts closely related to opinion (consider, for instance, the imagination), what has been of primary interest is a common bond of association among individuals formed once there is knowledge that their opinions are mutual (Shepherd 1909, 40).

Peters (1995) situates the emergence of "public opinion" as a political turn of phrase in Enlightenment thinking, a time when the public (which implicitly meant a privileged, largely male, land-owning stratum of society) was developing into reasoning body, capable of such things as demanding justice in the face of feudal order and social upheaval. Several historical moments are buried in the term's past: the spread of literacy in Europe and the circulation of literature and news in print form, the expansion of European merchant and affluent classes, the Protestant Reformation (see for instance Bagchi 2016), and the rise of social institutions like *salons* and coffee houses where people gravitated to join in everyday debates and deliberation (Price 2008, 12). In this way, public opinion can be seen as a social and technological invention, "not an eternal given of human life. It emerged at a specific historical moment within a delicate balance of social and institutional conditions" (Peters 1995, 11). In this early stage, it was an ideological construct with fluid interpretation rather than "a discrete sociological referent" (Baker in Peters 1995, 13), and it is important to keep this in mind as we consider the incorporation of later (technological) innovations to the field of public opinion inquiry.

While the link between seventeenth and eighteenth-century European intellectual thought may seem very distant from the contemporary case of Arab public opinion, around which this thesis is assembled, we should consider the historic roots of the concept for at least two reasons. First, the persuasiveness of public opinion as a vital social force continues today. As Peters states, public opinion as

"a figure of speech cannot be easily separated from the real social and historical convulsions shaking Europe in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries: the rhetorical appeals were crucial in the century-long struggle to open the state to more and more popular control, from the French Revolution onwards" (1995, 13). Public opinion in the Arab region and other non-democratic contexts is often studied for signs of a similar struggle between people and their authorities. A second reason is that although scientific concepts are presented as timeless and universal, independent of historical and political developments, there are choices involved in the very act of defining scientific terms which are liable to contain the character of history, dispositions, and other contextual factors. There is little doubt that this applies to the globalised and highly scientised concept of public opinion.

An entire sub-field of literature exists on the influence of Enlightenment-era thinking and liberal ideology on public opinion theory (see La Vopa 1991); this body of work forms a major paradigm or tradition of thought. Public opinion in democratic theory leads down many different avenues: toward rights and representation, political behaviour, forms of liberal governance (democracy, direct democracy, or participatory democracy), and questions of support for authoritarian regimes. Perhaps there is some truth to Shepherd's contention that "the spread of democratic ideas is partially due to the increase in the number and complexity of public opinions" (1950, 46). In any case, this theoretical tradition reveals the extent to which the meaning and pursuit of public opinion and the development of liberal democracies are inextricably intertwined.

The turn to science in the early twentieth century marks a paradigmatic shift in the conceptual development of public opinion. Multiple factors were at work here, such as empirical developments in other fields of research. The science of political arithmetic built on the work of William Petty (1623-1687) brought statistics and demography into the field of economics, which helped to build a greater understanding of the political power of numbers. Developments in the field of anthropology (i.e., the outsider's observation of groups within societies) had an influence as well. But it was the institutionalisation of statistics that perhaps had the strongest effect. Social statistics as a field emerged in the late nineteenth century, "based on objective observation, measurement, and

enumerating the activities and characteristics of individuals in order to find out the basic principles in the conduct of mass phenomena" (Splichal 1999, 229). Once they had gained currency, the rules and ideas of social statistics greatly transformed the empirical contours of public opinion as an object of inquiry, inviting critical reflections that sought to counter the unrestrained influence of positivist thinking on public opinion.

The great amount of literature on public opinion can be synthesised and divided among three categories: traditional perspectives, natural science perspectives, and critical theoretical perspectives. I examine each in turn.

1.2 Traditional Perspectives: Liberalism, Irrationalism, Rationalism

Traditional perspectives have sought to understand the basis of public opinion as a source of political legitimacy and form of civic engagement and deliberation. These perspectives are part of a long liberal democratic tradition, embedded in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Voltaire, Denis Diderot, and other Enlightenment thinkers, as well as John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, and more recently in the literature on democratic peace and the work of Jürgen Habermas on the public sphere (Habermas 1962; Baum and Potter 2008; Moy and Bosch 2013). Situating the individual at the centre of the problem of politics, liberal democratic theory considers the legal limits and moral duties of governments "concerning the extent of human affairs over which its authority could be legitimately exercised" (Oldfield 2000, 6). The security and protection of individual rights in a democratic system invokes a unique contractual relationship between rulers and ruled that must be upheld at all costs, and the dialogue between the two creates a space in which public opinion becomes a crucial mode of communication. Public opinion, in the sense of a general will or sentiment that binds people together, represents the singular voice that people use to partake in this dialogue; a voice that helps preserve individual interests and rights, negotiate with political authorities, and keep in check the powers wielded by government. Conversely, in the authoritarian context, public opinion is seen in direct tension with political authority, either side able to censure or be censured by the other.

From the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea of the *volonté générale* had a notable influence on the modern construction of public opinion (Shepherd 1909, 42). Rousseau believed that all citizens should be subjected to laws declared only by the general will, "divined through reasoned debate, and framed as a powerful new tribunal for checking and thus controlling, as right would have it, the actions of the state" (Price 2008, 12). Rousseau was among the first to use the term in the liberal sense, where public opinion transcended class barriers—as something that did not belong only to elites but signified the customs and manners of all members of society. By 1780, European writers were using the term to refer to "the preponderant force" of mass opinion—neither public fickleness nor mob loyalty, but rather "the authoritative judgement of a collective conscience, the ruling of a tribunal to which even the state was subject" (La Vopa 1991, 46). There is a marked idealism present in this early conceptualisation of public opinion. It is an abstract hypothetical embedded in a politics of the people. It is not an objective fact, a statistical average, or something that can even be seen. Rather, it is a symbolic and collectively agreed upon "will of everyone" without recourse to a mediator (Hamzaj 2016).

John Stuart Mill, writing a century after Rousseau, saw in democracy an active space for the symbolic representation of the people. Through Mill and others like Jeremy Bentham, utilitarian ideas made their way into public opinion theory. In this view, individuals attempt to maximise their own interests, which naturally conflict with one another, resulting in a rule by majority interest. Thus, public opinion "was wedded to the liberal idea of an unregulated 'marketplace of ideas', with the majority view, ascertained through a free popular vote, as its operational definition" (Price 2008, 12). Further, majorities, minorities, hierarchies, in-groups, and out-groups become ways in which public opinion was analytically divvied up.

Attempts to elaborate on the contours and characteristics of public opinion produced different ideas about whether public opinion was something that could be overstated. Much of the early twentieth-century literature appears to be conflicted as to whether the public was stable and rational or incoherent and easily swayed—or perhaps both. The role of the public in twentieth-century democratic theorising thus saw a notable shift: questions about the

representational power of citizens grew increasingly sceptical, leading to ideas about the public as poorly informed and lacking a capacity for rational judgement, being overly emotional and volatile, or simply as pawns easily manipulated by modern political demagoguery (Price 2008, 13). World War and the collapse of international diplomacy no doubt played a part, and key public opinion thinkers like Walter Lippman and Joseph Schumpeter helped spur the idea that public opinion cannot and should not influence the foreign policies of states. With little empirical proof to say otherwise, the public existed "only as a fiction in the robust sense—something fashioned and formed" (Peters 1995, 17). In essence, public opinion began to lose the lustre that it once held.

Lippmann, in his influential texts *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925), described publics as being unable to act rationally or understand the needs of the state. He encouraged a scepticism of the role of public opinion in democratic systems because he saw no adequate, real public ready to engage in that so-called sacred dialogue with government. The "phantom public", as he saw it, was a mere illusion, naive and disassociated from the public affairs of democratic states. And so, public opinion itself was an illusion; a myth. Lippman argued that individuals assume no greater political role than to elect their leaders; they are politically ignorant, which leaves the task of domestic and foreign policymaking to governing experts. Distrust in the basis for and stability of public opinion has been echoed in many studies since (see, for instance, Lippmann and Merz 1920; Almond 1950; Converse 1964; Lipset 1966; Verba et al. 1967; Zaller 1992; and Caplan 2007). As a theoretical principle, this distrust culminated in the Almond-Lippmann consensus of the 1950s and 1960s, which held that public opinion is too erratic and incoherent to be able to meaningfully contribute to foreign policymaking and should not be overstated due to the ignorance and "nonattitudes" of ordinary citizens.

Aligning with realist thought in IR, Hans Morgenthau saw public opinion as a hindrance to coherent diplomacy, "thus to permit the public a strong voice in policy would be to place the democracies, if not the stability of the international system itself, at a distinct disadvantage" (Holsti 2006, 56). Even decades following the opinion polling revolution of the mid-twentieth century, John Zaller remarked that "no one quite knows what to make of the multiple vagaries

of mass opinion" (1992, 29). A good amount of the scholarly literature has therefore been devoted to a view of public opinion as fickle, volatile, and irrational, susceptible to manipulation and rumour, beholden to personal bias, and rarely authentic. With these characteristics, the normative potential of public opinion is diminished. In definitional terms, public opinion from this angle has to do "with the behaviour of other human beings, in so far as that behaviour crosses ours, is dependent upon us, or is interesting to us", and further, when groups of people act upon "the pictures inside the heads of these human beings", this becomes the so-called public opinion (Lippmann 1922, 29).

On the opposing side, a significant body of literature has treated public opinion as something rational and stable, especially when studied over sustained periods of time. This has helped to create narratives about political beliefs and belief systems, especially around electoral systems. For a time, these two opposing literatures on public opinion (as rational and meaningful and as irrational and inconsequential) developed in conversation with each other. Research on American foreign policy from the Vietnam War-era onwards sought to challenge the Almond-Lippmann consensus. A study by William Caspary (1970), for instance, found American public opinion to be characterised "by a strong and stable permissive mood" (Holsti 1992, 446). Further studies by Mueller (1973), Jentleson (1992), and Page and Shapiro (1992) that relied in large part on modern polls discovered publics to be rationally-minded, displaying behaviour that could, to some extent, be predicted. Page and Shapiro's pathbreaking work in *The Rational Public* used statistical aggregation of over six thousand different survey questions to reveal patterns of stability in collective opinion over a fifty-year period. The findings suggested that publics, though ill-informed about the political world beyond the domestic, still react to political markers in a rational manner. This school of thought understands that public opinion adheres to a "common-sense principle" and can act as an independent political force. Relatedly, but beyond the scope of my task here, the principle of common sense in political behaviour laid the foundations for the dense area of literature relating to rational choice theory and voting behaviour. Furthermore, this rationalist school of thought presupposes that public opinion "takes on an added rather than diminished significance" in policymaking and the conduct of politics (Holsti 2006, 83).

1.3   Modelling the Natural Sciences

Rationalist thought imbued the study of public opinion with a sense of great political potential: if public opinion was truly a rational, reason-based process or phenomenon, it might be possible to generalise about opinion formation and about how groups and collectives exert power on political processes. This question of how people collectively form opinions created new frontiers in the behavioural sciences. As a reaction against traditional approaches ,which were largely "institutional in focus and eclectic in approach" (Harris 1967, 30), behaviouralism sought to explain the psychology and mental actions of individuals and groups operating in the political world, providing a cognitive basis "for the representation of politics dominated by highly bureaucratised political party organisations and interest groups" (Wolin 1960, 574). The shift to behavioural-thinking was marked by an emphasis on empirical data drawn from scientific methods, on the attainment of facts, and on evidence. It allowed scholars to model the social sciences on the natural sciences, where observations are derived from experiments and analysed using mathematical methods including statistics (see, for instance Easton 1962). It advocated for the "utilisation and development of more precise techniques for observing, classifying, and measuring data" and defined "the construction of systematic empirical theory as the goal of political science" (Harris 1967, 30). It also allowed public opinion theory to enter the field of psychology. Philip Converse (1964), for instance, suggested that collective attitudes are shaped by *belief systems*: overarching configurations of ideologies and values that provide structure within political societies (Greene 2004, 13). From a social-psychological vantage point, then, public opinion came to refer to "people's attitudes on an issue when they are members of the same social group" (Habermas 1962, 241).

While different discursive patterns were thought to manifest as public opinion—like conversations between elites and their constituents, newspaper editorials, protests, elections, and the views of community leaders—they were not readily observable until methodological advancements in sampling, questionnaire design, cognitive science, and a general "science of polling" were underway (Delli Carpini 2011). The popularisation of polls and surveys, which could produce empirical data points, was surely aided by the rise of behaviouralist

thinking. Polls and surveys (in addition to personal interviews and questionnaires) promised access to the aggregate the thoughts and behaviours of individuals through quantification. They transformed public opinion into mass opinion—a natural and observable phenomenon. They also assumed, as a starting point, that people have something meaningful to say, specifically that "people's opinions form the bases for their actions" (Margolis 1984, 64). Actions usually meant voting in elections, but more complex political behaviour involving different interest groups could also be exposed to this method (for instance, opinions toward foreign policy). The effect of modelling public opinion (as a concept or variable) on the natural sciences was that it lost its organic, abstracted characteristics and came to be something that was invariably out there, awaiting scientific discovery.

The inclusion of scientific techniques like random sampling made their way into the study of public opinion after 1915 (Splichal 1999, 230). Analysis based on small samples allowed a society to "know itself in a topical and immediate way" and measure its achievements and progress (Berelson in Basáñez and Parás 2012). During the first part of the twentieth century, "statistics was changing from a bare means for more accurate description of mass phenomena into an analytical tool for generalisation and explanation of social phenomena" (Splichal 1999, 230). Experimentation in cognitive behavioural methods, interview procedures, and mathematical formulas calculating and predicting human behaviour were in vogue by the 1930s and 1940s, as evidenced by the rapid proliferation of American and European scientific journals and associations, research hubs in universities, national statistics bureaus, granting agencies, and professional research companies dedicated to the cause (Splichal 1999). This period of institutionalisation and empirical overdrive was taking place even in the face of intense scepticism that regarded public opinion as nothing more than a manufactured fiction. Still, from the 1930s onwards, a time when behavioural approaches to American political science were becoming popular, polling and survey research were increasingly seen as innovative tools that stripped public opinion of its ambiguity and conceptual fuzziness. Delli Carpini (2011) notes that this fascination with measurement tools created a pressure to monitor people, and some saw public opinion becoming closer in kind to surveillance as a result.

Alternatives to scientifically-administered polls and surveys did develop in tandem. These included the social survey (as an example, see Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 1893), psychological attitude studies, and "focused interviews" or focus group studies, where deliberately selected participants engage in a planned discussions meant to elicit perceptions about an issue. These alternatives were nevertheless marginalised in favour of the mass-observation approach, and "by 1960 public opinion and survey research were, for all intents and purposes, synonymous" (Delli Carpini 2011). Thus, within a few decades, the science of polling had more or less cemented a hegemonic status, and the second half of the twentieth century saw innovations in theory, methodology, and the application of the science of polling as a surrogate for "public opinion". The ideological and empirical during this time became so closely intertwined that the latter began to stand in for the former.

Finally, scholars have examined the extent to which the social sciences are capable of creating phenomena, as is the case in the natural sciences. Sociological perspectives have argued that public opinion research, as a social science, has at times produced a version of the world that has entered "into the true" (Osborne and Rose 1999). More specifically, the empirical pursuit of public opinion has led to the creation of people and societies with particular opinions, expressed in particular ways, that would be missing or different in the absence of empirical investigation. In this way, public opinion research appears to blur the line between the hard and soft sciences.

1.4 Constructivist and Critical Perspectives

Political scientist Francis Graham Wilson criticized the behaviouralist turn for encouraging uncritical statistical analyses that ignored historical, philosophical and institutional inquiry, arguing that "attitudes and opinions are quite obviously qualitative, intangible, evaluative, or normative; and in the ordinary sense they cannot be counted, weighed, or scaled" (1962, 165). The contestation over whether public opinion was something qualitative or quantitative promoted a diversification of theories. On the one hand, public opinion was something that could be located after aggregating measured sentiments "at a given time, in a given area, on a particular issue of public policy" (Wilson 1962, 271). On the other

hand, public opinion was a form of philosophical inquiry concerned with how the individual positioned herself in relation to her calculation of the collective judgment.

Wilson was part of a broader backlash against behavioural approaches to public opinion, which has taken place on multiple intellectual fronts. Of these, constructivist thinking has paved the way for a re-philosophising of the concept in the post-behavioural era. The constructivist sees public opinion as a social construct; the term itself is a rhetorical device. In this spirit, Klaus Krippendorff writes that "surely, public opinion is not a fact of nature that could be found somewhere unattended, nor is it a tangible artifact that could be manufactured and photographed" (2005, 130). It does not exist independent of human action, but can be experienced through the everyday use of language and common associations (Krippendorff 2005, 130).

Whereas many definitions of public opinion have suffered from being universalist or "thin" and fail to problematise its social, cultural, and historical development, a "thick" descriptive approach (see Geertz 1973) instead allows us to understand public opinion as a context-dependent phenomenon. To some extent, this is not novel. In the nineteenth century, German writer Christoph Martin Wieland proclaimed that public opinion, if it exists at all, "may be a rhetorical construct, used to retrospectively motivate and legitimate a particular historical transformation at the same time as it is used prospectively to justify specific behaviours and courses of action" (in Wetters 2008, 28). It is a force "by which historical events are rationalised" and is thus part of history itself (Wetters 2008, 28). Another helpful direction comes from Krippendorff in the field of communications:

> [Public opinion] has a reality that is constituted in what people do. It does not exist independent of human actions [...]. It is the common use of language and its associated perception that makes public opinion an undisputed fact. Saying that the public *is concerned* about something, *favours* something, *is against* something, *decides* something, *likes to hear* about something, *supports* something, *has attitudes* about something, *expresses* its beliefs, and *acts* on them personifies the public. Personification is the most pervasive metaphorical root of the social construction of public

opinion. Personification makes actors out of objects, here out of an abstraction (2005, 130 [emphasis in the original]).

Krippendorff and Wieland both invoke the idea that public opinion is performative as well as historically anchored. This notion of the performativity of public opinion can be extended to the empirical realm, especially when we consider the sensationalisation of opinion in the media, who participate in constructing public opinion by reporting and publicising it.

Another helpful perspective considers the hegemonic rise of polling and its implications for our understanding of "public opinion". Taeku Lee (2002) argues that the explicit emphasis on producing data is the reason why data is now routinely conflated with public opinion itself—indeed, that it helps to construct the idea of public opinion. Academic journals such as *Public Opinion Quarterly* have grown to favour quantitative research over other methods.[5] Innovations and improvements in scientific sampling theory, polling technologies, psychological tools, and the accuracy of polls in determining elections have indeed led some to see surveys and polls as the desiderata of public opinion knowledge (Korzi 2000). The observation of the phenomenon changes the phenomenon itself. As Lee notes, "with the growing dominance of opinion polls, survey researchers increasingly command authority over the substantive parameters of public opinion as well—over what, when and how mass opinion is measured, analyzed and interpreted" (2002, 296).

Other critical perspectives exist. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu memorably declared that "public opinion does not exist" in a 1979 critique of opinion polls. Because data runs through the filter of an interpreter (i.e., journalists and social scientists), results are liable to be misinterpreted. This critique argued that polls wrongly assumed that each individual was capable of producing an opinion, that all opinions were of equivalent value, and that there is a real consensus around the issues probed in polls and surveys. "Following Bourdieu, post-structuralist critics have seen polls as the mythic constructions of a modernist age, the products of a

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[5] As an example, the share of articles in *Public Opinion Quarterly* on the topic of race that relied on survey and polling data grew from 14.3% in the early 1940s to 91.3% in the early 1990s (Lee 2002).

series of epistemological and methodological blunders whose factual appearance signifies a smug rationality" (Lewis 1999, 200). In this sense, polling is responsible for constructing (the idea of) public opinion rather than measuring or locating it (Lewis 2001, 10). Similarly, according to Ginsberg, polls have the effect of domesticating public opinion, in other words restructuring and abridging it in such a way that its intensity is diminished (in Herbst 1992).

Critical theoretical approaches are also found in the works of Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann on the silencing of public opinion (1974) and of Jürgen Habermas on the evolution of public opinion within the confines of the public sphere (1962). Learnings from cognitive science suggest that patterns of attitudinal stability found in polls and surveys might be a product of the method itself (see, for instance, Hall et al. 2013). And Limor Peer has argued that the practice of opinion polling is "a disciplinary mechanism which creates a 'public that has opinions', and that the consequences of this process include the exercise of power, surveillance and control" (1992, 230). Measurement error and non-opinions, i.e., "Don't know" and "Refused" responses in questionnaires, remain greatly undertheorised and yet involve the systematic negation and writing off of collected non-opinions. While these critiques are extremely helpful, they are few and far between, not wholly unified, and their application to the non-Western, non-democratic context is limited. For this reason, there remains much uncharted terrain in this critical vein.

2   Reframing Public Opinion

Public opinion in its theoretical form has been operationalised and formulated as an empirically observable phenomenon, and there is an abundance of literature that seeks to "test" it. As we know by now, it is through some of this empirical work that public opinion has come to be known as rational (Nincic 1992; Page and Shapiro 1992; Caspary 1970; Mueller 1973; Jentleson 1992), as irrational (Lippmann 1922 and 1925; Campbell et al. 1960), as a hindrance to diplomacy (Morgenthau in Holsti 1992), and as inextricably linked to democracy (Lasswell 1941; Crespi 1989; Shapiro 2011). It has been deeply distrusted as a politically viable force (Lippmann and Merz 1920; Almond 1950; Converse 1964; Lipset 1966; Verba et al. 1967; Zaller 1992; and Caplan 2007). And it has opened up new

frontiers in the behavioural sciences (Harris 1967; Wolin 1960). The scientific approach for understanding public opinion has advocated for the "utilisation and development of more precise techniques for observing, classifying, and measuring data" aimed at "the construction of systematic empirical theory" (Harris 1967, 30). And importantly, this approach has come to eclipse most others (see Brulle et al. 2012). In the wider literature, constructivist and critical perspectives have problematised some of the epistemological and cultural assumptions associated with the practice of public opinion inquiry (Bourdieu 1979; Beniger 1992; Noelle-Neumann 1993; Herbst 1992, 1993, and 2001; Verba 1996; Osborne and Rose 1999; Krippendorff 2005; and Lee 2002). These perspectives, though numbered, are helpful and necessary interventions into the dominant scientific discourses on public opinion. However, what is missing is a critical historical analysis of the field of public opinion inquiry.

Looking at the current state of the literature, the main authoritative claims that prevail today are (1) that public opinion exists and operates in some capacity in the political world, (2) that it can be measured, recorded, and used predictively, and (3) that particular tools (i.e., the poll; the survey) and practices (i.e., polling; statistics; social classifications) are among the best methods for doing so. Entire global industries have swelled since the science of polling was first popularised in the 1930s (Howell 2015; Lepore 2015; Wuthnow 2015). Today, opinion polling and electoral analysis are mutually co-dependent, and media landscapes have co-opted the very same methods, practices, and assumptions in their own attempts to appeal to their designated publics.

Operational definitions of public opinion are useful and necessary when the goal is just that—to operationalise and make use of it. But as the scientific approach that sees public opinion as something measurable has eclipsed other approaches, we must contest this further because it is rooted in epistemological trends in the social sciences, which are subject to change and which privilege certain types of knowledge. Take for instance Osborne and Rose's sociological argument that "the term 'public opinion' conjures up, as its necessary technical aspect, the public opinion poll" (1999, 371). Public opinion as an idea is often conflated with its technical mirror image, i.e., "what the polls poll" (Moodie 1975, 314). What I see as fundamentally problematic in the development of public opinion as a

concept is this conflation between its ideal and observational forms. People tend to speak of the two as one. Thus, while the literature showcases many different definitions and uses for public opinion, there remains a common treatment of public opinion as a monolithic concept, where the underlying epistemological and philosophical assumptions are wholly taken for granted and where there is no differentiation between ideas and technology (for instance, see Furia and Lucas 2006; Lynch 2009; Telhami 2013; and Pollock 2014).

For my purposes, a critical re-examination of public opinion entails problematising the value ascribed to public opinion data, which, instead of objective fact, is the result of dominant practices and epistemological assumptions in contemporary social science that have led to a disproportionate amount of attention, resources, and politicising around public opinion research. And importantly, these practices and assumptions are carried out by (groups of) actors (i.e., pollsters, experts, social scientists, and other researchers) whose role is generally left out of the literature. I expand on this in Section 2.1.

2.1   A Missing Link in IR Scholarship

Within IR scholarship, what does public opinion theory look like? Baum and Potter (2008) provide a visualisation of this (see Figure 1) in the form of a simplified causal map of actors and interactions present in the mainstream literature.

1) Paletz 2002, Graber 2002, Reese 2001, Baum 2003
2) Hamilton 2003, Zaller unpublished manuscript
3) Cohen 1963, Sigal 1973, Bennett 1990, Brody 1991
4) Powlick 1995, Denham 1997, Merril 1995, Malek 1996
5) Powlick 1991, Eisinger 2003, Meuller 1995
6) Zaller 1992, Lewis 2001, Brody 2001, Jentleson 1992
7) Evans, Jacobson, & Putnam 1993
8) Finel & Lord 1999

9) Hermann & Hermann 1989, Mintz 2004, Kolodziej 1981
10) Gartner 2004, Graber 1997, Tifft & Jones 1999
11) Behr & Iyengar 1985, Andrade & Young 1996
12) Manheim & Albritton 1984, Zhang & Cameron 2003
13) Sharkey 1993, Wolfsfeld 2004, Stetch 1994, Rotberg & Weiss 1996
14) DeRound & Peake 2000, Clark 2003, James & Oneal 1991, Meernik 2004
15) Feaver & Gelpi 2004, Mueller 1973, Slantchev 2004, Kull & Ramsay 2001

Prior specifications of causality in relationship(s) between the mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy. The citations associated with each arrow are illustrative rather than exhaustive. They represent simplifications of the authors' arguments, intended to highlight the absence of a clear causal chain across the broader system.

Figure 1: Causal interactions in the public opinion literature.
Source: Baum and Potter 2008, 41.

Disregarding for the moment that this depiction neglects scale and positionality, what it shows is directional arrows illustrating some of the main arguments supporting causal relationships between different variables. Public opinion has been shown to influence foreign actors and decision-makers and be influenced in turn. Public opinion has been shown to shape media messaging, while the media at times can shift public opinion. Critical events become politicised and weigh on public opinion. The link between opinion and foreign policy can been explained through the presence of intervening factors such as elites, decision makers, and the media. Through the use of this diagram, the authors assert that "scholars have investigated every conceivable causal link between the public, decision makers (foreign and domestic), and the media", and stress that "this web of causal arrows has become so dense that further investigations into these narrow individual pathways is likely to produce diminishing returns" (Baum and Potter 2008, 41). Instead of continuing to examine the directional relationships in Figure 1, the authors encourage scholars to shift analytical gaze away from static causal

snapshots and towards new research questions that probe dynamic interactions between multiple overlapping variables (for instance, the media-opinion-foreign policy nexus).

But more interesting than this is what Baum and Potter's diagram tells us about the state of the literature on public opinion today. Indeed, scholarly attention tends to focus on the individual constitutive elements and causal pathways present in this depiction. This raises a number of issues. For instance, it is not exactly clear what "public opinion" is here (i.e., an abstract idea, a research output, a process, etc.). Similarly, it is unclear if the same conceptualisation of public opinion is used or is applicable for each causal relationship. Further, how can we capture the changing definitions, qualities, and uses for public opinion over time with an ahistorical and atemporal framework such as this one? Figure 1 also tells us more plainly how public opinion inquiry has been sidelined by mainstream scholarship. Where are the pollsters, on whom we rely for raw and processed data, evidence, and analytical interpretations? Surely, they are an intermediary actor situated between the public and public opinion, or between public opinion and decision makers depicted in Figure 1. Likewise, the multimillion-dollar global industry for public opinion, that has developed over decades and shares an intimate history with American and European war-time foreign policy, is completely shielded from view.

Given that actors in the field of public opinion inquiry today engage the very same methods, share technical resources, subject data to similar analytical treatments, and presuppose the same grounded assumptions about the basic operational qualities of collectives, opinion-formation, and human behaviour, it is somewhat surprising that the actual tools and practical activities that facilitate our understanding of public opinion are shielded from mainstream scholarly investigation. In bypassing these fundamental building blocks and taking public opinion as given, as something out there that can always be measured and is a stable concept, I believe that the strength of the causal linkages in Baum and Potter's depiction begin to weaken.

2.2   Reconceptualising Public Opinion

Taking stock of the issues at hand, I argue that IR is in need of a reconceptualisation of public opinion that speaks about the international while also considering the historical and geopolitical situatedness from which public opinion as a concept has emerged. While there are many different ways public opinion might be reconceived, I find it helpful to distinguish between theory, data, and practice (*thinking* public opinion and *doing* public opinion are two very different things). This requires us to think about "process, change and flows through a continuous reflection on the assumptions enabling claims to knowledge", thereby allowing us to "enhance our understanding of the multiple facets and circulations of power and authority" embedded in public opinion inquiry (Basaran et al. 2017).

There are many different ideas, claims, and definitions that fall under the banner of "public opinion". I therefore encourage a distinction between public opinion as an ideal-type and as an epistemic pursuit (or object or practice):

(1) As an ideal-type or referent, public opinion is an ideological vehicle that carries sets of views, actions, reactions, deliberations, expressions, and preferences of social collectives. It has symbolic power. Only by postulating the ideal concept can we begin to theorise how public opinion manifests politically. As an ideal, public opinion can be further problematised on the basis of its own historical situatedness, though that is not my primary task.

(2) As an epistemic pursuit, public opinion is a form of knowledge production, i.e., the organised activities through which knowledge about peoples' views, actions, reactions, etc., is created and pursued. The pursuit of public opinion engages certain practices and methodologies that are evolving and largely determined by the scientific, cultural, and dispositional milieus in which research takes place. These practices comprise a set of activities, assumptions, and relational links between epistemic actors working in cohort. Epistemic actors, i.e., pollsters, practitioners, and scholars, are directly and indirectly responsible for shaping ideas about public opinion in the first ideal-typical sense. Their data, which often comes to be called "the public opinion", is a legitimating tool—it has

the ability to shape political outcomes and inform decision-making. In turn, data derives legitimacy from a generally-stable confidence in the science of public opinion research. Public opinion, as an epistemic pursuit, can be seen as "performative" in the sense that it is constructed and staged by actors with a desire or obligation to transform raw data into new knowledge.

For simplicity's sake, let's call the ideal-type *public opinion₁* and the epistemic pursuit *public opinion₂*. Both have evolved over time, alongside changing trends and "paradigm shifts" in the social sciences.[6] I illustrate this evolution below:
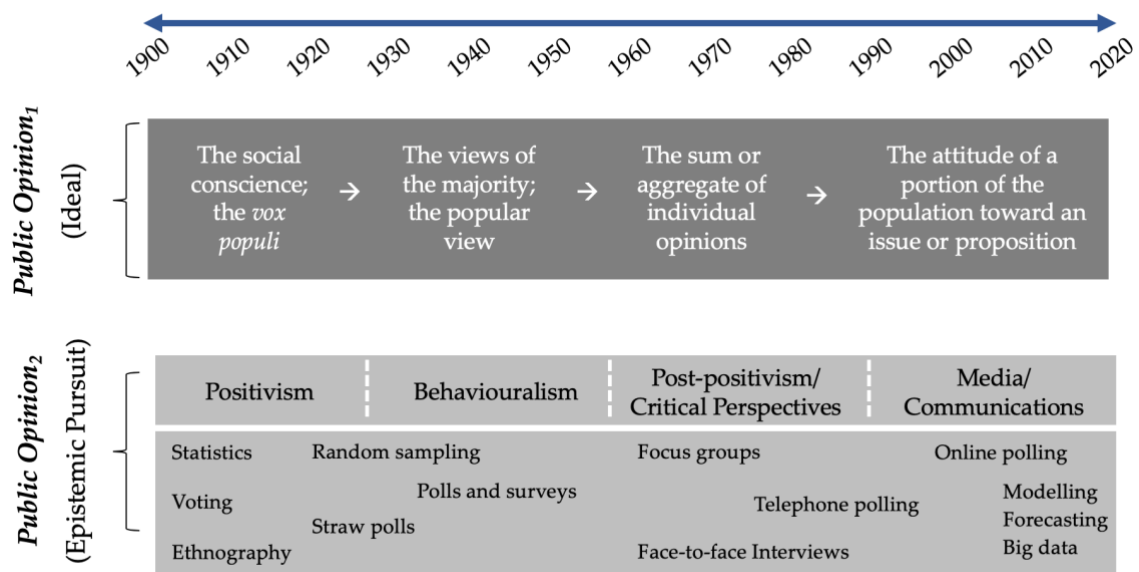
Figure 2: Distinguishing between *public opinion₁* and *public opinion₂*. Changing definitions and approaches over time.

The illustration above separates the two sense of public opinion, tracing key developments and approaches to uncovering public opinion over time. *Public opinion₁* in the ideal, abstract referent sense is a constant concept in the liberal theoretical tradition, following from Rousseau's idea of the general will. But the

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[6] The idea of paradigm shifts in the sciences belongs to Thomas Kuhn, who used it to explain scientific revolutions in the natural sciences. By Kuhn's definitions, paradigm shifts would not apply to the social sciences, though others have "borrowed" the term to describe disciplinary changes in the dominant modes of thinking. See Kuhn 1962.

dominant definition of public opinion has changed over time. In this illustration, I look back no earlier than the twentieth century, showing the transition from *vox populi*, to the views of the majority, to the sum of individual opinions, to the views and attitudes of segments of the population on particular issues. Importantly, the evolution of the concept does not read as neatly in the literature as on this simplified timeline. Instead, I acknowledge the progression of ideas about public opinion as an ideological construct. Even on this ideological level, we see an increasing "scientisation" of public opinion.

On the knowledge production front, *public opinion₂* as an epistemic pursuit can be mapped more closely against theoretical and methodological developments in the social sciences. The developments displayed in the illustration reflect the Western/American social science tradition, within which the study of public opinion in the twentieth century is rooted. I display two levels of change. The upper level corresponds with theoretical paradigms that have influenced how the study of public opinion is carried out. These include the positivist tradition, behaviouralism, post-positivist/critical perspectives, and the media-communications perspective. Where one new paradigm begins, the preceding one does not necessarily end (its relevance persists). I focus more on the advent of these modes of thinking. Meanwhile on the lower level, *public opinion₂* is described through the dominant methodological tools and technologies that emerge over time. Statistics, voting, and ethnographic methods pre-date the twentieth century, but were prevalent at the start. The use of polls and surveys spread through the 1930s, focus groups and interview techniques were refined through the 1960s with developments in the field of cognitive science, Internet polling boomed at the turn of the millennium, and more novel methods such as statistical modelling, forecasting, and big data analytics (including social media analysis) are now widespread and undergoing technical and theoretical refinement. As an epistemological pursuit with knowledge production as its main objective, *public opinion₂* is truly a sign of the (scientific) times. Again, the trend toward increased "scientisation" is clear.

The implications for Figure 2 are that we cannot divorce the idea of public opinion from its theoretical and epistemological roots. A distinction between these two forms of public opinion brings clarity to the literature, where the only

consensus is that there is no consensus as to what public opinion is. When the two forms of public opinion are conflated, which they often are, "Public Opinion" (capitalised to denote the grand concept) appears to be this:

Public Opinion = public opinion$_1$ + public opinion$_2$

We might say that Public Opinion is the sum of its *theoria* and *praxis*. I find it helpful to provide this equation because in this thesis, I am fundamentally concerned with *public opinion$_2$*. While I stop short of militantly using these two terms (*public opinion$_1$* and *public opinion$_2$*) through the remainder of the thesis, I can at least better stake my claims by clarifying this distinction from the outset and "choosing my battle".

There are broader theoretical implications for deconstructing public opinion as such. For one, it necessarily brings us closer to the relationship between knowledge production and power. As Weiler writes, the systematised production of (social) scientific knowledge creates epistemic hierarchies whereby "different forms and domains of knowledge are endowed with unequal status" (2009, 2). This is most evident in the distinction between the hard and soft sciences, where the quality of "hardness" has been equated with a more precise organisation of knowledge. Further, less exact or less scientific forms of knowledge are sometimes relegated to lower ranks of prestige (see Krause 2016; Anthony 2006). The influence of (Western) scientific principles and assumptions is very much embedded in how societies talk about and attempt to divine the public opinion. The issue of privileging some forms of knowledge over others is also a matter of whose knowledge it is (or who produces it). This recalls Burawoy's reflexive query, *knowledge for whom?* and *knowledge for what?* (2005).

In positioning the development of public opinion inquiry squarely within the Western social science tradition, we must address what it means to impose or transport ideas and assumptions about public opinion to other geographical and political contexts. As Mark Tessler hints with reference to Arab public opinion research, "the epistemological and methodological assumptions on which survey research is based may in some cases be inapplicable in the Arab world" (1998, 79). With this thesis, I therefore want to contribute to literature that challenges the "paradigmatic hegemony" of Western knowledge norms (Weiler 2009, 4;

Krause 2016), and to problematise the ascendency of a globalised, but deeply Americanised, way of knowing, thinking, and doing public opinion.

3   Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the different debates and perspectives in the literature relating to public opinion. For instance, traditional approaches to defining and explaining public opinion are bound by rationality. Constructivist perspectives have contributed to ideas about public opinion as a social construct, not a material fact but as something that is constituted through the act of searching for it. Sociological insights have helped to shape the idea that publics are borne of the use of specific epistemological tools and techniques. I argue that the prevailing conceptualisations of public opinion within IR are analytically inadequate because public opinion is not a monolith, but a conflation of different variables and epistemological positions. At times, it is an abstract, ideal construct, used to help make sense of the political world and our role in affecting it as individuals and as societies (*public opinion₁*). At other times, we are referring to an epistemic practice that contains assumptions about how we can come to know public opinion (*public opinion₂*). In breaking from conventional approaches to conceptualising public opinion, I encourage a unique focus on the role of knowledge production in defining, describing, measuring, classifying, creating, and controlling the *vox populi*, wherein the polls and surveys become political artefacts. Public opinion is not a given; rather, a more inductive approach to the issue allows us to engage the fundamental questions of *knowledge for whom?* and *knowledge for what?* in the context of the rise of global polling.

Chapter 2
The Development of Arab Public Opinion Inquiry: Elements of a Conceptual Framework

Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant. The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; the object is a 'fact' which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge of a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it.

Edward Said (1978)

With the problem of public opinion laid bare, this chapter moves ahead in tethering different elements together to sketch a conceptual framework, i.e., a system of concepts, arguments, and theories, which support the key arguments in the thesis. While the goal of this framework is to provide an adequate account of the development of Arab public opinion inquiry (and not the state of Arab public opinion), I acknowledge that there is still much to be done in the way of theory-building and information-gathering, especially considering that the subject remains relatively untapped. Although many studies report the results of polls, surveys, and experiments so as to theorise how public opinion operates in democratic and authoritarian settings at different points in time, there is no existing, cohesive body of literature or seminal text that explains the rise of Arab public opinion inquiry or considers how pollsters have sought to claim the region as an object of study. All we really have are clues and methodology discussion pieces which recognise that the field of "Arab public opinion" is indeed growing and carries unique methodological traits and obstacles. For instance, Michael Suleiman has written on the "agonies and ecstasies" of conducting survey research in the Arab World (1985). Faires al-Braizat writes briefly on the development polling in Jordan (2004). Marc Tessler and Amaney Jamal discuss opportunities for political attitude research in closed research climates in Middle East and North African countries (2006). Mohamed Zayani has considered the

role of the media landscape in emancipating Arab public opinion (2008a). Lindsay Benstead describes the increasing openness of the Arab world to political survey research (2018). And finally, the case of polling Palestine has been explored in greater depth in studies by Christina Zacharia Hawatmeh (2001) and Erika Schwarze (2012; 2015).

The conceptual framework that I build breaks from the status quo by considering the ways in which the development of inquiry pertaining to political opinion in the region is inextricably tied to the politics of knowledge production. It is a more sociological account that seeks to illustrate how the landscape for "Arab public opinion" has been dynamically constructed and reconstructed through practices and by actors (whether foreign actors, foreign actors embedded in the region, local Arab actors subordinate to foreign influence, or autonomous local actors). The framework developed in this chapter is later applied in Part 3 of the thesis, which analyses the Arab-region case in depth.

My central argument follows that public opinion data cannot be divorced from the context from which it emerges. I identify a seemingly nascent field of public opinion inquiry pertaining to the region and explore the ways in which it is largely a product of externally-driven historical and market forces propagated by informational actors (i.e., pollsters, practitioners, experts, and scholars) who enact specific practices (i.e., polling). Through the history and development of these practices and the spread of the science of polling, we learn that these are not apolitical acts. When we fail to consider the contextual backdrop, public opinion data and theory can only be taken "as is"—as something static and analytically divorced from social and political realities. Paying attention to the contexts from which data is and has been produced and procured not only allows for deeper theorising, but helps us to understand the rationale behind the pursuit of global public opinion and the power dynamics inherent in that pursuit. Most importantly, it tells us something about the situatedness of knowledge production and the extent to which knowledge of something like "Arab public opinion" can reify and distort accounts of political life, can lend power to those with claims to that knowledge, and can sideline other/local/personal forms of knowledge.

The main premise of the conceptual framework is that public opinion inquiry pertaining to the Arab region and its people can be seen to unfold in three successive stages. Each stage encapsulates a dominant mode of inquiry for the study of Arab public opinion. In the first stage, political opinion served as a form of colonial knowledge. Epistemic interventions and investigations were forged in Stage 1 by foreign actors, whose practices of inquiry rendered local societies as "passive patients" (Wagoner 2003, 748). Following on Wagoner, the knowledge produced in the Arab region during this time was not *of* the region; rather, it emerged through the combining of pre-defined, imported forms of scientific knowledge and "the raw data provided by the indigenous social and cultural forms of the colonised society" (Wagoner 2003, 748). In the second stage, the rapid institutionalisation of social science research propelled the rise of a transnational network of actors engaged in studying patterns of local opinions and political behaviour. Developing alongside the commercialisation of polling in the West and the expansion of an Arab media sphere that fostered greater civic communication across borders, Arab opinion inquiry became a collaborative endeavour between foreign and indigenous epistemic actors. While relationships were collaborative, knowledge with a Western scientific stamp of approval continued to be prioritised and popularised. In the third stage, which we see most formally today, there has been a shift toward the reclamation of practices and knowledge production by indigenous actors. This localisation of knowledge production to suit local needs represents one of the key findings of this thesis. The expectation that local actors lacked agency in the field of knowledge production has increasingly turned out not to be the case. What emerges in the third stage is a clear distinction between the independent "ethics of research" of local actors, and foreign scientific procedures of research. I find that the foreign monopoly over knowledge of "Arab public opinion" is being displaced by the local.

To summarise, taken together, these three stages describe a process that begins with the intervention of foreign experts, develops into a transnationally-dispersed and networked marketplace of pollsters and related actors, and then evolves, adapts, and responds to local contexts such that the study of contemporary public opinion is, in a sense, reclaimed at the local level, by Arab polling actors who have a far greater stake in the political potential of civic

dialogue. While preliminary research would seem to suggest that the proliferation of public opinion data relating to the region is a recent phenomenon, the themes and theories drawn into this analysis are used to weave a historical account of the pursuit of Arab public opinion (the narrative laid out in Part 3 reaches as far back as the end of the First World War, though enriching this historical analysis with more archival research would likely reveal earlier roots). Knowing this, it becomes critically important to trace the evolution of the field, and much of this thesis is dedicated to a mapping exercise that relies on disparate sources and evidence, simply because this story of the rise of Arab public opinion inquiry is one that has yet to be told.

This chapter is divided into different theoretical discussions that are pertinent to the conceptual framework: namely, the empirical construction of the Arab world (Section 1), the legitimacy of data (Section 2), actors and group dynamics (Section 3), and processes of localisation (Section 4). Each of these elements is in some way modeled into the conceptual framework presented in Section 5, which builds and elaborates the three-stage model of inquiry described above.

There are of course limits to the extent to which I can provide full and impartial evidence of the three-stage model of inquiry at work in the real world. Perfect knowledge is unattainable. Further, I take a bird's eye view of the development of Arab public opinion inquiry, which means that many nuances, outliers, diverse and diverging elements, and unique voices in the field are not always captured and accounted for. Describing a general phenomenon while avoiding the trappings of being reductive is a fine line to walk, and I acknowledge the limitations of this approach. However, with little existing scholarship to build on, a first attempt should be sufficiently broad to identify patterns and carve a space for new theoretical discussions. In the sections that follow, I engage and intertwine issues beyond the concept of public opinion that are nonetheless centrally important to what I identify to be the field of Arab public opinion inquiry.

1   The Empirical Construction of the Arab World

Of all the manifold ways in which the Arab world has been "constructed" by outside forces—for instance, by rhetoric built on essentializing words and images, or by sensationalised popular portrayals in Western media—I am most interested, for the purposes of this thesis, in the construction of the Arab region as an empirical object of study. As an empirical object, I am concerned with the ways in which the region as a whole has been reflected and recast by the "investigative modalities" (Cohn 1996) of social science and its observations of people's political behaviour. By concentrating on empirical observations and measurement via public opinion inquiry, I may be charged with denying agency to the very people who come to be observed, counted, recorded, and classified. At this point then, I should make clear that people's opinions do matter and are their own, not the property of data creators or scientific investigators. To focus on the industry of public opinion research is not to say that public opinion does not emerge elsewhere. In fact, it is everywhere—at kitchen tables and in street cafes, in schools and universities, in small communities, major cities, places of worship, in news media and in technology, in elections, protests, and revolutions. So much of public opinion in the ideal sense is wholly organic, and evades capture by any scientific method or mean. By drawing the reader away from the question of what the public opinion is and toward questions about its production, I do not seek to diminish the existence and importance of what people feel and think collectively, in the Arab world or elsewhere. Rather, I aim to concentrate on a phenomenon—a specific type of observation—that is in great need of analytical appraisal.

The very idea of an "Arab world" is, in many ways, an extension of other essentialising constructs rooted in the notion that people across the region constitute a single regional community. Commonly used as a blanket social and geographical signifier, the idea of the Arab world invites us to problematize the ways in which external actors have gazed upon, attempted to define, studied, classified, framed, and reified its existence. Defining the region is, as Culcasi

warns, "a precarious endeavour" (2010, 583). It doesn't exist as a monolith[7], but comprises at the moment of nearly two-dozen countries with an estimated population of 423 million, stretching across two continents, containing disparate origins, unique historical and political developments, extraordinary experiences of nationhood and nation-building, many self-ascribed and/or legally recognised identities, diverse religions and sets of social values, wide distributions of wealth, overlapping institutional and social structures, uneven economic landscapes, multidirectional future trajectories, and the list goes on. The tendency in popular discourse to use the terms "Arab public opinion" or "public opinion in the Arab world" speaks to how public opinion is similarly treated as a monolith; as a regional phenomenon even in the absence of uniform experiences and characteristics among people inhabiting the same spaces. These terms also indicate a habit of simplifying information into manageable, generalisable units of analysis—a practice that is generally encouraged by audiences who use public opinion data, such as policymakers and the media.

I seek to further problematise the shorthand label of "Arab public opinion" (though I do employ the term in this thesis when referring to it in the sense of a social/empirical construction). This term is found in both academic scholarship[8] and policy[9], and is sometimes used in the abstract way (*public opinion₁*), but more often connotes aggregate opinion polling and survey data taken from many (though not always the same sets of) countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The justificatory claim is that this term is more nuanced and scientific than previous attempts to understand and capture the pulse of the region. For example, a policy brief from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) is prefaced with this:

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[7] The identifier "Arab" is used in the sense that countries in the region's core have Arabophone and Arab-majority populations, but it is admittedly problematic for its exclusion of non-Arab identities.

[8] See, for instance, "Arab Public Opinion and the Gulf War" by Telhami (1993); "Determinants of Arab Public Opinion on Foreign Relations" by Furia and Lucas (2006); *Voices of the New Arab Public* by Lynch (2006); "Courting and Containing the Arab Street: Arab Public Opinion, the Middle East, and US Public Diplomacy" by Zayani (2008b); *The World through Arab Eyes* by Telhami (2013).

[9] For example, David Pollock's 2007 testimony "Arab Public Opinion", given before the US House of Representatives, as well as Daniel Brumberg's 2002 testimony "Arab Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy: A Complex Encounter", prepared for the Congress of the United States, House of Representatives.

> In the Middle East, the Gulf War shattered many stereotypes and preconceived notions, not least among them, about the so-called 'Arab street'. Commentators regularly depict a mythologised and often demonised 'Arab street'—an ominous urban mass that is sometimes depicted as intimidating regimes, sometimes as being held captive by them; and sometimes, oddly enough, as both. But Arab opinion is not uniform, rather it is diverse, and operates in dynamic interaction with Arab government policies; moreover, its very nature must not be assumed but measured (Pollock 1993).

This piece, authored by David Pollock, goes on to say that a more sophisticated reading of Arab publics which appreciates the internal diversity of opinion in the region, is possible in order to move beyond the exaggerated and monolithic views of the Arab street. The Arab street, based on anecdotal evidence of public and private life, "evokes exotic images of mystery, mobs, and mullahs; it sounds vaguely subterranean, if not sinister; and it is most often regarded in the West with a peculiar mixture of fascination, dismissal, and fear" (Pollock 1993, 1). By contrast, Pollock suggests that the term "Arab public opinion" is scientific, neither uniform nor static, and can be tailored "to fit individual Arab governments, societies, and circumstances" (Pollock 1993, xiv). It has room built in for refinements that can be supplemented by statistics, modelling, and other tools, which flag inconsistencies and provide "among the more objective, interesting, and also unfamiliar pieces of evidence in the field" (Pollock 1993, 27). For this reason, it has caught on as a new empirical anchor for the Arab world.

Though practitioners like Pollock have warned against constructing regional public opinion as something uniform and have pushed for an understanding of nuanced and diverse identities, "Arab public opinion" as an empirical term maintains strong links to its antecedent, the "Arab street" (see Rosen 2016; Wolf 2015; Lynch 2013; Jamal 2013; Regier and Khalidi 2009), boosted only, it seems, by the guise of scientific objectivity. This terminological thread can be traced further back to similar portrayals used to capture the Middle Eastern "other" from the vantage point of the outside looking in; we can see this same idea of the "street" in the notion of the "Arab mind" (Viorst 1998; Patai 1973; Sayegh 1953) or the "Arab psyche" (Palmer 2012; Victor 1973). These, in turn, link to constructions of "the Arab" (Allen 2006; Rodinson 1981) and the broader geopolitical architecting of the Middle East (Foliard 2017; Bonine, Amanat and Gasper 2012; Güney and

Gökcan 2010; Culcasi 2010). And this harkens further back to the notion of the Orient (Said 1978; Lockman 2010; Hentsch 1992). Terminologically, "Arab public opinion" is, in my view, little more than an extension of earlier constructions, discourses, and politicised narratives that position the dialectic "other" in relation to a Western "self", used as means of counterbalancing "non-knowledge" or ignorance of the "other".[10]

The empirical construction of the region is therefore partly embedded in essentializing orientalist discourses and imaginings that were pivotal in constructing the other as inherently different from the Western self; "once established as different and inferior, Western domination of these Other peoples and places was not merely justified but also warranted" (Culcasi 2010, 584). In the context of this thesis, domination over the other is interpreted as foreign control over the architecting of mass opinions.

Edward Said's 1978 critique *Orientalism* is "centrally concerned with the forms of knowledge that constitute what he defined as orientalism", as they relate to cultural, racialized, and political discourse-making on the region (Said 1978; Appadurai 1993, 314). I find Said's critique to be helpful inasmuch as it discusses issues in empirical measurement. For instance, the orientalist critique can be a useful sociological tool for considering the relationship between colonial forms of control and knowledge extraction, and the later development of localised enumeration (census-taking) and polling that engaged many of the same methods and practices of research. It is also particularly helpful for understanding the practices of classification. Said wrote that "rhetorically speaking, Orientalism is absolutely anatomical and enumerative; to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularising and dividing of things Oriental into manageable parts" (Said 1978, 72). While Said's articulation of orientalism and other subsequent critiques like *Covering Islam* (1981) are extremely enlightening, the relevance of Said to the core arguments in my thesis remains somewhat constrained. The work that would follow from a purely orientalist analysis might

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[10] I take a cue here from Michael Smithson's "Toward a Social Theory of Ignorance" (1985): ignorance, like knowledge, is constructed and negotiated, and a complete sociology of knowledge requires a sociology of ignorance

help to explain how foreign inquiry frames or distorts issues relating to public opinion in Arab states, however, it would fail to explain recent developments that have seen local actors acquire greater agency and control over rights to determine and define public opinion in the region. For this reason, I choose not to fully engage with Said. I look beyond the orientalist critique and instead bring in questions about counting and control, as well as questions of local agency and the degree to which it can emerge and become prevalent.

On counting and control, literature on the history of enumeration provides a gateway for analysing the politics of numbers, measurement, quantification, and by extension, public opinion inquiry (see Appadurai 1993; Ludden 1993; Cohn 1996; Kalpagam 2000; Skerry 2000; Kertzer and Arel 2002; and Ruppert 2011). Enumeration as a colonial science, according to Appadurai, had more than just a utilitarian function: it helped to create "the illusion of bureaucratic control" and was "key to a colonial *imaginaire* in which countable abstractions, both of people and of resources, at every imaginable level and for every conceivable purpose, created the sense of a controllable indigenous reality" (Appadurai 1993, 317). In tracing the practices of public opinion inquiry relating to the Arab region back to colonial census-taking activities, we can assess how social classifications were developed and imposed along territorial, occupational, ethnic, and racial lines and then brought directly into the practice of contemporary polling (I consider this in Chapter 4). The politics and history of social classification, with its imprint very much present in contemporary (quantitative) research, was brought in via statistics, which Appadurai terms the "epistemological underbelly" of colonial politics (1993, 330). While India has been a fruitful case for the study of colonial forms of knowledge production (see Appadurai 1993; Cohn 1996; and Dirks 2001), the Arab case is comparatively less explored (with exceptions of course; see Mitchell 2002). While it is beyond the bounds of this thesis to analyse the development of colonial forms of counting in the Arab region, I do engage with the aforementioned bodies of literature inasmuch as they help to situate contemporary public opinion inquiry as an extension of these colonial practices.

Finally, the many lenses through which the region has been empirically framed have very much shaped the kinds of questions that researchers ask, the methods and sources employed, and the meaning and interpretation imbued in the

knowledge that emerges. This has created "contending visions" of the Arab world and the people who inhabit the space (Lockman 2004). If we look closely, we can often find the "taken-for-granted imaginings of the region" (Culcasi 2010, 594) embedded in questionnaires and survey designs. The tools of opinion research are therefore best understood as political artefacts, and if we analyse them as such, they can provide valuable discursive evidence of the empirical (re)constitution of the region.

2 The Pursuit of Public Opinion as a Tool for Legitimation

In the literature concerning the relationship between public opinion and politics, it is generally assumed that public opinion lends legitimacy to governments and political decision-making. It is seen to broadly act as a check on the actions of those who hold power and authority. As was once remarked in *The Observer*, "the vigilance of the public operates powerfully on the subconscious of members of the government" (Durant 1955, 155) and this has been found to be the case both in democratic and non-democratic contexts (in authoritarian cases, see for instance, Zaller and Geddes 1989; and deLisle, Goldstein and Yang 2016). This vigilance is often perceived in the lead up to or aftermath of elections, during times of conflict, in heightened security climates, amid diplomatic crises, and in economic downturns, where the dialogue between politicians and publics intensifies and these two facets of political life are drawn closer together. Without some sort of claim to legitimacy, public opinion would likely go unnoticed, be dismissed, or have imperceptible effects on political outcomes. Political elites rely on and take cues from the ebb and flow of support and denunciation from the public. Public opinion in this sense is a rational construct, i.e., it acts as a voice of reason and places external constraints on the state, while demarcating the boundaries of public life.

In the context of public opinion inquiry, I take legitimacy to mean something more than simply constraints from approval or disapproval on the part of the public. Following on Inis Claude, legitimacy can be understood as "ultimately a political phenomenon, a crystallisation of judgement that may be influenced but

is unlikely to be wholly determined by legal norms and moral principles" (in Mulligan 2005, 363). This "crystallising of judgement" or the act of providing legitimacy takes place in the empirical realm, i.e., concerning *public opinion₂*. *Public opinion₂* (the empirical pursuit resulting in data from systematic research) legitimates and is legitimated through different means. For instance, it legitimates words and actions when we consider the ways in which political elites wield data, pander to, listen to, or seek to manipulate the public opinion (Weiler 2009). It supplies an informal channel between political elites and the public, constructed and maintained by the industry of research. Further, perspectives that critique the malleability of polls are relevant here, as they examine the ways in which states employ data to manufacture consent and legitimacy that might not otherwise exist (Lee 2002; Habermas 1962; Ginsberg 1986). Legitimacy is therefore a (sought after) byproduct—the ultimate telos—of *public opinion₂*; it brings this form of public opinion closer to the ideal state of *public opinion₁*.

One way that a field of research attempts to gain legitimacy is through scientific objectivity. Objectivity in social research, modeled on the methods and assumptions of the natural sciences, makes claims to describing the social world from a value-free perspective, without interference from human bias or personal interests. Some have suggested that "the invocation of 'objectivity' for a knowledge claim has more to do with attempts to boost the status of the claim than with any actual criteria the claim has satisfied" (Harding 2015, ix; Hacking 2015). This means to say that the label of scientific objectivity can lend legitimacy to data, and indeed, the authority of science has propelled the transformation of public opinion inquiry into a predominately quantitative field, subject to rules, controls, and methodological rigour that mimic laboratory work. The legitimacy gained from the guise or label of scientific objectivity generally increases the value of the research from a professional standpoint. Prior to the 1970s, most opinion researchers were seen as little more than number crunchers with a skillset geared toward analysing raw data. Since then, they have grown to fulfill a more prominent and strategic role in political life, increasing their relative power within the field (Medvic 2003, 35). The responsibilities of data interpretation and crafting sophisticated political strategies are now part of their skillset, and these skills are subjected to intense scrutiny. We see this when polling actors are

regularly ranked in relation to one another, fight for survival in a capital marketplace, or compete for attention and reputation.[11] The reputations of pollsters hinge largely on the accuracy and predictive capacity of their methods, which are tested against the real world, i.e., election results, referenda, and political outcomes.

While Chapter 3 in particular discusses the implications for the pursuit of scientific objectivity in the practice of public opinion research, we might consider more generally the legitimation of *public opinion₂*. Our assessment of the importance of *public opinion₂* is dependent on the extent to which we are persuaded of its scientific value, and whether states, elites, media, and publics in general carry confidence in the polls. When these are met, *public opinion₂* is secured. Similar to statistics and the census, public opinion data can serve as a referent for the inner workings of states and societies. When scientific measurements are used to justify political action, they take on a normative role. As Porter writes, "numbers create and can be compared with norms, which are among the gentlest and yet most pervasive forms of power in modern democracies" (1995, 45). This is more than simply a methodological issue. The perceived "scientificness" of public opinion can expose the extent to which political systems are dependent on statistical knowledge to explain the social world. Rose argues that "numbers have an unmistakeable power in modern political culture […]. Numbers here are an intrinsic part of the mechanisms for conferring legitimacy on political authority" (1991, 673). Numbers can be seen as a way to govern political life, can advance or slow progress, inform or distort civic discourse, or help or hinder political participation (Rose 1991, 690). These issues lead to broader questions, for instance, at what moment in the process of research does legitimation take place? It might arise when a poll is commissioned, which can be taken as signalling the desire or need for data. It might emerge when raw data is analytically transformed into meaning and symbolic interpretation. Or it might take place after a poll is said and done, once it finds its way into the hands of different actors who then use it to build

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[11] See, for instance, FiveThirtyEight's pollster ratings based on accuracy and methodology. Available here: https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/pollster-ratings/.

narratives about the social and political world. I believe that the need for legitimacy is present at each stage in the process of inquiry, in the very least to solidify confidence in the modes and methods of research.

3 Actors and Group Dynamics

In Chapter 1, I identified a missing link in the traditional literature on public opinion, i.e., those actors involved in the empirical pursuit of public opinion (along with the practices they enact). This focus on actors and practices—pollsters, practitioners, scholars and experts, research entities and private companies, all invested and/or implicated in the political potential of public opinion—is sustained throughout this thesis. It seems pertinent then that I address the role of actors as I build toward a theoretical framework.

There was both a pre- and post-hoc rationalisation for the focus on actors in my research. The case of missing actors from the literature (recall Baum and Potter's causal map in Figure 1) provided the impetus to craft an empirical agenda around the pollster. In the small but growing body of literature that seeks to explain trends in "Arab public opinion", pollsters are usually classified as part of a larger group of informational elites. Brumberg, for instance, argues that Arab public opinion is comprised of three circles of influence: ideologues and activists, professional and academic elites, and the broader public, and further, each of these three circles interacts differently with one another and with the international political environment (2002). Though not explicitly analysed as such, pollsters make their way into the second category of professional and academic elites. Meanwhile Lynch (2003a) and Zayani (2008a) have argued that the key to understanding "Arab public opinion" lies neither in the circle of ideologues not the broader public, but in that elite sphere that encompasses intellectuals, politicians, journalists, academics, student bodies, and other actors with some measure of power and influence in society. We can assume the pollster sits among these actors as informational elites, particularly given that pollsters in the Arab world often double as media-facing commentators. Still, meaningful studies such as these make only a passing mention about the role of informational elites who contribute to the production of public opinion data. Existing studies on Arab public opinion have not yet tackled the more critical

theoretical question of the extent to which the machinery of polling and public opinion research is responsible the crafting of ideas about people in the region and beyond.

Identifying international polling actors implicated in the field of Arab public opinion research was thus one of the first exercises I undertook, and an agenda for fieldwork was designed around this. The post-hoc rationalisation (upon completion of the fieldwork) came from the discovery of the ways in which these actors were relationally linked and saw themselves as part of larger groups of networked polling actors. No single actor was operating in isolation, and there was good reason to assume that these actor dynamics were not uniquely limited to the case of Arab public opinion, but are rather characteristic of the field of global polling and public opinion inquiry in general.

In considering how public opinion actors past and present are linked, how they understand their roles in relation to one another, how they interact, compete, and engage in knowledge sharing, and how they impart legacies and ensure the survival of their methods, I find it helpful to situate actors within larger transnational knowledge networks. Knowledge networks are usually seen to be made up of (in)formal entities involved in the creation and dissemination of knowledge by controlling the provisions and interpretation of specialized information (Stone 2003). As Stone describes, "if knowledge is 'an organized body of information' then a knowledge network is one mode of organising information" (2003, 8). Stone differentiates between formal and informal actors in knowledge networks; the former might be international organisations, while the latter are more difficult to identify but might include smaller entities like professional bodies, academic research consortiums, intellectuals, and scientific communities who are organized around a particular issue area. When actors are viewed as part of larger (transnational) knowledge networks, their modes of self-organising come into view. We can begin to see how and why some groups form, and how the diffusion of ideas, norms, practices, and tools takes place.

While transnational knowledge networks are a helpful and sufficiently broad organising tool, I do not engage network analysis in the strict sense (for instance, actor network theory). Fried (2012) provides one instance of an analysis in which network theory is applied to the case of American public opinion in order to

explain the institutionalisation of actors. Fried uses the concept of networks to show how the "quantification of public opinion became more common as it was inscribed into organizational routines and was incorporated into typical repertoires of activity" (2012, 14). The field of American public opinion research is therefore seen to have developed in a networked fashion, where networks helped to propel actors (like pollsters) and their activities. However, an emphasis on network theory meets two dead ends in the field of public opinion inquiry. The first is that it is near-impossible exercise to map out a coherent network of actors and institutions in the field. I would argue that the interactions, relations, inner movements, not to mention financial obligations, are far too dense and complex to generate any meaningful conclusions (other to say that there is a network and it broadly functions in some way). Second, the focus on networks sidelines the actors themselves, diminishing their agency and the centrality of their role. As will be seen in the case of the Arab sphere of opinion research, actor agency becomes increasingly important over time and must therefore be considered in its own right.

While Chapter 4 maps out actors implicated in the rise of global polling and the distribution of control over the provisions and interpretation of public opinion data, Chapters 5 through 7 introduce the reader to actors specifically involved in the study of Arab public opinion at different points in time. I use this space here to provide a more skeletal overview of relevant actors. Others situated in proximity to public opinion but not involved directly in the conduct of inquiry include the broader public (as an audience and also as the subject of inquiry), the media, political parties, and ruling elites. Throughout this thesis, I bring these other agents in and out of view through the lens of my primary actors, i.e., the producers of Arab public opinion knowledge. The level of analysis I am thus concerned with is neither that of the public individual nor of the state, but rather the level of transnational entities and informational elites.

The primary actors conducting large-scale public opinion inquiry relating to the Arab region are transnationally situated, with the main loci being the United States and major cities in the Arab countries (with a strong concentration in Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon). Few European actors are concerned with the production of Arab public opinion research by comparison. In Figure 3

below, the geographic distribution of actors is mapped, accounting for all of the Middle East and North Africa, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Austria, Denmark, and Norway. A more detailed analytical discussion of the geographies of actors takes place in Chapter 6 and 7.
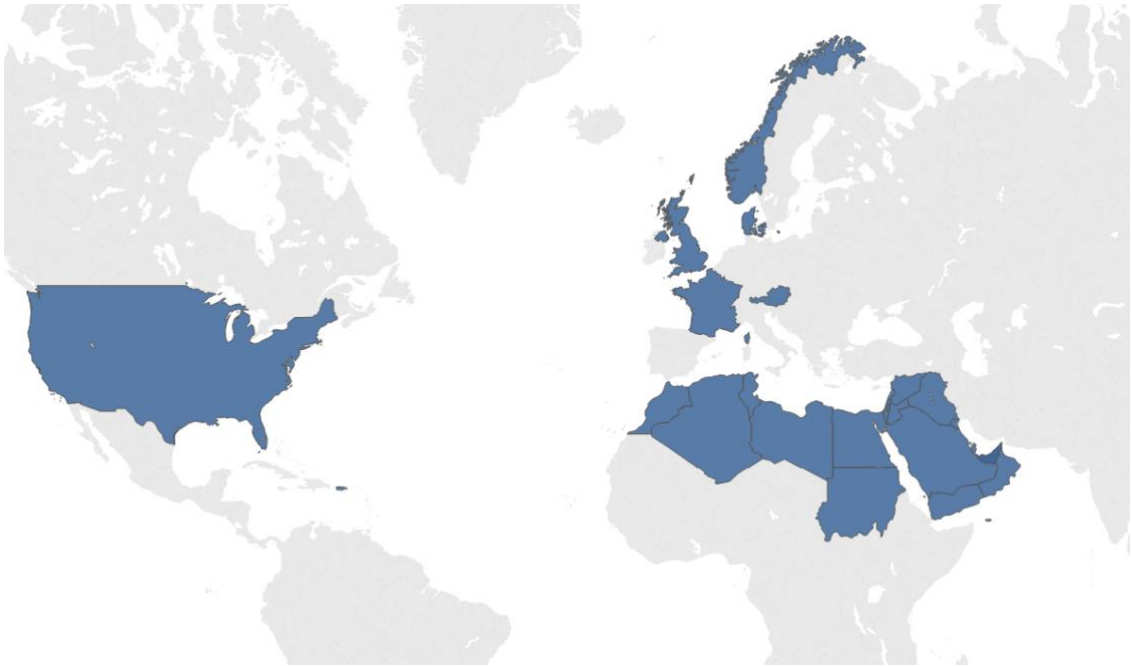
Figure 3: Geographic distribution of actors in the field of Arab public opinion inquiry.

The geopolitical significance of the United States-Arab region nexus unfolds over the course of the thesis. Over decades, the central concentration of actors involved in the study of Arab public opinion has shifted from outside to inside the Arab region, which means that the pursuit of Arab public opinion has been progressively transferred and at the same time reclaimed by local (indigenous) actors. If we consider the concentration of actors at any given time as a proxy for agency, the story suggests that the responsibility and power of local Arab actors is becoming more pronounced over time. As one of the central findings of the empirical research undertaken, agency is considered in greater depth in Chapter 7. But generalising beyond the Arab case itself leads to the hypothesis that, at any given moment in time, wherever we see a strong concentration of actors reproducing institutions in a knowledge-producing field of activity (in this case the pursuit of global public opinion), from where there is a perceptible

proliferation of data, we should expect to see a high degree of human agency. This idea stands to be tested in other cases of global public opinion inquiry.

Actors (informational elites) in the field of Arab public opinion inquiry include individuals and collectives. They are state departments and agencies, private or commercial polling firms, independent think tanks, partisan and non-partisan policy institutes, university departments and academic research bodies, social science institutes, public relations and market research companies, media affiliates, independent experts and scholars, as well as collaborative initiatives undertaken by more than one of these (i.e., research consortiums). Public opinion inquiry generally serves political, scholarly, and private commercial ends. The gradual commercialisation of global public opinion inquiry has led to fragmentations in the market. Commercial actors—private and/or media polling, public relations and public diplomacy firms, and market research companies— compete more than ever before in a marketplace where the main commodity of value is data. They sometimes find ways to undercut the market and save costs at the expense of data quality and methodological soundness. While full-service public opinion research companies will produce studies from start (research design) to finish (research dissemination), a more common practice today is to outsource individual elements of the research process to other intermediaries, such that a single public opinion study finds itself in the hands of different actors (principle investigators, sampling firms, auxiliary data collection vendors, or data science divisions) at different steps along the way. In the end, a study often emerges from an assemblage of actors, resources, and practices.

The development of the field of Arab opinion inquiry is evidenced by the proliferation of these actors since the advent of the science of polling in the 1930s. Emerging actors have grown from older, established ones and individual practitioners move seamlessly between organisations within the same field, creating linkages, ensuring commonalities of practice, sharing methodological insights and techniques, encouraging knowledge transference and market-sharing, and delineating the field within which they operate. What I effectively mean by market-sharing here is the sharing of work, commissions, clients and employees, technical resources, and other aspects of labour. This might mean that one party calls on another for expertise, or that an institutional project is granted

to several different actors at once. Market-sharing in this sense creates working bonds, bringing actors closer together so their practices naturally come to be more integrated. In some cases, market-sharing also has implications for the legacy of work, i.e., in determining the allocation of future funding or planning projects. Further, actors are aware of other like actors who inhabit the same sphere and commonly interact with each other in professional capacities, such as by attending conferences, cross-training, and encouraging job mobility (employee movement) within the network.

We can reframe these actor dynamics, interactions, and activities around market-sharing in another way. They essentially relate to how knowledge is controlled in the field of public opinion research, as well as how knowledge becomes available to actors entering into and navigating the field. Bourdieu's reflexive sociological concept of field provides a spark of inspiration here. For Bourdieu, actors in the field employ two types of knowledge: the first is a logic of practice (a feel for the game) and the second is a reflexive relationship to the field and one's practices within it (Albright, Hartman, and Widin 2018, 2; Bourdieu 2000). The field has written rules and conventions governing it, but is also transformed by the actions of actors working within it. Field thus emphasises the dynamic relationships and actions within a social space. While I do not apply Bourdieu's field analysis to the case of actors in the field of Arab public opinion inquiry, if only because of such limited access to the field and the actors themselves, I certainly find motivation in this reflexive stance.

4 Processes of Localisation

The world of opinion research is populated by giants. American household names like Gallup, Pew, and Roper, global megafirms like Ipsos and Nielsen, and famed statisticians like George Gallup, David Blackwell, Nate Silver, and Nassim Nicholas Taleb fill the space of popular knowledge, discussion, and debate, leaving little room for smaller actors to meaningfully shape the vast and highly diversified field of global opinion research. Today, there is an overabundance of actors operating in the field; many are small, and most are virtually unknown in markets outside their own. Further, the market activities of public opinion research overlap considerably with the market research industry, which is

characterised by increasing numbers of mergers and acquisitions by prominent umbrella corporations operating through high-value deals in competitive capital markets. In this fast-paced and often unforgiving environment, one might expect localisation to diminish in the face of globalising processes.

Localisation suggests an emphasis or increased salience of locality and is stimulated by a normative orientation. It is a helpful tool when applied to a transnational field of such as public opinion inquiry, where actors operate across geographic borders and therefore come into constant contact with other instances of locality. Following on Acharya, localisation can be understood as "a complex process and outcome by which norm-takers [actors who absorb global norms and standards] build congruence between transnational norms (including norms previously institutionalised in a region) and local beliefs and practices" (Acharya 2004, 241). The foreign and the local meet in such a way that "the active construction (through discourse, framing, grafting, and cultural selection) of foreign ideas by local actors" results in a developing congruence between these foreign ideas and local beliefs and practices (Acharya 2004, 245). Thus, local actors contribute to processes of localisation through the diffusion of ideas and practices.

Translated into the case of Arab public opinion inquiry, localisation sees the modes and practices of inquiry adapting to the local climate, to local publics, and to changes "on the ground". Further, actors increasingly acknowledge that the local is not a homogenous entity, but rather represented by distinct voices, diverse ideologies, and intricate histories. Localisation has the effect of making public opinion a less monolithic idea, and instead, something that carries a different flavour from place to place. The practices of mass opinion research, which have become more standardised over time, are renegotiated when localisation takes place. Practically, this might mean that the *thinking* and *doing* of public opinion change, i.e., by asking different questions, changing the nature of sampling frameworks, building closer relationships between interviewers and interviewed subjects, or redefining how mass interviews are conducted altogether. In this way, local actors increase their agency and command over the field, while something like the practices of research attune to different local settings.

As will be seen in Chapter 7, localisation *is* possible for polling actors operating in the context of transnational knowledge networks, despite the pressures to produce data in standardised ways. Localisation of practices in the Arab case is found to be shaped by various forces, including conflict and relations between state and society, as well as by the people whose opinions are counted and recorded. Localisation becomes most apparent when we consider the normative "ethics of research" that each pollster clings to, and the extent to which their ethics of research comes to be shaped by the settings that they inhabit.

5   A Proposed Conceptual Framework for Arab Public Opinion Inquiry

Given that the subject of public opinion inquiry involves the complex interplay of issues relating to knowledge production, epistemology, power asymmetries, actors, institutions, agency, and the reifying force of numbers, in this section I attempt to bring these defining components together. Here, I present a conceptual framework which will be used to guide an analysis of the empirical pursuit of global public opinion, with a specific application to the case of the Arab region. The problematization of public opinion as an empirical object is not just about pollsters operating in global markets. By looking at the political contexts that drive the pursuit of public opinion, together with hegemonic rise of polling in the American social science tradition, one can begin to problematise the logic that informs our way of speaking about monolithic constructs like "Arab public opinion". The conceptual framework therefore represents *public opinion$_2$* in action.

In the interest of trying to deconstruct the idea of "Arab public opinion", I maintain an overarching argument that it (Arab public opinion) has been pursued and created by different actors to different ends, and that Arab public opinion inquiry has so far developed in three successive stages since the early twentieth century. This development begins with a mode of inquiry that is predominately foreign-led, then enters a transitional and transformational phase wherein foreign inquiry becomes deeply embedded and institutionalised in the region, and then finds itself in a stage of reclamation (of practices) by local actors,

which we are seeing in the field today. In a very skeletal and reductionist form, we can visualise these three modes of inquiry as follows:
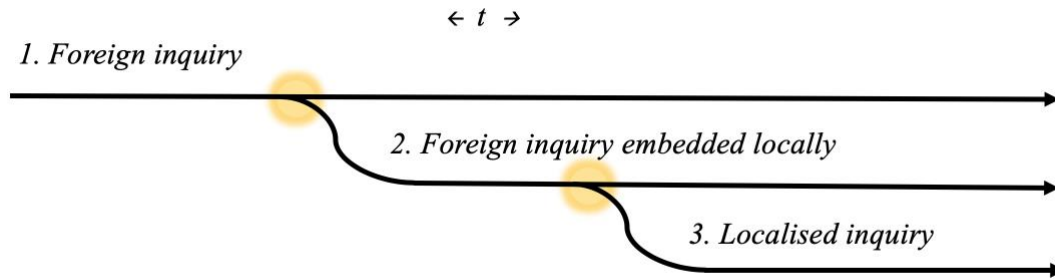
Figure 4: The branching of modes of Arab public opinion inquiry over time.

In the figure above, *t* represents the continuum of time, while each directional arrow represents an actor-specific mode of inquiry. We can see how the process begins with foreign-led inquiry, then subsequently branches out into different modes at different points in time. Vestiges of the first and second forms of inquiry continue to be seen today, which is why each of these arrows continues its forward movement. This reductionist visualisation does not tell anything of the intensity of each mode of inquiry, or the ways in which each has changed or diminished over time. Instead, it purely shows the branching of three geographically and temporally-identifiable phases. It also shows, importantly, that practices of public opinion inquiry are generative; they are learned and adopted from previously existing practices, and thus share certain characteristics, empirical assumptions, and tools. On example of a generative tool, for instance, is the sample survey, which has been utilised within each mode of inquiry by different actors, though the scientific rules defining a sample survey have changed over this long duration.

In order to describe this visualisation in more detail, I summarise below each of the three modes of inquiry, which I otherwise describe as "stages". I also consider the moments of transformation that spark the emergence of a new stage. In some ways, these transformative junctures are unique to the Arab case, but there is a possibility of generalising this basic model of development such that if we were to look to other cases in global public opinion, we might observe a similar story.

Each of the three stages described below is located in a time and place, demonstrating how the process of knowledge production cannot be separated from its historical and political contexts. The progression from one stage to the next is not meant to create a periodisation of the narrative into discrete blocks of time. I also caution the reader against thinking of these stages of development as evidence of progress toward a more accurate or a better understanding of public opinion. Some would argue that this is the case, but I refrain from saying as much because I am fundamentally interested in problematising the production and construction of global public opinion on the whole. This means that I forego evaluating the data or results of public opinion research, and instead concern myself with the practices that bring them into being.

Below, I present the three modes of inquiry that explain the development of "Arab public opinion" as both "a social institution and as a history and logic of thought" (Harding 1991, 222).

Stage 1: Foreign Inquiry

This stage represents some of the earliest attempts by foreign actors to study and maintain records of mass Arab opinion on issues relating to governance, statehood, identity, culture, religion, and community politics. I situate this mode of inquiry as part of broader historical practices that treated "othered" societies as scientific specimens under the lens of the outsider's (the Western) gaze. These practices included the counting of people, the (oft arbitrary) classifying of social groups, the administration of censuses and surveys, and other ethnographic modes of inquiry on large populations. Stage 1 is characterised by "epistemic interventions" into the Arab region by foreign actors. I define epistemic interventions as points of knowledge interference, where one mode of thinking or set of ideas about what constitutes knowledge inserts itself into another existing epistemic tradition and then claims the right to represent the other. These epistemic interventions were definitive political acts using empirical means that were often suspect—of questionably sound methods, design, and assumptions. I illustrate with the cases of the King-Crane Commission of 1919, Daniel Lerner's 1958 study of Middle Eastern modernisation in *The Passing of Traditional Society*, and the question of Palestine as it appeared in Western polls from the creation of the state of Israel to the Six-Day War. While there are many

more individual cases that can illustrate foreign inquiry and epistemic intervention, the selected cases are meant to address a broad enough spectrum of political and methodological issues, rather than being too close in kind. Chapter 5 is dedicated to this analysis of Stage 1 ("Arab Opinion in the Colonial Imaginary"). While Stage 1 is not temporally fixed, I focus the fifty-year period from the end of the First World War in 1919 to just after the Six-Day War of 1967. During this time, public opinion (as a concept and as a practice) was undergoing important scientific transformation as polling was rising the ranks of popularity as the seminal way of *doing* public opinion.

In delimiting the earliest stage of Arab opinion inquiry within colonial and postcolonial settings, I am tracing a particular mode of social-scientific inquiry carried out by Western experts and scholars whose goal it was to contribute to a unified science of opinion research for the world. While this mode of inquiry has diminished in intensity, we can still see vestiges of the same thinking in institutions that outlived the period covered in Stage 1 and continue to operate in the area of global opinion research today.

Stage 2: Foreign Inquiry Embedded Locally

This next stage covers substantial transformative ground from the late 1970s and early 1980s onwards, during which time we witness the proliferation of international institutions dedicated to social research in the Middle East and North African region, as well as a coalescing of a regional "Arab public sphere" (Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Lynch 2006; Ayish 2008) hastened by revolutionary advances in media landscapes. Stage 2 unfolds in the midst of developments that encouraged greater mobility and dialogue among Arab populations and sparked interest in the region both as a strategic asset and an ideological threat in Western foreign policy. Chapter 6 is dedicated to this analysis of Stage 2 ("Great Transformations: The Rise of Embedded Institutions and Practices"). Similar to how I approached Stage 1, I do not suggest concrete temporal bounds need apply to this phase of development, however, I focus on the three decades leading up to the final years of the George W. Bush presidency in 2009, by which time "Arab public opinion" had taken up a prominent role in America's foreign policy interests in the Middle East. While the 9/11 moment can be thought of as the sort of pinnacle of Stage 2, the patterns of inquiry

characteristic of this stage continues until today. During this period of great change, I highlight a pattern of embeddedness whereby foreign actors/practices of public opinion inquiry rapidly "set up shop" in urban centres in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Yemen, and Libya (Morocco, Oman, and Sudan are found to be later entrants). This trend toward embeddedness came with the realisation that "a more original and authentic Arab contribution" (Tessler 1987b, 149) was needed in order to understand Arab society, and for this to happen, collaborative epistemic relationships would need to be forged with actors in the region. This marked a fundamental epistemological shift, and encouraged the development of a marketplace for Arab opinion data that was transnationally situated, with actors operating across multiple territories and with the lines between foreign and indigenous actors becoming increasingly blurred (Tessler 1987a, 20).

In delimiting this second stage in Arab public opinion inquiry, I aim to highlight the evolution of actors and of practices, within the context of more formalised institutional settings. While these settings encouraged a collaborative pursuit of public opinion by foreign and local actors, the hegemonic rise of polling as an American social science during this time, combined the authority of Western science around the world, engendered power asymmetries between actors in the field and led to the prioritisation of a decidedly Western-styled approach to building knowledge around Arab public opinion.

Stage 3: Localised Inquiry

This latest stage describes the reclamation of public opinion inquiry by indigenous actors, wherein we begin to clearly see the workings of a self-sustaining and self-serving approach to producing public opinion knowledge by way of a locally networked and inwardly-focused field of dynamic actors. Stage 3 is fundamentally about the agency of local researchers that has arisen through processes of localisation. While local Arab actors have operated in the field of Arab public opinion inquiry since at least the mid-twentieth century, the cumulative effect of generative research practices, knowledge-sharing, and the steep intensification of polling in the Arab region since the 1990s has allowed for actors in the region to mold their own agendas and impart their own learnings to

the field. In more recent years and particularly in the post-Arab Spring environment, in which structural changes to the social science research environment have taken place, there has been a shift of agency and power from the foreign to the local. Chapter 7 is dedicated to this analysis of Stage 3 ("The Local Reclamation of Public Opinion Inquiry"). Drawing on conversations with actors situated across the Middle East, I identify a special network of actors that have come to define the field, with unique perspectives that can be explained by the localisation of knowledge production, as well as by personal politics. Actors in the field are more likely to carry a "participatory ethics of research", something that is deeply political and rarely seen in the case of Western public opinion research today where pollsters assume an apolitical position. Stage 3 analysis uses evidence of methodological and practice modifications to demonstrate processes of localisation. Importantly, localisation begins to emerge years before the Arab uprisings of 2010/2011 (some cases reaching back to the 1990s). However, over time the personal networks and local authority of actors have strengthened considerably, and their capacity to shape the field is far more perceptible in recent years.

In Stage 3, the expectation that Arab actors lacked agency in relation to monopolising Western pollsters and professional bodies has been upended. The space for foreign epistemic intervention has tightened as local actors adapt practices to suit local needs and political conditions. In this latest stage of development, local actors appear emboldened, and a more participatory approach to knowledge production has slowly begun to disrupt foreign claims to "Arab public opinion".

The three-stage process above traces the development of public opinion inquiry in the case of the Arab region up until the present (Chapter 8 considers some implications). This "stages of inquiry model" can be distilled into an analytical map, using geographic and temporal markers:
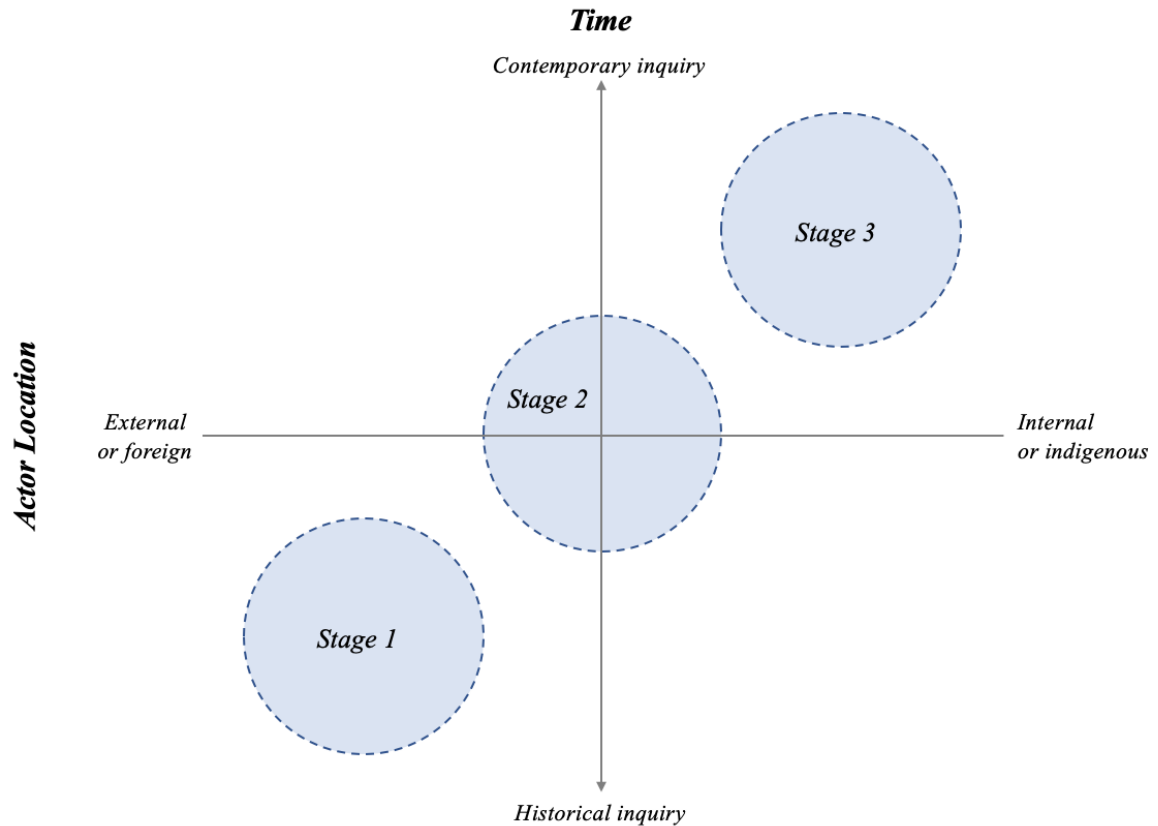
Figure 5: Analytically mapping the emergence of Arab public opinion inquiry.

In this map, the x-axis of "Actor Location" plots actors according to their geographic position, while the y-axis "Time" plots the historical progression of their emergence. What we find is that older, more historical forms of Arab opinion inquiry (Stage 1) were forged mainly by foreign actors. The subsequent embedding of foreign inquiry into the local setting of the Arab region (Stage 2) involved foreign actors located externally, foreign actors located internally, and indigenous actors located internally (hence at the intersection of the axes). In the most contemporary setting (Stage 3) actors are predominately indigenous and internally located. Visualised across two axes, the development of inquiry travels from the lower left to the upper right quadrant. While this mapping exercise of time and place is a fairly elementary analytical tool, it nevertheless provides a clear differentiation between modes of inquiry geared toward the same fundamental and pervasive question of Arab public opinion. Because all actors in the universe of Arab opinion research cannot be plotted accurately here (the number of known actors is far too dense and there are many unknowns), I invoke

this map more as a general schema for a story of emergence. Its application is useful inasmuch as it supports the argument for the development of *public opinion₂* relating to the Arab region.

Instead of defining the region for myself and locating practices of inquiry performed within, I follow the trail of literature in Arab public opinion research (as found in the methodology and specification documents of polls) that defines and re-defines the region for itself. Publics (and countries) are included and excluded, prioritised and ignored according to the interests of those doing the research. It is thus the field of Arab opinion research itself that must be held accountable for the construction of Arab publics; just as global opinion research contributes to the construction of global publics.

While the empirical story that unfolds in three stages above is helpful for the case of the Arab region, we might want to consider the extent to which this account is generalisable to discussions about opinion inquiry and knowledge production beyond the Arab case. Certainly, the history and development of polling as the hallmark science of public opinion research is not a case-specific phenomenon; we could trace its effects in any setting (and the American case has received an inordinate amount of scholarly attention already). But rather than one linear history applied to different cultural cases, I find that a more meaningful contribution is the use of paradigm shifts in the study of global public opinion and in knowledge production in IR more generally (recall Figure 2 from Chapter 1, where *public opinion₂* as an epistemic pursuit was mapped against small-scale paradigm shifts in the Western social science tradition). Identifying and mapping paradigm shifts in knowledge production allows for a clearer view of the overlapping assumptions, experiences, approaches, and methods that lie at the intersection of epistemology, history of science, and IR. A focus on paradigms and paradigm shifts is therefore a broadly useful approach. While this approach tells us something about dominant discourses, theories, and narratives, it does not necessarily help us to reconfigure knowledge or move beyond the status quo toward new and different perspectives. All that it can lend us is greater awareness.

The "stages of inquiry" account above also leads us to question the nature of change; namely, what triggered the evolution from one stage to the next in the

development of Arab public opinion inquiry? From a methodological perspective, one explanatory mechanism is technology. In general, polling mass publics has become less laborious and less expensive over time, especially as a result of Internet polling, pre-recorded telephone polls, and the outsourcing of different parts of the polling process to competitive vendors. These advancements have allowed for greater "masses" to be studied at once, and pollsters need not (and rarely do) personally encounter the people they claim to speak for. Economies of scale and advancements in polling technology are only a partial explanation for the case of the Middle East and North Africa, where the majority of studies continue to employ face-to-face interview methods.[12] This method is comparatively expensive, and polls and surveys must be "selective, and focused on producing the most useful kinds of information" (usefulness as determined by the agendas of pollsters and audiences) (Lynch 2006, 41). Other factors, like the strategic importance of the Middle East in policymaking must therefore be considered as well, as polling is generally deployed when particular policy issues pique the interest of the political community. Still, the fact that polling in the MENA region (regardless of the method) is far more feasible today than three decades ago is evidence of technological advancements in general.

We can also look to more specific mechanisms to explain change between each stage. Stage 1 covers a period of rapid development in the American social sciences, which grew with the support of political patronage and was modelled on the natural sciences and ideas about modernisation. During this time, social scientists increasingly laid claims to knowledge about the international. Their research efforts—mobilised toward containing the threat of communism during the Cold War years—propelled theories of modernisation and development that "were extant well before the term earned its common currency in the years following World War II" (Ekbladh 2010, 14). But the modernisation narrative,

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[12] Computer-assisted face-to-face interviewing is one of the most common methods employed in survey research in the Arab region. Organisations hire and train interviewees, who are deployed to randomised households to ask standardised questionnaires in person. Like all methods, face-to-face interviewing has its pros and cons. While it grants the interviewer more time with the respondent, the ability to monitor the respondent's surroundings, and the possibility of probing politically sensitive issues that respondents are less likely to answer by phone, it is a costly method with a high risk of measurement error due to inconsistencies between interviewers or the nature of interactions between the interviewer and respondent.

with its weaknesses and Western ethnocentrism "blindingly apparent", was in decline by the 1970s (Latham 2011, 157).

The shift away from the spirit of modernisation and toward alternative analytical paradigms for the social sciences during the 1980s and 1990s is found in the transition from Stage 1 to 2. Other important factors play a role in this shift, such as the shift toward an international development discourse, the "moment of uncertainty" in the social sciences following the decolonisation movements (Cooper 2004, 9), as well as the intellectual reckoning that came with Edward Said's critique or orientalism (1978). As Burke and Prochaska write, Said's *Orientalism* "marked a paradigm shift in thinking about the relationship between the West and the non-West" (2008, 1). Thus, we can presume that the branching off of Stage 2 inquiry takes place at a time of a major ideological and political disruption in the social sciences as a result of far-reaching structural and political changes in the world, as well as a post-colonial awakening. Meanwhile, Stage 2 plays out in the aftermath of the Cold War, during which time the rapid acceleration of the effects of globalisation transformed public opinion inquiry into a consumerist endeavour (especially through its sister discipline of market research), as much as a scholarly one. The events of September 11, 2001 and the threat of international terrorism marked a new kind of political turbulence, and a totalising view of the Arab world became part of the discourse of public opinion (one that magnified an "us" vs. "them" ideological framework).

The events of 9/11 itself were not a transition point for public opinion inquiry (though it did greatly intensify research on "what Arabs think"; see, for instance, Zogby 2002a). Rather, the transition from Stage 2 (foreign-embedded inquiry) to Stage 3 (localised inquiry) seems to have emerged as a result of a "local event"; namely, the Arab uprisings and the renegotiation of civic politics on a regional scale. The sheer magnitude and profound importance of the uprisings motivated local research efforts and opened a window of opportunity during which time politically sensitive research in the Arab region experienced a moment of freedom for many, only minimally obstructed. Research practices were revitalised, and new actors emerged, who had watched this political storm unfold. We can therefore presume that the branching off of Stage 3 inquiry was spurred by a critical local (regional) event.

In sum, while each of the three stages is motivated by different epistemological questions, their emergence comes as a result of ideological shifts and local political events. Arab public opinion inquiry has become formalised and institutionalised along the way, and in each stage, a different set of primary actors come to establish authority over the problems of public opinion. These actors are animated by their own assumptions, interests, and politics, which recalls Bruno Latour's affirmation that "science is politics pursued by other means", i.e., as a technology and an artefact of power (in Bueger 2012, 101). In seeking to reposition my substantive argument about the Arab-region case as a formal, more generalisable argument about global public opinion and knowledge production, I acknowledge that there is much more analytical work that needs to be done. Nevertheless, the conceptual toolkit assembled in Parts 1 and 2 of the thesis are relevant beyond the Arab case. At the same time, the guiding star of the project—which orients the research questions, argument, design, and empirical work—is the narrowly understood phenomenon of "Arab public opinion".

6   Conclusion

I have so far explored some key concepts, thematic issues, and theoretical debates that animate this thesis and together shine a light on the relatively uncharted terrain of public opinion inquiry in and on the Arab region. In this chapter specifically, I have further problematised and tethered together ideas about knowledge production, actors, and practices in order to build a conceptual framework that will be applied to the main research question: how can we explain the rise of public opinion knowledge on the Arab region? In constructing a three-stage narrative for the development of Arab public opinion inquiry, I contend with historical legacies of colonial knowledge production, as well as the global spread and institutionalisation of Western social science. These histories do not normally make an appearance in existing conversations about Arab public opinion research. Thus, more than just filling the gaps in our knowledge of the subject of Arab public opinion with descriptive information and interview data, I wish to build a more cohesive historical and sociological account, which views epistemic actors and practices as inherently political rather than taking for granted their role in the production of knowledge. That claims to knowledge

about Arab opinion have passed through foreign hands and are today being recovered at the local level paints an "arc of return" of local knowledge. In this way, attention should be paid not only to the emergence and continuing strength of local epistemic actors, but also to the burdens of knowledge and history that they might carry with them.

Part Two

The Field of Global Public Opinion Inquiry

Chapter 3
Searching for Public Opinion: Insights from Pollsters

Once public opinion is defined as the raw material for opinion polls, the various techniques used for turning words into numbers disappear, so that the columns and percentages emerge as if they are unmediated expressions of public attitudes and desires.

Justin Lewis (2001)

Public opinion must obviously be recognised as having its setting in a society and as being a function of that society in operation. This means, patently, that public opinion gets its form from the social framework in which it moves.

Herbert Blumer (1969)

The Public is a political state.

Sina Odugbemi (2011)

In Chapter 1, I explored the conceptual roots and competing definitions of public opinion—an interdisciplinary concept that has at once been shaped by political theorists, sociologists, cognitive and behavioural scientists, and media specialists through the course of its (relatively recent and ongoing) genesis. I discussed the evolution of public opinion from a democratic ideal to a "scientised" and abstracted representation of subgroups of populations defined by precise categorical parameters. The fluctuations in the development of this concept are at least partially explained by the fact that ways of speaking about public opinion are found to be confused and conflated in the literature, where public opinion is treated as a muddy amalgam of different elements. In Chapter 1, I argued for the need to separate the broad ideal of public opinion as something that represents

the general will (*public opinion1*) from the epistemological practice of locating and transcribing it (*public opinion2*). Specifically, *doing* public opinion research by way of practicing particular methodologies that capture and (re)present snapshot sentiments through numeric data leads us to something that approaches (but should not be) confused with the will of the people. That is because the epistemological sense of public opinion contains its own set of assumptions which favour scientific and systematic approaches to observing and recording pre-defined publics.

The ongoing debate over how to define "public opinion" has mainly taken place among scholars and academics. Outside of the scholarly literature, we have little sense of how pollsters and practitioners working in the field of research create, contribute to, or even dissassociate from the dominant discourses about public opinion. In this chapter, I consider the position of pollsters, as practitioners, toward the idea of public opinion and present some of the ways in which they speak about the concept. Drawing on original interviews conducted with international pollsters, I synthesise their musings and insights about the qualities and characteristics of public opinion as their object of study.

To this end, we might expect pollsters to describe public opinion similar to how they have been trained to measure it: for example, if a good amount of your professional job involves tabulating or managing a database of individual opinions, it may lead to a working definition of public opinion as an indicator used to convey the aggregate of individual opinions pertaining to certain issue areas. If instead your job is to mediate focus groups and distill thematic linkages from participants' dialogues, public opinion might be defined as communally-directed words and feelings toward certain problems.

In navigating conversations with pollsters and expert practitioners located in Ann Arbor, Amman, Beirut, Doha, Princeton, Tel Aviv, Ramallah, and Washington D.C., my main aim is to examine the dominant discourses (co)constitutive of public opinion research as they are represented in the views of practitioners themselves. Through the process of interviewing I found that the interviewees were surprisingly reflective about public opinion, and they expressed many nuanced and differentiated views about it. They do not find useful recourse to a common definition. Instead, I identify three different senses

of public opinion that exist in the global polling and survey research industry: the first sees public opinion as an objective and scientific reality, the second sees public opinion as a malleable construct, and the third sees public opinion as a form of emancipatory power. In some way, each of these perspectives is anchored by existing theoretical debates. I also sensed an interesting analytical confusion when pollsters would habitually equate public opinion results with the "public will at large" in the abstract sense. In essence, I found that even practitioners stand divided as to how to define public opinion (mirroring the long-running scholarly debates) and it appears to me that public opinion is not and has never been one thing. In other words, there is no one thing that public opinion can possibly be; rather we find divergent understandings wherever we look.

As a secondary narrative in the chapter, I also consider why pollsters might hold these different views on public opinion. To explain divergence, I suggest that the geographical and market conditions in which these pollsters and practitioners operate within shape, to some extent, their conceptual views. Although most pollsters' methodological tools and techniques are shared and standardised, it appears that their personal views are shaped more by the political and market environments that they are most familiar with. In addition, I note that pollsters with positivist inclinations tend to view public opinion as a valuable tool for policymakers or as a productive force for political decision-making. Meanwhile, those who expressed constructivist ideas about public opinion generally had mixed views on the matter: some would say that public opinion makes a difference to policymaking, while others were less convinced. Finally, those who viewed public opinion as a form of emancipatory power, or as something that confers and is closely connected to ideas about power, believed it to be absolutely necessary for the elevation of the masses in political life. This last group sees public opinion as something inherently political, and the effort of producing public opinion research is itself a political act. These patterns speak to pollsters' varied senses of the perceived usefulness of public opinion.

In sum, given that a complete conceptualisation of "public opinion" cannot be divorced from context and the legacies of knowledge production inherent within

(as is my contention), this chapter pays close attention to the practitioner's role in shaping ideational and empirical views on theoretical concepts.

1   Pollsters Share their Views: A Discussion on Methodology

Who gets to define public opinion, and which definitions become the dominant ones? In Chapter 1 we saw that there is no singular accepted definition in the literature, and it is clear that different intellectual traditions have laid claim to different conceptualisations of public opinion. We have seen shifting interpretations going back to the idea of a symbolic manifestation of the *vox populi, vox Dei*, and since then, the dominant definitions have been greatly shaped by theoretical and methodological trends in the social sciences. Stepping outside the scholarly realm and into today's extensive and growing industry of pollsters, analysts, enumerators, and data scientists, the question of how public opinion is defined is a seemingly crucial one—defining the object of inquiry is a key step when undertaking a scientific study. So how do pollsters and practitioners working in the field of public opinion research define and operationalise the concept public opinion? Do they tend to associate with a common theoretical tradition? In fact, our understanding of this is surprisingly limited, as no studies exist (to my knowledge) examining how pollsters in general approach either this concept, or more specific versions of the concept of mass opinion.

We might consider as a first step looking to institutions and professional associations for public opinion researchers. WAPOR, the World Association for Public Opinion Research (founded in 1947), is a membership-based international organisation comprised of entities who are commercially engaged in the production of public opinion data. In conjunction with ESOMAR[13] (founded in

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[13] ESOMAR is the World Association of Opinion and Marketing Research Professionals (formerly the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research) and is a membership-based organisation that accounts for over six hundred corporate research entities. ESOMAR has a norm-creation role in that it provides guidelines for the conduct of opinion and market research and seeks to regulate and promote the industry. The official guidelines are enshrined in the ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market, Opinion and Social Research and Data Analytics, developed with the International Chamber of Commerce, and outlining global standards for things like duty of care of interviewees, protection of children and vulnerable

1948), guidelines on the conduct of polls and surveys are published regularly, and include definitions, ethical considerations, and methodological guidelines. But curiously, we find no definition for public opinion in WAPOR or ESOMAR documentation. The closest equivalent is a rationalisation for the conduct of public opinion research, i.e., that "public opinion is a critical force in shaping and transforming society" (ESOMAR/WAPOR 2014) and that this justifies the methods of polls and surveys.[14] A sister organisation, AAPOR (the American Association for Public Opinion Research, founded in 1947), also omits any working definition for public opinion from their documentation. AAPOR's report of standardised definitions, which has been publicly available and regularly updated since 1998, focuses instead on technical terms relating to polling, descriptions of diagnostic tools, and calculated metrics.[15] These institutions fundamentally embrace the principle that public opinion research is an essential element of a healthy democracy and an important piece of the policymaking puzzle, and yet there is no attempt to describe public opinion beyond this. Moreover, no definitions can be found in the published materials of market research and polling firms like Gallup, Pew, and other established companies. Even the online glossary of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research eschews defining public opinion. Beyond references to public opinion as "views" there are no standard working definitions for public opinion available for practitioners in the field of research to draw upon. This curious omission perhaps gives practitioners more leeway in devising methodologies that are not tied down by precise analytical definitions or measurements. At the same time, we have no real indication of how pollsters and practitioners think of public opinion beyond the technical definition of a poll or a particular metric.[16] As a starting

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peoples, data collection, privacy, transparency, and compliance. The code, first published in 1948, now covers 130 countries where ESOMAR members are contractually obligated to abide by the code.

[14] ESOMAR/WAPOR Guideline on Opinion Polls and Published Surveys (August 2014).

[15] AAPOR Standard Definitions Report (2016).

[16] Poll and survey-based metrics might include ratings for approval, enthusiasm, positive intensity scores, confidence, satisfaction, and most pressing problem, for instance.

point then, it is important to begin to unpack how producers of public opinion knowledge understand their craft.

The in-depth interviews, conducted in the Middle East in 2016 and 2017 and in the United States in 2017, involved pollsters and practitioners with experience working on large-scale polling studies focused on the MENA region. For the purposes of this chapter, I limit interview-selection to senior-level researchers or analysts, directors of research firms, and other practitioners with established careers (such as consultants and scholars) who have dedicated a considerable number of years of their career to the study of public opinion. Of the twenty interviews drawn upon for this chapter, half were conducted in the United States, three in Jordan, two in Lebanon, one in Israel, and four in Palestine. The in-depth interview process allowed for exploratory conversations relating to the practitioner's role in the process of producing new knowledge, as well as their interactions with audiences of research, such as media outlets, policymakers, and academic stakeholders. In each interview, the question "How do you define public opinion?" was posed. However, not every interviewee was able to provide a clear answer. Many simply could not define public opinion, and there were clear differences in how answers were formulated based on the thematic routes and turns our conversations had taken until that point. Even in the absence of a clear definition, I did take note of the discourses or ways of thinking about public opinion that emerged from the interview, which in many cases were arrived at independently of the dominant debates in the scholarly literature. Surely, there are many more competing discourses at play in global polling industries than the three that I detail below. While I note the ones I found to be most apparent, I stop short of uncovering how these views are institutionally reinforced, though we can speculate in some instances. As an example, pollsters at Gallup had a tendency to repeat core company axioms or mottos in conversation, which first emerged in the original writings and speeches of George Gallup and are now found on the company's website and in press materials. This might suggest a process of socialisation through which certain norms and ideas become internalised within organisations, though further research is needed in order to better understand the mechanisms at work here. The remainder of the chapter is divided among the three competing discourses, which see public opinion as something that is scientifically objective, as malleable and socially constructed,

and as an emancipatory tool belonging to the public at large. Within each section, I employ theoretical resources to help summarise and ground the views of pollsters.

2   Public Opinion is Scientifically Objective

From the positivist perspective that public opinion can be discovered through scientific inquiry, two main ideals emerged that were reinforced by pollsters and practitioners. These were objectivity and accuracy, both of which are tackled in turn below.

Philosophers of science understand objectivity in a number of different senses; for instance, with respect to "the claims of a theory in relation to the world, to the process of gathering data, to individual reasoning about scientific theories, and to the social dimension of producing scientific knowledge" (Sprenger 2017, 3). Sprenger outlines three senses of scientific objectivity (in the context of statistical inference) that, for my purposes, are also very helpful for understanding scientific objectivity relating to public opinion inquiry. In the first sense, labelled "concordant objectivity", different members of a community (let's say, pollsters) agree to the factual reality of an observation. When the community (of pollsters) comes to believe and agree that tools like polls and surveys can observe and provide us with uncontested facts about the social world, those tools become objective truth-tellers.

A second sense of scientific objectivity is that of "value-free objectivity", wherein objectivity is ensured only through the absence of personal bias and subjective judgements. Indeed, the need to eliminate researcher biases, emotions, and judgements was often explicitly mentioned during the interviews as one of the ultimate goals of the pollster. In their view, polls and surveys could provide an impartial, direct, and unmediated pathway to the public by using neutral language, neutral forms of questioning, neutral recording techniques, and neutral aggregative and statistical treatments.

The third sense of scientific objectivity, "procedural objectivity", standardises the process of reasoning in order to obtain the same results every time, regardless of who conducts the research. Polls and surveys, in this view, produce systematic

forms of evidence about the social world. They involve assigning codes, symbols, and percentages to words, sentences, and sentiments in ways that can be standardised and replicated. They become part of the scientific process; tools that "bring science into the social" (Lewis 2001, *x*) or alternately, the social into the scientific.

Each of these three forms of scientific objectivity is valued by empiricists and positivists. As Lewis writes, pollsters are "people who believe in an objective world" that "will simply reveal itself in columns and percentage" (Lewis 2001, 6). By default then, pollsters seek to ground all results in observations, and in the case of polls and surveys, observations and measurements are in fact interchangeable. To illustrate scientific objectivity in practice and drawing on all three of Sprenger's senses, we can look to the Pew Research Center, one of the leading information hubs in the American research sphere. Pew presents itself as a non-partisan actor involved in the production of global public opinion and demographic information, as well as other major American projects and research initiatives. In official documents and on websites, Pew calls itself a "fact tank" as opposed to a think tank. Researchers at Pew based in the Washington headquarters speak in a tone that mirrors what is found in press documents and official memoranda. As one Pew Associate Director stressed, "We are a fact tank. Facts are objective science". Unlike think thanks, which often perform research in order to advocate for policy positions, might carry a partisan affiliation, or are often funded by governments, advocacy groups, corporations, or other entities with particular interests at stake, the designation of Pew as a "fact tank" attaches the allure of scientific objectivity to its work. The Associate Director understands their research to be objective because it relies on pure facts and observations extracted from the social world. This sends the message that Pew sees itself as a rational, value-neutral actor serving as a gateway between policymakers and people on the ground. This ties into the idea of concordant objectivity; the view that facts are objective and we know this to be true when they are confirmed by multiple independent sources.

A second ideal that emerged from this set of interviews was accuracy. Accuracy as a scientific ideal refers to the closeness of a measurement to its known value, or otherwise, how close it comes to the true value. The notion that greater

accuracy in results from polls and surveys influences the prestige of the pollster may not be surprising. But while accuracy in pre-election polling (measured) can always be checked against the results of elections (known), polling on complex social and political issues as a way to gauge public opinion cannot usually be checked against any clear known values. We simply do not have transparent knowledge about future political outcomes or the state of general opinion in time to be able to compare a poll with the real world; it is beyond our empirical capabilities to do so. This poses a validity problem, because accuracy ceases to be a helpful way to describe non-election polls and surveys. Instead, pollsters will focus on the soundness of their methodology or the reproducibility of their research design in trying to convey the message of scientific accuracy. An example is the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) based at the University of Jordan, Amman. "The department conducts scientific studies and surveys on various local, regional and international issues on a very high level of accuracy, objectivity and impartiality" (Center for Strategic Studies 2015). Striving for accuracy is possible, but ensuring it is difficult. A note in a joint-analytical report by the CSS and the International Labour Organization (ILO) spelled out that neither organisation would "accept any responsibility in case of inaccuracy, error, or omission of, for any consequences related to the use of this data" (CSS/ILO 2017).

Emphasising the accuracy of the method and justifying the choices that go into the research process were easy techniques to spot in conversations with pollsters. The popular perception that polling has become more inaccurate in modern times tends to force pollsters to go on the defensive; they see themselves as the gatekeepers of their field. They argue that the problems with the polls lie not in the methods, but in the interpretation of results, which is often out of their hands. Interpretation can take place in the media, in the policy sphere, and in the public arena, whereas the role of the pollster is limited only to producing the information and providing a forthright account. Sometimes, pollsters would explain their methodologies in depth, describing the stages of costing, sample design, questionnaire building, field scheduling and re-fielding, technological deployment, error compensation, data tabulation, weighting, statistical treatment, and presentation. Other times, the process was kept from view, like a closely guarded recipe that contains in it some secret elements which ensure that

the best (most accurate) data will be produced. For example, one interview took place with an independent Washington-based pollster who formerly worked for a major American polling firm, where they were involved in launching large-scale private surveys across the Arab region shortly after the events of 9/11. I asked whether one can justify the application of the same methods in different countries of the region despite divergent local conditions. The pollster simply said, "Look, the methodology that we imposed in those countries *was* accurate", without further explanation of what exactly was done. We are meant to trust the pollster based on their expert understanding of the method and their intimate relationship with the research process. They have a level of access that the public (the object of their inquiry) are missing.

This confidence in the methodology is part of a larger story about the rise of statistical thinking through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and which is now relied upon in almost all empirical scientific research (Romeign 2014; see Porter 1995). The great enthusiasm for statistics that developed during this time generated a need for quantitative expertise, new measurement systems, and institutions for quantification. As one polling expert and Director of the Institute for Social Research (ISR) based at the University of Ann Arbor, Michigan put it, public opinion research has grown from a "a missionary zeal to do statistics". The ISR (originally the Survey Research Center) was founded in 1949, emerging at a time when Bayesian statistics were in the early stages of development and would soon become popularised and implemented in public opinion methodology.[17] The words of the ISR Director ring with religious overtones. "The tremendous hopes that have been invested in polling since its origins" (Davies 2017) reflect our burning desire—as a society—to see what and how people together think and act in plain, unaltered view.

Pollsters who practice a positivist discourse also care about appearing scientific. Often, they will refer to what they do as "scientific polling" in order to distance themselves from media polls and other self-selective opinion-based tools and methods of research. Scientific polling, as they describe it, makes use of statistical

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[17] Bayesian theory is based on an interpretation of probability that expresses a degree of belief in an event, which made it particularly attractive for forecasting elections and results.

information during the process of selecting who to count as participants, relying on census and other official data to represent diverse demographics. Random selection of the group being surveyed is thus one main factor that dictates whether or not a poll is considered scientific, though this alone does not guarantee the accuracy of a poll. Even without making explicit recourse to statistical tools, public opinion research can manage to carry an air of "scientificness". I conversed with a Jordanian Director of Polling at a major social science institute, for whom scientific polling could be defined as "something that is statistical, representative, and uses scientific terms". The Director proudly noted, "We were responsible for the first instance of a scientific poll in the region". This represents the rhetoric of science at work. This rhetoric of science incorporates the language of math, statistics, and specialised vocabulary in order to convey specific messaging. Scientific rhetoric is about "persuasive forms of reasoning or argumentation that aim at changing the belief system of an audience in scientific debates" (Pera 1994, 58). Pollsters stand to gain legitimacy when they make strategic use of scientific language to appeal to audiences with non-scientific backgrounds.

This rhetoric of science might be used to make appeals to an audience, but it can also indicate a stalwart belief in the method, above all other methods. I met with one Palestinian statistician and pollster in Ramallah who was described to me by a handful of pollsters across the Middle East as "the best statistician in the region". The statistician, who has primarily worked on regional public opinion inquiry, remarked that "Survey research methodology is a fixed science. It does not change". Very few people hold the absolute belief that science does not change, and I do not believe we need to read these words so literally. Rather, the statistician is exhibiting a level of trust in survey research that has come to dominate the field. For the statistician, the method itself is a fact, it has been tested time and time again, and it has proven itself over and above other methodologies. In a later conversation on samples (i.e., subsets of the population), the statistician stated plainly that "Representative samples of one-thousand people, with a +/-3% error margin, are justified at the theoretical level". The sentiment here is that findings from a survey amongst a group that closely parallels the population as a whole can be generalized with confidence to the entire population, precisely because of the representativeness of the sample. This

is a standardized and agreed upon research protocol, which counts as the third of Sprenger's senses of objectivity; procedural objectivity.

The discourse of positivism gives clues as to how pollsters and practitioners see themselves and their role more generally. I noted that those who expressed positivist interpretations tended to see public opinion as a necessary and effective part of the political process. In conversation with one Research Analyst at a Washington-based think tank, we discussed to what extent public opinion data is actually used in the policy realm. The Research Analyst remarked that "Data brings [policymakers] closer to reality" and is commonly used and valued in Washington. The role of the think tank, when called upon, is therefore to "bring rational sense to policymakers who are not grounded in reality". For this researcher, data from polls and surveys is the translation of the general will into something that political elites can understand. These elites stand outside of reality and do not naturally come to know or understand it without cues and aids from intermediaries. The pollster's role is that of a saviour and interlocuter, providing the policymaker with the grounding that they need in order to be able to adequately understand a situation, make decisions, and propose ideas. The policy world in Washington was described as being infatuated by the objectivity, accuracy, and scientific rhetoric of data. As the Research Analyst remarked in the same conversation, "Fresh data from credible sources is the *lingua franca* of Washington D.C. Numbers are a truism for these people". The Associate Director at Pew echoed this sentiment, pointing out that policymakers in Washington are not data savvy; they are not people who work with numbers, yet they are transfixed by them. It is the job of the pollster, in this case, to employ scientific rhetoric to transform numbers into something meaningful (something that can be imbued with political meaning) for audiences like policymakers and other political elites.

The importance of data to elites is not only an American phenomenon. In Jordan, pollsters see their role as central to political decision-making because of a relationship forged between the former King Hussein bin Talal, who reigned until his death in 1999, and the growing community of social and political scientists. Multiple Jordanian pollsters noted his unique attention to statistical data (on the state of Jordan). One pollster, whose involvement in polling stretches

back to the 1960s and who has worked extensively with the Royal Hashemite Court throughout his career, recounted that "King Hussein used data to the last comma". Indeed, the monarch also helped to establish the CSS, which continues to work extremely closely with the state in their polling initiatives.

The insights presented above display the presence of a commitment to (or at least the influence of) the positivist tradition. Some commonalities are noted among the interviewees who expressed this particular discourse. For one, each of them worked for (at the time of the interview) or had made a career working for major firms and research institutes considered to be among the leading organisations in their field and respective country (companies with at least fifty employees or among the largest in their geographic markets). Each of these organisations are corporations, with the exception of the CSS, which is a major research entity accountable to the Jordanian government. Accountability to multiple shareholders and high-stakes media attention is likely a key reason why organisations such as these would value and promote objectivity and accuracy in their work, given that they must always appear to be authoritative leaders in their field. These discursive views emerged primarily in the United States and in Jordan, with the exception of one of the Palestinian researchers interviewed, a statistician.

In our conversations, the reflections of these pollsters were straightforward, almost unflinching; there is a confidence in the expert self, bolstered by a belief in the validity of scientifically-obtained social data. The combination of musings on the nature of public opinion here did not exactly get at what public opinion is (definitionally) but did demonstrate an understanding of public opinion as something that can be captured by standardised statistical methodologies with confidence: the methods of polls and surveys are accurate, accurate methods produce facts, facts are objective, and objective facts are true. There is no desire from the positivist-minded pollster to probe deeper into theoretical terrain or question whether objective facts are empirically ascertainable. Instead, they view themselves as the gatekeepers of this science of social knowledge and expertise.

3 Public Opinion is Malleable

While, as we saw above, the discourse of positivism is recognisable in commentary emphasising scientific objectivity and accuracy, a second discourse emerged among a set of pollsters that emphasised, by contrast, the socially constructed and changing nature of public opinion. According to this line of reasoning, public opinion is a fluid as opposed to a fixed science. These pollsters are aware that there is no strict agreement among scholars and experts on whether polls are perfect measures of public opinion. For instance, one Israel-based practitioner, who described their role as an independent polling consultant, said succinctly, "Polling is not exact. No science is exact". The science of polling cannot be exact because public opinion is a complex cross-section of independent thoughts, influences, ideas about choices, preferences and hopes, social judgements, unpredictable cognitive processes, and unknowns, and on top of this, the methodology is imperfect. And yet pollsters who understand the malleability of public opinion as a concept are still very much empirical researchers who "confine themselves to find out what people say they think, believe, know, or judge" (Krippendorff 2005, 133). They thus recognise the problem of conceptual malleability in public opinion while remaining committed to practicing the dominant measurement techniques.

To say that public opinion is socially constructed is to say that it "is not a fact of nature that could be found somewhere unattended, nor is it a tangible artifact that could be manufactured and photographed" (Krippendorff 2005, 130). It does not exist out there, waiting to be discovered, but is an artificial construct emerging from the interactions of humans and social groups. The pollsters interviewed were seemingly clear on this. Polls and surveys represent merely one piece in a larger machine fashioned to tap into the public imaginary. The Israeli Consultant admitted that polls and surveys are important and useful, but prone to manipulation, saying that they are "the best and most systematic measure we have. There is no better measure". And further, they are just one of a few different signals that we can pay attention to. Pollsters in this camp are therefore willing to adapt and potentially see beyond the opinion poll, recognising that

there are methodological limitations to large-N opinion research. Yet, they continue on their course, despite the recognized limitations in their methods.

As Klaus Krippendorff writes,

> All social constructions are constituted in the understanding that their constituents have of it and enact. Public opinion is no exception. It is constituted in concepts of public opinion for which numerous institutions compete—advertising, public relations, the mass media, politics, journalism, and last but not least the science of polling—each pursuing its own interests in shaping the concept of public opinion in its favour, and each relying on pollsters, social researchers, and relevant media to record and publicise it […]. As such, public opinion appears as a self-organising system that preserves the uneasy network of conceptions of itself (2005, 146).

Indeed, the co-opting of the idea of public opinion to suit different actors and interests is something that arose in multiple conversations with pollsters. One Director of Polling at a Washington-based think tank described how they derive utility and satisfaction from doing public opinion research, but "what happens with it is out of my hands". Public opinion information is an "uncontrollable" force. Once it leaves the hands of the researcher, it is prone to being shaped or reconstructed by others who come into contact with it at later stages. The Director recognised that data by its very nature is easily manipulable, and this is a reality of their daily work. Pollsters are not policymakers and do not see themselves as activists or advocates for non-neutral positions. By clearing up questions about their own neutrality, pollsters effectively set themselves free from blame. They are inculpable; determined to remain innocent while deflecting when necessary to those actors whose job it is to interpret or (mis)read data. This protective mechanism preserves the neutrality of the pollster, renders them apolitical, and keeps the process of transferring public opinion knowledge from publics to elites in balance because the pollsters remain invisible in the process. The main message is "Don't shoot the messenger". But at the same time, there is an admission that polling data is not one reality; rather, its ability to be misconstrued allows it to wear multiple faces at once.

Scientific accuracy is not a reasonable ideal or an absolute goal of the pollster who understands public opinion to be an ever-shifting thing. Instead, the focus is on keeping numbers in the ballpark or within a generally accepted (and expected) margin of error. As the Israel Consultant explained, "You don't need accuracy within a single percentage point. The figures we have are good enough". They give us a sense of what we're looking for, or at the very least give clues that lead us toward the correct analytical directions. To expect total accuracy is both futile and unnecessary. One Director and Co-Founder of a Lebanon-based market research firm (which also operates in the Gulf region) admitted that "Most [public opinion] data is problematic" and that this is generally known and understood across the practitioners' world. Some of the pollster's doubts here are about methods—are the right questions being asked? Does the wording of questions have the effect of manipulating the public respondents or leading them into ambiguity? Do other pollsters cut corners, and how can we know? But the same issues also extend to the way that public opinion is talked about as an idea. It is, at its core, a "problematic" concept. Going back to Krippendorff, "Public opinion is the artifact of how public opinion researchers conduct themselves in public, which includes the questions they ask of their interviewees, what they do with them, and how they publish their findings" (2005, 134). The concept itself becomes an instantiation of the methods and approaches embodied by public opinion researchers. Problems and uncertainties in the methods thus naturally give way to problems and uncertainties in how public opinion is talked about more generally.

Pollsters and practitioners who conveyed this constructivist discourse also highlighted the evolution of technologies in public opinion research. At Gallup, Inc., the Washington-based private firm founded by George Gallup in 1935, one Data Consultant explained that even though the methodology of polling is standardised, "There are innovations over time. Changing the survey constantly makes it a malleable science". The Consultant described their philosophy toward polls and surveys as an acceptance of the inevitable imperfections and problems that arise in their daily craft. Their objective is to try and fix these problems, for instance by "making any changes that better the survey", rather than to maintain absolute consistency in line with past motives and methods. Consistent, unchanged (or minimally changed) survey questionnaires are usually used to

trend public opinion data over time. Alterations can break these trends, and given that trends and forecasts are often considered two key objectives of polls, a philosophy of innovation as opposed to uniformity is an uncommon position to find.

While an openness to the changing nature of technologies of research is seen in some pollsters, others suggest that we need to look beyond the dominant tools and techniques to understand public opinion. Though they are pollsters by practice, they too rely on other methods to supplement the sometimes shaky or incomplete stories derived from the polls. A prominent Jordan-based pollster with a background in psychology has come to realise this over the course of a six-decade long research career, during which time they have worked on public opinion as it relates to Middle East market research, electoral and non-electoral political polling in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and national and regional research in collaboration with the Jordanian government, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the International Republican Institute (IRI). In a conversation about the pollster's "ethics of public opinion research", the importance of blending methods came through. "Qualitative research puts you in the frame of everyday people", something that quantitative research cannot do as successfully. Focus groups, in-depth interviews, and direct observation are qualitative tools that help to tell elements of the story which standardised interview and online questionnaires often miss. They allow room for exploring why individuals might hold the views that they do, helping to *understand* opinion as opposed to just *measuring* it. It is this understanding—as opposed to just measuring—that makes a pollster more adept and a better expert. The pollster, in this sense, values the closeness to individual members of the public. The Director of the Lebanon-based market research firm mentioned earlier also conveyed a strong openness to other ways of understanding public opinion. "We need a more *participatory* approach [to public opinion research]. For instance, comparing different methodologies as opposed to total global standardisation". Further, "We must change the methodology to suit the times". Thus, public opinion research cannot effectively see itself as a fixed science and still thrive; instead, the methods shift and change not only because researchers aim to get closer to the truth, but also because the object of inquiry (public opinion) and its market are moving targets.

The social construction of public opinion also emerges when we consider the ways in which public opinion is put to use. Its perceived *usefulness* determines its purpose and shapes its conceptual meaning. This can be otherwise framed as the fundamental question, "What is the social reality that polling operationalises?" (Krippendorff 2005, 134). One Research Analyst at a Washington-based think tank put it this way: "Public opinion is about *symbolic politics*". Symbolic politics in this sense requires us to pay attention to *meaning* in political acts rather than other substantive elements. Conveying meaning becomes the political end in itself. The Analyst continued by explaining that "The scientific gaze on public opinion is really more about salience, and about what sells. It matters what you use it for". Public opinion for this Analyst is useful inasmuch as it is perceived to be impressive, important, or marketable. Given that the Analyst's role is to produce information for policymakers, data is useful inasmuch as it relates to policies people will find relevant and in line with their interests. Contrast this with other ideas about the social reality that polling operationalises: one Senior Analyst at Gallup, for instance, said that public opinion is about "perceptions of things". These perceptions drive behaviour, and "political leaders need to know these behaviours". So, public opinion fulfills a need for political leaders. Given that a large part of Gallup's role involves sharing data with political leaders and other elites, it seems fair that the Senior Analyst's impression of public opinion reflects the usefulness of data from this perspective. Another example comes from a Research Analyst working in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) at the US Department of State in Washington. The Analyst described public opinion as being about intelligence. Intelligence, in this sense, refers to the collection, processing, measurement, and interpretation of information concerning foreign states and peoples. Its perceived usefulness as a tool to support foreign policy directions and national security is embedded in the Analyst's understanding of public opinion. These examples reveal the different social realities (for policymakers, elites, and intelligence communities) that public opinion polling operationalises.

The insights presented here reflect a sense of public opinion as something that is socially constructed: it is naturally malleable at both the theoretical and practical levels. The dominant measurement tools and techniques are prone to change and innovate, in some cases because of their inherent imperfections. These tools and

techniques are also considered alongside other means of producing public opinion knowledge, such as qualitative approaches. The reflections from each pollster are shaped, to a large degree, by what their data is ultimately being used for— policymaking, advising political leaders, and/or providing security intelligence. Utility is therefore one determinant of how pollsters perceive public opinion; it is not value-free. Those who expressed constructivist interpretations of public opinion generally had mixed views on its usefulness. The Lebanese Director raised the issue that polling is irrelevant during times of war; its usefulness ebbs and flows based on political conditions. But at the same time public opinion polling "helps policymakers to understand what the people want". According to the Israeli Consultant, "polling is just one piece of a political machine", which is to say that public opinion research is not enough to manage all points of disconnect between people and leaders. The Jordan-based pollster, meanwhile, cited their close working relationship with the state as one of the conditions for public opinion data translating into policy. Not all pollsters have this relationship of mutual support with government. Finally, the Washington-based Analyst, when asked "Does public opinion [data] matter to policy?", answered that "It is about flavour rather than kind; it's about nuances". The Analyst suggests that the question be rephrased to ask what forms of public opinion matter to what kinds of policy, as opposed to whether public opinion matters per se.

The first set of interviewees who perceived public opinion as scientifically objective and exhibited a commitment to the spirit of positivism, were mostly working in the setting of large companies. By contrast, interviewees who expressed the malleability of public opinion, with the exception of Gallup, were either independent pollsters or worked in smaller operations with less than thirty employees. The INR office of the US Department of State has a small team dedicated to global public opinion research. The remaining operations comprised either of think tanks or small-to-mid-sized operations in Washington, Jordan, and Lebanon. The smaller size of operations may contribute to ideas about public opinion as something that changes or is volatile, simply because these pollsters are more likely to engage in methodological experimentation and exploration and test different approaches with fewer clients. In short, the methods of polls and surveys are considered adaptive, evolutionary, and imperfect. There is a

willingness from the constructivist-minded pollster to consider the limits of their craft. Still, their understanding of public opinion is bound by the perceived functional utility of the information they produce, leading them to view public opinion research as a means to different ends.

4   Public Opinion is Emancipatory

To say that the public is a political state is to see the potential for publics to embody a type of structural governance (Odugbemi 2011). Being able to hold states accountable for their actions is part of the power of the public, which means that public opinion is about much more than "a mere aggregation of attitudes that have not been reflected upon"; it is about larger processes of debate and discussion in the public arena (Odugbemi and Lee 2011, 7). As became apparent from a subset of pollsters interviewed, public opinion is also about fostering a sense of identity and inclusion in these same processes of debate and discussion. The third discursive tone that emerged from interviews with pollsters and practitioners understood public opinion as a form of civic emancipation or civic power. Neither does it prioritise the scientific soundness or objectivity of data, nor the perceived utility of data for private interests, nor developments in methodology and technology. Rather, it focuses on public opinion as a tool that can be used by people for the betterment of their societies. It is emancipatory in the sense that it procures the right of representation for different subgroups in a society. The pollster still has an important intermediary role to play here, especially in designing tools for "representativeness" and facilitating processes of communication between people and media and governments. Public opinion research is therefore seen as having an increasingly central role in political life, while conceptualisations of public opinion take on a normative dimension.

The Arab Barometer describes itself as a "research network", comprised of academic and research institutions who collectively have produced large-scale national opinion surveys in five waves since commencing data collection across

multiple countries in the Arab region in 2006.[18] In a conversation about the formation and purpose of the Arab Barometer initiative, one American Project Director said that polling is about "using science to empower the region". For this reason, the Arab Barometer is transparent with its data, publishing survey materials and results online for public consumption.[19] This transparency is what the Project Director believes is "key to the sustainability of polling", namely, for polling to make progress as a science, it must lay bare its mistakes and imperfections so that when polls and surveys "get it wrong, it doesn't come as such a shock", but rather as an opportunity to learn and improve the methodology. When the normative dimensions of public opinion are prioritised, a different ethics of public opinion research emerges. Instead of serving a particular utilitarian function or being sold as a commodity, data is multi-purpose: it becomes available for anyone to make use of analytically.

In response to the question, "What is public opinion?", the same Project Director carefully reflected and then said that public opinion means "giving each individual in society a voice. Empowering them. It creates a level playing field". A level playing field connotes equal opportunity and equal representation. The idea here is that each individual understands that their views are not excluded or marginalised by the complex processes of sifting, aggregating, and statistically manipulating a small sample of expressions and opinions. This is a distinctly different interpretation of the representative sample. While the discourse of scientific objectivity would understand the representative sample in public opinion methodology—a subset of a statistical population that accurately reflects the (demographic) makeup of the members of the entire population—as an approach that has strong external validity and generalisability, an emancipatory discourse highlights a principle of inclusion whereby majority and minority views and subgroups are visible within the bigger picture of a society painted by the polls.

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[18] The first Arab Barometer survey (Wave I) was conducted between 2006 and 2009, and subsequently, Wave II (2010-2011), Wave III (2012-2015), and Wave IV (2016-2017) were released. The fifth and latest wave, conducted between 2018 and 2019, was initially publicised in June 2019.

[19] Pew Research Center also publishes its data online for public consumption.

Public opinion research can also have the effect of fostering a sense of identity in and among communities and subgroups. "Especially in countries where leadership is not close to the public … polling keeps people in contact with democracy. And we need polling for citizens to see who they are part of more broadly". This was remarked by a Lebanon-based Director of Polling whose own data is not made public, though the pollster acknowledged that public opinion data can only be transformed into a public good if it is transparent and available. When data is publicised, individuals are able to take stock of where they stand and whether their own views are supported by others around them. The polls, in this pollster's view, can help foster a sense of identity and belonging, especially in social climates that are not yet oversaturated or disillusioned by the polls. The democratic potential of public opinion research is re-embedded in the principle of inclusion, in which a spectrum of views is represented.

The discourse of civic emancipation also allows for a renegotiation of the relationship between pollsters and civil society, which becomes stronger as the pollster begins to see themselves as an advocate of the people that they seek to give a voice to. While it is more common for researchers to see themselves as neutral intermediaries who are responsible for producing public opinion data but are absolved of misuse or misinterpretation of the data *post-factum*, neutrality takes a backseat when the pollster sees their work as part of a larger cause. One Palestinian pollster and President/Founder of a major research institute, who has also worked as part of the World Bank-led Palestinian National Development Plan, explained that in their view, "Public opinion leaders are influencers". They can choose to operate from particular perspectives and advocate for particular causes. The pollster further discussed the notion of "polling for all"—the idea that polling methods need not follow existing models if they exclude relevant members of society. Rather, a more inclusive form of polling where "questions are designed around the needs of all" is advocated. In this way, people themselves become agenda-setters for research. Public opinion research is thus again about representation. If pollsters are seen to represent the diversity of subgroups and minority views in a society, then trust in pollsters and in the science of public opinion increases and the relationship between pollsters and civil society becomes stronger. Speaking more on this idea of inclusivity, the same pollster remarked, "I am not doing polling for the sake of polling", but as a way

to give some sort of power to the people. Through representation, public opinion is thus a form of power that members of a society can hold, and pollsters help manifest this power by producing data and information.

The discourse of public opinion as something with emancipatory potential stands in stark contrast to the positivist line of reasoning (where scientific objectivity and accuracy reign). An interesting way of conceptualising the tension between the two views is to consider the gendering of scientific research. As Lewis writes,

> The symbolic power of numbers to connote science and scientific rigour is inverted on this critical terrain: numbers are seen to symbolise a narrow, controlling view of the world, an arrogant, anal-retentive, and characteristically male approach to social science. Thus the term 'number cruncher', with its connotations of empty-headed manual labour, becomes a pejorative term (2001, 7).

If the idea of data being crunched to create/control narratives and "truths" about the world is a decidedly masculine investigation of knowledge, then a gendered lens allows us to consider what a feminist critique of the science of polling might look like. Perhaps a feminist epistemological approach to public opinion knowledge, instead of outright rejecting empirical evidence as invalid, would "argue that most beliefs are more the result of their social context than they are objectively true" (Pressley 2008, 47). A feminist approach to public opinion research would not necessarily reject tools like polls and surveys, but would reconsider the politics of their origins, their application, their potential, and the manifold meanings that they reveal to us. This emancipatory discourse of public opinion aligns with critical perspectives in the literature, and while there is no sign of a gendered approach to polling in the literature (and it is outside the parameters of my research), I re-address the possibilities of a feminist critique in future trajectories of research in Chapter 8. But for the purposes of this analysis, we can say that this view stands in opposition to the positivist ideal of value-free objectivity because public opinion research must instead be understood as a normative pursuit that has inevitable social, political, and ethical consequences (see Douglas 2009).

The discourse of civic emancipation may not be the dominant way of talking about public opinion, but it emerges where the pollster values transparency and

the accessibility of data. Those who expressed the view of public opinion as a form of emancipatory power saw public opinion as absolutely necessary for the elevation of the masses in political life. These pollsters are not alone in thinking that participation in the public sphere is necessary for a just society (see Rawls 1971; Habermas 1962). The aforementioned Palestinian Director was one of few pollsters I encountered who discussed the need to "push for the diversity of questions, from political violence, to social issues, to sex and AIDS, corruption in leadership", topics otherwise considered taboo or too sensitive to discuss in public forums. The Director's desire to push the boundaries of collective discussion using questionnaires is geared toward progressing civic discourse on the whole. A second Director of another major Palestinian research organisation discussed how, from their experience, Palestinians display a willingness to speak openly about political issues and that it would serve leaders well to listen. Pollsters thus fill the space between people and political elites without sending the signal of favouritism toward the latter. As an example, politicians or journalists often request to see the results of polls before they are made public in order to "be in the know", but pollsters refrain from doing so in order to uphold the principles of transparency and fairness in the public.

In sum, public opinion in this sense is treated as a public good, i.e., as something that belongs to the people and simultaneously enhances their collective well-being. As we will see in Chapter 7, this normative approach to research, which seeks to empower people by helping them to understand and through the artefacts of polls and surveys, has the potential to politically transform communities. Contemporary developments in Arab public opinion research have provided fertile ground for this human-centric approach.

5   Conclusion

After reviewing scholarly definitions of public opinion that have gained currency over time, I wanted to get a sense of whether practitioners actually reflected these definitions in their daily work. Through the interview process, I noted three general pollster perspectives relating to public opinion. 1) Public opinion is scientific. The epistemic and political authority of science is deeply rooted in highly-valued ideas about objectivity and accuracy (Porter 1995). 2) Public

opinion is a malleable and socially constructed concept. It is not a fixed science, but rather an approximation for representation. It is symbolic and has the potential to shift and change. Finally, 3) public opinion is a tool for emancipation and empowerment—both the empowerment of communities of individuals and of the study of opinion itself. We can see the linkages between the first perspective (scientific) and the rationalist/behaviouralist theoretical tradition. The second perspective (malleability) resonates with constructivist approaches to understanding public opinion. Finally, the third perspective (emancipation) feels novel and at the same time harkens back to the early, pre-scientific ideal-sense of public opinion as an invisible force that binds together all members of a society, to be wielded as a dialogical device in the struggle for political freedoms.

Additionally, I found that the market conditions in which the pollster finds themselves align, to a great extent, with their individual perspectives. The principle of scientific objectivity was pursued by some of the largest companies out of the subset whose existence depended on their reputations, while the idea of malleability emerged from smaller polling organisations that likely experience greater methodological freedom and work volatility. Meanwhile, the emancipatory view was found in the Palestinian case and in academic initiatives who make their data transparent. I return to the significance of the emancipatory case of Palestine in Chapter 7.

This exercise presented here had its limitations. Some pollsters, for instance, simply could not provide a conceptualisation of public opinion, while at the same time, the small sample and assorted selection of interviews means that it is difficult to assert that global polling practitioners will likely fall into one of these three camps. However, I take this to be a starting point in an area where we have surprisingly limited information; specifically, on the question of how global pollsters view public opinion and where these views come from. Nevertheless, the small number of examples derived from the epistemological and methodological convictions of the pollsters and practitioners I interviewed reveal nuanced ideas about public opinion, and demonstrate that conceptualisations of public opinion in practice are just as diverse and conflicting as in the scholarly literature: even in practice, there is no consensus on the concept of public opinion.

Chapter 4
On the Global Ascendancy of Polling

Statistics are to bodies and social types what maps are to territories: they flatten and enclose.

Arjun Appadurai (1993)

Our academic and practical understanding of the term "public opinion" has come to rest on one point: the opinion poll.

Taeku Lee (2002)

We have so far seen that diverging conceptualisations of public opinion are prevalent in the everyday practice of research, and that this is, to some extent, a mirror of the debates and contestations in a body of scholarly literature that traces back to Enlightenment-era thought. The stage has thus been set to welcome public opinion as an essentially contested concept. With this chapter, I turn to the application of the concept in order to explore a phenomenon explicitly tied to the study of public opinion—that is, polling. This chapter engages with the relentless desire to capture and manage populations and "the public opinion", and further traces its institutionalisation through the systematic use of polls and surveys on a mass scale.

This chapter tackles the rise of international polling in five steps. I begin in Section 1 by considering the ways in which administrative practices of counting bodies provided a blueprint for the study of public opinion. Section 2 follows with a brief discussion of the method of scientific polling. Sections 3 and 4 problematise the hegemonic status of polls in political life. I question where the authority of polls comes from and dissect the label of "pollster". Finally, Section 5 traces the global ascendency of polling and survey research through the

twentieth century as it followed from and contributed to developments in the American social sciences. Far from an exhaustive historical account, this chapter is concerned with the spread and institutionalisation of specific modes of scientific inquiry and behaviour which have "succeeded" in the sense that they have been replicated, reproduced, commodified, and globalised. The mapping of actors and institutions in Section 5 will subsequently prove helpful in the case of foreign-led opinion inquiry in the Arab region. Analytically, this chapter takes place from a more metatheoretical perspective, paying attention to the characteristics of inquiry rather than public opinion (data) itself. The groundwork laid down in Part 1 and Part 2 of this thesis provides a point of departure for the case analysis (Part 3). This point of departure is situated externally to the Arab region, the reason being that the study of Arab public opinion has not developed in a bubble and cannot be seen in isolation. Rather it bridges multiple overlapping histories and unfolds as part of a broader story of the globalisation of American-styled scientific opinion research in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which first conquered domestic public opinion and later set its sights on "empirically neglected" territories of the world.

1 Counts, Categories, and Enumeration: A Basis for the Study of Public Opinion

To count people is to determine the finitude of the social spaces we inhabit. As it happens, people are governed as members of populations, and populations are represented through observations, calculations, schema, probabilities, censuses, registrations, polls, and other administrative devices "invented to classify and inscribe identities as legal and bureaucratic categories" (Ruppert 2011, 219). As L. John Martin writes, "the idea of collecting, summing, and averaging the opinions of a population, as opposed to culling the wisdom of a community by listening to the sages who cared to comment or by achieving a consensus, developed gradually. On the other hand, gathering passive—for example, demographic—data about a population goes back as far as written history" (1984, 15).

The practice of counting individuals in a society has been performed by states to varied ends; for instance, in determining the wealth of a nation when people are

regarded as assets to the state, in drawing resources in the form of taxation, in producing inventories of materials that form the basis of economies, in executing military conscription, in keeping people under surveillance or control, or for the purposes of seeking political representation and participation, as in the case of electoral systems. In each instance, the act of counting is self-serving. It allows the state to account for itself and to come to know itself in relation to other states. In James C. Scott's words, it renders society "legible" to the state (1998, 2). The practice of counting might also enable individuals—as the subjects of the counting—to access extracorporeal knowledge about themselves through the lens of the state. Anecdotally, a 1940s slogan of the American Bureau of the Census encouraging people to identify themselves in their census, read "You can know your country only if your country knows you" (Igo 2011, 285). This suggests that a dialectical relationship between the individual and the state is born of the act of counting, though the asymmetry is tipped in favour of the state, for whom the counting translates to a mode of governance. It also suggests an obligation for people to make themselves visible to the state. Still, the administrative exercise of counting "all" peoples, which has grown to become "a near-universal institution for the development of state power and the imagining of shared national communities" (Lieberman and Singh 2017, 1), has the effect of bringing into being both the state and its peoples (Clarysse and Thompson 2006, 11).

Counting may appear a value-neutral and benign administrative activity, one that is arguably necessary for the management and functioning of large state systems and one that is also positively illuminating—in the sense that new knowledge is created to progress ideas about the state. Acts of counting "are, after all, generally viewed as matters of bureaucratic routine, somewhat unpleasant necessities of the modern age, a kind of national accounting" (Kertzer and Arel 2002, 2). In one view, counting has ordering and additive qualities that encourage consistency and a shared language. They can create "bonds of uniformity" amongst the counted, convey risk and change, and replace the unknown with a sense of monitored stability (Rose 1991). But by now we also know that counting populations is, of course, deeply political. People are rarely counted without being ordered—symbolically segregated—along hand-drawn lines denoting social difference; the act of counting thus somewhat superficially and arbitrarily produces populations. To count without classifying would mean

to assign each subject an equal value, with no perceptible distinguishing characteristics among them. Yet even a total population count involves classificatory schema, as it is usually the case that a population is defined on the basis of nationality, citizenship, living status, or whereabouts, delineating who is included and excluded. Counting and categorising are thus part of the everyday lives of states, and these activities help to produce identities (i.e., categories of race, ethnicity, language, social function, belief system, or other co-constituting markers) that order the social world. As Theodore Porter argues, categories become black boxes; "having become official, then, they become increasingly real", and further, these categories "occupy contested terrain. The numbers they contain are threatened by misunderstanding as well as self-interest" (1995, 42).

Many studies have focused on how contested constructs like race, legal status, and the ideal citizen, produced through the discriminatory acts of counting, classifying, or the enforced self-identification of individuals, serve to strengthen and legitimate the rule of the state (as a small selection, see for instance Skerry 2000; Kertzer and Arel's 2002 edited volume; and Ruppert 2011). These acts have sometimes been subversive, of the type that Ian Hacking calls an "unintended effect" of classifying peoples, as in how people might be organised according to their occupations or the "inevitable" divisions of social class (Hacking 1982, 280). "Enumeration demands *kinds* of things or people to count. Counting is hungry for categories" (Hacking 1982, 280). Seemingly innocuous descriptors we assign to groups of people in our everyday language might be part of the unintended effects counting.

These acts may also be overt, as when classifying intensifies opposition and violence between groups, brings populations into existence, or conceals them from view. Jan Busse, in his study on the origins of Palestinian statistics, demonstrates the ways in which the count via census and official figures has played a role in the quest for self-representation (2015). "From the very beginning, the development of Palestinian official statistics was characterized by a profound exposure to global dynamics. Within the Palestinian national movement, there clearly existed an awareness that modern statistics are crucial for the project of Palestinian self-determination and nation-building" (Busse 2015, 76). In this case, the tools for enumeration developed in the setting of conflict and

were harnessed in ways that shaped notions of identity and belonging. In the case of Burundi and Rwanda, Peter Uvin describes how population statistics managed to hide mass violence by continuing to indicate annual population increments in the early 1960s which "give no indication whatsoever of the death and flight of hundreds of thousands of people" (2002, 153). And Evelyn Ruppert questions the role of counting in making up new people in the case of the Canadian census, where "Canadian" was added to list of racial and ethnic categories only in 1996 after an indication that people were identifying as such even though the category was not considered an official one (2012). Following on Hacking's ideas of "making up people" (1982), Ruppert asserts that censuses "may inaugurate a new kind of person that had not been self-conscious before" (2012, 37).

Though they developed and were adopted unevenly around the world, practices of enumeration (census-taking) are broadly similar; canvassing territories, extrapolating from samples to larger populations, and incorporating vital statistics along with inventories of peoples and objects. As Tessler writes, censuses and population studies "constitute one of the relatively few substantive areas in which similar surveys have been carried out at many different points in space and time" (1987a, 200). These practices are part of institutional settings "within which the experts and their subjects interact, and through which authorities control" (Hacking in Ruppert 2012, 38). They are therefore embodied by institutions (census bureaus and statistics or population departments in governments), actors (census authorities and enumerators), and tools and techniques (paper forms, questionnaires, and categories).

As a methodology, enumeration translates chains of local observations into the language of statistics. By virtue of being quantifiable, enumeration allies itself to the spirit of rigour, rendering the social objective (Porter 1995). As a process, it is generally slow and belaboured, carefully planned and executed. Such large undertakings as a state census are carried out infrequently and have likely never been attained in a perfect form: not everyone who is sought by enumerators is reached, not everyone who is sought out chooses to or is capable of responding, not everyone responds truthfully, some people are purposefully omitted, some data are lost, some are erroneously transcribed, and changing estimation

techniques are just that—estimations. The census naturally, and often by design, fails at being fully inclusive. "The final reports and administrative techniques work on the premise of acquiring complete and totalising knowledge" even though their creators know well that numbers are unruly, and completeness is unattainable (Widmer 2017, 100).

The centrality of institutions, actors, and tools in acts of enumeration, as well as the methodology around recording, sampling, and extrapolating populations have provided a sort of template for the empirical pursuit of public opinion. Enumeration practices "are something of a model for the conduct of coordinated studies and/or replications in the pursuit of cumulativeness in other areas" (Tessler 1987c, 200). That approaches to counting were easily replicable aided in their reproduction and eventual standardisation. It is the scientific quality of replicability that allows for the same methods and practices to spill over into other areas of study concerning populations at large. As Tessler notes, "replication is thus an indispensable component of the scientific method and an absolute requirement for the cumulative production of knowledge".

Public opinion knowledge about populations is, in many ways, the same type of knowledge as is derived from counting bodies. As a start, opinion polls and surveys are modeled on census categories: if the census is taken to be an abstract depiction of the entire population, a sample will be drawn from the census to create a miniature population, who are then targeted for opinion polls. The classifications and omissions created through the census are reproduced in polls. We may think of opinion polling as a more specialised form of counting. What the census does to bodies, the poll does to opinions; both accumulate, aggregate, evaluate, and interpret data about populations. Polls add the element of voice to the census on a smaller (but categorically identical) scale. Both carry a constitutive force—they are not just descriptive exercises to represent populations, territories, and the bounds between groups, but also "performative technologies that literally produced them" (Isin and Ruppert 2018, 2). They can shape discourse and alter the way we speak of and come to know about populations.

The Greek term, techne (τέχνη), becomes relevant here for describing knowledge in the act of counting and classifying. "It is in Aristotle that we find the basis for

something like the modern opposition between *epistêmê* as pure theory and *technê* as practice" (Parry 2014). In *Seeing Like a State*, James C. Scott introduces the idea of techne as technical knowledge—akin to formalised or "settled knowledge" (1998, 320). Elsewhere, techne is described as art or a craft where the objective is the "application of technical knowledge and skills according to a pragmatic instrumental rationality" (Flyvbjerg 2001, 56). In essence, techne represents technical know-how in accordance with what Foucault calls "a practical rationality governed by a conscious goal" (1997, 378). In the case of the systematic counting and classifying of populations, the practical rationality that guides the science of enumeration sees knowledge of populations as an abstracted system useful for calculating projections, outcomes, and decisions. Despite the unruliness of the social world or the complexities of human identities, enumerators adhere to rules and principles that formalise and distill knowledge of populations down to universal rules and metrics. Just as in the case of statistics, where the relationship between a mean and standard deviation is formalised and universally applicable, principles embedded in the practices of systematic population data collection are similarly guided by techne. An ideal sample of a population, for instance, is defined as a random selection of people, who, by virtue of being subjected to randomisation, are assigned equal values and carry the same chance of being selected in the sample. This rule is generalised to all populations everywhere; it is a universal construct. Because of its universality, randomisation in samples generates high levels of confidence, i.e., a secure faith in the universal application of randomisation. This principle does not claim to produce perfect knowledge about the social world, but it is practiced as techne and thus enacted *as if it does.* We can extend this idea to any instrumental part of the methodology of counting.

The techne of counting and classifying is just as apparent in census-taking practices as in mass opinion research. The usefulness of techne for describing systems of counting populations—and by extension, opinions of populations—comes from its ability to tell us something about standardised ways of knowing. Standardised knowledge in the form of rules and metrics can be shared and taught, applied and tested, validated and reformulated. Standardised knowledge also enforces strict discipline on methods and techniques in order to minimise variation. It is at once useful and destructive: while the universalisation of

population knowledge allows us to describe phenomena scientifically, it also comes at the expense of other ways of knowing (it fills the universe of knowing, such that there appears to be no possibility of this knowledge being untrue).

While this discussion and application of techne to the practices of counting stands to be developed further, I find it to be a useful anchor in the field of the history of science, helping to problematise the technically-driven systems of knowledge that counting (bodies and opinions) produces.

2   The Method of Scientific Polling

To study the development of polls in political life is akin to studying at least two histories: one is a history of methodological experimentation, innovation, and failure, while the other is a history of its institutionalisation. Methodological experimentation in public opinion research has produced longitudinal surveys, sampling trials and sample bias, election prediction models, exit polling, questionnaire science, and more. It has led to developments in the study of representativeness, population weighting, total survey error, social measurements and calculations, probability and confidence intervals, odds ratios, house effects[20], and the list goes on. And it has attempted to reach members of the public through different means: in person, over the telephone, through newspapers, in magazines and news broadcasts, via post, online[21], and through real-time digital tracking. Especially when we consider how ubiquitous public opinion data is, experimentation and innovation are found to be the main sources of discovery, refinement, and often even mistakes about public opinion. The propagation of very specific tools, applications, and the jargon of polling naturally produces ways of seeing and talking about public opinion, and both the ability and inability to adequately measure a phenomenon will shape the ways in which that phenomenon is understood.

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[20] House effects account for all of the methodological decisions made by the researcher.

[21] Online polls and surveys are inexpensive to conduct but comparatively ineffective due to the tendency to generate low and self-selecting levels of engagement.

The history of the institutionalisation of these processes of experimentation, innovation, and failure provides another means for studying the development of polls in political life. As a starting point, for instance, we know that the statistical revolution "spurred the initial growth in survey research in Europe and the United States" (Norris 2009, 522), and that together with electoral studies, conventions and norms around public opinion research were established. Electoral systems have provided a strong support system for the rise of polls. A persistent, undying intrigue with solving the riddle of future uncertainties is deeply human, so it is unsurprising that polling developed as a way to predict political outcomes. As Smith writes, "as long as elections have existed, people have tried to anticipate their outcomes", and "horse race" pre-election polls have long been used to fill the void of uncertainty (1990, 32). Elections and polls are also naturally synchronised: the numerical format allotting one vote per citizen is replicated in the poll, where the assumption is that each person has an opinion on an issue and each opinion is valued equally.

The poll itself has evolved through different stages. The straw poll[22], for instance, is one of the earliest renditions of the pre-election poll. Contentious elections where the outcome was unclear provided opportunities for journalists and campaigners to take stock of what people were feeling by holding a straw polls at public meetings or from poll books left in public spaces where people wrote down their preferences.[23] Despite sometimes getting it right, the use of straw polls for mass public opinion was written off as flawed and unscientific, intentionally or unintentionally biased, and as capable of producing only a premature statement of public opinion at best. On the other side of an election, exit polls were developed as better checks against reality.[24] Not reserved for elections alone, the sample survey (based on the observation of a representative,

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[22] A straw poll (origin: American) is an unofficial or ad-hoc vote used to determine "non-binding" popular opinion on an issue, often an election, with a self-selected group of participants. Straw polls were often reported in early twentieth-century newspapers (mass-oriented "penny press"), evidence that public opinion and media have long been relationally linked (Delli Carpini 2011).

[23] The inconclusive 1824 American presidential election, which was ultimately won by Andrew Jackson, has been considered the first successful example of the use of straw polls as predictive tools (Smith 1990).

[24] Exit polls, still in use today, are taken immediately after voters exit a polling station.

random, or probability sample) was a revolutionary methodological development and serves as the gold standard of polling today.

Constructing a sample survey from the ground up is a very human endeavour, in that it involves human input or manipulation: it entails sample design, questionnaire wording, setting quotas for interviewers, coding of open-ended (verbatim) responses, data entry, and human error—none of which are automated and all of which require conscious decisions made at each step. And yet the fundamental principles of randomness and representativeness have entangled polling with probability theory, as a branch of mathematics. Representative samples which reproduce the demographic makeup of a total population on a small scale are more or less a baseline expectation. Today, the ideal sample for a state stands at 1,000 people, i.e., a thousand people are considered sufficient to represent the views of a state *in toto*. When an insufficient number of members of a population or subgroup required for representation cannot be reached, support mechanisms like weighting and prediction are used. And the time it takes to conduct a poll (from days to months) will depend on the method used to reach people in the sample.

The method of polling today, from the earliest stage of sample design to the interpretation of data, unfolds like an old, well-worn recipe: it is a consensus-driven step-by-step process that is both human and mechanical. Through the process, the substantive opinions of people are of little consequence—they must first be sorted, assembled, and manufactured. Only once they emerge from this process does a comprehensive and decipherable picture come into view. The tension between the scientific elements of polling and human bias embedded in the design, conduct, and interpretation of polls is practically inescapable for a method that blurs the line between the hard and soft sciences (we tend to see this tension flare when the polls miss the mark).

3   The Hegemony of Scientific Polling

The notion of hegemony might traditionally refer to the overwhelming capacity of political actors or subjects to shape the international system and reproduce forms of dominance in relation to weaker subjects within a shared space. In the

same vein, the idea of cultural hegemony extends this dominance to the worldviews, beliefs, value systems, and norms embedded in *status quo* ideologies. Hegemony offers a template for understanding the authority of scientific polling on account of its radical novelty and prestige. On the strength of science in society, Michael Polanyi once wrote that most "accept the validity of science as unquestionable and neither in need of philosophical justification nor capable of justification. You will rarely find this spelled out, but it is revealed by current practice" (1967, 533). Polanyi was referring to the authority of the hard sciences in society, but his message extends to the (social) science of polling, which has traditionally held greater influence and power than alternative means of social inquiry—not only in the social scientific community, but also in popular culture. The normalisation of scientific polling in society is a case of scientific and non-scientific communities growing closer together; "laymen normally accept the teachings of science not because they share its conception of reality, but because they submit to the authority of science" (Polanyi 1967, 540).

There is no doubt that public opinion polls and surveys have come to play an increasingly authoritative role in political life, becoming one of the most ubiquitous and socially trusted determinants of public opinion. Perrin and McFarland write that "few techniques are more central to contemporary social science than the sample survey as a tool for measuring the opinion of a public. The technique has become so entrenched that its historical, ontological and epistemological contours are hidden" (2011, 101). Similarly, Fried writes that "whether or not people like the polls and similar mechanisms, they are now a part of the landscape of our lives, having largely displaced other means of discerning public opinion" (2012, 6). Brady contends that "no other method for understanding politics is used more, and no other method has so consistently illuminated political science theories with political facts" (Brady 2000 in Fernandez et al. 2016, 859). And Korzi suggests that innovations and improvements to scientific sampling theory, polling technologies, and psychological study tools, combined with the predictive accuracy of many major election polls have fed the idea that opinion polls are the *sine qua non* of opinion research (2000, 56).

While there are myriad ways to convey the rapid growth of opinion polling, Figure 6 below shows the frequencies of relevant terms using Google's Ngram functionality, which displays growing mentions of public opinion polling and related terms in a contained corpus of literature over time.[25]
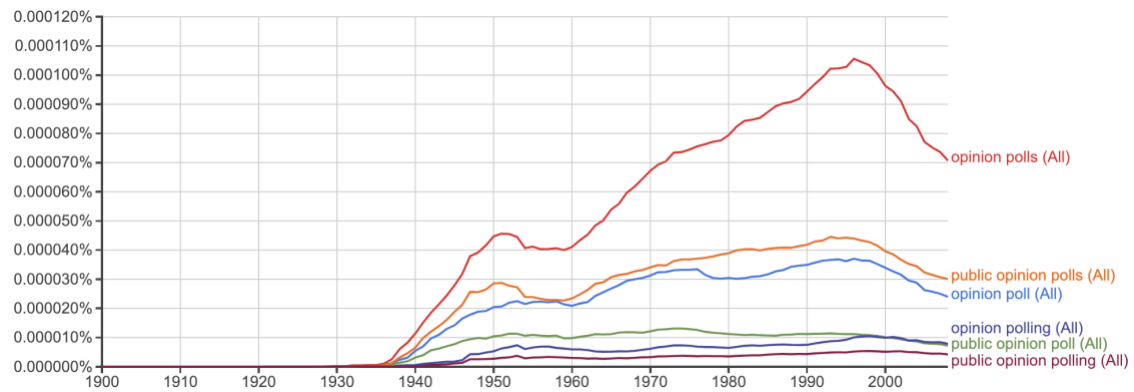
Figure 6: Google Ngram results for occurrences of phrases in corpus of English-language books, 1910-2008.

Similarly, Figure 7 below uses the Web of Science Citation Index (SCI) to chart the growth in citations for the same six search terms as above in the scientific literature.
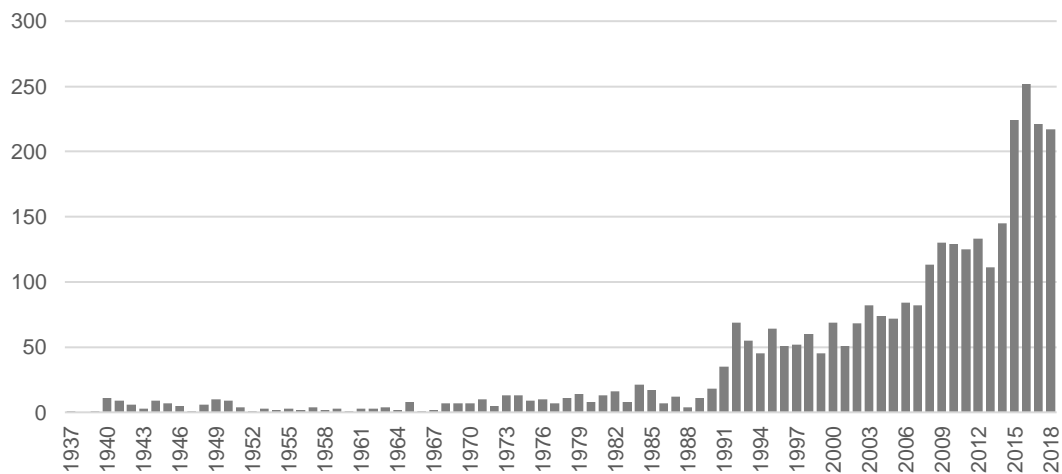
Figure 7: Web of Science Citation Index (SCI) results for opinion poll-related terms, 1937-2018.
Source: Web of Science Core Collection.

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[25] The terms "poll", "polls", and "polling" were omitted to minimise skew from unrelated results.

The oft-cited American setting (imagined as a "sea of polls") captures this growth in another sense (Lepore 2015). Lepore notes that "from the late nineteen-nineties to 2012, twelve hundred polling organizations conducted nearly thirty-seven thousand polls by making more than three billion phone calls" to Americans (2015). The sheer level of penetration of polling in contemporary political systems is difficult to capture, but it is certainly towering.

How did polling become so ubiquitous? Lee, for instance, wonders whether "the sovereign status of survey data may simply be a fortuitous historical contingency or, more forcefully, an outcome warranted by the simple fact that polls are the optimal way to measure public opinion" (2002, 79). Both these explanations limit the agency of actors and seem to suggest that the phenomenal rise of polling might be an inevitable development in the social and political sciences, one that could not have otherwise been resisted or influenced by outside intervention. Perhaps it has to do with the ease with which polling data-bytes can be digested and quoted, or the ability of polling data to provide quick validation of individuals' perspectives. Perhaps the problem that polling data soon becomes redundant and obsolete works to ensure its survivability, thanks to the need for replaceable data at a constant pace. Herbst reminds us that the opinion poll is not the only form of quantification in political life, yet it is one of the most attractive because of its seemingly objective and decisive nature, its ability to account for many individual opinions, and because of the authoritative power of numbers in general (1993, 2).

What does the predominance of polling as a research tool mean? For one, it fundamentally shapes the *how* and *what* of the field of research, given that much of our understanding about public opinion has come to be equated with, or at the very least rely on, "what opinion polls poll" (Korzi 2000, 56). Polling data by nature is static, disjointed, rife with cognitive biases, and sometimes derives from impulse (and while we may actually want to measure impulse instead of reason in political behaviour, the point is that impulse is volatile and difficult to generalise to large populations). There are therefore analytical ramifications to the increasing reliance on polls over time. The observation of the phenomenon changes the phenomenon itself. As Lee notes,

The ascendancy of survey research is accompanied by a shift in focus from public opinion as the subject of theoretical speculation to public opinion as the object of empirical inquiry. A casualty of this shift is that the normative and conceptual parameters of public opinion largely become presumed, rather than interrogated, and much to the neglect of alternate parameters of public opinion (2002, 296).

Regardless of what public opinion really is or what polls really measure, public opinion polls play a yet undetermined but surely prominent and symbolic role in the construction of ideas about nations, publics, identities, hierarchies, and boundaries. Though they may not always be correct, they are believable.

4   The Pollster

Who is the pollster? It may seem a fairly straightforward question, but as I argue for refocusing the empirical gaze on the pollster within the study of IR, it's a necessary question to address. Clearly, pollsters are individuals who conduct and analyse polls. They are the creators, producers, disseminators, and representatives of public opinion data. They uphold a form of method and research that is among the most customary modes of public opinion knowledge production. I consider pollsters as a category of non-state actor for the reason that they are individual experts with the capacity to hold influence in (domestic and foreign policy) decision-making and act as agents wholly or partly independent from government. The pollster bears a legacy of being summoned by political elites to enlighten them on changing attitudes, fear, impressions, and other fragments of valuable social information. Their role includes providing relevant information to key actors in political settings. This information might sometimes be thought of as a public good, in the sense that it may directly and/or indirectly impact the well-being of the public depending on the venue through which information flows, i.e., through strategic political channels, media, or politicians and campaign managers. As Byron Price claimed, "whoever keeps public opinion under the microscope, analyzes its tempo and questions every sign of malady, performs a paramount public service" (1945, 40).

Pollsters as a non-state actor-type are epistemologically and methodologically united, engaging in the same methods learned from common forebearers and

often coordinating their efforts and technical expertise within a community of like actors. The practices that pollsters enact are so consistent that those working today in Washington D.C., São Paulo, Allensbach, Abuja, Beirut, Kiev, and Quezon City converse in the same scientific language, engage the same methods, and produce results and reports that structurally resemble and speak to each other.

The idea of the pollster as a modern-day soothsayer has often propelled them to celebrity status. We are meant to trust the pollster's innate understanding of their methodology and intimate relationship with the research process. They have a level of access to the public imaginary that regular people themselves (the object of the pollster's inquiry) are missing. They may also play the role of pundit and political strategist. Indeed, pollsters who accurately predict political outcomes such as major election results often garner media attention and fanfare. Their data (the end-product) grants them the authority to represent publics discursively, and the results of their polling can greatly influence the course of political decision-making. One peril of this lies in failing to accurately predict future political outcomes. British pollster Henry Durant (1902-1982) once quipped, "it is the most stupid job you can ever take up, no matter how hard you try to find a worse one. If you get the election results right, everybody takes it for granted. If you get it wrong, you stand naked and utterly ashamed, and there is nothing you can do about it" (Durant in Gallup 1976, 19). Inaccurate results can make waves in media circles, after which a coming crisis of the polls is inevitably declared and then usually averted, if only because the deep entrenchment and institutionalisation of polling seems to ensure its survival (see, for instance, Silver 2014; Blumenthal 2016; Friedman 2016; Skibba 2016). In election or referenda polling at least, there is an overwhelming pressure on the pollster to prove that the method of scientific polling is accurate, verifiable, and replicable in the face of unforeseen events and unpredictable human emotions, reactions, and decisions. Part of the pollster's role is therefore to ensure the public has faith in the polls, as well as ensure the survivability of the method.

Another way that we can understand the pollster is by considering them in the context of what Lipari calls "the ritual of polling" (1999). Lipari describes the dialogical exercise of polls as being "ritualistic", arguing that "the practice of

consulting the latest opinion poll has become a ritual not unlike consulting the oracle was to the ancient Greeks. Then, as now, the power of the ritual lies not merely in the interview itself, but in its symbolic resonance with the larger community", and further, "rituals attain a privileged status in a culture by virtue of being distinguished from other practices" (Lipari 1999, 90). It is through the symbolic power of polls that the authority of pollsters comes to be legitimated, and through which pollsters, experts, and social scientists harness their specialised knowledge and conduct a social custom that affirms the existence of a reasoning public. Again, this equates the pollster with a soothsayer or seer—an intermediary between reality and the unknown with the special ability to demystify how we feel, act, or will feel and will act in the near-future. "Thus, whereas in religious ritual the specialist could be a priest or shaman, in polling the ritual specialist is the social-scientist-pollster who is appropriately qualified and trained to design, conduct, and interpret poll results" (Lipari 1999, 91). The lens of mysticism through which Lipari interprets the phenomenon of polling is very much tied to polling's active role in the daily procession of (democratic) political life. The risk here is when too much trust is placed in the pollster, who is neither immune to mistakes nor bad judgements. As Lepore writes, "pollsters, rose to prominence by claiming that measuring public opinion is good for democracy. But what if it's bad?" (2015). This question engages a distinct set of problems, which in today's political reality is almost a counterfactual exercise.

There exist very few surveys of pollsters themselves, but a more recent study titled "Polling the Pollsters" (Fernandez et al. 2016) attempts to better understand practitioners based in academic survey institutions (not commercial ones) across the United States, many of whom are accountable to or provide data for federal agencies. The authors found the demographic makeup of academic pollsters to be largely homogenous: about sixty percent were male, and ninety percent were white, while more than half had doctoral training in political science. There is no clarity as to what extent this homogeneity is reproduced in the full universe of pollsters (commercial or academic) across global polling markets. However, since the development of the American polling industry has taken shape in institutional settings characterised by the predominance of white men, we can expect, to some extent, that this will be reproduced in sub-settings of the academy. While the enterprise of polling is designed to account for the opinions

of all (via representative sampling), Western polling methods, as a type of expert knowledge, have been produced (and continue to be reproduced) in the confines of culturally, racially, and epistemologically homogenous power structures.[26] In the following section, which traces the ascendency of global public opinion research from its American roots, the parameters of these power structures are drawn out. The ways in which these structures have sought to capture and control global knowledge beyond the American case is explored in Chapter 5.

5   The Spread of Polling from Gallup to World Opinion

By almost all accounts, public opinion polling has thrived since the 1930s, adapting quite painlessly to changes in markets and societies "and exploiting new technologies when they proved valuable to the field" (Groves 2011, 861). Its early institutionalisation in international organisations (e.g. the World Association of Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) and ESOMAR), journals (e.g. *Public Opinion Quarterly* and the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*), and research programmes (e.g. the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago; the Global Barometers) have served as a stimulus to the development of a multibillion-dollar global market research industry, and have furthermore been instrumental in advancing the fields of domestic and international policymaking. By the 1950s, the question arose as to whether a single world-wide polling agency could be created for the purpose of preventing international war, in parallel to the idea of developing a world government (Dodd 1959; Dodd 1945). This idea of a "demoscope"—a single barometer to "measure, in representative samples of citizens and, eventually, leaders in all nations, the many kinds, degrees, and patterns of attitude, information, and current behaviour together with their changes in time as far as all these may be related to the elimination of war"—was an ambitious research proposal that sought to uphold a liberal international order (Dodd 1959, 430). Steps have been

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[26] To understand the implications of this, consider the invisibility of race in American survey research: see Lee, T. (2002), who exposes the subordinate treatment of African-American opinions in national surveying.

taken toward a system of "Barometer of World Opinions", and today we have enterprises like the Global Barometers Surveys (GBS), which include the Eurobarometer, Latinobarometró, Asian Barometer, Afro Barometer, Eurasia Barometer, and Arab Barometer.

The measurable expansion of public opinion research—from a decidedly American preoccupation with domestic affairs, to a transatlantic community of social scientists and market researchers, to a post-World War II concern by governments regarding foreign policy matters, and to the mass implementation of quantitative methods for understanding behaviour in diverse markets around the world—has been documented in several historical accounts (see for instance Groves 2011; Brückweh 2011; Norris 2009; Heath, Fisher, and Smith 2005; Geer 2004; Converse 1987; and Speier 1950). Further, the tenacious link between American social science institutions (in which public opinion research was refined), philanthropic money, and power in the Cold War era has been explored in detail (see Berman 1983, Gilman 2003; Shah 2011; Parmar 2012; Solovey and Cravens 2012; and Solovey 2013). Instead of paraphrasing these chronicles and accounts, which more than adequately do the job of recounting the historical development of opinion research, I wish instead to concentrate on the proliferation of actors who have been centrally involved in this field. From my perspective, focusing on the emergence of particular actors over time is more helpful for showing how the field of public opinion research has unfolded in a geographically expansive way, based at least partly on coordination between actors and groups. This focus on actors also allows for a consideration of the human agency of researchers, institutions, and organisations in the field. They have their own objectives and incentives, and many will stand on reputations and impart legacies, which in the case of institutions can be incredibly influential and enduring. While not an exhaustive list of actors by any means, this analysis aims to highlight how the rising influence and power of actors (often based on the merits of their work or the perceived need for public opinion data) lends credibility to their methods and findings. This in turn further solidifies their status as well as the status of the science of polling. This cyclical pattern of reinforcement has helped to crystallise the hegemonic status of polls and surveys in the quest for understanding the public opinion. As such, I provide a brief

overview of the global ascendency of public opinion research through the lens of key Western actors.

5.1 The Gallup Empire

The contribution of Iowan-born George Horace Gallup (1901-1984) to the field of public opinion research is difficult to overstate. His name appears in nearly every text about the development of opinion research, and the operation that bears his name, Gallup Inc. (founded in 1935, formerly Gallup Organization, and the American Institute of Public Opinion), is today among the most visible and prominent brands in the field of international polling. At its inception, this brand was built on the novel use of representative samples of the population: "If a sample is accurately selected, it represents a near replica of the entire population. It is a miniature electorate with the same proportion of farmers, doctors, lawyers, Catholics, Protestants, old people, young people, businessmen, labourers and so on, as is found in the entire population" (Gallup 1944 in Emmel 2013, 128). The predictive promise of this approach in American electoral studies made the jump to market research when Gallup himself took up a career in the advertising and film industries in the 1930s (see Ohmer 2006), applying the same methods as well as the general dictum that understanding attitudes should inform decision-making.

As of 2012, nearly three decades after George Gallup's death, Gallup Inc.'s net worth was estimated to be about $275 million (Anders 2013)—though the company does not release financial information—and counts about two thousand employees in thirty to forty offices worldwide. Most of the company's revenues come from private consulting work and independent market research, selling data to third parties, and conducting confidential government research. But the legacy of the Gallup empire is not built on its private research, rather, it rests firmly on the ability to predict the winners of presidential elections and on the Gallup Poll, "the longest continuous measure of public opinion in the United States" (Moore 2008, 298). The Gallup poll has been syndicated to hundreds of newspapers, and Gallup has often been first in line to conduct research for media outlets in the United States and globally (Hogan 2009). Though "Gallup has been the country's gold standard for horse-race election polling ever since its

legendary founder, George Gallup, predicted Franklin Roosevelt's landslide reelection in 1936", Gallup Inc. ceased conducting electoral polls in 2012 after misidentifying Barack Obama's win (Shepard 2015). This "retirement" is symptomatic of a recent crisis of polling in Western democracies, faced with an oversaturated market for data.

In 1937, shortly after Gallup's method of "scientific" opinion polling took hold in the United States, the Gallup Poll came to Britain and the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) was established with London-based pollster Henry Durant (LSE) at its head (Roodhouse 2012). BIPO was the first international affiliate for Gallup, and a sister organisation was founded in France the following year. BIPO's primary activities were electoral forecasts. "Gallup thus began in Britain as it had in the USA, by producing an unexpected finding and being proved right. As had also happened in the USA, this led to an immediate increase in status" (Moon 1999, 14). Moon (1999) describes how the British polling industry grew rapidly from this point, yet always faced mistrust and scepticism by news media who managed their own subscription-based polls (this growth took place despite a wartime statistical blackout during which the British government ceased publications of census and statistical data until World War II ended) (Roodhouse 2012, 235). The range of methods grew as well, with experimentation in random sampling and refining questioning techniques. By the 1960s, opinion polls of the Gallup type were a major part of the electoral process, and many new organisations joined in competition, including firms like Market and Opinion Research International (MORI), who specialised in the type of commercial opinion research that took off in the 1970s. And in 1969, Gallup himself helped create the National Council of Public Polls (NCPP), an association that has been heavily involved in monitoring the conduct of American political polls.

This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.
Image can be viewed at http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19480503,00.html.

Figure 8: George Gallup featured against the backdrop of his hallmark method. TIME Magazine, May 1948. Cover Artist: Boris Artzybasheff.

Likely in an effort to consolidate opportunities outside this transatlantic sphere, the 1970s saw George Gallup develop a network of foreign associates under the umbrella organisation of Gallup International Research Institutes (GIRI) (Traugott 2008, 298). Traugott writes that this network of researchers "were at one time responsible for conducting polls in more than 70 countries overseas" (2008, 298). A separate source lists the number of countries at fifty (Hodges 2009). Very little information exists on the nature of this organisation, with one study describing an inexpert approach to an early (GIRI) cross-national poll: "The world was divided up into 8 regions and some sort of proportionate probability sample of around 9,000 people aged 15 years and older was drawn from 57 nations. No particular scientific theory was tested using this data-set, which was subsequently lost" (Michalos 1993, 87). Neither the list of members of this network nor the fate of their research are readily available.

In 2005, Gallup revitalised the push to conduct systematic polls in as many countries as possible, launching the Gallup World Poll. With the intention of regularly surveying the world over, this World Poll seeks to "(1) quantify the current state of well-being of those living in each country and (2) to collect additional data of importance in each of six regions around the world. The driving design principle is to conduct nationally representative surveys in each country" (Tortora, Srinivasan, and Esipova 2010, 535). On the Gallup website is written: "In every corner of the Earth, the Gallup World Poll tracks the opinions that matter most" (Gallup World Poll). The World Poll operates in roughly 160 states today. It omits countries with small populations, countries where a national government bars access to public opinion research, and countries that Gallup deems to be a security threat for researchers. As Gallup does not have operations in each country for which it polls, it hires local partners or vendors to conduct the research, acting as the ultimate overseer from its base in Washington. The World Poll is funded entirely by Gallup and costs roughly $200 million USD per year. The majority of the data is not public but rather purchased by clients, including governments and international organisations, who might choose to add their own questions to the standard battery of questions designed by Gallup at an additional cost.

Gallup as an organisation rests its laurels on pioneering a type of social research and more or less maintaining a consistent record for political fortune-telling, so to speak. Through its history, the Gallup name has been almost synonymous with public opinion research. As one of the original pollsters, George Gallup's legacy is tied to a deep belief in his method and his ability to convincingly make social surveys scientific. His missionary zeal for the method has left a mark: "In public speeches, several books, and more than a hundred articles in journals and popular magazines, Gallup mythologized polling's history of 'progress', deflected doubts about the polls' accuracy and technical procedures with a rhetoric of scientific mystification, and celebrated the collective wisdom of 'the people'" (Hogan 2009, 161). George Gallup therefore worked to ensure a legacy that would enshrine polling as a gateway to the precise, unmediated voice of the people.

5.2   Key American Pollsters and Institutions

The ties that bind pollsters and institutions have traditionally been strong, such that leading institutions for public opinion have been constructed by pollsters, while these institutions have produced some of the most recognisable and sought-after social scientists in the field. The American institutions that developed in quick succession from the 1930s to the 1970s, that would serve as models for other institutions around the world, focused their efforts on conducting applied public opinion research (i.e., the application of polling and survey research to social or wartime problems) and on developing new methods and techniques influenced by social psychology and studies of group dynamics and mass communication. While these institutions were responsible for carrying out thousands of high-cost, methodologically ambitious national and international studies, particular pioneers in public opinion research bear lasting legacies for their hand in "the development and improvement of methodologies, scope, and standards" (Roper Centre for Public Opinion Research 2018). Below I introduce some of the early pathbreakers, who together formed an elite network of actors and institutions, sharing in financial resources, expertise, collegial relationships, scholarly debate and outputs, and professional opportunities, and expanding together as a result of this networked collaboration and the support of the political machinery (and funding) of United States government agencies.

The American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), along with its sister organisation WAPOR, are professional organisations with norm-setting agendas that count as members private research firms, academics, media, government and non-profit research outlets. Both associations emerged following the second World War and activated a set of guidelines, fundamental principles, codes of ethics, publications, and conferences to carve out a central space for public opinion research activities. Over the years, their primary efforts have been directed not so much to the pursuit of international security, as to bringing practitioners of public opinion research, commercial institutions, and academics under one banner, such that public opinion research is ensured to be a shared and collaborative enterprise. Archibald Crossley (1896-1985), who served as Director of Research for the influential *Literary Digest* and ran his own survey firm, helped to establish both the journal *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 1937 and AAPOR in 1947. WAPOR was formed on its heels in the same year. Crossley's daughter Helen Crossley (1921-2016), educated at the National Opinion Research Centre (NORC), was also a founding member of AAPOR, served as the first female president of WAPOR, and held a long tenure conducting survey research for the US Information Agency (USIA). Until it was subsumed by the Department of State in the 1990s, the USIA (1953-1999) was a federal public diplomacy agency built to "communicate with foreign populations" most centrally during the Cold War (Chodkowski 2012). Meanwhile Helen Dinerman (1920-1974), who along with Helen Crossley was one of comparatively few female pollsters in the twentieth century, "worked at Columbia University in the Bureau of Applied Social Research, the first academic research centre dedicated to survey research" (Roper Centre for Public Opinion Research 2018). She later acted as Secretary-Treasurer of AAPOR, worked for the United States Office of War Information (OWI, 1942-1945), and specialised in sociology and psychology.

Those who served as Presidents and Secretary-Treasurers for AAPOR and WAPOR were pioneers of scientific polling, behavioural psychology, and/or sociology in their own right. In the early years, American figures like Elmo C. Wilson (1906-1968), Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1902-1976), Bernard Berelson (1912-1979), George Gallup (1901-1984), and Harry Alpert (1912-1977) helped shape AAPOR as an institution. Wilson also served as President of a New York-based company called International Research Associates, which was contracted by the

Department of State to conduct polls in Western Europe during the 1950s. Lazarsfeld, a celebrated opinion analyst and sociologist, headed the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR) based at Columbia University. BASR grew out of the Radio Research Project at Princeton University (1937-1939), a largescale Rockefeller-funded study on the human effects of radio which also involved the work of psychologist and pollster Hadley Cantril, psychologist Gordon Allport, media executive Frank Stanton, and philosopher Theodor W. Adorno (Frankfurt school). Berelson, a behavioural scientist who contributed to the field of communications research, worked with Lazarsfeld at BASR, served in the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service during World War II, and helped to establish the Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences at Stanford University, founded by the Ford Foundation. Sociologist Alpert was most notably a director at the National Science Foundation (NSF), but also worked during the war in the OWI, the Office of Price Administration (OPA), and provided research consultancy for the US Air Force.

Meanwhile, WAPOR's early leadership positions were filled with pollsters conducting opinion research outside the United States, including George Gallup (US), Stuart C. Dodd (US), Jean Stoetzel (France), and Leo P. Crespi (US, 1916-2008). Dodd (1900-1975) was an American sociologist born in Turkey who spent time teaching at the American University of Beirut (AUB), conducting polls for the Allied Expeditionary Force in Sicily, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine (Dodd 1946a). These studies involved radio polls in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine for listeners of United Nations broadcast programmes and other polls relating to the effects of propaganda. He would later lead polling research at the Washington State Public Opinion Laboratory at the University of Washington. Stoezel (1910-1987) was a sociologist who founded the French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP), built on the model of Gallup. He once wrote that political polling in France "is more than an institution; it is a kind of fact of nature. It is something the French expect to find when they look out into the world, just as when you and I walk out into the street we expect to step upon a pavement" (Stoezel 1983, 18). Psychologist Crespi (1916-2008), an expert on sampling techniques, directed a world polling division within the USIA between the 1950s and 1980s where he surveyed perceptions of American prestige in Western European and Soviet public opinion, much of which was classified data.

The natural fit between opinion research and government programs, beginning with, for instance the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the case of rural opinion in the 1930s and developing into wartime communications research, helped foster a mutually dependent relationship between pollsters and federal agencies. Harry Field (1897-1946), for instance, supported George Gallup in establishing BIPO in London, the Australian and French Institutes of Public Opinion, and the NORC in 1941 at the University of Chicago, which played a major role in conducting war-time research commissioned by the US government.[27] Additionally, the NORC housed the General Social Survey (GSS) (1972-present), a running face-to-face sociological survey concerning the attitudes and practices of American society. Samuel Lubell (1911-1987) bridged the dual roles of public opinion analyst and journalist, devising a method of surveying key precincts within a state to predict how a state would vote. His correct prediction of Eisenhower's landslide win in the 1952 American election propelled him to star status, after which point he directed the Opinion Reporting Workshop at Columbia University from 1958-1968. The link between polling and the media grew even stronger through figures like Warren Mitofsky (1934-2006), who worked with the New York Times through the 1970s to create a joint polling organisation with CBS News. The Times/CBS News joint poll remains one of the oldest American public opinion polls, with over five hundred studies conducted to date since 1975.

Elmo Roper (1900-1971) entered polling from a retail background. Following his accurate prediction of the 1936 Franklin Roosevelt win, he worked in the United States Office of Strategic Services—a World War II-era intelligence agency and predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—as well as the Office of War Information, Office of Production Management, the Army, and the Navy (Roper Centre for Public Opinion Research 2018b). He founded the Roper Centre for Public Opinion Research at Cornell University in 1947, which also serves as one of the largest archives of national social science data, particularly from surveys conducted by news media and commercial polling companies. A host of

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[27] For a more detailed account of the war-era contracts between the NORC and the United States Department of State, see, for instance, Brown (1961).

leading social scientists worked at the Roper Centre, including Elmo C. Wilson. Roper's son, Burns Roper (1925-2003), was another influential figure in the polling world, taking over leadership of the Roper Centre and serving as president of AAPOR during the 1980s. And soon after the founding of the Roper Centre, the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan was founded (1949), now the largest academic survey research centre in the world. At present, the ISR has an annual research budget of $80 million USD and is comprised of five major research centres, each of which are centrally involved in the field of opinion research. They include the Centre for Political Studies (CPS), the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), the Populations Studies Centre (PSC), the Research Centre for Group Dynamics (RCGD), and the Survey Research Centre (SRC). The ISR's founding director, Rensis Likert (1903-1981), was a renowned social psychologist with previous experience in the Division of Program Surveys (DPS) at the US Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS). His key contributions were the advancement of open-ended interview techniques and the Likert scale, which remains the most commonly used scaling system in survey research.[28]

The development of American public opinion research institutions was, perhaps unsurprisingly, greatly propelled by American interest in wartime propaganda and the government's willingness to fund research on propaganda and psychological warfare. For instance, pollster Hadley Cantril (1906-1969) set up the Office of Public Opinion Research (OPOR) at Princeton University through the Rockefeller Foundation, which lasted through the World War II years and surveyed many Americans and Germans on wartime events and policy. Cantril later acted as a Program Director for the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), led a number of psychology studies institutes, including the CIA-funded Institute for International Social Research (IISR), which conducted intelligence polls in Cuba regarding support for Fidel Castro in the 1950s, on the social psychology of Soviet populations, and on protest voters in France and Italy, for instance (Simpson 1994). Simpson notes that at least some of

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[28] The formal Likert scale would be familiar to most people who have conducted or filled out a survey questionnaire: a five-point scale where the responses are (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly agree. Multiple variations of the Likert scale now exist.

the most important American centres for post-war information and communications studies "grew up as de facto adjuncts of government psychological warfare programs. For years, government money—frequently with no public acknowledgement—made up more than 75 percent of the annual budgets of Paul Lazarfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR) at Columbia University, Hadley Cantril's IISR at Princeton, Ithiel de Sola Pool's Center for International Studies (CENIS) program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and similar institutions" (1994, 4).[29] By some accounts, confidential political polling in the United States through the Cold War years accounted for the vast majority of national polling activities (see for instance, Field 1983). "Private polling was being conducted at every level of political office—presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial, congressional, state legislature, country supervisor, mayoralty, as well as for other smaller polls" (Field 1983, 204). And though it did not amount to as much by comparison, polling outside of the United States was also largely private for the duration of the Cold War.

Finally, the behavioural approach to political science, spearheaded by Charles E. Merriam, entered public opinion research through students of his, like V. O. Key Jr. (1908-1963), Gabriel Almond (1911-2002), Harold Lasswell (1902-1978) and others. Key, a scholar of electoral politics and voting behaviour, was an important member of the Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC), "which aimed to raise the social sciences to the same level of rigor and respect that the natural sciences enjoyed" and dispense knowledge to American policymakers (Gilman 2003, 115). Almond used systematic mass interview research in *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963) to determine the capacity for democracy in countries with dissimilar political cultures, though the method and assumptions were problematic. Lasswell, a political psychologist and another founding member of AAPOR, had a prominent role in MIT's Center for International Studies (CIS). The CIS received funding from the CIA and later the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations to target public diplomacy communications to the developing world, and Lasswell's involvement in the CIS his many affiliations have led to

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[29] It was communications specialist Ithiel de Sola Pool who asserted that through "mandarins of the future", i.e. this elite class of self-styled rational social scientists, society would become modernised and civilised.

him being described as a "shadowy presence" in the modernisation and developmental work gaining ground in the CIS at the time (Gilman 2003, 165). The relationship between modernisation theory and public opinion research is explored in greater depth in the Arab case in Chapter 5.

5.3   "Towards World Surveying"

In 1957, American pollster Elmo C. Wilson penned an article for *Public Opinion Quarterly* titled "World-Wide Development of Opinion Research", in which he bluntly stated that "opinion research in the world outside the United States is basically a post-World War II phenomenon" (174). What he meant was that large-scale, systematic polling and survey research of the kind that had been devised and conducted across the United States since the 1930s had only recently conquered territory abroad. Given that World War II exposed, to a great extent, the ignorance of Western states toward foreign security issues and foreign publics, the war had had a genuine impact on the development of global opinion research. In 1946, following the end of the war, the first international conference on public opinion research was held in Colorado, with pollsters from across the United States, Britain, France, Australia, Canada gathering to discuss "further steps and the possible means of combatting the forbidding, falsification, or frustration of the polls by individual countries" (Wilson 1957, 179), in reference to Soviet and other non-Western countries where systematic polling was either extremely difficult or non-existent. The goal of the conference was to create a constitution for a future institution, which would amount to the founding of WAPOR in 1946, and was laid out in the conference proceedings, titled "Toward World Surveying" (Dodd 1946b).

The main purposes of this world institution would be: 1) "To establish and promote contacts between persons in the field of survey research on opinions, attitudes, and behaviour of people in the various countries of the world", 2) "To further the use of objective, scientific survey research in national and international affairs", and finally, 3) to advance the aims of the United Nations (Wilson 1957, 179). On this last point, the community of (mainly American) pollsters present at the founding of WAPOR—many of whose names appeared in the previous section—agreed to build closer ties to UN agencies such as

UNESCO, ECOSOC, and the Public Information or Statistical subsections of the Secretariat, so that institutions like "the United Nations may use a tool the League of Nations never had—public opinion" (1945, 194). Thus, one larger aim of the institutionalisation of public opinion research in the post-war era was to ensure the creation of a liberal international order by pre-empting global security threats and preventing the outbreak of future world wars (Dodd 1945; 1959). Given that public opinion research rapidly expanded from that moment on, this aim was an indirect response to war: "In other words, the very release from the war, and from the various kinds of censorship which accompanied it, led to a greatly heightened desire to know what people were saying and thinking about important national and international issues" (Wilson 1957, 176).

WAPOR was never responsible for carrying out polls and surveys itself, instead promoting coordinated international survey efforts using the original pathbreaking American methods as a prototype. Its early alignment with the UN facilitated the signing of contracts to jointly poll across countries, as well as the establishment of centralised committees to further international survey research. In 1956, WAPOR and UNESCO produced a joint report on survey and polling methodology, in hopes of standardising techniques internationally.[30] "In general, surveying could be used by an international organisation to predict social trends and thereby achieve greater control over them" (Dodd 1945, 196). In other words, the method was seen not only as a science, but as a (hegemonic) form of knowledge production that could organise the global political system. The belief was that worldwide standardisation would improve the universality, reliability, validity, representativeness, and the utility of opinion information. In practice, early world surveying involved subcontracting a handful of international researchers to ask various questions in different locales. By giving distinct datasets a common affiliation or copyrighted name (e.g. UNESCO or Gallup polls), they appeared to be a uniform and consistent venture, regardless of the dissimilar nature of collecting data in different places, or socio-cultural variations themselves.

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[30] The report was summarised in Dodd and Nehnevajsa (1956), "Techniques for World Polls: A Survey of Journal Articles on Cross-Cultural Polling, 1925-1955". Paris: Mimeo.

The ultimate vision of a single world survey, as imagined by WAPOR and the UN in the early 1950s, has not manifested as such, but its liberal democratic motivation is still embedded in the foundational principles of WAPOR (and other institutions like AAPOR, NCPP, and ESOMAR). These institutions understand public opinion as necessary to the workings of a democracy and hence view it as a mechanism for engaging and promoting a world government. For these institutions, public opinion research has been a normative pursuit. This sweeping optimism of world surveying from the American perspective is best recounted by Stuart Dodd in his 1957 article on WAPOR:

> In scientific affairs, a world demoscope would give the social sciences a new instrument, comparable in power to the telescope in astronomy or the microscope in micro-biology. Research in the behavioral sciences could observe for the first time the exact difference and similarities, the cultural and biological processes, the expressible feelings, knowings, and doings of all living people. It could overcome current limitations of the human sciences to observing parts of humanity. It could progress to develop a fuller and more exact science of man.

> In practical world affairs, an opinion barometer could help build one world by democratically amplifying the voice of the people in United Nations councils. The distribution of opinion on any world issue could be quickly, accurately, and cheaply determined to help guide international decisions of statesmen. World government could more truly fulfill Lincoln's definition of a democracy as government of, by, and for the people (183-4).

This idea of a demoscope or international barometer is likely the origin of the Global Barometer Surveys, a loose collection or network of regional public opinion polls focused primarily at the level of states and interested in issues of democracy and political change, economy, social and public policy, institutions, international relations, media, and religion. The Eurobarometer, for instance, was launched in 1973 with member-state polls conducted by the European Commission. The Afrobarometer began in 1999 as a joint initiative of Michigan State University, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, and the Centre for Democratic Development in Ghana and today polls in more than thirty-five African countries. The Latinobarometró, Asian Barometer, Eurasian Barometer, New Europe Barometer, and the Arab Barometer have emerged since,

independent of each other and at the same time modelling themselves off the same original idea: that international polling "can measure *conditions* in a population and the *behaviour* of people as well as their *opinions*" (Dodd 1945, 196 [emphasis in the original]). As Figure 9 shows, a composite image of the Global Barometers approaches the idea of a demoscope.
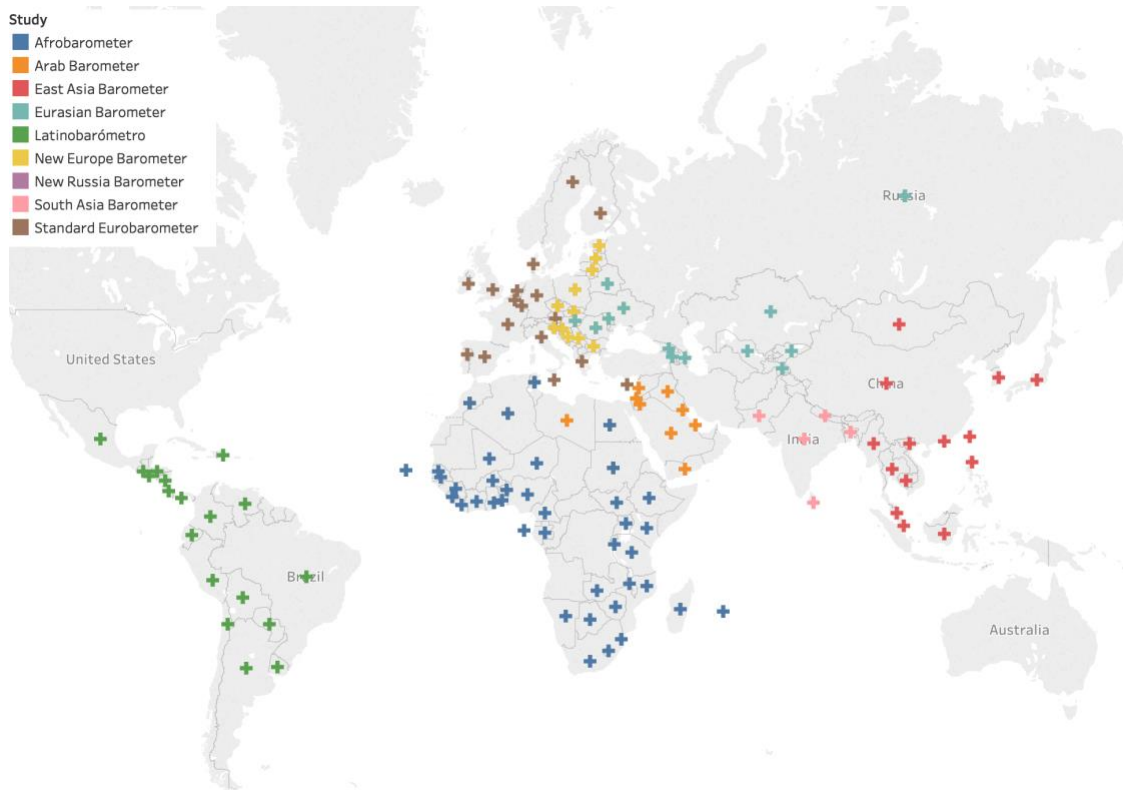
Figure 9: Countries included in the Global Barometers today.

As a 1963 UNESCO report described: "The introduction of public opinion surveys in underdeveloped countries, is, of course, only one aspect of a general problem, namely, that of bringing modern techniques, evolved elsewhere, into countries hitherto untouched by them" (Girard 1963, 7). From early on then, the poll was considered an ideal technological instrument for enabling modernisation in diverse settings; it could be scaled down or up and involved human interaction, which allowed researchers to adapt and make decisions in the field. Some fundamental difficulties with polling in the developing world arose where "freedom of speech, and the integrity of the surveyors" was compromised; "In any given country, surveys can be *forbidden*, or *falsified*, or simply *frustrated*"

(Dodd 1945, 198 [emphasis in the original]). This shrouded world opinions under a veil of secrecy. Stuart Dodd argued that to get around cases where surveys are forbidden in authoritarian countries, measures including avoiding politically sensitive questions on surveys, or in extreme cases creating a "name and shame list" of countries barring free speech should be taken (1945). Dodd went so far as to argue that states who chose to forgo global polling should be denied membership in the United Nations and the UN Security Council, to stress the necessity of polling for democratic freedoms. There was never any semblance of the idea that systematic polling should not be undertaken everywhere. The geographic extension of polling and survey research from the developed to the developing would only be possible through the efforts of already established (Western) institutions for research or through the funding of "indigenous and self-supporting institutes of public opinion in new territories with the assent of their government" (Dodd 1946b, 471). As will be seen, polling in the Arab region has developed along both of these lines.

5.4   Contemporary Practices

While polls and surveys have, through their recent past, served very different end-games (domestic politics, foreign policy, wartime intelligence, commercial/consumerist markets, and media), the preceding sections have shown that there have long been linkages between individual pollsters, knowledge sharing practices, institutional capacities, funding, and professional governance and oversight. As Heath et al. note, if the globalisation of public opinion research has meant the emergence of social and cultural developments that change the very processes of research as well as the export of Western technology and practices to the rest of the world, then overtime, we can expect to see greater ease and speed of communication between countries, closer collaboration between national teams, a rise in cross-national programs of survey research, and the penetration of particular brands in global markets (2005, 297). Further, Groves writes that if polling and survey research prior to 1960 was about the invention and refinement of the method, the period following this can be characterised as an age of expansion (2011). Indeed, Newport asserts that one of the most apparent changes in the field of polling over the years has been the differentiation of the practice into discrete activities (2005). Polling is conducted

as an ancillary service provided by research firms to businesses, by government and educational institutions, by "niche providers that focus only on one small aspect of the polling process", and by companies concerned with "high-volume, low-cost polling" to undercut the market (Newport 2005, 124). The assemblage of niche services means that technical parts of the polling process are outsourced, for instance to sampling companies and independent vendors.

The economics of polling dictates that the practice is unprofitable: it is an expensive, involved method and the presence of actors seeking to undercut the market (especially since the advent of online polling) should effectively make high quality polling non-viable. And yet, the practices have continued to spread and thrive. As an illustration, consider the widening scope of Gallup's polling and survey activities, from its origins in US election polling in the 1930s to the creation of the World Poll in 2005. Figure 10 below shows the geographic coverage of the Gallup World Poll in 2018, which includes 167 countries.[31]

GALLUP

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[31] Based on a core age-related question asked for each respondent in each country. The question text [English] reads: *Please tell me your age.* Source: The Gallup World Poll Reference Tool.

Figure 10: Gallup World Poll coverage, 2018. Based on a core age question asked in full set of countries.

Today, Gallup aims to capture a nationally representative snapshot of public opinion for every country possible, and it is one of a long list of polling entities that have also grown considerably in global scope over recent years. The reputation and reach of polling companies such as Gallup are now perceptible nearly everywhere.

Insofar as the objective of the political pollster is to measure political opinion, market researchers also traditionally have used the same methods to measure market trends, the intention to purchase a good, loyalty toward a brand, or cognitive recall of an advertisement. The expansion of international marketing through the application of traditional survey and polling methods and predictive techniques has certainly helped to bolster the continued relevance of polls in surveys in other fields of research. The globalisation of polling in a market-oriented setting has led to an explosion in the sheer number and types of polling entities in existence. These include major enterprises like Nielsen (1923), GFK (1934), Ipsos (1975), and Kantar (1993) with offices in dozens of cities globally and where researchers are not considered pollsters in the same way as in political polling, yet continue to engage in knowledge and technology sharing with the political polling world.[32] Indeed, by industry classification standards, Market Research and Public Opinion Polling today is considered to be a single consolidated industry, one that comprises "establishments primarily engaged in systematically gathering, recording, tabulating, and presenting marketing and public opinion data" and includes political opinion polling, broadcast media, market research, statistical services, and other opinion research services.[33]

The commonly used label of "industry" is an accurate descriptor. An industry implies that economic activity is undertaken as a result of the processing and

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[32] It is estimated that there are over four thousand market research companies in the United States alone, totalling $20.1 billion USD in sales in 2018 (MarkeResearch.com).

[33] For instance, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) used by businesses and government to organise economic activity in Canada, the US and Mexico. The Market Research and Public Opinion Polling industry carries the NAICS code 541910 (SICCODE).

production of raw materials or manufactured goods. It also implies that an assemblage or association of actors produce a common good for economic benefit. If we consider the good in question to be opinion data, then we can begin to sort producers of public opinion (pollsters, public opinion firms) from consumers of opinion data (the public, private audiences). Public opinion data, like most statistical data, has a raw, unprocessed form and a processed form, the latter of which comes about through the practice of research and analysis by experts. And the sheer size and scale of the market research and public opinion polling industry speaks to the attainment of economic benefit, or profits. Though difficult to measure, the worldwide market for this industry generated $76 billion USD in revenues in 2018[34], dominated by American actors who conduct research on their home fronts and abroad.

Non-profit academic polls and surveys funded by major research councils and philanthropic organisations have also increased in scale. The SRC at the University of Michigan, for example, has traditionally conducted large-scale national election studies which focus on an individual's socio-psychological motivations for party preferences. Heath et al. write that "after their establishment in the United States, the Michigan Studies were exported, not unlike Gallup's export, via links with scholars in other countries" (2005, 301). Since the 1980s the world has seen a rapid spread in the conduct of election studies, including the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), which includes over fifty countries, as well as the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). And other mass-scale collaborative and comparative opinion studies have emerged: the British Social Attitudes survey, the GSS, the Allgemeinen Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften (ALLBUS), the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), the European Social Surveys (ESS), the European Values Survey, the World Values Survey, the Global Barometers, and the Pew Global Attitudes Project. Each of these follows standardised procedures and methodology with a representative sampling of adult

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[34] Global revenues for the market research industry have grown steadily year-over-year, reaching $76 billion USD in 2018; further, "across all corners of the globe, quantitative research accounted for 81% of all spending, while qualitative research held a 14% share, a decline of 1% on the year previous. The remaining 5% of the market is distributed across other research methods" (Consultancy.org). The United States accounts for almost half of the market share (44%).

populations, fixed practices around administering the survey, and systematised questionnaires.

Academic initiatives are far easier to identify as opposed to the full register of actors involved in political public opinion research (even after omitting market research from the picture). Today, the arena is simply too dense, and we have started to lose track of who the actors are. There are countless numbers, they emerge and disappear, and much of their data—often a snapshot of opinion in time—quickly becomes obsolete. The opinion analysis resource FiveThirtyEight conducts polling aggregation analyses, i.e., predicting political outcomes using aggregates of other published polls. In their annual pollster ratings, they count nearly four hundred separate polling organisations who engaged in American election polling in 2016-18 alone. The networks between actors that were easily traceable in the middle of the twentieth century have become far too chaotic to parse out. Today, WAPOR has five hundred members in more than sixty countries, ESOMAR has over six thousand individuals and six hundred corporate members in over one hundred and thirty countries. The political and normative authority that an institution like WAPOR held at the time of its inception—of working toward global government through the pursuit of liberal and democratic ideals—has somewhat faded as polling and survey research have become commercial pursuits in a highly saturated market. What has not diminished, however, is the keen desire to continue to pursue a standardised form of public opinion inquiry across all corners of the world.

As we have seen, what began as a wholly American enterprise rapidly spilled over borders and spread to other parts of the world, in part through the sheer determinism of scientific ambition, whether for the purposes of covert government research, international sociological research, or consumer market research. In any case and regardless of the aims of research, key actors transposed the methodology of polls and surveys onto different settings, assuming from the outset that standardisation was not only possible, but scientifically sound and socially necessary.

6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to tackle the rise of global polling by focusing on aspects of key importance (and not a chronological re-telling), namely, the basis for the methods, the special status of polling in society, and prominent actors and institutions in the field who grew out of the American social science tradition and whose legacies are memorialised in the lasting popularity of opinion polling today. In the context of post-war America, these actors formed an elite class, imagining themselves "as handmaidens to power, advisors whose 'scientific objectivity' would help to guide political leaders toward elite 'consensus'" (Gilman 2003, 51). In considering the ways in which these actors are linked, how they negotiated their political roles, relationships, and knowledge-sharing, I find the idea of knowledge networks to be particularly helpful. Knowledge networks work to organise knowledge produced by (in)formal entities (Stone 2003). The multiple overlapping linkages that allowed the field of polling to build rapidly, to the point where an agenda for world polling under the auspices of the UN was being pursued, is evidence of the creation of a knowledge network. This network is located between people and governance structures and derives meaning from both. It is also located between the local and the global, taking recordings and signals from specific spaces and abstracting them to say something about public opinion more broadly and how it operates on the conscience of international affairs. Through the exercise of mapping a knowledge network in development, two epistemological issues come into view: first, it was never doubted that American-styled polling was applicable the whole world over, and second, these actors "generally considered the disparate countries of the 'third' world as faced with broadly similar problems, and therefore amenable to a broadly similar theoretical conceptualization and policies" (Gilman 2003, 34). The practical problems with these fundamental assumptions about knowledge are explored in Chapter 5, which follows.

This chapter rounds out Part 2 of the thesis, which seeks to describe the field of public opinion inquiry in a less conventional way. Rather than outlining the chronology, terminology, and everyday practices of the field, I have chosen to focus on elements generally missing from view in the broader literature; namely,

the concept of public opinion in the practitioner's world, the legacies of counting and control in survey research, and the hegemonic rise of American polling through the twentieth century. The theoretical discussion in Part 1 combined with this toolkit of ideas in Part 2 sets the stage for Part 3, which builds a case around the pursuit of Arab public opinion.

Part Three

The Case of Arab Public Opinion Inquiry

Chapter 5
Stage 1 | Arab Opinion in the Colonial Imaginary

Those Middle Easterners whose private lives have become permeated by the public questions will prove most enlightening for us.

Daniel Lerner (1958)

One of the core arguments of this thesis is that public opinion, as a form of data or as the output of specific empirical practices, cannot be divorced from the context and legacies from which it has emerged. To this end, I consider the legacy of Arab public opinion inquiry as something with roots in early census-taking practices by colonial actors who sought control through the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This chapter is an attempt to identify twentieth century epistemic interventions into the Arab region by foreign actors who carried with them the same colonial legacies. I illustrate cases that I consider to be representative of the early history of Arab public opinion inquiry: the King-Crane Commission of 1919, Daniel Lerner's 1958 study of Middle Eastern modernisation in *The Passing of Traditional Society*, and the question of Palestine as it appeared in Western polls from the creation of the state of Israel to the Six-Day War. These cases contribute to what I see as a first stage in the development of Arab public opinion inquiry, though I stress that compressing this tradition of inquiry into discrete stages of growth is somewhat formulaic and might cause us to overlook important details. Rather, the cases presented in this chapter help to demarcate the parameters within which we can view specific approaches to opinion inquiry on the Arab region at work. This first stage has no exact temporal endpoints, but for my purposes in this chapter it roughly covers the fifty-year period from the end of the First World War in 1919 to just after the Six-Day War of 1967.

In delimiting the earliest stage of Arab opinion inquiry within colonial and postcolonial settings, I am tracing a particular mode of social-scientific inquiry

carried out by Western experts and scholars whose goal it was to contribute to a unified science of global public opinion research (of the kind envisaged by Stuart Dodd in the 1930s and 1940s). This mode of inquiry was based on the methodical codification of individuals, recorded observations of social phenomena, the formulation and testing of theories, and the application of the scientific method to the politics of the Middle East. Elements of the scientific method, like the neutrality of the observer and the translation of observations into hard-coded data, can be seen in each case presented in this chapter. They serve to bolster the authenticity of the research but should also be viewed as political acts precisely because the conduct of research was at all times politically motivated. In each case, I therefore focus more on issues of epistemology and methodology rather than analysing the findings that came out of each case analysis.

While there is very little that has been written on the tradition of opinion inquiry in the Arab region, some scholars like Ilya Harik have made mention that prior to the 1970s, this field was largely "the product of research initiated and conducted by foreigners" (1987, 66). The process of seeking the attitudes and counsel of communities outside of the so-called industrialised sphere is treated (in the Anglo-American literature) as something that was not naturally occurring but instead brought in from the outside. Harik, for instance, says that "in Third World countries, interest in survey research has been the product of dissemination of information and technology from advanced nations to the less advanced. It has no indigenous cultural or technological basis in the new lands where it has been adopted" (1987, 66). He goes on to say more specifically that "the Arab world is one such recipient culture" and asks, "has the Arab world been a hospitable recipient of survey research as we know it?" (Harik 1987, 66). This configures the two cultures as Western donor (of scientific research) and a recipient, less-advanced "other", a similar framing to that of foreign development and assistance. I believe that the case studies presented in this chapter do a good job of showing how enduring this benefactor/saviour mentality was in early opinion inquiry.

I believe that each of the cases presented in this chapter represents an epistemic intervention on the part of foreign actors. What I mean by an epistemic intervention is a point of incursion or interference, as when one mode of thinking

or set of ideas about what constitutes knowledge inserts itself into another epistemic tradition and then claims the right to represent the other.[35] Just as a military intervention can be seen as a political act with the use of military means, I see an epistemic intervention as a political act using epistemic means. Epistemic interventions are orchestrated by external actors, usually without an awareness of the consequences. In practical terms, it might entail the systematic deployment of scientists into "new", foreign territory in order to extract particular forms of knowledge using specifically designed technologies of inquiry, to then be processed outside that territory and communicated using the instrumental and technical vocabularies of the scientific community. An epistemic intervention can be direct or indirect, can be more or less benign, and can occur with or without consent from the territory of knowledge being interceded. If it is the result of a power imbalance (i.e., colonial forms of knowledge production), it can lead to the supplanting of indigenous knowledge systems by outside ones. In the process of an epistemic intervention, people (as subjects) become figures of alterity, seen as epistemic means rather than epistemic ends.

Stage 1 represents the earliest attempts by foreign parties to extract opinion from people largely situated in the Middle East on issues relating to governance, statehood, identity, culture, religion, and other social and political matters. Stage 1 comes at a time when opinion research is undergoing a scientific transformation; within this window of twentieth century, polling comes into existence and quickly becomes the dominant tool for measuring opinion. We can conceptualise Stage 1 as an analytical guide, allowing us to trace the practice of Arab public opinion inquiry over time. Figure 11 below is a visual guide:

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[35] My use of the term "epistemic intervention" can be compared with U. Kalpagam's concept of "epistemological conquest", whereby Western technologies of governance (i.e., bureaucracies and colonial discourses of administration) not only served as representations of modern power in parts of the non-Western colonised world, but also imposed an entire "world-view" or approach to knowing that displaced what previously existed (Kalpagam 2000). Kalpagam explores the case of British colonial and statistical governmentality in India.

Time

Contemporary inquiry

*External
or foreign*

Actor Location

*Internal
or indigenous*

Stage 1

Historical inquiry
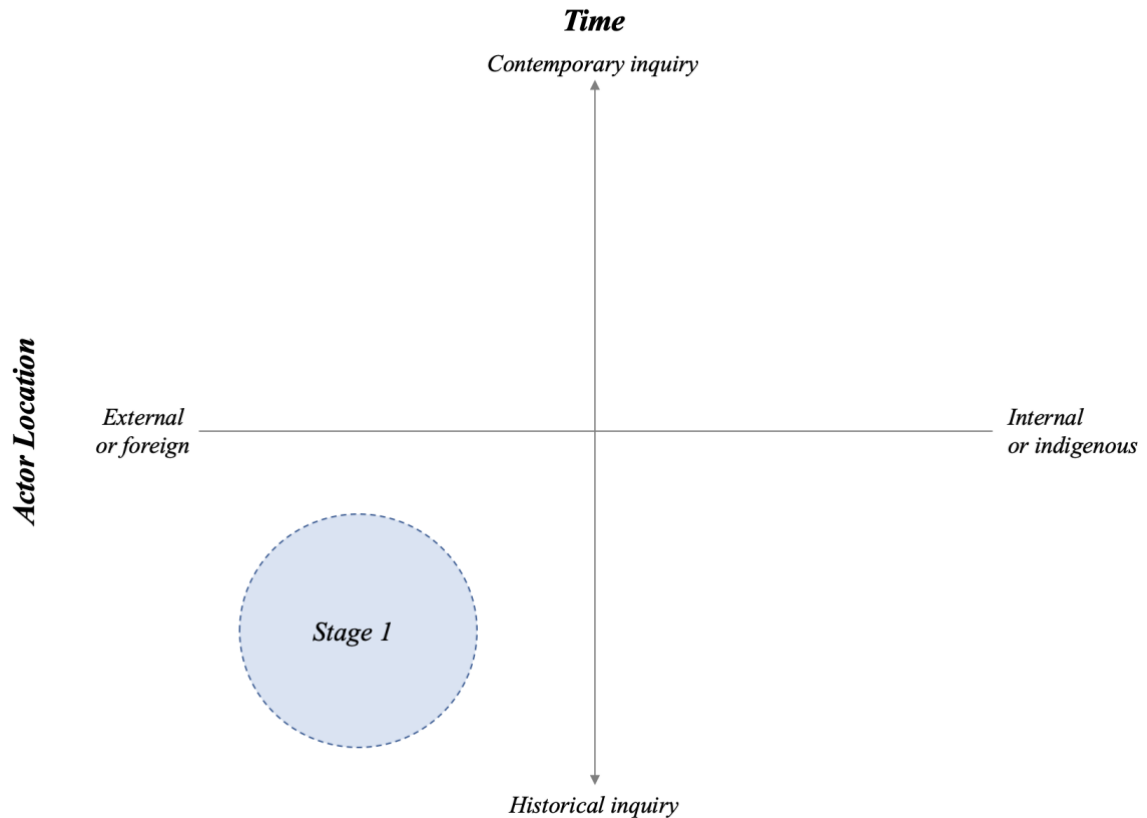
Figure 11: Stage 1 in the development of Arab public opinion inquiry.

Stage 1 is found in the bottom-left quadrant of this visualisation. This is where a form of historical inquiry carried out by external or foreign actors is positioned. The axes of time and geographic location in Figure 11 are purposefully indefinite. It is not my goal to set temporal parameters or pinpoint every relevant actor implicated in the history of Arab public opinion inquiry. This would be too daunting and, I think, too problematic an exercise. It is nearly impossible to account for the full universe of actors. Rather, in my attempt to highlight a mode of epistemic inquiry, I find this visualisation to be a helpful way to focus in specific context—a time and place where certain practices were prevalent and would have an enduring effect on the contemporary conduct of public opinion inquiry in the region. Each of the three cases outlined below thus contributes to the earliest stage of systematised empirical research on people of the Arab world.

1   The King-Crane Commission of 1919

The rise of Arab nationalist fervour during the First World War would provide the setting for a major epistemic intervention into the region by foreign actors. The slow corrosion of Ottoman rule from 1915, when Turkey first declared war on Britain and France, ultimately led to the liberation of greater Syria supported by these two powers and with help from the Hashemite Arab leader Sharif Hussein and his son, Emir Faisal. At Versailles in February 1919, it was the Emir who made a strong case to British and American officials for Arab self-determination, declaring that "the Allies had now won the war, and the Arabic speaking peoples thought themselves entitled to independence and worthy of it" (Little 2004, 159). This pronouncement of the will of the people could be seen as an assertion of an "Arab public opinion" through discursive representation, with Emir Faisal as its representative. Political complications amounting from the 1917 Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France, "which carved out a British sphere of influence in Iraq and Palestine and a French sphere in Syria and Lebanon" (Little 2004, 159), along with America's unsteady, mistrusting position that any encouragement of Arab self-determination could spark revolution and disorder, contributed to delaying a decision on Arab independence.

Thus in 1919, when the question of whether and how to divvy up the Ottoman Empire among the Allied forces was being debated, as well as what was to be done with Palestine and the Jewish peoples, the idea of conducting a "scientific investigation" (Reimer 2006, 129) to determine how people in the Middle East wanted to be governed was proposed—in essence, a study of Arab public opinion. This was not an entirely novel idea for the time, as a similar American-led commission had been assigned earlier to investigate in Russia following the 1917 revolution. Still, it was novel for the Middle East. The seed for it came from Howard S. Bliss, a missionary and President of the Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut) who proposed the idea to the French, British, and Americans of establishing an on-the-ground and "neutral" diplomatic mission to "establish facts" and ascertain local sentiment (Howard 1963). American President Woodrow Wilson was in strong support of the idea, recommending "that the fittest men that could be obtained should be selected to form an Inter-Allied Commission to go to Syria, extending their inquiries, if they

led them, beyond these confines. Their object should be to elucidate the state of opinion" (Howard 1963, 32; Reimer 2006).

Communication during the planning process between the Americans and their European counterparts was marred with misunderstanding and in the end, due to diplomatic backtracking, the Europeans declined to participate. Only an American commission was sent—led by Charles R. Crane, a businessman and noted Arabist, and Dr. Henry Churchill King, an author and educator at Oberlin College, as well as a small team of American field observers. In Harry N. Howard's 1963 historical monograph on the Inter-Allied Commission, he recounts that King and Crane were seen as especially qualified precisely because they had no prior contact or experience with greater Syria and its peoples; they were considered to be well-positioned as neutral, unadulterated observers. The British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who was in office at the time, recounted in his memoirs the basis for King and Crane's selection as principal investigators: "If we were to send a Commission with no previous contact with Syria, it would, at any rate, convince the world that the Conference had tried to do all it could to find the most scientific basis possible for a settlement" (in Ben-Bassat and Zachs 2014, 3).

As researchers, their stated aim was to learn "the sentiments of the people of those regions with regard to the future administration of their affairs" and acquaint themselves "as fully as possible with the state of opinion there with regard to these matters, with the social, racial, and economic conditions" (Howard 1963, 34). The culmination of knowledge from their investigation would "serve to guide the judgement of the Conference, and to form definite opinion [...] of the divisions of territory and assignment of mandates, which will be most likely to promote order, peace, and development of those peoples and countries" (King and Crane, 1919). But as epistemological envoys of the imperial West, their larger mission to "ascertain whether the Arab peoples were ready for self-government" proceeded alongside a deep scepticism as to whether Arabs were fit for self-liberation (Little 2004, 160).

The first major Arab public opinion study to go on record, with the official title of "The American Section of the Inter-Allied Commission on Mandates in Turkey", was thus an American epistemic inquiry and "an exercise in positivistic

sociology", i.e., the study of society that relies on scientific evidence to advance truths about the social world (Reimer 2006, 136). Not everyone was in favour of an investigative mission. Speaking about general public reactions to the establishment of a commission, Reimer describes resistance from many Western Middle East specialists "who argued that the sending of a commission might generate political disturbances by raising false expectations (i.e. of independence)" (2006, 132). The act of inquiring about local opinion without the full intention to uphold its demands would potentially be—as Gertrude Bell put it—"tantamount to a 'criminal deception'" (Reimer 2006, 132).

With King and Crane at the helm, the research Commission travelled through thirty-six towns across greater Syria, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Thrace, and other margins of the Ottoman sphere. They had planned to include Iraq, but never got that far. Forty-two days in the summer of 1919 were spent "in the field" traversing over a thousand miles, amounting to a large-scale ethnographic undertaking.

Figure 12: Map of the King-Crane Commission's 1919 itinerary, from Yafo (Jaffa) to Mersina. Map image courtesy of the Oberlin College Archives.

In each of the sites visited, the Commission called upon local delegations and individuals "who should represent all the significant groups in the various communities, and so to obtain as far as possible the opinions and desires of the whole people" (King and Crane, 1919). They also spoke with European officials, "local notables", and American aid workers using the method of informal interviews and hearings (Tejirian and Simon 2012, 183). Delegations representing different interests were invited to share their opinions and attitudes toward Syrian unity and independence, Zionism, Iraqi independence, a French mandate, a possible American mandate, democracy, the designation of Emir Faysal as king

of Syria, a British mandate, clandestine treaties like Sykes-Picot and the Balfour Declaration, and other subjects (Reimer 2006, 136). In all, 442 Arab delegations were heard from (orally and in writing), representing 1,520 cities and villages and a total of 1,863 individual petitions. This data was compiled into a final report, along with commentary on the conditions of the region and recommendations for the Allied powers from the Commission leaders.

No formal or consistent methodology was employed for determining "what the group thought would provide a composite picture of popular attitudes", and further, "the sample was not proportional and was heavily weighted toward Christian representation" (Tejirian and Simon 2012, 184). As the expedition pre-dated scientific polls, which would arrive with George Gallup in the coming decade, the assumption at the time was that petitioning was the best way to evaluate public opinion; in this way, an individual or delegation was elected to represent a significant group, and all significant groups combined could account for "the whole people" (Ben-Bassat and Zachs 2014, 2-3). As for the approach to measurement, the Commission recorded opinion in favour and against each issue. For instance, 80.4 percent (1,500) of those asked about the prospect of a unified Syria were recorded as being in favour, the remainder, opposed. But as Reimer points out, there were considerable conceptual holes in the inquiry. "What did the petitions mean by 'Syria' and why did the demand for unity outrank all others? [...] Most importantly, what precisely are the petitions measuring? What evidence is there that they represent 'public opinion' in Syria in 1919?" (Reimer 2006, 136). Further research by Gelvin (1996) has shown that "what King–Crane took as the more or less spontaneous expression of indigenous opinion" in 1919 was in reality more of "a measure of the Arab government's powers of mobilization and manipulation than of Syrian 'public opinion'" (Reimer 2007, 137). There were thus other dynamics and motives at work, something that Commission could not easily detect in their methods.

The methodological validity of what came to be known as the King-Crane Commission has been criticized on the grounds of selective sampling, omissions of voices that may have been important and other inherent biases (including the Americans' links with Protestant missionary communities in the Middle East), artificial paradigms, and "positivistic assumptions underlying its collection and

presentation of data" (Reimer 2006, 130). There is indication that some identities were purposefully undercounted, and it's not clear that King and Crane's own positions were politically impartial. The selection of opinions that were heard likely came from the more elite stratus, linked to wealthier delegations or those with political stakes and strategic connections to primary actors like Emir Faisal. In the study of Anatolia, investigations were only conducted in Istanbul, which overcounted the Christian population, and their views "obviously underestimated the Muslim nationalist movement in the provinces" (Reimer 2006, 134). And in general, there were sweeping racial generalisations made about ethnicities, such that the opinion of few became the opinion of all. But on the whole and in retrospect, some of the Commission's findings were illuminating in the sense that they tapped into genuine aspirations and expectations surrounding the acute issue of political unity and self-determination.

Figure 13: Portrait of the King-Crane Commission at the Hotel Royal, Beirut. Henry Churchill King and Charles R. Crane are seated at the table, left to right. Standing, left to right: Sami Haddad, physician and interpreter; Capt. William Yale, Technical Adviser for the Southern Regions of Turkey; Albert Howe Lybyer, General Technical Adviser; George R. Montgomery, Technical Adviser for the Northern Regions of Turkey; Donald M. Brodie, Secretary; Laurence S. Moore, Business Manager. Photo courtesy of the Oberlin College Archives.

The Commission's final report, compiled by Albert Howe Lybyer of the University of Illinois, was heralded as a legitimate scientific study of public opinion in the Arab region. For political reasons and accidental ones, the report was never shared upon completion. In the immediate aftermath of its publication, the King-Crane Commission was favourably received by the American Delegation in Paris. One copy was left with the Secretary of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace and the other was sent to President Wilson. It was delivered to his desk in the White House a few months later in the autumn of 1919 but Wilson happened to be away, and so no official confirmation of receipt came. Subsequently, Wilson fell ill—"a near-fatal stroke that paralyzed his foreign policy and enabled Britain and France to establish their own systems of mandates (British in Palestine and Iraq, French in Syria and Lebanon), dashing Arab hopes for independence" (Little 2004, 160). There was no arrangement made for a review of the report among the Allied administrations; a political move. "Thus it was that the King-Crane Report remained entirely confidential, insofar as the general public was concerned" (Howard 1963, 258).

The contents of the final report, as a record of the epistemic intervention, were potentially far-reaching. The results carried the language of objectivity. "What counted as data", writes Allen, "was that which could be counted" (2017, 396)—and so the data that emerged made up the totality of what was known and understood about the political preferences of the Middle Eastern delegations. The findings revealed that the consulted peoples of then-Syria were vehemently against French rule, preferring either American oversight or complete independence. King and Crane's own conclusions were that "full independence for the Arabs would be premature and recommended instead that the United States assume a League of Nations mandate system for Syria and Palestine" (Little 2004, 160). There were also perceptible warnings within the data regarding how Jewish populations returning to Palestine should be governed to avoid conflict and what to do about the competing claims for the Holy Lands. Some historians have made the counterfactual argument that had the opinions expressed in the King-Crane Commission been heeded, the history of Arab nationalism would have unfolded in a much different manner and a lasting peace in the region that is today Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the State of Palestine, and Jordan would perhaps have been attainable (Howard 1963). In any case, by the

time the report was unearthed and published by the American *Editor & Publisher* and *New York Times* three years later in December of 1922, it was far too late to renegotiate the imperialist course of action that had been taken. The *Editor & Publisher* report opened with the headline, "The Vital Significance of the Report That Follows" and the grave words: **"**Facts are first. The world is askew today because facts have been concealed or perverted" (1922). Even if the masking of the document was journalistically embellished, the importance of the document was not lost on American media at the time.

The King-Crane Commission was, in many ways, a "quintessentially American undertaking", particularly in its epistemological view of public opinion as something that could be measured as an evidence-based form of discursive knowledge and as something that could move politics (Reimer 2006). Further, it initiated a pattern of using "foreignness" as a proxy for neutrality on the part of public opinion researchers. Around that time, the dominant American scientific view on public opinion understood it to be "the gross aggregate of individual opinions freely expressed rather than a consentient position articulated by an elite" (Reimer 2006, 135). This reflects the positivistic zeitgeist in post-war America. Reimer continues,

> The only way to ascertain the true direction of public sentiment was to poll as accurately as possible the whole population. This was the genesis of the King–Crane Commission, a fusing of the American faith in the certitudes of 'science' and the values of 'democracy.' For both scientific and democratic reasons, quantity mattered: the quantitative dimension of the commission's work was the reason for the confidence with which its authors spoke, reflecting the peculiarly authoritative character that quantitative discourses had acquired in the United States by 1919 (2006, 135).

Subsequent analyses of the King-Crane report reveal no precedent for this type of undertaking in the Middle East. Still, its scientificness has been called into question on many occasions. It was very much taken for granted that foreign commissioners would have had an ability to read the feelings of their empirical subjects (Allen 2017). Another problem can be read directly from the text of the report itself, when the authors attest that "The process [of hearing delegates] Itself was inevitably a kind of political education for the people, and, besides

actually bringing out the desires of the people, had at least further value in the simple consciousness that their wishes were being sought" (King and Crane, 1919). This motif of Western scientific salvation manifests itself throughout the report.

For both its methodological breakthroughs and its imperious assumptions, the King-Crane Commission represents an early landmark in the pursuit of Arab public opinion by Western imperialist actors. Reimer warns us that opinion data itself cannot be considered outside of the historical and cultural settings from which it emerged. In his words, "the statistics amassed by the commission must be interpreted therefore with an awareness of both the Ottoman background and the unusual and transitory conditions under which they were collected" (2006, 138). This cautionary advice, I would say, transcends the King-Crane case.

2 From Tradition to Modernity: Arab Opinion Inquiry in Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society*

As a social scientific paradigm that promised to explain macro-level transformations and progress in contemporary societies, the breed of modernisation theory that emerged from the 1950s is now usually treated from a historiographic perspective—as an artefact of a time and place. Embedded within this modernisation paradigm was an elite and unidirectional understanding of the world order, with the superior Western democratic and industrial society positioned at the helm, far ahead of an "unprogressive and unimaginative" Global South (Bah 2008, 799). Modernisation was premised on ideal notions about the trajectory of social development from tradition to modernity. It assumed, among other things, that "development tends to proceed toward the modern state along a common, linear path" and that "the progress of developing societies can be dramatically accelerated through contact with developed ones" (Latham 2000, 4). The process of modernisation was generally conceptualised as scientific and rational, one that would increase a society's productivity and efficiency as it came into being as modern. Further, modernisation was viewed as something that could be empirically verified. Gilman, for one, speaks of the "elitism of technical expertise" that prioritised "fact, knowledge, and the

indisputable authority of science" during this time (2003, 8). The attitude that pervaded modernist thinking was that "traditional societies had to be reorganised to make individuals subject to the epistemological control of social science" (Gilman 2003, 8), and opinion research offered the technologies necessary for doing so.

The discourse of modernisation developed in the context of the Cold War, when American intellectuals, policy elites, public opinion and propaganda specialists, and social scientists were engaged in a prolonged exercise of countering the influence of Soviet-styled communism in the world. The discourse of modernisation has also been considered as an ideological response to the decolonisation process, which "presented a new and potentially dangerous force to be channeled and controlled" (Latham 2000, 22) and "established the need for development" (Gilman 2003, 42). Modernisation and development theory—its proponents and its critics—form an expansive body of literature (see, for instance, Rostow 1960(1991); Wallerstein 1974; Shils 1975; Pye 1979; Schelkle et al. (eds.) 2000; Engerman et al. (eds.) 2003; Ekbladh 2010; Latham 2011). And more recent analyses have considered the immense effects of the modernisation paradigm on the production of scholarship and knowledge, particularly with reference to the epistemological development and institutionalisation of the American behavioural social sciences (see Appy (ed.) 2000; Gilman 2003; Cooke et al. 2005; Shah 2011).

Of the key modernist social scientists who worked to refashion postcolonial societies in the image of America, Daniel Lerner's work stands out as explicitly implicated in the history of Arab public opinion inquiry. Lerner was one of a network of American intellectuals and academics who thrived from an unprecedented wave of funding for the social sciences in the late 1950s and early 1960s that came as "government agencies sought to enhance their knowledge of the politics and culture of geopolitically sensitive areas where the Cold War might be fought" (Shah 2011, 18). Within Lerner's intellectual network were characters that we are already now acquainted with—Harold Lasswell, Paul Lazarsfeld, Ithiel de Sola Pool, Gabriel Almond, Bernard Berelson, for instance—all major influencers in the development of American public opinion research. Indeed, Hemant Shah's critique of Lerner's formative research on the Middle

East disentangles some of the complex, tightly connected networks of American government agencies, private public opinion research firms, universities, and social science research institutes involved in postwar foreign policy research. Lerner's work was greatly influenced by Harold Lasswell's psychologistic approach to opinion research, which, in true behaviouralist fashion, sought to build a link between ego and personality development and political behaviour (Gilman 2003, 165). Lerner was a trained sociologist and, having spent time working on psychological warfare during World War II, eventually joined the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR) at Columbia University. BASR's legacy of research lay in the field of media and communication studies. One of its largest projects, contracted by the Department of State and in collaboration with MIT's Center for International Studies (CENIS), monitored the reach and effects of Voice of America (VOA) radio broadcasting around the world. VOA programming was an integral part of American postwar foreign policy and a counter-strategy to Soviet radio stations, and Lerner's involvement in assessing VOA's reach in the Middle East was a key element of his 1958 book, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East.*

The Passing of Traditional Society was funded and conducted under the auspices of American institutions working on anti-Soviet foreign policy objectives. The object of Lerner's study was to identify audiences of VOA broadcasts, as well as to understand how messaging was being received and evaluated by Middle Eastern populations in order to target "vulnerable audience segments" with more specific propagandistic messaging (Bah 2008, 814). The study exemplified the fusion of modernisation thinking with the epistemology of behavioural social science, at a time when each was in need of the other. It relied on surveys and post-hoc comparative analysis to explain how societies become "modern", i.e. "Western", and where the role of mass media was to be found in all this (Shah 2011, 3). For the study, survey interviews were conducted in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Syria in 1950 and 1951; three hundred in each country, reaching a total of roughly 1,600 individual respondents from the Middle East. The survey questionnaire itself comprised a total of "117 questions about their living conditions, their opinions on politics and foreign countries, their use of mass media, their level of happiness, and their basic demographic characteristics" (Shah 2011, 3). From this data, "Lerner statistically extracted three types or

categories of people and nations—the traditional, the transitional, and the modern" (Shah 2011, 3). What Lerner essentially provided was a three-pronged typology of modernity derived from a pseudo-scientific, psychological assessment of a given Middle Easterner's capacity for opinion-making (in his view). For Lerner, political consciousness separated the modern individual from the traditional one, while a transitional individual, standing halfway between traditional and modern, might represent the key to social change (modernisation) in the Middle East. It was the promise of the transitional's passage to becoming modern that was encapsulated in the idea of the passing of traditional society.

In questioning what differentiated a modern individual from a non-modern or traditional individual, Lerner reasoned that opinion-formation held the key. It is within this notion where fragments of the theories of Lasswell and other similar social scientists of Lerner's day are found. The ability to hold and express opinions on matters of public and political life suggested that the individual had certain personal attributes which made them more or less amenable to becoming modern. One of these was empathy, which for Lerner meant the ability of an individual "to identify with people and situations different from him- or herself" (Shah 2011, 107). Lerner instrumentalised attributes such as empathy by creating an index against which respondents could be placed along a linearly-structured opinion continuum (Shah 2011, 105). This continuum categorised respondents as a traditional Middle Easterner with no ability to express an opinion, a transitionalist with some clues about opinion-formation, and a modernist with developed opinion-formation capabilities. The tripartite index was based on a smaller set of questions that tested the opinion-capacity of each respondent and was constructed by adding up the number of questions to which the respondents answered (Shah 2011). Lerner himself explains this methodological approach:

> A person becomes participant in society by learning to 'have opinions'— further, the more numerous and varied the matters on which he has opinions, the more participant he is. To rank each respondent as a participant in the Middle Eastern opinion arena, we counted the number and variety of items in the questionnaire on which he expressed *some* opinion (i.e. did *not* say 'I don't know' or 'I have no opinion') (Lerner 1958, 71 [emphasis in the original]).

The methodology of *The Passing of Traditional Society* is notably unclear. No details on the construction or cut-off points of the modernisation index were given. Of the many methodological problems that have been traced in Lerner's study, perhaps one of the most jarring is that respondents were classified not on the content or the essence of their opinions—not on *what they said*—but on whether they said something at all. "The justification was that it was only the holding of the opinion that mattered, not the substance of the opinion" (Shah 2011, 106). Further, Lerner's questionnaire, like other similar studies of global opinion, was drafted in English and subsequently translated into Arabic and other languages, with little attention paid to concept equivalence and the distortive effects of translation. This (still common) practice of privileging the language of the interrogator diminishes the discursive authority of the respondent.

The smaller set of nine questions used to construct the empathy index related to media, politics, and "role playing", in the sense that the respondent was led "to imagine himself in a situation other than his real one" (Lerner 1958, 70). The questions read as follows:

1. *If you were made the editor of a newspaper, what kind of a paper would you run?*

2. *What do you think you miss by not knowing what the newspapers have to say?*

3. *How do you think people who go to the movies differ from those who don't?*

4. *If you were put in charge of a radio station, what kinds of programs would you like to put on?*

5. *If for some reason you could not live in our country, what other country would you choose to live in?*

6. *Suppose that I could tell you anything you wanted to know about (this country): What two questions would you be most interested in asking?*

7. *What is the biggest problem that people in the same circumstances as yourself face in life?*

8. *What do you think people in the same circumstances as yourself can do to help solve this problem?*

9. *Suppose that you were made head of the government. What are some of the things you would do?*

Lerner gives little indication as to why these questions were chosen and worded in this way, or about the reliability of the interviewer and translation process, or the logic behind the scoring mechanism that determined an empathic individual. From these questions, the problems that we encounter include conceptual confusion and ambiguousness. Some questions are open hypotheticals (i.e. q.2, q.9), under-described (i.e. q.1, q.2, q.3), force the imagination beyond plausible bounds (i.e. q.4, q9), are tricky and invite no clear answer (i.e. q.6, q.7), rely on other questions (i.e. q.8), or are worded such that "I don't know" would constitute a reasonably sound opinion (i.e. q.5). The connection between an(y) answer to these questions and the label of "modern" has been challenged as both arbitrary and conceptually flawed. Bah (2008), for instance, demonstrates how Lerner's model rests on preconceived and untested notions of society in the Middle East. As a result, Lerner's methodology to a great extent reifies the hypothetical categorisations of modernity that it sought to find, such that his index of modernity seems a neat, historical inevitability. Lerner clues us in to this when he remarks, "our data fell beautifully into place", as if it could not have been otherwise (1958, 72).

Combined with the larger dataset, Lerner paid particularly close attention to the media-consuming habits of his respondents, those "found to be literate, urban, and relatively well off would have been the ones most likely to score higher on the index than others", while those with "little or no access to international news or with limited interest in world politics were destined to score lower on this index, even if they held opinions on many other issues of importance to them" (Shah 2011, 107). Lerner thus concluded that "mass communication technologies were the essential vehicle of modernization, creating similar cultural traits everywhere they penetrated" (Gilman 2003, 172). He judged as well that the overall benefits of modernisation made people happy, and thus modern Middle Easterners were happier than traditional ones.

Lerner's claim to speaking for Middle Eastern public opinions was validated by his fellow American academics, who shared in the spirit of modernist thinking. Elie Salem, for instance, wrote that *The Passing of Traditional Society* "reflects

faithfully the state of mind of the Middle Eastern peoples in their process of transformation from a traditional to a modern society" (Salem 1959, 127). The study was commended for its use of "modern techniques of sociological research", and Lerner was applauded for being "amply qualified to analyze the attitudes of these peoples" and handling "with mastery" the "varied and immense" dataset of cross-national surveys (Salem 1959, 127-128). Another critic wrote that the study was "bound to retain an honoured place" in the literature on the Middle East (Lengyel in Shah 2011, 4).

Of course, there is much in Lerner's study that provides for an uncomfortable read. As Gilman notes, Lerner remains "unsympathetic toward the local, the particular, and the unique" (2003, 173). The structure of his analysis follows an Orientalist fantasy about parochial characters like the Grocer and the Chief of Balgat, a "deprived and remote village" outside Ankara, and false imaginings of the Middle East. The discourse that permeates *The Passing of Traditional Society* projects an otherness and backwardness onto the region that serves to justify the Western mission of development. At the same time, the language of science and recency of statistical application to social research had the effect of propelling the validity and rigour of the study. At this point, I return to Lerner's own words inscribed at the beginning of this chapter: "Those Middle Easterners whose private lives have become permeated by the public questions will prove most enlightening to us" (1958, 75). Indeed, this one passage lays bare the self-serving nature of American inquiry into the Arab region during the age of modernisation.

3   "The Palestine Question" and Arab Erasure in Western Public Opinion

In the lead up to the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (1947), the dismemberment of the British Mandate for Palestine, and creation of the state of Israel in 1948, public attitudes toward "the Palestine question" were being closely monitored. Indeed, the subject has been one of the most consistently observed cases in the study of public opinion of the Arab world. The Arab position in the struggle for self-determination was that "Palestine was an integral part of the

Arab world and that from the beginning its indigenous inhabitants had opposed the creation in their country of a Jewish national home" (Tessler 2009, 259). Edward Said has written of Palestine as a topic around which knowledge is ever-evolving, leading us to reflect on the ways by which this knowledge has been "implicated in the contest over and about Palestine" (1986, 30). To see this contestation in action, one can look toward different forms of knowledge. Here, I consider the subtle ways in which erasure—the writing out of Arab identity and agency—comes to be embedded in the design of opinion research. With small examples from Western polls and surveys from the mid-twentieth century, we can see how public opinion knowledge becomes politicised not once media pundits and politicians have their hands on it, but early in the planning stages, well before any opinion has been uttered.

In 1951, the Office of Public Opinion Research (OPOR) (led by Hadley Cantril and based at Princeton University) collected funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to publish a volume of major opinion studies conducted in sixteen countries between the years of 1935 and 1946. These studies originated from roughly two-dozen polling institutes based in Europe and the Americas. In publishing this volume, Cantril and his colleagues at *Public Opinion Quarterly* saw "the potential value and usefulness this type of information could have for a wide range of people: historians, sociologists, political scientists, economists, editors, policy makers, businessmen, labor leaders, and a host of others whose professional lives are, in one way or another, concerned with public reaction to events" (Cantril and Strunk 1951, v). A good number of the studies in the compendium were conducted on behalf of governments, media, and private clients, and not all data were publicly available until being published by OPOR in 1951 as a knowledge-sharing tool. These were also large-scale polls, with sample sizes in the hundreds and thousands. The compendium assembled public opinion polls on a lengthy list of social, political, legal, and cultural topics. As one of the first substantial collections of opinion data for its time, Cantril, as editor, cautioned readers "that this scientific tool, like all others, is in itself neutral and can be used for good or evil according to one's own definition and purposes" (Cantril and Strunk 1951, v). The sentiment here was that the data itself (and, it could be assumed, the process of data collection as well) was wholly apolitical, with the politicisation of data being a post-hoc effect of interpretation.

The OPOR compendium, titled *Public Opinion, 1935-1946*, is organised around the classification of subject headings and cross references "which are the result of careful thought and wide experience" (Cantril and Strunk 1951, vii). In this way, a single topic might contain results from different polls of different years. This allows for a comparison of question wording, results, and shifts in opinion over time. The topics are far-reaching, covering anything from abortion and aeronautics to weather and World War. The large majority of polls included in the roughly 1,200-page compendium surveyed American and British respondents. Additionally, many of the polls included in the compendium were institutions in their own right: the Fortune Survey (Elmo Roper), the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) polls, and the Gallup and Crossley polls, among others. The analysis below examines the specific instantiations of Middle East public opinion from this compendium.

In the years preceding the Nakba, the "catastrophic" expulsion and exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians after Israel's declaration of establishment, inquiry relating to "the Palestine question" appeared more frequently in opinion polls and surveys. In his account of the development of public opinion on Palestine through these years, Michael Suleiman writes that "in 1948, when Palestine was dismembered and the Palestinians were dispersed, 'world public opinion' on the Palestine issue—as on many others—was to a great extent shaped by the West" (1984, 87). American and British polls and surveys found in the OPOR compendium greatly contributed to this sense of a "world public opinion" on the issue, which in turn motivated a decidedly pro-Israeli stance in Western media discourse (Suleiman 1984, 87). At this crucial time in state formation, Suleiman notes that no major polls were commissioned to communicate the opinions of Jews and Arabs caught in the political crossfires of 1948, though Western pollsters had the means to interview people in Mandatory Palestine in the lead up to the 1947 UN General Assembly vote on Resolution 181 (II) regarding the international community's partition plan for Palestine. While an extensive three-volume descriptive and statistical *Survey of Palestine* was prepared by British officials in 1945/6 for the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, it did not constitute a study of local public opinion. Others have noted a lull in the presence of foreign organisations conducting survey research inside Arab states in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of political upheavals and the

influence of the Arab national movement, but few details are to be found as to why the dearth of research in the territories during this time (see S. Ibrahim 1987, 28).

Instead, the question of what to do about Palestine and claims to a Jewish homeland were put toward people living in countries far from there, with little background knowledge or first-hand encounters with territorial conflict and partition. The way in which this knowledge was organised is captured in the 1951 OPOR compendium.

In the subject index to the compendium, entries for "Palestine", "Arabs", "Middle East", or variants of these terms appear as below:

> Arabs in Palestine. *See* Jews: Colonization.
> Jews in Palestine. *See* Jews: Colonization.
> Palestine question. *See* Jews: Colonization.

This displacement of Palestine through the codification of knowledge within the index alone is striking. Arabs, Palestine, and the Palestine question do not make up their own subjects (and here I mean both subjects as entries and subjects as agents with recognition and representation). Rather, they are subsumed into the Jewish subject such that they become subsets of public opinion knowledge filtered through a different label and experience. Here, it becomes even more interesting that Mildred Strunk's introduction to the compendium explicitly comments on the careful crafting of subject headings and cross references.

When we scan the index for mentions of "Jews", "Zionism", or derivative terminology, we find the following entries:

> JEWISH QUESTION
> > *See also* Jews: Colonization; Minorities; Music; Race; War crimes and trials; World War, 1939-45: Atrocities.
> JEWS
> > *See also* Church unity; Jewish question; Minorities; World War, 1939-45: Children: U.S.
> > COLONIZATION
> > > *See also* International cooperation: U.S.-Great Britain; Jewish question; World War, 1939-45: Displaced persons.

Persecutions. *See* Jewish question.

These two main entries for the Jewish question and Jews include the sub-headings of colonisation and persecutions, and various cross references including cooperation between the great powers, though there is no mention of Palestine or of Arabs. It seems a stark omission given the keen interest of British and American foreign policy in the future of Palestine and the Middle East more broadly. This erasure within the OPOR codified index of opinion is present despite the numerous polling questions included in the compendium that probe attitudes relating to how boundaries and land claims should be dealt with by foreign actors. Suleiman argues that the centrality of the Jewish case in Western public attitudes "is not merely because Palestine ceased to exist as a country in 1948" (1984, 107). Rather, there is a larger problem at work; one which he calls a "concomitant lack of concern for the Palestinian Arabs" in Western polls (1984, 107). The reasons for this include racial prejudice, long-standing othering of the Arab in European political thought, and a hierarchical approach to opinion production whereby the Jewish question becomes a more pressing issue than the Palestine question. This renders the latter unessential; blotted out from the writing and design of public opinion inquiry. In the aftermath of the Shoah, the Nuremburg trials, and the struggle to reconcile the brutality of the Holocaust in human history, the weight of the Jewish plight was unequivocal. But where there was opportunity to create space for the turbulent issues of statehood and self-determination in the Middle East, the polls expose an "almost ignorance, or deliberate negligence, of the fate of the Palestinian Arabs" (Suleiman 1984, 107).

In 1944, at a time of increased tensions between Jewish and British forces within Mandatory Palestine due to restrictions on Jewish immigration, a NORC poll (Cantril and Strunk 1951, 354) asked the following to Americans:

> *Do you think the Jews should be given a special chance to settle in Palestine after the war, or do you think all people should have the same chance to settle there?*

The answers were operationalised into three categories: "Jews", "All people same", and "Don't know".[36] The bias in support of Jewish settlement reverberates

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[36] The published results were Jews (45%), All people same (44%), and Don't know (11%).

through the question wording, with its mention of "a special chance" but without reference to Muslim populations and existing inhabitants of the territory. This leaves the Palestinians indiscernible, concealed within the category "all people" but unable to represent themselves. Over thirty more questions from different American and British polls appear in the same section of the OPOR compendium, regarding opinion on the possible creation of a Jewish state. Very few make explicit mentions of Arab peoples or ask of their fate.

A similar question from a 1946 NORC poll (Cantril and Strunk 1951, 356), employing a Western saviour discourse, asks Americans:

> *As you remember, the report* [by the Anglo-American committee on Palestine] *recommends that one hundred thousand more Jewish refugees be admitted to Palestine in spite of protests by the Arabs there. President Truman has said he thinks this ought to be done. Now England says that the United States ought to help her keep order in Palestine if trouble breaks out between the Jews and the Arabs. Do you think we should help keep order there, or should we keep out of it?*

The three possible responses were "Keep out of it", "Help keep order", and "Undecided".[37] There is a binary framing of the Jewish refugees in opposition to "the Arabs there", the latter not inhabiting the territory by any right worth mentioning, but "there" as if an inconvenient truth and an uncooperative disturbance. The positive reinforcement for the United States to involve itself in the escalating conflict comes from the recommendation of the report, Truman's declaration of support for intervention, and the British stimulus. This obscures the neutrality of intervention by casting it as an officially ordained position. The only options given are to "help keep order" in case "trouble breaks out". The Palestinians are incapable of solving the issue, which justifies an intercession by the West to preserve order and control as only they are capable of. Left to its own devices, Palestine would degenerate into a frenzy of internal strife, threatening stability in the region and more broadly jeopardising the world order. The idea of Palestinian autonomy as a solution is not even entertained, and intervention by foreign actors comes in only one flavour: the complex of the colonial saviour.

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[37] The published results were Keep out of it (61%), Help keep order (28%), and Undecided (11%).

Another common type of question that appears in the compendium asks the respondent whether they agree with one given statement over an alternative. When not randomised, the ordering of the statements can often create a cognitive bias in favour of the first statement mentioned. For this reason, misleading question designs like this no longer appear in scientific public opinion surveys. An example from a 1945 Roper poll (Cantril and Strunk 1951, 385) reads:

> *Here are two statements. Please tell me with which one you most nearly agree: a Jewish state in Palestine is a good thing for the Jews, and every possible effort should be made to establish Palestine as a Jewish state, or commonwealth, for those who wanted to settle there; Jews are a religious group only and not a nation, and it would be bad for the Jews to try to set up a Jewish state in Palestine or anywhere else.*

The question was only asked of an American cross-section of Jewish individuals and published in the New York Herald Tribune. In fact, it was standard practice to probe opinion of religions subgroups: Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic, though never Muslim. The respondents were classified as "Pro-Jewish state", "Anti-Jewish state", and "Undecided".[38] The two statements themselves are not on a level continuum. The wording of absolutes ("every possible effort should be made"; "Jews are a religious group only"), the non-randomisation, the encouragement to pick what one "most nearly" agrees with (as opposed to just agrees with), a false equation of a positive deed with a negative decision prejudice a "Pro-Jewish state" opinion, and the likelihood of ingroup pressure for the Jewish subgroup are factors that might expressly produce a non-neutral opinion.

The OPOR compendium covers a critical time span where tensions were flaring in the run up to 1948 and the creation of Israel and first Arab-Israeli war. Patterns in research production reveal that polls tend to emerge in swarms during these critical junctures in Arab-Israeli relations (times when foreign policy has high stakes in the region), only to fade away in the interim. As Suleiman has argued, "opinion often follows policy", i.e., discussions of specific policy only begin after they have been initiated by public officials (1984, 88). Further, Hazel Erskine

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[38] The published results were Pro-Jewish state (80.1%), Anti-Jewish state (10.5%), and Undecided (9.4%).

notes that in the first two decades following Palestinian partition, Western public opinion was apathetic, uninformed, and unevenly collected until just after the Six-Day War of June 1967, which then "not only focused attention on the Middle East, but turned sympathies of the western world overwhelmingly toward the victorious small nation" of Israel (1969). Scanning many of the major Western polls that included questions on the conflict between 1948 and 1969 allows us to trace the evolution of the Palestine question. These polls include those from Instituto Gallup de Opinião Publica Brazil (BGI), EMNID Germany, Gallup, Gallup Markedsanalyse Denmark (GMA), Harris USA, IFOP France, MINN USA, Norsk Gallup Institute (NGI), Nederlands Instituut voor de Publieke Opinie (NIPO), NOP Britain, NORC USA, SOC Britain, SRC-C USA, and USIA (in Erskine 1969).

After 1948, the question of who had claim to the land (which was originally mentioned in the OPOR compendium) became a matter of whose side was deserving of greater sympathy, Jews and Israel or Arabs and the Arab states, and who was to blame. For instance, consider this selection of questions sourced from the aforementioned polls:

> *If war breaks out between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine, which side would you sympathise with?* (Gallup, November 1947)

> *In the conflict between Israel and her Arab neighbours, do you tend to sympathize with Israel, with the Arab states, or with neither side?* (USIA, November-December 1956)

> *Suppose there were a war between the Arab nations and Israel. Which side do you think you would probably sympathise with?* (SRC-C, November 1964)

> *Which side do you feel is more to blame in this dispute—Israel or the Arabs?* (NORC, November 1953)

Following the Six-Day War, these questions appear in higher frequencies in the following form:

> *In this trouble (between Israel and the Arab nations in the Middle East), are your sympathies more with Israel or more with the Arab states?* (Gallup, June 1967)

Which side are you in sympathy with in the present conflict between Israel and Egypt and the other Arab countries? (IFOP, June 1967)

Who do you think has more right on their side—the Arabs or Israel? (Harris, June 1967)

Who do you think is more to blame for the failure to reach a settlement of Mid-East issues—the Israelis or the Arabs? (MINN, January 1968)

Do you tend to agree or disagree that:
   The Arabs have wanted to start a war with Israel for a long time.
   Israel has wanted a war with the Arabs for a long time.
(Harris, June 1967)

Each of these and the many other similarly-worded formulations in the polls strike at one basic question: "Where do you stand on the question of Palestine?", which Edward Said has called "shamelessly provocative" (1986, 29). Certainly, the methodology of polling places textual limits on researchers, forcing them to ask concise, to-the-point questions. But in each of the cases above, we can see a clear binary built into the questions that pits the allegiance of respondents against each other and between opposing factions, forcing opinion toward the side of Israel and the Jewish peoples or toward the Arab peoples. The only middle ground is a "Don't know" or non-response; there is no other opinion that one can hold.

Not only does this reduce the complex historical trajectories of Jewish and Palestinian Arab statehood and statelessness to an either/or conditional statement, it also inevitably shapes the way that public opinion on the conflict is framed and talked about. Policymakers, media, and practitioners (those who collect and commission the polls) are not interested in whether the public can offer a solution to the protracted conflict; they are not seeking the public's counsel or advice. Rather, testing on which side of the fence people stand (after first constructing a fence) can be a legitimating tool or affirmative signal for policy decisions like intervention (or non-intervention). The issue of who to blame for the complex and enduring struggle is similarly framed in a binary fashion, which does little more than to absolve colonial/Western powers and other actors like the UN for their role in orchestrating or prolonging the conflict. Finally, the framing of the conflict between the two identities as "symmetrically

balanced, polarized at dead centre", in the words of Said, misrepresents the Palestinian case. As he says, "to place the Palestinian and the Israeli sides within the opposition on what appears to be equal, opposite, and symmetrical footing is also to reduce the claims of one by elevating the other" (1986, 31). This great levelling is its own form of erasure.

4   Conclusion

Through the three cases presented in this chapter, I have provided historical evidence of early Western epistemic interventions into the Middle East by way of public opinion research. These examples, I argue, are emblematic of a first stage in the broader story of Arab public opinion inquiry in which experts seek control over their objects of inquiry (everyday people). In each of the cases, we see the application of a reductionist epistemology characterised by an unchallenged emphasis on scientific principles and methodological protocols. As objects of inquiry, people's opinions and desires are purposefully isolated "from their vital context" (Mazzocchi 2006, 464). Complex historical and social realities are compressed and abridged, and then replaced with the outputs of measuring techniques meant to transmit the degree of importance of the questions asked of people. As a means of extracting, compressing, and recasting the voices, wants, and experiences of others through the Self's systems of knowledge, each of these instances of epistemic intervention was orchestrated by foreign, predominately American, actors motivated by the desire to collect technical information and control knowledge of the Other. And yet each case study is also quite distinct. They are not meant to show a continuity of actors or methods per se. Indeed, the methods and audiences differ in each case. Instead, I believe that the King-Crane Commission, Lerner's widely influential study on modernisation, and commercial polling on the Palestine issue in the post-Mandate era each made a significant contribution to the empirical construction of the Arab world using the truth-seeking tools of science.

In the case of the King-Crane Commission of 1919, the collection of numeric population information using the method of petitions was aimed at a more systematic (scientific) way of governing the collapsed Ottoman empire; an alternative redrawing of borders to the Sykes-Picot mandate system based on

empirical data. As one of the first major studies of Arab public opinion to go on record, the Commission was an ethnographic investigation of the hyper-local; of the three case studies, it displayed the strongest commitment on the part of experts to distil the state of opinion "of the people concerned" from the places where they were forged (King and Crane 1919). Yet what was taken to be the representative opinions of all was in fact only a selection of strategically relevant positions on issues relating to colonial leadership and self-governance. By its very design, the empirical pursuit of public opinion here was cut on the bias; it is more a study of elite opinion than of (mass) public opinion. It was framed as a scientific triumph that presented "the cold, matured facts in the case, as fully gathered and fearlessly stated by a responsible, unbiased American group of investigators" (*Editor & Publisher* 1922). It was this scientific stamp of approval that solidified the value of the Commission's work as a major feat of international social science research.

In the second case of Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society*, the nature of intervention was both epistemic and developmental. The text itself exemplifies the paradigm of modernisation that was cultivated in wartime institutions like BASR (introduced in the context of the rise of global opinion polling in Chapter 4). Whereas the King-Crane Commission was meant to enlighten the major powers, Lerner's study provided a path toward enlightenment for what he saw as traditional or backward societies of the Middle East. The West, with its scientific advancements, media technologies, systems of mass communication, and democratic political structures, served as a prime model for enlightenment. Lerner's methodology was more specialised than King and Crane's. By the 1950s, polls and standardised surveys were being used widely. These were employed alongside psychosocial theories about modernisation that allowed Lerner to systematise the process of social change. In the context of public opinion inquiry on the Arab region, *The Passing of Traditional Society* should be read as "a 'production' in the sense that it was an outcome of a research process embedded in a particular postwar political and cultural economy" (Shah 2011, 9).

In the third case, we witness the implicit erasure of Palestinian identity through the design of mass polling. Unlike the previous two cases, opinion is decoupled from experience here. What I mean by this is that foreign public opinion on the

Palestinian issue was canvassed widely after 1948 instead of local (Palestinian or Israeli) opinions formed through lived experience. Partisanship in both question wording and the codification of data manufactured a particular narrative of the Arab-Israeli conflict, within which the Palestinian right to representation was nullified. This erasure took place within the design of public opinion questionnaires, before results even came to be interpreted and instrumentalised by media pundits and politicians. Examples from Western polls after 1948 display a tendency to treat Palestinians, with no internationally recognised state, as stateless people and as "non-people". As Suleiman writes, "if Palestinians are non-people, it is easy to wish them away, refuse to talk to them or their representatives, the PLO, and to persist in excluding them from any formula for a proposed solution to this nagging problem" (1984, 106). Ironically, years earlier, Henry King and Charles Crane had proposed a very different future for Palestinians with relation to "the Zionist program" (King and Crane 1919). Based on all that their Commission had heard, they cautioned against the contents of the Balfour Declaration, arguing that "'a national home for the Jewish people' is not equivalent to making Palestine into a Jewish State; nor can the erection of such a Jewish State be accomplished without the gravest trespass upon the 'civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine'" (King and Crane 1919). The initial suppression of the Commission report amounted to the suppression of opinions in support of this position. Repeatedly, and in different ways, indigenous public opinion supporting the right to Arab self-determination was subjected to foreign empirical control or altogether silenced in the process of creating scientific knowledge about public opinion during this first, early stage of inquiry.

Chapter 6
Stage 2 | Great Transformations: The Rise of Embedded Institutions and Practices

Between the ecstasy and the agony, we must take stock of what has been accomplished, of what has not been accomplished, and of where we go from here.

Saad Eddin Ibrahim (1987)

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, opinion polling and survey research had "become common in the Arab world and in other developing areas" (Tessler 1987a, 1). We have detailed records of nearly four hundred studies, from Algeria to Yemen that used quantitative and behavioural methods that form a relatively unified set. These are mainly found in Monte Palmer's 1982 compendium, *Survey Research in the Arab World*, which in all probability represented "little more than the tip of the iceberg" (Tessler 1987a, 3; Palmer et al. 1982). And although Marc Lynch has written that "as recently as the late 1980s, the idea of conducting scientific surveys of public opinion about controversial political issues would have been virtually unthinkable" (2006, 33), we have evidence to the contrary—politically sensitive ideas were making their way into opinion research earlier, but permanent records of this are scarce.

While Stage 1 (Chapter 5) traced a mode of inquiry wherein societies across Arab countries were participant to the development of Western social science merely as objects of research (Zghal and Karoui 1973), the rapid institutionalisation of public opinion inquiry in the latter part of the twentieth century, as part of broader global economic and political shifts, provides a segue into (what I demarcate as) a second stage in the development of Arab public opinion inquiry. While the first stage was characterised by epistemic interventions at the hands of foreign actors, Stage 2 is characterised by a deeper co-dependency between actors situated within and outside of the Arab region. Stage 2 covers substantial transformative ground over roughly four decades, during which time we witness

the coalescence of a regional Arab public sphere, hastened by revolutionary advances to the media landscape. This period is marked by political and social developments that "created an unprecedented mobility in Arabian societies", sparked a vested interest in the region "as a strategic asset" to global onlookers (Ayish 2008, 13), and eventually provoked foreign policymakers to interrogate "Arab opinion" more deeply following the shattering events of September 11 and the ensuing war in Iraq.

Similarly to how I approached Stage 1, my goal is not to suggest that concrete temporal bounds apply to this next phase of inquiry; however, for the purposes of this chapter, I focus on the period from the late 1970s at a time when Arab social science institutes began to flourish, until the final years of the George W. Bush presidency, when by 2009, Arab public opinion was appearing in congressional testimonies relating to American foreign policy in the Middle East. Recalling the visual map of inquiry used to locate Stage 1, the figure below plots Stage 2 in a similar fashion.

Time

Contemporary inquiry

Actor Location

External or foreign

Stage 2

Internal or indigenous

Historical inquiry
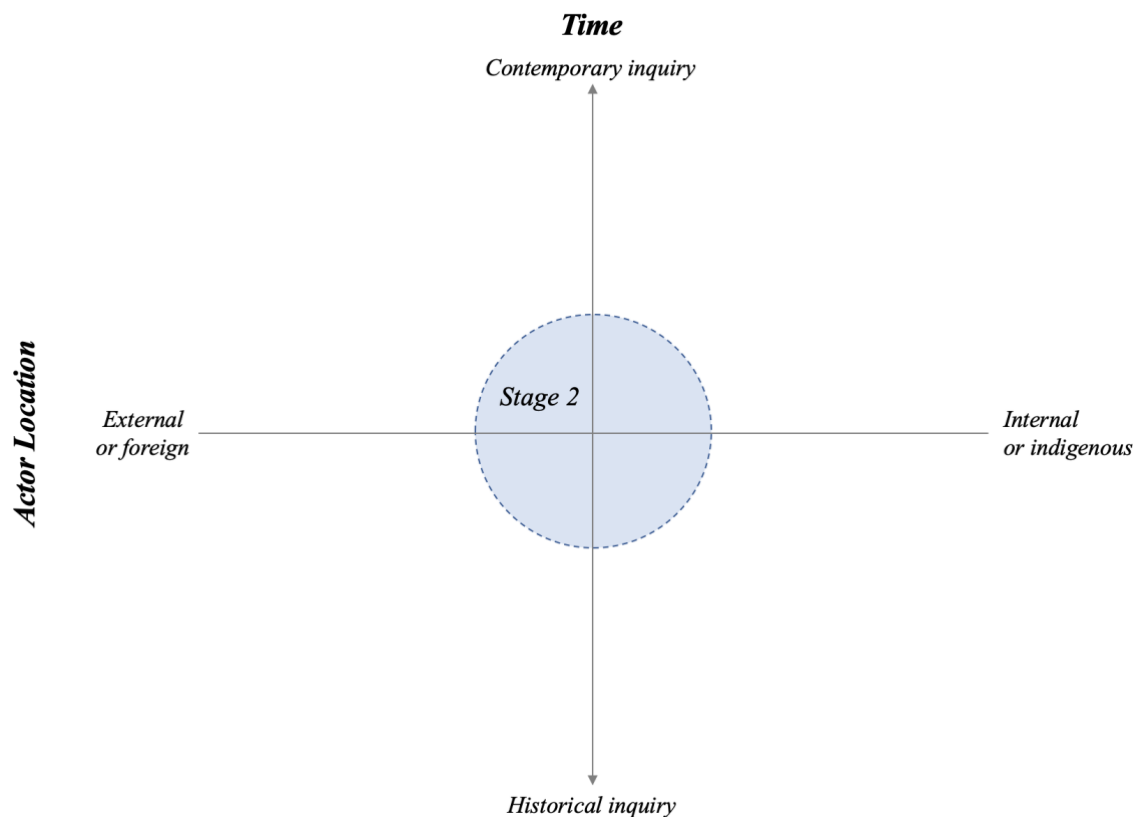
Figure 14: Stage 2 in the development of Arab public opinion inquiry.

Stage 2 is found at the intersection of the axes in this visualisation, where transnational networks are forged by actors located inside and outside the Arab region. Once again, the axes are purposefully indefinite; I do not attempt to map out and rank every relevant actor on this visualisation. Rather, in shining a light on a more heterogenous group of actors than was the case in Stage, I find this visualisation a helpful way to differentiate and show geographic and temporal progression.

My investigation of Stage 2 begins with the Bellagio Conference on Survey Research in the Arab World, held in 1983 by international scholars and practitioners. It is at this moment of inflection where a marked change in the discourse of Arab opinion inquiry is discernable. It was here where Egyptian sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim mused on the agony and the ecstasy of doing social research in the Arab world, a field that was described as both frustratingly underdeveloped and wildly promising (1987). In Section 1, I highlight not the findings of the Bellagio conference per se, but rather the main epiphanies that, I argue, signal an altogether new way of thinking about the study of Arab public opinion. Section 2 overviews the rapid institutionalisation of Arab opinion research during the 1980s and 1990s, as part and parcel of the expansion of an American neoliberal agenda for international development. Here, Western epistemic actors and practices become embedded in urban centres, and a more collaborative field of international (foreign and local) actors began to take shape. During this time, we increasingly find that "the distinction between foreign and indigenous scholars is not always clear cut" (Tessler 1987a, 20). Finally, Section 3 examines the resurgence of American interest in the Arab mind and the Arab streets between 2002 and 2009, a time when "Arab public opinion" made appearances in congressional hearings in Washington. I discuss the emergence of Arab opinion in transcripts and testimonies from these hearings as an illustration of how Arab opinion came to be politicised in the post-2001 environment.

Above all, what I wish to highlight with this chapter is the shift from colonial and post-colonial modes of inquiry by way of epistemic interventions to a more embedded institutional framework that precipitated the rise of an industry for polling people in Arab countries. In Stage 2, we see foreign actors embedding themselves into the local setting, bringing with them some of the same methods

and epistemological assumptions as in Stage 1, but leaning on local actors—at times collaboratively, at times as a prop—to help illuminate (and frame ideas about) the "Arab other".

1   The Bellagio Conference of 1983: An Inflection Point in Arab Public Opinion Inquiry

Jointly funded by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, an international conference on the "Evaluation and Application of Survey Research in the Arab World" was convened over six days in June 1983, hosted at the Rockefeller Bellagio Centre in Italy. An interdisciplinary group of two-dozen senior experts and academics were in attendance, a quarter of whom represented development institutes such as the Ford Foundation (Cairo), the Arab Development Institute (Tripoli), and the World Bank (Washington). The remainder were interdisciplinary scholars based in the US and Middle East (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Palestine, Libya, and Sudan). The aim of the conference "was to assess the utility and limits of survey research as a tool for the study of Arab society", to take stock of what the scientific community had achieved so far and the obstacles it continued to face in conducting (political) polls and surveys in the Arab region (Tessler 1987a, 11).

The conference proceedings, published in 1987, shed considerable light on the state of the art of Arab public opinion research by the 1980s. Titled *The Evaluation and Application of Survey Research in the Arab World* (Tessler et al. 1987), the published volume was "addressed to a number of audiences, both Arab and Western" (Tessler 1987a, 19). It represents one of the earliest resources at our disposal that plainly shows a transnational knowledge network at work, focused on building a research agenda around the study of Arab public opinion. This research agenda touched on four key areas: (1) substantive opinion surveys underway at the time in countries like Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, (2) methodological obstacles and ways to overcome them, (3) contextual issues (i.e., social, cultural, institutional, and political) that hindered the free expression of opinion and the implications for restrictions placed on political research in countries such as Egypt, and finally (4) normative and

epistemological concerns relating to the ethics and embedded assumptions of opinion research. The 1983 Bellagio conference, in other words, served as a sort of self-examination, prognosis, and diagnosis for a budding epistemic community engaged in navigating a politically and culturally dynamic landscape.

Departing from the orientalist and modernising discourses that characterised earlier opinion inquiry in and on the Arab region (see Stage 1), the Bellagio conference set a new tone—one that signalled a more reflexive approach. As Tessler wrote, "it would be erroneous to assume that change is synonymous with Westernization. Attitudes and behaviour patterns derived from a people's own traditions may be no less conducive to societal development than social codes imported from the West or elsewhere" (Tessler 1987a, 4). The plain realisation that scholars and practitioners originating from the West, armed with the latest empirical tools, with teams of enthusiastic field assistants, and with the powers of deductive reasoning, were still not adequately equipped without some contextual knowledge and a relinquishing of their *a priori* assumptions indicated that working collaboratively with locally-situated actors was a necessary next-step. In this way, there was no specific end-game in sight for the Bellagio attendants aside from cultivating this collaboration. As described by political scientist Mark Tessler, who was in attendance and co-edited the conference proceedings,

> The Bellagio conference did not attempt to fashion a precise blueprint associated with the conduct of survey research in the Arab world. Participants recognized that such a blueprint cannot be established by intellectual fiat and then imposed on a scholarly community. The growth and improvement of social research, they concluded, must be built from below (1987a, 14).

This yielding to a more grassroots approach was altogether new for the study of global public opinion, and through the course of Bellagio, we sense an epistemological reckoning taking place in the reflections of its participants. For this reason, I consider the 1983 Bellagio conference a point of inflection, i.e., a turning point or a signal of directional change in the pursuit of Arab public opinion.

We can reassemble the learnings and debates from Bellagio under three subheadings: political, epistemological, and methodological realisations. The first

two, as we will see below, share some overlap, while methodology combines both the techniques of polls and surveys and considerations about the cultural climate for social scientific research in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While the Bellagio conference was fairly comprehensive in scope, some points of discussion were notably missing. For one, there seems to have been little talk of the effects of foreign funding on opinion research. How did the legacy of endowments from American government agencies and philanthropic, democracy-building institutes like Rockefeller and Carnegie, for instance, come into play? Was it a determining factor in the types of questions asked or the nature of the research carried out? While we do see mentions of different funding bodies in the Bellagio proceedings, there is little exploration of the relationship between financing and knowledge production. At the very least, we can assume that granting agencies had thematic requirements and expectations in line with their political values. Their influence was likely felt most strongly at the start of a commissioned study (the approval and funding stage) and at the end (reviewing and promoting the final report), while the meat of the research process—survey design and testing, fielding and interviewing, data collection and statistical processing, and compilation of results—were left in the capable hands of the researcher. But we do not have clarity on the extent to which this was the case.

Another point of discussion that is surprisingly absent concerns how researchers interacted with the hundreds if not thousands of peoples they interviewed. Across North Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf countries, people, as research subjects, remain almost completely shielded from view, their everyday experiences sidelined in the process of becoming scientific objects. We learn very little about peoples' involvement and effect on methodological breakthroughs. Instead, polls and surveys were understood to involve only three primary parties: sponsors, researchers and practitioners, and consumers, wherein sponsors and consumers constituted the *post factum* audience for public opinion data (Ibrahim 1987, 78).

Finally, theory-building relating to the operationalisation of public opinion in non-Western and non-democratic settings was not addressed. To be fair, there had been little written at the time on macro-theorising about public opinion in non-democracies (especially until Zaller and Geddes' 1989 study of public

support for authoritarian policies in Brazil was published). And although not an explicit goal of the conference, we can read the missing references to theory as a field of knowledge still very much in its infancy. As Lynch says, "for opinion surveys to be useful, analysts need a theory of the role of public opinion in political processes" (2006, 40). The perceived usefulness, then, of these early studies for theory-building remains an open question.

Political Realisations

On the whole, there was a consensus among the Bellagio participants that their epistemic community of scholars and practitioners had roots in the strained history of colonial knowledge production. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, for instance, draws a thread that begins with Pharaonic traditions of cadastral survey-taking (see the Wilbour Papyrus, *c.* 1150 B.C.), runs through the empire-building practices of social research during the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt (see *Description de l'Égypte*, 1809-1829), and through twentieth century colonial administrations responsible for the creation of the modern Middle East (1987, 27). But what differentiated contemporary opinion inquiry from its strained past was a new-found awareness or sense of agency on the part of the researcher. In Ibrahim's view, those (mostly non-Arab) scholars, scientists, and experts who designed and carried out contentious early research ought not to be implicated in colonial legacies of oppression because their intention was purely scientific and not political—they would "not have been aware that what they were doing would later be helpful to the colonialists" (1987, 28). Contrast this with his view that from the interwar years onwards, opinion research had become an "intentional and deliberate" act. At once, then, "pre-modern" scientists are exonerated, while contemporary scientists are independent agents that can be held accountable for their ideas.

There was also a consensus among Bellagio participants that historical practices of opinion inquiry had been problematically fixated on extraction, i.e., mining for information only to be remitted to foreign audiences. In general researchers had not been overly concerned with elevating the social well-being of people they investigated. Instead, they were part of a top-down and externally driven process whereby researchers trained in the West were in the habit of "directing their findings back to the Western social science community" without engaging local

audiences (B. Ibrahim 1987, 79). At the same time, "the extent and depth" of early opinion research was considered to be ineffective; as Harik remarked, "the total product is meager" (1987, 67). There was a sense that the push for scientific research initiated after the First World War had failed to produce a sophisticated body of knowledge, and further, that far too much intellectualising had taken place abroad to generate any clear understanding of how to conduct research within the region (Tessler 1987a, 8).

At the same time, Arab political systems under development presented obstructions to the ideal of free, uninhibited political research about the political lives and proclivities of citizens, which posed a problem for the study of public opinion. Some felt that "only under conditions of political freedom can one inquire about how people feel and think about policy and public servants. Under such conditions, inquiry of all kinds flourishes" (Harik 1987, 66). But in the absence of democratic political systems, American-styled mass opinion research found shaky footing (particularly in the cases of Egypt and Tunisia). Additionally, people as interview subjects were found to be hesitant toward foreign researchers (even those of Arab origin). One participant explained this hesitation by arguing that Arabs and their political representatives lacked the interest or desire to engage in social science activities and "reap the benefits" of knowledge-producing activities (Harik 1987); a view that privileged the "enlightened West". Another argued that a community's "only contact with survey takers was likely to have been connected with tax collection, military conscriptions, or other forms of arbitrary intervention by a distant authority" (B. Ibrahim 1987, 86) and so the reluctance to engage with Western researchers was part of larger historical power asymmetries rather than a lack of appreciation or education. In any case, the Bellagio cohort found lack of trust to be a common issue and debated the ways in which trust could be deepened between researchers, participants, and host governments.

Epistemological Realisations

The epistemological problems that the Bellagio cohort confronted in 1983 struck a reflexive chord. For social scientists trained or accustomed to carrying out research elsewhere, there was a question as to whether methods could simply be

cut and pasted, and if not, in what ways they should be adapted. As Barbara Ibrahim wrote,

> In the Arab world, opinion surveys have been introduced into a vastly different political and cultural environment. For the most part local social scientists have not examined critically the assumptions of opinion research, either conceptually or in terms of practical application. The Bellagio conference afforded an opportunity to begin that critique (1987, 94).

This critique offered two perspectives. As Palmer wrote, "At the heart of the issue is the fundamental question, Is science applicable the world over, or is there one scientific method for the West and another for the East? Arab participants at the conference were sharply divided on the answers to these questions" (1987, 111). The first perspective was that true, objective social science could be applied anywhere, at all times. This perspective rejected the idea that the tools and techniques of opinion research were products of Western cultures, incommensurate with non-Western value systems. One participant remarked that "instruments of science have no nationality and only confused minds would think otherwise" (Harik 1987, 70). Adding to this,

> The social sciences are based on the principles of consistency of deductive thinking and the truth of empirically derived information. Violation of the deductive or inductive methods cannot be justified in Timbuktu any more than in Paris. There is no geographic home for the laws that govern rational thinking and empirical inquiry (Harik 1987, 71).

This sentiment displayed a strong commitment to the scientific method, which certainly was not new for the time. We might refer to this view as "scientism", i.e., the belief that the methods of natural science are the best ones for all forms of inquiry (and any objects of inquiry which cannot be studied by these methods cannot be known) (Blackburn 2005).

The second perspective tried to account for what it saw as normative disjunctures across cultures. As Tessler wrote, "the enterprise of science is inescapably embedded in a normative context" (1987c, 190). In this way, science is acknowledged as one among many methods by which truth could be sought;

tenacity, intuition, and authority (especially with relation to Islam) represented other methods. Consequently, a key question raised at Bellagio was: What exactly were surveys able and not able to reveal about Arab society to the scientific community? While the question was left open-ended, the fact that it was raised shows a weakening of absolutist attitudes toward social science research.

Another issue raised was that of concept equivalence, i.e., whether the meaning of social constructs can be expressed in similar ways across cultures and geographic lines. As Palmer wrote,

> The issue of an Arab paradigm is much broader than that of the unperceived concept because it questions not only the ability of Western scholars to understand the Middle East well enough to include the right concepts in their research designs, but, more important, the ability of the Western scientific method to discover and chart human behaviour in the Middle East (Palmer 1987, 111).

There were serious worries against the dangers of imposing Western concepts on Arab societies. Not only were theoretical ideas like democracy, development, modernity, and liberalism considered problematic from the standpoint of measurement and geocultural translation, but even presumably fixed or simple variables such as age, occupation, social status, and income were found to be incompatible in the cultures that researchers encountered. These seemingly simple stratifying variables like occupation and income represented cases of how "traditional patterns in the region have been overlaid with a veneer of Westernization resulting from colonialism, economic development, and other forces of social change" (Palmer 1987, 107). Data from these variables often made their way into theorising about class structure in Arab societies, and "if Western measures of social class are used (imposed) in Middle Eastern questionnaires, they run the very real risk of creating fictional classes that have no basis in reality. Such a procedure, then, results only in self-deception" (Palmer 1987, 108). Again, though the issue of concept equivalence was discussed, it remained (and still remains) far from resolved.

A final epistemological issue concerned social scientific training in American and European institutions. The community at Bellagio recognised that while there was a plurality of ethnicities represented between them, they were each trained

in Western institutions. This of course meant that the epistemological groundings of Western social science would carry over to their practice, and what was missing was a semblance of what an indigenous approach to the study of Arab public opinion and social research might look like, as well as where that might be found.

Methodological Realisations

Finally, there were methodological realisations that came out of Bellagio, relating to the techniques and culture of survey research. On the technical side, there was a growing suspicion that surveys or polls were increasingly insufficient tools for gauging mass opinion on their own; they could capture snapshots of reality but should ideally be combined with other research procedures to be maximally useful (Tessler 1987a, 1). Methodological pluralism, or the idea that combining methodological approaches and theoretical models was a legitimate and beneficial approach, and was gaining ground as practitioners considered the relationship between method selection and cultural/geographic context. Some participants lamented that too much faith was being placed in arbitrarily or experimentally-designed questionnaires, otherwise described as tangible expressions of research problems used to infer causality (Zurayk 1987, 53). And participants considered whether less emphasis should be placed on questionnaires and more on the cultivation of a social bond between interviewer and interviewee. As Barbara Ibrahim opined, "social researchers should see themselves as entering into a dialogue with their subjects", and not as impartial onlookers of the social world (1987, 85).

The Bellagio proceedings also gave insight into the culture of research at the time, namely, the expectations, norms, values, and experiences held in common within the research community. For instance, participants spoke of the overabundance of social data that existed on Arab peoples. They recognised that knowledge production was a possible and productive engagement. Yet much of this data was virtually inaccessible because dissemination channels such as archives, repositories, and other institutional storehouses simply did not exist in the Middle East. It was lamented that "even the published work frequently has not found its way to everyone in the Arab world or to scholars everywhere" (S. Ibrahim 1987, 29).

> At the NCSCR [National Center for Sociological and Criminological Research] in Egypt, for example, a researcher is overwhelmed by the impressive quantity of research that has been done over the last twenty-five years. But the national center has not succeeded in disseminating the results of its studies to a wider audience, and thus researchers cannot take advantage of much of its work. The studies may be valuable, but we do not know much about any results or breakthroughs that may have come from the NCSCR's research. (…) As a result, this great effort in survey research is hardly known in Egypt, to say nothing of the rest of the Arab world and beyond (S. Ibrahim 1987, 33).

The problem of dissemination was therefore agreed to be an inhibiting factor for knowledge production. It was also greatly affected by practices of censorship by governments who sought to maintain control over the knowledge space.

Another realisation was that the research climate was sensitive and could differ considerably from country to country. From this, it became apparent that the entire region could not be targeted with blanket approaches and methods. Climates of research were seen as either more or less open and friendly, and more or less engaged, depending on government support for opinion research and access to areas of conflict. At the time of Bellagio, it was easier for foreigners to conduct opinion research in Morocco and Sudan than in Egypt, where it had become increasingly tricky to access government statistical data and receive research permits. At this time, participants noted that only nine out of twenty states were allowing opinion research to be conducted freely, without government impediments. The relationship between authoritarianism and public opinion inquiry was being tested. "Authoritarianism", as Harik wrote, "complicates the picture further in that the free flow of information is viewed as inimical to the political interests of national leaders. Thus even if research is permitted, its publication is by no means certain" (1987, 67).

While much ground was covered at the 1983 Bellagio conference, the lasting impression is one of a budding epistemic community working toward a coherent research agenda. A sign of charting new epistemological territory, more questions were raised than were answered. Through the conference proceedings we are witnesses of a point of inflection where the tradition of foreign control over the field of Arab opinion inquiry was being abandoned in favour of a more

collaborative approach. There was an increasing understanding of the value of local knowledge and a desire to procure it. The final message from Bellagio was that foreign researchers should work in closer cooperation with locals who have some level of native access (Palmer 1987, 110). It is this rallying cry for collaboration across geographies, against the backdrop of an expanding neoliberal agenda for global knowledge, that initiated a new direction in Arab public opinion inquiry in which Western actors began to plant or embed themselves in the region, hastening the local institutionalisation of American-styled public opinion inquiry.

2   Times of Transformation: The Institutionalisation of Polling in the Arab World

The years that followed the Bellagio conference saw fundamental shifts to the international system with the end of the Cold War and unravelling of the Soviet Union. Critical regional events like the Iran-Iraq war and its ceasefire in 1988 and the First Palestinian Intifada, together with the impact of the Gulf crisis in the early 1990s, ushered in a precarious era for the Arab region. These were unsettled years of "formidable tensions and contradictions" (Karawan 1994, 434) marked by popular disaffection with ruling elites, conflicting identities, the dominance of single-party systems, and a growing authoritarianism that reasserted state control and restricted civil liberties in a period where much of the rest of the world was riding a democratic wave. The 1990s introduced a dualism between stagnation on economic and political fronts and widespread technological advancements, and while the polarising effects of the processes of globalisation were not uniquely felt in the Arab region, they certainly helped to propel the coalescence of a "new Arab public sphere" (Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Lynch 2006; Ayish 2008).

This space for public dialogue, by a great measure, shaped and has been shaped by contemporary opinion research practices. In this section, I outline the accelerated institutionalisation of public opinion research during the latter part of the twentieth century; revolutionary years in terms of advancements in consumer culture and media proliferation and penetration. Rather than highlighting any specific case study, I discuss some general trends and transformations during this

period that illustrate the rapid-fire rise of an Arab "industry" for opinion polling leading up to the dawn of twenty-first century.

Prior to the advent of commercial polling in the region, we know that cross-national opinion research was being forged by different American actors and institutions. Gallup was measuring human needs and satisfactions across countries as early as the 1960s, working collaboratively with groups like the Institute for Social Research, the National Council on Public Polls, Crossley Surveys, and Gallup affiliate offices or researchers stationed around the world (Gallup 1976). Western media pollsters continued to probe the Israel-Palestine issue in depth among different groups of respondents through the 1980s and 1990s. Questions of territoriality and Palestinian claims to nationhood evolved into interrogations about the nature and legitimacy of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (Moughrabi 1986). Meanwhile from the 1970s, social impact studies were being widely funded by American and European development aid. USAID, for instance, was involved in studying the impact of aid in countries like Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, and Yemen, waging "free foreign reign in the research domain" (Harik 1987, 69). Through the 1980s and until it was subsumed into the Department of State in 1999, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was polling frequently (at times monthly) on issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, Israeli opinion on foreign policy, and the politics of the Middle East (Roper). Records exist of USIA polls conducted in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Syria, Turkey, the UAE, and Yemen, some in the interest of general political public opinion, others in search of the difference between Islamic and Western values, and yet others tracking *post-factum* opinion around "critical events" like the Gulf War. Changes in the field of global social research should thus be viewed against the background of an expanding neoliberal agenda that served to benefit from the extraction of information.

These polling efforts are indicative of a rising empirical trend: the cross-cultural comparative survey. Instead of designing a survey for a single sub-group or political issue, cross-cultural surveys aimed to highlight differences and associate similarities between cultural groups. They engaged the efforts of investigators coordinating the same methods and assumptions across different countries, and emerged from the idea that at a high enough level of abstraction, people of one

culture or nationality formed a box (a culturally or geographically identifiable public) with a unique set of characteristics that could be analytically compared and contrasted with people of another culture or nationality. A Gallup outpost in Israel, for instance, was tasked "to draw a sample that would accurately reflect the attitudes of adults fifteen years of age or older" in the region demarcated as "North Africa and the Middle East", in its entirety (Gallup 1976, 461). Countries within this region were viewed as similar enough to group together and compare, while the region as a whole was viewed as different enough to contrasted against other categorically-defined regions of the world. And further, geographic borders were superimposed on individual opinions, such that it became not only possible but encouraged to speak of competing national opinions (i.e., Egyptian public opinion, Iraqi public opinion, etc.). In many ways, this method was propelled by the ease of its design. The prevailing attitude that "social scientists are justified in replicating surveys across cultures, with modifications only at the level of translation of question items" encouraged a sort of one-size-fits-all approach to polling and survey design (B. Ibrahim 1987, 93). Use of the cross-cultural survey meant that the infrastructure for polling across countries, i.e., the procurement of "experienced fieldwork teams, market and social science research organisations, and survey analysts", had to be secured (Norris 2009, 532). Just as this infrastructure helped to facilitate the coordination of cross-national surveys, the surveys themselves facilitated "cross-national networks among networks of collaborators" (Norris 2009, 532). In this setting, comparative research thrived.

The coordination of these empirical efforts across countries was certainly aided by the rapid proliferation of regional social science institutes, elite universities, and research programmes replicating the "Anglo-Saxon model" in the Arab world (Waast 2010, 195). Of the small body of English-language scholarly resources relating to the practice of polling in the Arab region, very few seem to draw a connection between contemporary commercial actors and earlier (Cold War-era) social science institutions, and because of this oversight, contemporary polling in Arab countries is so often treated as a new phenomenon, when in fact it should be seen as a byproduct of the globalisation of social sciences in general (see for instance Lynch 2006; also Norris 2008). Arab social science institutes funded by local and Western donors with democracy-promoting neoliberal

agendas formed the original bedrock for a future commercial industry, and similarities can be drawn to the way the field played out in other non-Western markets. Philanthropic funding from the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations enabled the expansion of "overseas" establishments that linked "Third-World elites to major institutions in the United States and the norms embodied in them" (Berman 1983, 26). The effect of this was that local informational "elites" were tasked with providing support for foreign (Western) actors in the form of technical resources and situated knowledge (Tessler et al. 1987). Furthermore, as foreign practitioners increasingly undertook permanent working roles within institutions situated abroad, they were more seamlessly able to transmit their knowledge and training (of systematised face-to-face interviews using pre-designed questionnaires and post-hoc statistical analyses) to the local setting. Through this process of transmission, the methods and assumptions of social science research were absorbed by local actors.

By the 1990s, Arab social science institutes were widely dispersed and had experience in conducting, facilitating, or sponsoring opinion research as part of their repertoire. Many of these institutions were initially based in universities, and later emerged as independent entities. According to Ibrahim, "Lebanon was one of the first countries where social research was conducted" in the region (1987, 28). The AUB, where Stuart Dodd was designing polls in 1940s with the idea of world surveying in mind, was described as a producer of "usable social science data" (S. Ibrahim 1987, 28); Saint Joseph University and the Center for Arab Unity Studies in Beirut were other known centres. In Tunisia, the Centre d'Études et de Recherches Économiques et Sociales (CERES) established in 1962 was considered "one of the bulwarks of social research in the Arab world" by the 1980s (S. Ibrahim 1987, 28). Iraq had the National Center for Criminological Research and Center for Arab Gulf Studies (University of Basrah), while Jordan's Royal Scientific Society and Center for Studies and Information were involved in survey-based opinion research from the 1980s. Another Center for Gulf Studies was based at the American University of Kuwait, while in Libya, the Arab Development Institute (established in 1972) was for some time a major sponsor of regional research. The PLO maintained its own planning and research centres in Palestine, which carried out surveys "with varying degrees of conformity to the canons of social research" (S. Ibrahim 1987, 29). Meanwhile the Israel National

Election Study of pre-election polls took off in 1969. And Egypt was home to several institutes that had "carried out important and extensive research programs since the late 1950s" (S. Ibrahim 1987, 29). These included the Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo (AUC), established in 1953, the state-run National Center for Sociological and Criminological Research (NCSCR, established 1956-57), and the national statistics bureau otherwise known as the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), established in 1964. Another Cairo institute—the al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies—emerged shortly after, in 1968. Opinion research was also taking place in pan-Arab centres that formed specialised agencies within larger institutions like the League of Arab States (LAS), the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNESCO, the UNDP, and the World Bank.

Much of the research that emerged from early institutions focused on attitudes toward "benign" social and administrative matters such as population and family planning, agriculture, class and society, women and family, social improvements as a result of aid programmes, and various other indicators. Political public opinion research was generally found to be a far more sensitive and difficult pursuit. But countering the impression that Arab social science institutes functioned entirely to service Western knowledge needs, Ibrahim's analysis on the state of social-science research in the 1990s found that experts based in many of the above-mentioned institutions were also "heavily studying" regional debates like the Arab-Israeli conflict, the fallout from the Egypt-Israeli peace treaty and Camp David Accords, the role of the military in politics, electoral politics, and attitudes toward democratisation (2000, 112). Work was being done on new theoretical paradigms that could recover knowledge about the Arab plight in the context of international relations—as Ibrahim put it, a way of "re-discovering non-Western worlds" (2000, 112).

One event that had an astounding effect on institutional development during this time and provided a purposeful boost for political public opinion research was the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 that resulted in mutual recognition between the State of Israel and the PLO. Ibrahim found that "some twenty research centers or research groups sprang up between 1993 and 1998 in the West Bank and Gaza" and that Oslo fuelled "a robust public opinion survey

movement" (2000, 113). The Center for Palestinian Research and Studies (CPRS) and the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC) emerged at this time. Shortly after, the Jordanian Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) and the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) were established. Hawatmeh has argued that "the importation and adoption of public opinion surveys in Palestine can be viewed as part of the larger process of political and economic liberalisation" following the collapse of the Soviet Union and defeat of Iraq in the Gulf War (2001, 4). Within the context of the Oslo negotiations, "polls were seen as a tool that could support peace negotiations by linking diaspora negotiators more closely with Palestinian constituencies, inserting much needed public participation in the process" (Schwarze 2012, 142). Public opinion research was thus heralded as a mechanism through which the public could participate in the process of self-determination.

While public opinion research was more widely carried out in this stage, the institutional channels to ensure its publication and dissemination were often missing.

> Results of many survey projects are frequently restricted to local distribution or supressed by nervous governments. Communications between countries and institutions is poor and survey researchers tend to operate in a vacuum. Data sharing does not exist, nor is there a coherent picture of what surveys have been conducted or where the data might be found (Palmer et al. 1982, 3).

As such, records of opinion research conducted during the 1980s and 1990s are sporadic, and there is only scattered evidence that the studies we do have contributed to macro-theorising, discourse and policy-formation, or political growth in the region until after the turn of the century. There remains a prevailing attitude that Western institutions and academies were still "far ahead of the Arab world in theory construction and cumulation of evidence, so that researchers naturally seek to learn from the vast body of literature produced in the Western world", whereas the history of "modern education in the social sciences" in the Arab region was still considered nascent (Harik 1987, 67).

The proliferation of research institutions in the Arab world coincided with the expansion of media services that were "pan-Arab" in reach (Ayish 2008, 152), and

to a great extent helped to address the problem of dissemination. The emergence of an Arab public sphere, which has been defined as "the public arguments enacted by self-defined Arabs within widely accessible new media" (Lynch in Ayish 2008, 152), is evidenced in part by the growing number of media outlets. The transformation of the Arab media landscape has undoubtedly changed the relationship between people and politics and between media and policy. The 1990s were revolutionary in terms of consumer culture, media diversification, and media access and penetration, which served as precursors to the digital age. During the latter half of the 1990s, "satellite television brought disparate local debates in the various Arab countries and the Arab diaspora together in a remarkably coherent, common, and ongoing public argument accessible to almost everyone. Even as (or perhaps because) Arab regimes struggled to maintain their control over local media, transnational media emerged as an alternative location of vibrant and open political debate" (Lynch 2003a). Arab press had been in circulation transnationally since the 1970s, but its popularity was overshadowed by the boom in satellite television, entertainment programming, and Arabic news that challenged state-owned broadcasting (for instance MBC and BBC Arabic, and later Al Jazeera), followed by the introduction of the Internet and its rise as a primary source of news and information. While it is beyond the scope of my research to analyse the relationship between pan-Arab media and public opinion research, one key point is that public opinion research increasingly found outlets for dissemination, and further that debates and ideas about "the public opinion" shaped and were shaped, to some extent, by transformations in the public sphere.

Since 2000, the field of Arab opinion inquiry has taken on a "two-track" structure. While an undercurrent of regional institutions has developed at one level, American-led research and policy agents operating at the macro level have developed along a separate trajectory. Between the two levels, there has certainly been communication and coordination, and often the outsourcing of macro-level studies to local Arab researchers. But overall, the knowledge (data) that emerges from the macro (foreign) level has been prioritised in terms of global knowledge. The United States Information Agency (USIA), the United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the National Endowment for Democracy

(NED), and later the Arab American Institute (AAI), the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI), the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), and the Centre for International Strategic Studies (CSIS) have grown to become some of the most prolific and recognisable actors involved in advancing not only American knowledge interests in the region, but also in the production and sponsorship of raw data from the MENA region.

MEPI, for instance, a division Department of State's Near Eastern Affairs Bureau, has funded Arab NGOs and research since its creation in 2002 by the Bush administration, representing a form of soft power public diplomacy with the goal of promoting democratic reform in the Middle East. MEPI has provided funds for local polling institutes, such as the Yemen Polling Centre, to conduct studies on their behalf. Once the results are published, they bear the name of the primary commissioner and often not the local parties carrying out fieldwork or data collection. The IRI, founded in 1983, has promoted democratic reform internationally and is funded by USAID. The IRI jointly carries out polls with local vendors on a consistent basis. The NED and NDI (both founded in 1983) operate in a similar fashion though the IRI is far more active in the Arab region. Meanwhile, the INR provides intelligence support to diplomats and senior policymakers and is the American government's leading source for polls and surveys of foreign public opinion. Between 2004 (immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein) and 2009, resources were being directed toward conducting polls in Iraq on security matters as well as "sustained research into the demographic and attitudinal profile of Muslim minorities" in Europe (Bureau of Intelligence and Research 2009). In 2009, the INR's budget for polling was just under $60 million USD.

One of the most prominent hybrid polling initiatives is the Arab Barometer, which was jointly established by practitioners at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and Princeton University (Mark Tessler, Amaney Jamal, and later Michael Hoffman). Part-academic, part-activist, the Arab Barometer works in close collaboration with participating Arab institutions from each country in which it polls (including the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR), Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) in Qatar, and others). The Steering Committee of the

Arab Barometer is composed of a leading member of each of these institutes. It is therefore a collaborative endeavour. At the same time, it receives funding from bodies like MEPI and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the American contingent has close working and training relationships with the US Department of State's public opinion sector (INR/OPN).

In more recent years, a small but steady stream of European actors have become involved in polling in the Arab region, i.e., GlobeScan and Opinion Research Business (ORB) International (both of whom conduct regional polls for the BBC), YouGov and Oxford Research International, and other actors like Ipsos (France), Voluntas Advisory (Denmark), the World Values Survey (Austria), and the Arab Reform Initiative, a joint French-Jordanian venture.

Other Western commercial firms polling extracting data from the region since 2000 include Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, D3 Systems, Pechter Polls, Princeton Survey Research Associates International, iPOS Polling, Caerus Associates, the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), Zogby/Arab American Institute (AAI), Gallup, and Pew. Pew is a non-profit venture (established in 2004) based in Washington DC and funded through the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Evangelical Protestant Templeton Foundation. Pew ventured into the Arab region through an initial polling study on religious freedoms and a later initiative called the Global Attitudes Project, though they do not conduct regular polls in the region. Gallup began incorporating Arab countries into their World Poll in 2005. In an interview with a Gallup Senior Analyst, the question of what spurred Gallup to monitor Arab countries more closely led the analyst recount an anecdote from a closed-door policy session in Washington. In this session, a discussion on Arab public sentiments reportedly led Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to remark, "It's not like you can do a poll in the Middle East". Gallup executives present in the room supposedly took this as a challenge, and soon after had incorporated many countries from the region into their poll. Finally, the AAI was established in 1985 in Washington as a non-profit, nonpartisan "national leadership organisation" and lobby group that concerns itself primarily with the political interests of Arab Americans. The AAI is presided over by James Zogby, an influential pollster who rose to prominence after accurately predicting the 1996 and 2000 American federal elections (Warren 2008, 877). His brother,

James Zogby, sits on the board of AAI and counts himself as an equally influential pollster and president of Zogby International, which has conducted opinion polls in the Arab region since 2002.

The exercise of mapping the emergence of Arab and non-Arab actors in the field of public opinion research might seem belabouring, but it is necessary, especially as there are no existing accounts or databases listing actors in the field. Understanding who is responsible for doing research becomes especially significant when we look to examples where polls and data come to be politicised. We arguably see this most starkly in the case American policy debates in the post 9/11 environment.

3   9/11 and the Myth of the Arab Street

The events of September 11, 2001 ushered in a period of increased tensions and renewed foreign policy engagement between the United States and the Middle East. Fears of terrorism and possibilities of retaliation created a frenzied search for answers in the polls. During the Bush administration's time in office, Arab public opinion was unquestionably high up on the agenda for American foreign policy. Between 2002 and 2007, testimonies were heard before congressional bodies like the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Government Reform, which were called to help policymakers work through the main question that was on their minds; namely, why do they hate us? The first to ask this question was Bush himself in a presidential address to the country on September 20, 2001, where he declared that al Qaeda and Islamic extremists "hate our freedoms" (Washington Post). The inability to make sense of acts of terrorism and a general ignorance about the region exposed a gap in knowledge that gave pollsters, who by now had means to poll in the region, the opportunity to demystify Arab opinion for American policy elites.

It is in these testimonies where we see how the "Arab street" was used and misused to stand in for public opinion knowledge. The use of the term "Arab street" provokes imagery of a passionate and proud mass uniting in the face of tyrannical elites (Lynch 2003a). The term has also been used as a negative framing that evokes the image of a volatile, irrational, and potentially dangerous

stratum of society. The metaphorical framing of the streets has led to sweeping generalizations with very little clarity about who the Arab streets represent and what issues unite them. It has roots in the idea that the streets of cities represent the realm of common people and are a source of conflicting ideas like unruliness, unity, and political chaos, and organisation (Regier and Khalidi 2009). The "Arab street" as a turn of phrase surfaced in Western media during the 1980s but dominated the post-9/11 media discourse. Its widespread usage after 2001 as a placeholder for public opinion, "rather than 'public sphere' or 'public', imputes passivity or a propensity to easy manipulation and implies a lack of formal or informal leadership", yet on some levels it also "indicates that policy makers at least acknowledge that even regional authoritarian and single-party states now have 'publics' to take into account" (Eickelman 2002, 40).

Post-9/11 testimonies called on American pollsters, some of whom were new entrants to the market for polling in the Arab world. The same seven American pollsters gave multiple testimonies over a five-year period. They represented the American Arab Institute, Zogby International, the University of Maryland, the Washington Center for Near East Policy, the Wilson Center, the Program on International Policy Attitudes, and Pew. In total, we have evidence from five testimonies:

2002 (Oct 8): "Are We Listening to the Arab Street?" (J. Zogby, J. Zogby, S. Telhami, D. Brumberg). Hearing before the Subcommittee on National Security, Veteran Affairs and International Relations of the Committee on Government Reform.

2005 (Nov 10): "How the United States is Perceived in the Arab and Muslim Worlds" (A. Kohut). Hearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the U.S. House International Relations Committee.

2007 (May 3): "Arab Opinion on American policies, Values and People" (J. Zogby, D. Pollock). Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2007 (May 8):   "Two Sides of the Same Coin: Jewish and Palestinian
Refugees" (S. Telhami). Hearing before the Subcommittee on
the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign
Affairs.

2007 (May 17):   "Declining Approval for American Foreign Policy in Muslim
Countries: Does It Make It More Difficult to Fight Al-Qaeda?"
(S. Kull). Hearing before the Subcommittee on International
Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight of the
Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The first testimony on record was held on October 8, 2002. John Zogby, James
Zogby, Shibley Telhami, and Daniel Brumberg, were among the American
pollsters invited to testify and submit evidence before the Committee on
Government Reform (United States Committee on Government Reform 2002),
submitting data from their own polls as evidence. The testimony was titled "Are
we listening to the Arab Street?" and opened with the following statement from
Republican Senator Christopher Shays:

> On September 11, many Americans got their first glimpse of the hostility
> and resentment harbored by some against our people and our culture.
> Others have known for decades that a toxic antipathy often dominates the
> so-called Arab Street of Middle East public disclosure. Left unrebutted,
> anti-American invective invites others to translate animus into deadly
> action. So the war against terrorism must also be fought with words.
> Public diplomacy, our efforts to understand and inform and influence
> foreign publics, plays an indispensable role in arming the soldiers of truth
> against the forces of fear and hatred (United States Committee on
> Government Reform 2002).

Over thirty references to the term "Arab Street" are littered throughout the
testimony transcript, and polling was seen as a means of accessing it (while
public diplomacy was seen as a way to tame it). The Committee heard calls to
reject the notion of the street; as James Zogby declared, "Arab opinion is
dehumanized referred to as the Arab street, generalized, treated as an object
usually of scorn and therefore dismissed". Further, the question of why the Arab
street was only conjured in relation to America was put forth. At the same time,

essentialising ideas about public opinion in the Arab region ("there is Arab public opinion just as there is American public opinion") persisted.

Following the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, appearances of Arab public opinion in testimonies became more policy-oriented; specifically, America's public image or brand in the Middle East was a question put to pollsters. Andrew Kohut, Director of the Pew Global Attitudes Project, provided evidence from Pew surveys that anti-Americanism was a pervasive sentiment among samples of respondents in Lebanon, Jordan, and Morocco, to different degrees. Only selective information relating to the American image, terrorism, and prospects for democratic reform were presented (Kohut 2005).

By 2007, opposition to American policies and leadership was described as "spreading and deepening around the world", and the question "Do they hate us because of our freedoms?" was still being asked (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007a). American pollsters aimed to diversify their questionnaires by asking respondents not whether they disliked America, but about their feelings toward American values of freedom and democracy, television programs, education, science, technology, culture, and finally American policy (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007a). The attempt to balance positive perceptions of American popular culture with negative assessments of American policy in the polls reveals an institutionalised sense of insecurity. As Zogby explained, "We also examined how Arabs learned about us, the degree to which their views were shaped by experience or received knowledge, and whether or not this made a difference in their attitudes. We found, for example, that Arabs who know Americans, have visited America or even just report watching American television programs are more inclined to like our people, culture, products and values" (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007a). Further, measuring attitudes relating to the inevitability of conflict "between Muslim and Western cultures" invoked a West vs. the Rest or Us vs. The mentality that policy-makers were particularly keen on enacting (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007a). While pollsters like Zogby, Telhami, and David Pollock made efforts to provide country-by-country assessments so as not to give the impression that Arab public opinion was a monolithic object that could be polled uniformly, we often hear a disjuncture in the testimonies

between experts and policy people, the latter of whom would backtrack and return to fixations with an overly simplified clash of civilizations mentality.

Later testimonies in 2007 focused on specific foreign policy areas relating to Jewish and Palestinian refugees and America's role the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, as well as support for al-Qaeda the Middle East. The testimony relating to Jewish and Palestinian refugees and statehood is a telling one (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007b). It reads as a tense exchange between support for Israel by Committee members and pleas for considering the Palestinian position by Arab pollsters. Republican Senator (and current Vice President) Mike Pence disputed evidence from Palestinian statistics, arguing that the plight of Jewish refugees is far worse. In his words,

> I would argue that the historical record is clear on at least one matter: Jewish refugees in Arab countries often face pogroms, execution, bombings, tortures, forced exile and nearly universally confiscation of property, often solely for the alleged crime of Zionism if not merely existing. There is really no comparison with that to what the Palestinian refugees have faced (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007b).

While much of "world opinion" had something to say about the Palestinian plight, the comparatively scant attention paid to the experiences of Jews in the Arab region became a topic of debate. Telhami's testimony, replete with evidence, facts, and figures encouraging policymakers to take into consideration the unique factor of Palestinian statelessness, was treated as overly-partisan, and no middle ground was reached.

Meanwhile, a testimony on Arab attitudes toward al-Qaeda reads as an unwillingness to accept non-American views (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007c). There is an overall sense of exasperation and surprise as to why respondents in Egypt, Pakistan, and elsewhere would not denounce al-Qaeda for perpetrating acts of terrorism to the extent that Americans did. Often, the absence of a firm "no" to the question of support for al-Qaeda was confused with support among Arab respondents for terrorism. Pollster Steven Kull explained that majority Arab attitudes that were unsupportive of the American position partially had to do with the fact that people "avoid paying attention to facts that are inconvenient" (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007c).

In the reflections of congresspeople, there are realisations that perhaps American and Arab peoples are "talking past each other" (United States Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007c). Still, the American position was content to remain entrenched, hoping to win over Arab public opinion in the polls through diplomacy efforts and other means, in order to bridge this divide and quell their deep insecurities and unease.

While a much deeper reading of these testimonies and the context from which they emerged would be beneficial, it is clear that there is a mode of thinking about Arab public opinion at work. What is unclear is the extent to which these testimonies shaped policies in the region or altered the agendas of pollsters, as many other testimonies and informational exchanges were taking place on a far greater scale at the time. Public opinion was only one piece of the puzzle. In sum, the repeated appearance of Arab public opinion in Bush-era policy discussions exemplifies how polls were used to serve foreign interests during this brief spell—a time of deep insecurities about America's image in the world and when understanding the inner workings of the Arab mind was a clear desideratum. This selective engagement with American pollsters (which overlooked experts and pollsters from the region itself) widened the gap between foreign-led inquiry and local inquiry on Arab public opinion. In his 2002 testimony, James Zogby's description of what Arab public opinion inquiry means to him summarises the treatment of "the Arab subject" through the foreigner's lens:

> The effect is not unlike looking at a carpet through a magnifying glass. When viewed by the naked eye, the carpet reveals its pattern. By enlarging the image, however, what becomes clear are the individual knots and the inner workings of the weave that produces the overall pattern (United States Committee on Government Reform 2002).

4   Conclusion

While Stage 2 covers a period of global change and is not unified by clear set of cases illustrating a specific mode of inquiry at work as in Stage 1, I aimed instead to show the rapid transformation of the field of Arab public opinion inquiry from being scarcely populated in the 1970s to appearing centre-stage in high-level

American policy debates by 2007. The institutionalisation and embedding of foreign pollsters and processes into the region grew at a steady pace. In the background, the Arab region experienced media and technological transformations which strengthened or at least provided venues for civic debates, dissemination of data, and expressions of public opinion. These developments also came at a time when the dominant epistemic paradigm guiding the science of public opinion was shifting from cognitive and behavioural thought to media and communications theory, and while the agendas of development and democratisation were being promoted through neoliberal American institutions around the world.

Aside from political and market transformations, a series of epistemological and methodological shifts help to distinguish Stage 2 from Stage 1. The 1983 Bellagio Conference showcases a budding epistemic community at work; a group of international practitioners and scholars in the midst of forming a "socially cooperative enterprise" whose goal it was to "produce and possess their knowledge together" (Ezrahi 2004, 256). For the first time, we see a growing number of Arab social science research centers, commercial actors, government research agencies, military institutions, and international donor organisations involved in promoting development and democracy in the region (B. Ibrahim 1987, 78). With this, there is a shift that comes from Western and Arab researchers calling for the creation or reclamation of an indigenous social science, though "little progress toward the construction of new analytical frameworks and methodologies" was seen to be made (Tessler 1987a, 10).

Stage 2 culminated in a "golden age" for American actors with a vested interest in Arab public opinion research, especially in the years following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Geopolitical interests gave way to an insatiable hunger for data from policymakers, and American pollsters were repeatedly called upon to explain Arab political opinion and behaviour using scientific data. Despite calls for greater indigenous opinion knowledge years earlier at Bellagio, the prioritisation of American knowledge in the end amounts to two forms of control: the first is epistemic, while the second is political. In some ways, pollsters did help to reverse or renegotiate the idea of the Arab street by framing public opinion as something scientific and conclusive rather than anecdotal. And yet it's clear that

despite the shifts and transformations that took place during this period, the "epistemic line" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018) dividing not only the pollsters from the polled but also privileging Western knowledge and disqualifying non-Western knowledge remains in full view.

Chapter 7
Stage 3 | The Local Reclamation of Public Opinion Inquiry

Everything has to be published; everyone has to have access […]. Like graffiti, polling is a channel for protest.
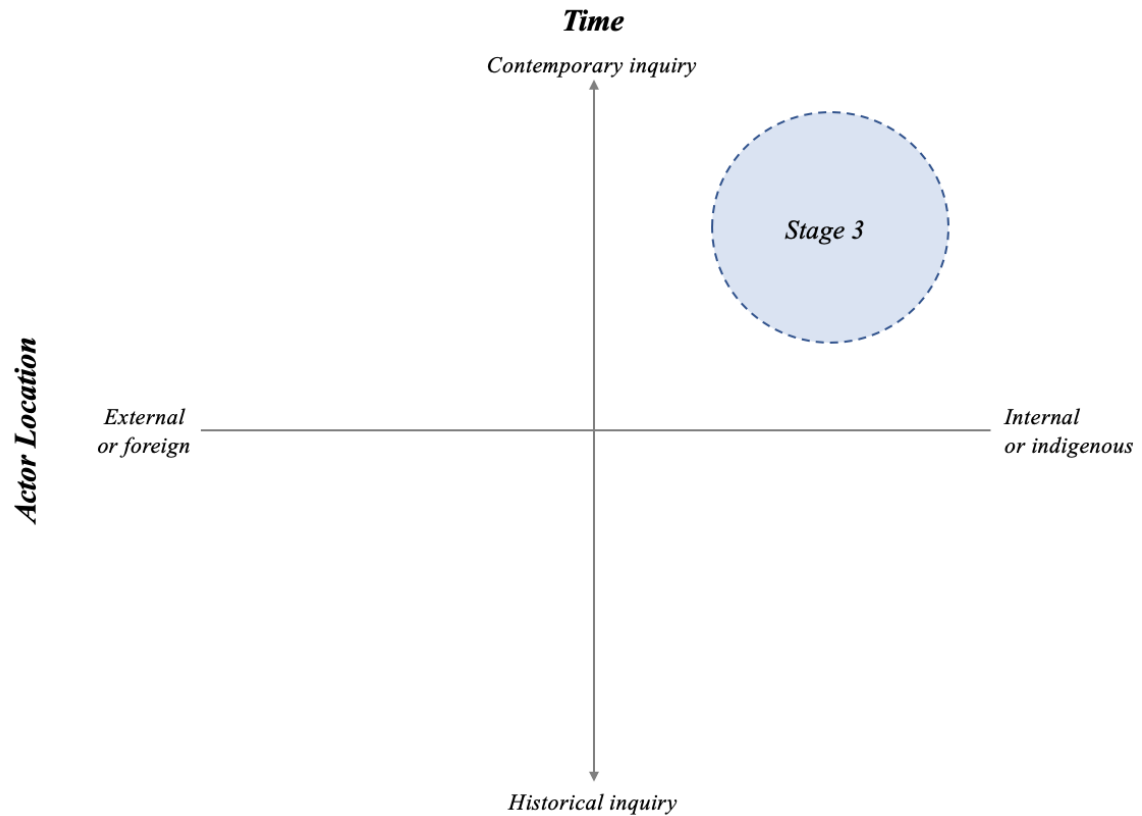
Nader Said (in Schwarze, 2012)

In coming to terms with the most recent stage in the development of Arab public opinion inquiry, this chapter considers the reclamation of practices at the local level by indigenous actors. Drawing on interview data in which pollsters reflected on contemporary issues in the field, I provide evidence of their agency as actors, acquired through processes of localisation. I argue that it is in this third stage where we most clearly see the workings of a self-sustaining and self-serving industry, by way of a regional knowledge network of inwardly-attuned actors. While, as we have seen, public opinion studies on local societies by indigenous actors has existed as an undercurrent for decades, the cumulative effect of generative research practices (i.e., those that are learned and adopted from previously existing or imported practices), seen by way of the sheer intensification of polling studies and actors since the 1990s and their increasing ability to mold their own research agendas, has helped to shift agency and power from the foreign to the local.

In this chapter, I explore some of the ways in which practices of doing research have become increasingly localised and how community needs and governance structures have helped to set research agendas on their own unique course, separate from the likes of Gallup, Pew, and other large Western players: questionnaires are adapted from the status quo to tackle local political dynamics and competitive markets, the means of obtaining statistical data rests on a nuanced understanding of administrative and political issues, the process of interviewing respondents and collecting data evolves alongside a fortified understanding of the unique specificities of the field, the tools of research (i.e.,

randomisation systems, data collection devices, call centres, databases, and questionnaires) diversify as actors take on a more intuitive approach to methods-selection, and network-formation and collaboration between local pollsters, the media, experts, and publics deepen. The expectation that local actors lacked agency in relation to foreign pollsters given the trajectory of social science research in Stage 1 and Stage 2 is upended, to some extent, in Stage 3. In particular, the Arab uprisings, which began in 2010, changed the environment for social science research in different ways. For instance, there is a greater engagement with questions of conflict, identity, demographics, and media in relation to public opinion—questions that researchers of the region who witnessed the events of 2010 and 2011 are better positioned to answer. Further, the uprisings led to an opening of the space for research, and we see a number of new entrants to the field over the past eight years.

Following on the visual demarcations of the previous stages, the figure below maps the third stage of inquiry in the upper right quadrant. This positioning certainly does not account for all the actors polling in the region in recent years, but the focus is on recent trends toward more localised practices of knowledge production.

Time

Contemporary inquiry

Actor Location

External
or foreign

Stage 3

Internal
or indigenous

Historical inquiry

Figure 15: Stage 3 in the development of Arab public opinion inquiry.

This chapter proceeds as follows: in the following section (Section 1), I discuss the nature of change ushered in by the Arab uprisings, in order to show how this political reckoning had implications for local knowledge production. Then, in Section 2, I provide a descriptive mapping of the rise of certain actors, so that in this third stage, we can visualise the growth of the field over time. In Section 3, I present the main findings of the interview research and use interview vignettes to illustrate localisation at work. Focusing specifically on the cases of Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine, where we see some of the highest concentrations of public opinion actors today, I introduce the reader to different characters, describing their individual perspectives on methodology, practice, and their unique ethics of research.

1   The Arab Uprisings and the Changing Space of Empirical Research

The sudden succession of high-profile events in late 2010 that sparked a populist uprising in Tunisia, and which precipitated anti-government protests and political upheaval in nearly every Arab state in the Middle East through 2011, are by now well-documented: the self-immolation of Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor by trade, in response to corruption and sustained abuse at the hands of local authorities; ensuing clashes between civilians and police in Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia; prolonged campaigns of civil resistance and street demonstrations amounting to a national revolution and the ousting of Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali; the January 25, 2011 demonstration in Cairo's Tahrir Square, since commemorated as "Revolution Day", where grievances about corruption, police brutality, lack of political freedom, inflation, and impatience with political rule spilled over borders; the widespread adoption of video blogging and social media to mobilise civilians and protesters; and the overthrow of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. These early seismic movements precipitated the toppling of governments, civil war, protests, political change, and militant action across the Arab region, exposing a "pan-Arab crisis of unemployment, low wages and the stifling of civil society" (Yassin-Kassab 2011). Taking stock in 2012, the Arab uprisings had in some form politically and socially marked not only Tunisia and Egypt (revolution and government overthrown), but also Libya, Syria, and Yemen (armed rebellion or civil war), Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Oman (protests and governmental changes), Algeria, Iraq, and Lebanon (major protests), and Djibouti, Mauritania, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Sudan (minor protests) (Ibrahim 2018).[39] Collective action across Arab states sought to challenge "the political status quo and the existing political and cultural systems in the region", and within the first two years, four authoritarian leaders had been deposed (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen) (Inbar 2013, 1). The flow of events is by now familiar to scholars and political commentators working on the region,

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[39] No protests noted in Qatar, Comoros, or the UAE (Ibrahim 2018).

and of course the people who endured them, but the broader significance, explanations for, and prolonged consequences of these critical events are still being processed.

A companion to the Arab uprisings is a new body of qualitative and quantitative scholarship seeking to account for these events that took the world by surprise (see Gause 2011; Farzanegan 2017; Gordon 2018). Within this body of literature, different narratives emerge (for instance, see Hoffman and Jamal 2013 on religious narratives about protesters; Valbjørn 2015 on framing Arab politics; Seeberg and Shteiwi 2014 on changing European narratives; and Abushouk 2016, Howard and Hussein 2013, and Diamond 2011 on democracy's fourth wave). Diverse theoretical lenses have been applied, e.g. security and foreign policy theory (Mason 2014; Monier 2015; Almezaini and Rickli 2017), social movement theory (Leenders 2013; Meijer 2016), media and communications theory (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011; Aday et al. 2012; Smidi and Shahin 2017), postcolonial studies (Jabri 2012; Dabashi 2012), democratisation theory (Stepan and Linz 2013), human rights approaches (Harrelson-Stephens and Callaway 2014; Alvi 2015), game theory applications and behavioural analysis (Gilli 2012; Zibin 2018), legal theory (Chertoff and Green 2012), and gendered perspectives (Khalil 2015; Khalid 2015). As Kohstall writes, the uprisings represented "a process of '*mise a nu*' (public self-assessment). It allowed for unprecedented inquiry into different actors and institutional arrangements" (2017). Otherwise mainstream theoretical assumptions and approaches were challenged, and the field naturally diversified. New research opportunities were created, and different methodological instruments and approaches were conceived (for instance, social media analysis applied to non-democracies and transitional states). Kohstall suggests that the Arab uprisings have "contributed to a more comparatively informed study of Middle East politics" from within and without, which recognise the very distinct contexts and localised consequences of political change—from new forms of demonstration in Egypt and Bahrain, to foreign intervention in Libya and Yemen, to constitutional change in Tunisia—as compared to prior to 2010 (2017).

One common thread that emerges from much of this new literature is the sense that traditional or mainstream ideas about (Arab) publics, the nature of the public

sphere in Arab countries, and the potential for collective political action in authoritarian settings, must be reconsidered and reconfigured. Scholars across disciplines, but particularly in Political Science, IR, and its subfields, were unprepared for the mobilising force of different strata of society. Indeed, this fundamental break from traditionally held ideas publics and collective opinion formation in non-democratic contexts spurred a renewed interest in public opinion in the region as a possible explanatory premise for the uprisings themselves. In this way, to understand local public opinion would help to explain and predict events unfolding in the region. Even public opinion polls and international monitors tracking sociopolitical conditions (economic indicators, purchasing power, level of trust in institutions, political affiliations, religious attitudes and community orientations, etc.) failed to predict or flag signs of growing discontent or deterioration in social welfare (Gordon 2018; World Bank 2015). In an interview at Gallup (Washington), one Research Director remarked that a post-Arab Spring analysis of the Gallup World Poll showed a growing discontent among respondents of questions relating to lifestyle and life evaluation leading up to 2010. While Gallup claims to have seen the signs, they did not actually notice or perceive this change until after the eruption of mass protests (as an aside, this is an example of a common problem with the overabundance of data—large amounts of data are collected and peoples' opinions are recorded, but analysis and interpretation happens on a selective basis, and much data is overlooked).

Rather than spurring a distrust in the method of polling due to heightened political obstacles, there are some accounts that the events of 2010 and 2011 created more space for research in the years immediately following. Many pollsters I spoke with sensed a moment of greater openness wherein polling faced fewer economic, bureaucratic, and political restrictions. A USAID Middle East Bureau Deputy Director discussed how a renewed interest in Arab public opinion post-uprisings spurred discussions amongst practitioners and policymakers, helping to boost funding and thus bringing the costs of polling down. One Jordanian pollster asserted that the Arab Spring made the region "more exposed" to research practices, while another talked about the increased willingness of people to speak "freely and without fear" to researchers once political transformations were in motion. And a Gallup Senior Analyst described

the period between 2010 and 2013 as "a window of opportunity for polling", wherein polling grew easier in countries with transitional governments because the usual regulations against conducting politically sensitive research "were put on hold".

The post-2011 setting has also been described as "messy" and difficult to navigate, particularly for foreign researchers. The work of development institutions like USAID was complicated because of a loss of control over the research process and an inability to impose consistency in the field. A journalist and Senior Advisor at the Jordan Media Institute discussed the negative effects for the media, who were subjected to great censorship and reluctant to report on certain issues. Mark Tessler, who heads the Arab Barometer, said that to call it an "opening up of the research space" is "an overly dramatic description" because we cannot generalise patterns relating to the research climate for the region as a whole. And Shibley Telhami, based at the University of Maryland, spoke of the opposite phenomenon: a closing of the public sphere after 2012 in Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon, which caused setbacks for researchers looking to gain access to "on-the-ground" opinion in the aftermath of the uprisings.

Perspectives from inside the region hint at other transformative effects on social scientific research beyond changes to the space for research. Transformations in the social sciences in the wake of the uprisings have been discussed by Ibrahim 2018, Almansour (2016), Bamyeh (2015), Kamel and Huber (2015), Lynch (2014), and Haddad (2013). Many of these perspectives describe an increase in knowledge production and a greater number of outlets for publishing and disseminating ideas. Ibrahim (2018), for instance, examines the effect of the uprisings on scientific productivity and research performance in Arab countries, finding that productivity and collaboration among local researchers increased on average in the five years following the events than the years preceding 2011, even in countries that experienced revolution, government changes, and armed rebellion. With this has come a noted rise in censorship practices by state and military authorities (Bamyeh 2015) and increasing threats to academic freedoms (Grimm 2018; Yahia and Butler 2015). In the case of Egypt, political research has become a precarious and sometimes unsafe endeavour (especially considering the planned closure of the Egyptian Ipsos office, warnings from the regime

against taking part in surveys by foreign organisations, the heavy restrictions to NGO work since 2017, and imprisonment of commentators like Hesham Gaafar).

While it may be tempting to generalise about the state of research in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, the insights above point more toward a research sphere in a state of transformative flux, which for now evades meaningful abstraction.

2 Mapping Arab Opinion Inquiry

In different parts of the thesis, I have described the ascent of global polling through the proliferation of global polling actors. In this section, I will focus on actors who have worked or work today in the specific area of Arab public opinion inquiry "from within". Stage 1 and Stage 2 are characterised by foreign actors leading the pursuit of Arab opinion, while local, indigenous actors emerge out of necessity to satisfy an outside demand for knowledge. In the third stage it becomes clear that local actors prioritise their own research agendas, while foreign commissions are treated as secondary. The space for foreign epistemic intervention has tightened and researchers are more interested in what data can tell us or how it can shape political processes in Arab countries. The foreign monopoly over "Arab public opinion" is gradually being displaced.

The figure below traces this ascent, charting the emergence of foreign (blue) and local (orange) actors according to the year in which they were established (or the year in which polling on Arab publics began, where available). While some actors included in this construction are no longer in operation, there are others who may not be included here—as I have mentioned elsewhere, there is simply not enough transparent information and no central repository to draw from that could help create an exhaustive list of all relevant actors. However, charting cumulative growth of at least the most prominent polling actors gives us a sense of how the field is developing.
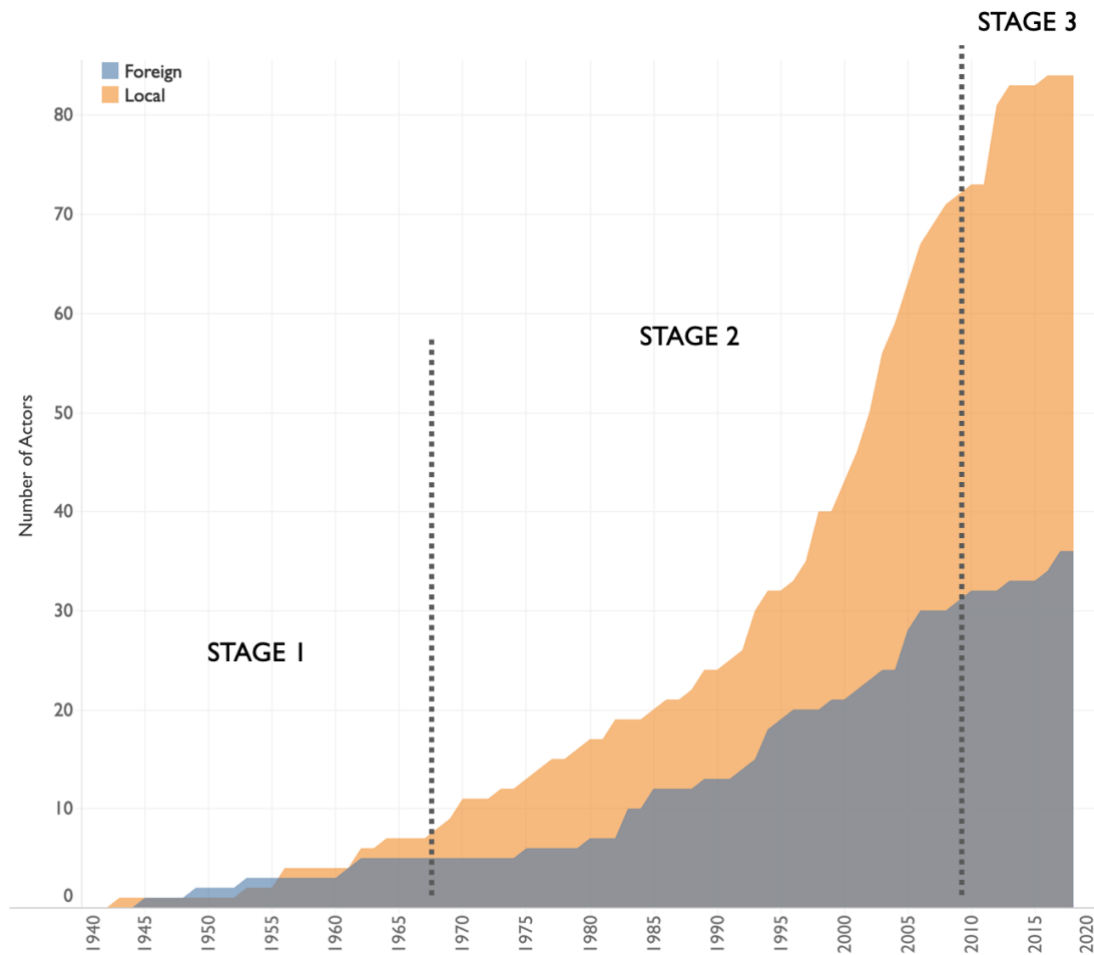
Figure 16: Cumulative growth of foreign and local actors, superimposed (1940-present).

As we can see in Figure 16, there have been active pollsters in the region as far back as the 1940s, but in low numbers. I have demarcated each of the three stages on this timeline; however, recall from Figure 4 (Chapter 2) that the stages of inquiry from foreign-led, to foreign-embedded locally, to localisation, do not have specific temporal bounds and actors from earlier stages persist. Once again, as it is impossible to assume that this set of actors is complete and all relevant polling organisations accounted for, the focus should be on the rate of expansion rather than the absolute total numbers.

Seen another way, Figure 17 and Figure 18 assess the same data geographically, filtered at the local level. We see the highest concentration of actors in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt. With the exception of Egypt, where fieldwork
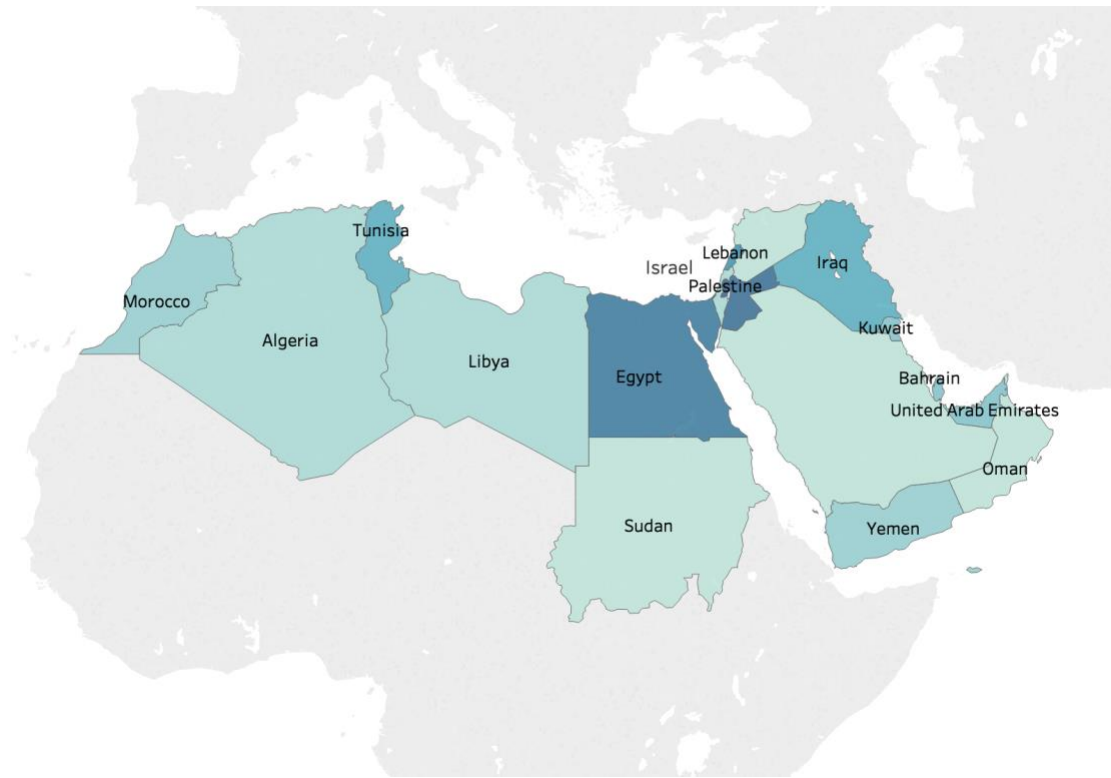
was not conducted, I explore the cases of Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine in the subsequent section.
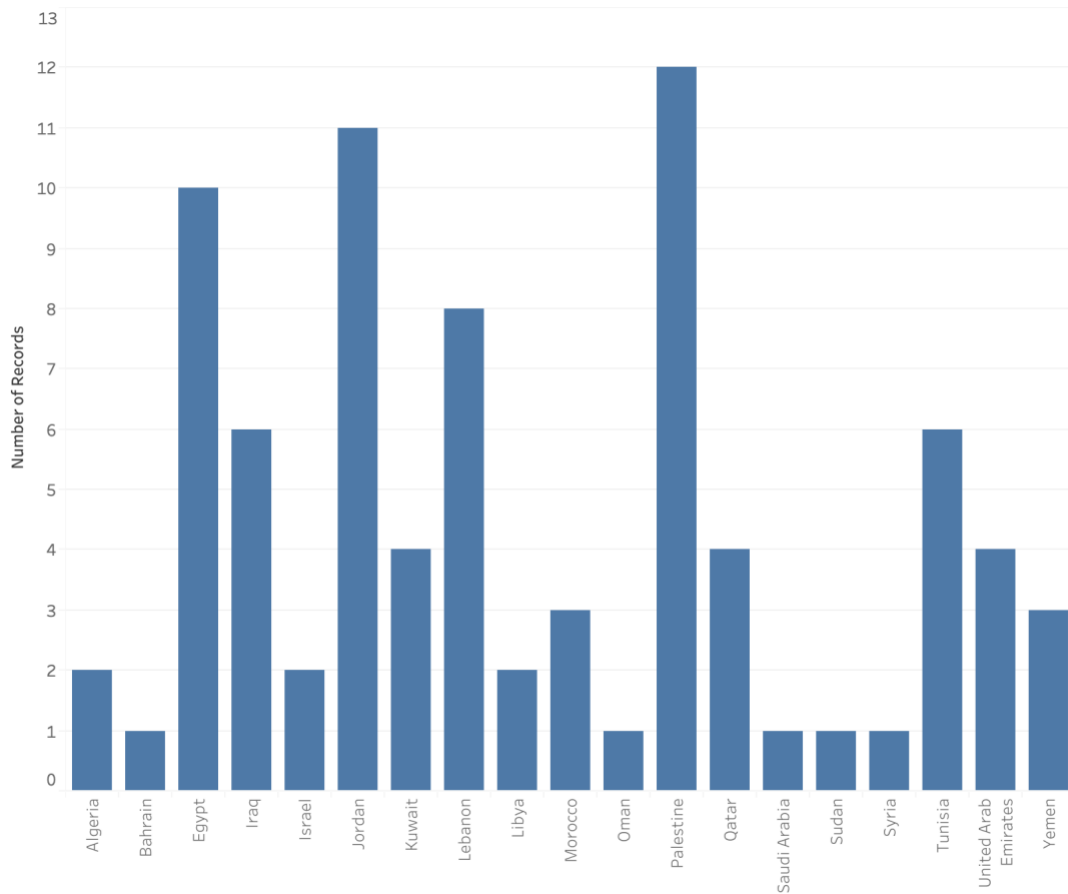
Figure 17: Local actors by country.

In the map below, we see the concentration of actors from few (light coloured) to a higher concentration (deeper colour). This can be taken as a proxy for the value and productivity of the public opinion industry in each country.

Figure 18: Local actors by country (map view).

3   Local Politics Breeds Local Practices: Vignettes from the Middle East

The theoretical and analytical thread that progresses through the thesis to the third stage supports the idea that Arab public opinion inquiry and the production of public opinion knowledge on Arab peoples have always been political. In this same vein, the local reclamation of inquiry by indigenous actors is a political act. Without perfect knowledge and complete access, I am only able to shine a light on select cases and aspects of the full knowledge production machinery. I hope that the illuminations presented for the cases of Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine below help to convincingly support my central argument: that public opinion inquiry pertaining to the Arab region and its peoples can be seen to unfold in three successive stages, and the data produced should not be divorced from the context in which it emerges. With that in mind, I have collated interview data from some of the leading pollsters in the Middle East, paying

attention to their insights, innovations, and inspiration for their work. As compared to interviewing American pollsters working on Arab public opinion, pollsters in the three countries below were far more expressive and willing to engage in drawn-out conversations about their careers and approaches. There was less emphasis on due process, protocol, objectivity, and best practices, and many more instances of adaptive methodologies and supplementing polling with qualitative methods. Further, there was an added normative dimension for each pollster, which suggested that they operate according to their own "ethics of research" or a personal politics of research. The impersonal nature of scientific authority is softened in the local setting. Instead, pollsters relied on personal experiences, their education and training, memories, and relationships with other actors in the field to describe the nature of their work.

The interview vignettes for each of the three country cases are aimed at showing the localisation (of practices) at work. Recalling Figure 4 from Chapter 2, I am narrowing down the analysis to the third stage, as illustrated in the figure below:
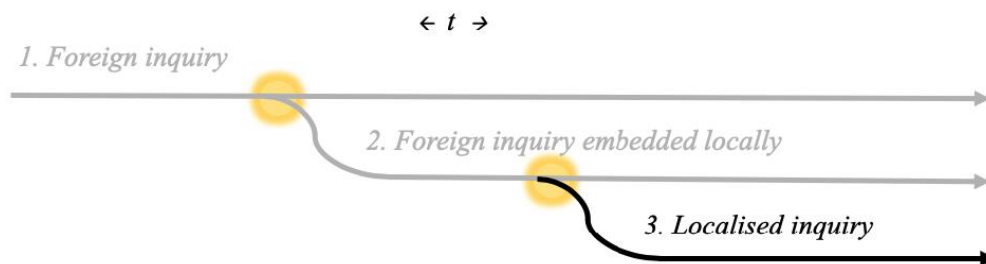
Figure 19: The branching of modes of inquiry, highlighting the third stage.

The interview insights represent some of the main findings from the empirical research conducted for this thesis. Through the interview process, it seemed that localisation was a naturally occurring phenomenon of increasing engagement in the field. Polling actors adapt to their locales and are well positioned (geographically, culturally, and epistemologically) to address the concerns in their immediate surroundings. The findings suggest that the field of Arab public opinion inquiry has grown to privilege local concerns, local practices, and local participation as researchers and researched (Smith 1999, 107).

One key finding that unites all of the interviews conducted in the Middle East, the Gulf, and with supplementary evidence from some American pollsters is that the most prominent Arab pollsters today form a special network. More than simply colleagues operating in the same field and sharing in the same expertise, a group of ten pollsters—an "old boys' club"—trained together and trained each other in the same research centre; the Centre for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan, Amman. The CSS has served as a central hub for survey research training in the region and as we will see below, it served as a first point of contact for local Arab public opinion research. The members of this "old boys' club" are intimately familiar with each other's work. Over nearly three decades, their career trajectories have diverged (each of them runs their own operations independent of each other). Today, they are based in Amman, the West Bank, Beirut, Cairo, and Doha, and pursue their own niche interests in these different markets. Interestingly, it appears that they might not always agree with each other from a political and methodological perspective. Nonetheless, they engage in work-sharing and will call on each other for additional expertise. As one renowned Lebanese pollster powerfully put it, "We are the pioneers of the field". Nowhere in the small body of literature on public opinion research in the Arab world is there any indication of a network of pollsters. A more detailed understanding of the implications of this special network of actors and the extent to which members see themselves operating as part of it would require its own additional project. But the finding itself is entirely novel and breaks new ground in the study of global public opinion and public opinion research.

3.1 The Case of Jordan

Through the process of searching for public opinion actors in Jordan, I identified eleven epistemic entities that emerged between 1962 and 2016. A selection of private firms, social science institutes, government bodies, and academic consortiums, it is clear from the large corpus of polls conducted in Jordan that the country has long been a bustling site for political research. The process of polling today, however, is belaboured, especially for actors who do not already have a trusting relationship with the state. For Jordanian or international actors wishing to conduct a large-scale opinion study, government permission must be granted. Information about the objectives of the study, the names of each of the field

interviewers, and the full questionnaire must be verified by the Department of Statistics, who reserve the right to reject the proposal or modify questions and question-wording. If approved, the proposal must then go through the Ministry of Interior and up to the General Intelligence Directorate, where it is subject to further checks. If approved at the level of state intelligence, notification is sent back down to the Ministry of Interior and finally the Department of Statistics, who will issue a notice of approval. It is not surprising then that the actors I interviewed in Amman had strong working relationships with the state, either through their institutions or because they themselves had worked in or with the Department of Statistics, which allowed them to bypass this political and bureaucratic architecture. This process certainly creates obstacles for research on politically sensitive areas, however it does not preclude polling on political opinion altogether. And while the issue of authoritarian control over free expression comes into play here, the pollsters I interviewed claim to experience an open field in which they have the ability to probe at "deeper levels". They are therefore members of a small class of informational elites who have local access and are nonetheless passionate about methodology and thorough in their research process.

Below, I expand on three leading Jordanian polling actors, each of whom trained in the United States or United Kingdom and have backgrounds in Political Sociology, Statistics, or Psychology. While each interview took its unique course, there were two points that were mentioned unanimously. The first was to do with the complex and sophisticated science of sampling in Jordan. Using maps and printouts of tables, each of them showed how Jordan is divvied up into hundreds of sampling clusters, i.e., geographically demarcated population blocks. Devised by the Department of Statistics, this regularly updated sampling map of Jordan is a tool that all pollsters have on hand. The randomised selection of respondents within these clusters is based on quotas and calculations that allow for a sample of one thousand people to mirror population demographics for the country. The second point made had to do with the nature of respondents themselves; namely, over time, people have become more at ease when being interviewed for political and government polls. This has been attributed to a general process of socialisation where "people in Jordan are accustomed to being polled", as well as the post-Arab Spring environment in which "everyone now

answers freely and without fear". While there are no existing studies examining the effects of the Arab uprisings on polling, the pollster's perceptions are the closest measure we have.

Actor 1: The State-Backed Research Hub

The Centre for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan, Amman was established in 1984 by King Hussein as an academic research centre for the study of regional conflict, international relations, security, media, and policy. In its early years, research at the CSS was mainly concerned with regional issues, in particular Arab-Israeli relations, politics of the USSR, and regional conflicts. From 1989, the centre expanded its activities and began to focus more on internal issues such as Palestinian refugees living in Jordan and parliamentary affairs. Within the CSS is a department of polling and survey research, which conducted their first national poll in 1993 on the subject of democracy and governance in Jordan, and since then has been a prolific producer of public opinion information on most countries in the region. The CSS serves as a regional institutional hub; many international researchers, scholars, and interns have walked through its doors, and the centre has long held a reputation as one of the most trusted and productive research centres in Jordan.

Financial support for the centre is provided by the Government of Jordan, which has also commissioned continuous polling since 1996. The CSS conducts regular government performance surveys in the interest of understanding how people perceive their government and how these perceptions shift over time (results are published and made available to the press and public). The frequency of government performance polling is fairly systematic: it involves a poll conducted one hundred days before and after a parliamentary election, two hundred days after, and then at least annually from then. The sample size has been enlarged since the first study in 1996 to account for a larger and more diverse population, and now stands at eighteen hundred randomised respondents interviewed face-to-face per poll. The government poll was described by the head of the polling division as popular and highly anticipated in the public sphere; "A lot hinges on the results and these polls have shaped the country", though there is no way of knowing to what extent people answer honestly. While polling in Jordan cannot be done without permission from the state, the CSS is able to bypass this

requirement because they are a trusted ally and claim to operate as an independent entity.

The organisation of polling operations within the CSS is compartmentalised, with different parts of the building assigned to a fieldwork division, statistical analysis division, and research division. The centre itself was newly remodelled in 1998-1999 with funding from the Jordanian Government, Fredrich Ebert Foundation, National Canadian Development Agency, and others. It is a large and modern standalone building located on the University's sprawling Amman campus. While the permanent staff is small (the polling unit, for instance, had three permanent employees at the time of interviewing), many part-time researchers, field interviewers, consultants, and student interns spend time at the centre, and the CSS has long hosted trainings and seminars for other regional actors working in polling. Further, the centre has built partnerships with international organisations like the ILO, and other polling actors like Gallup, the World Values Survey, and the Arab Barometer. These actors subcontract CSS to field their studies, collaborate, or collect raw data. The CSS serves as the regional hub for the Arab Barometer, working closely with the American contingent and managing relationships and coordinating fieldwork with polling centres in other MENA countries. Often, CSS pollsters will travel to nearby countries to train and monitor local research centres. Once data is collected in each country, local centres send their data to the CSS for processing and analysis. The process was described as a collaborative one; as the centre's head pollster put it, "We work as one group".

This sense of unity also came through in the centre's evaluation of regional public opinion. The Director of the CSS, a respected academic who completed a PhD in Sociology in the United States and has since spent over two decades teaching at the University of Jordan, asserted that "there most certainly is something that we can call 'Arab public opinion'" because there is an "Arab stance" that is reflected in issues like democratisation, gender, and the role of religion in society. Thus, we can speak of an Arab public opinion if what we are talking about is social norms and codes, however there is not a singular regional opinion on every issue, and a distinction must be made. The centre's lead pollster recounted a similar sentiment. This pollster began his career as a researcher in the CSS in the

1990s and returned to head the polling division after the centre sponsored his doctoral studies in Statistics at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom, where he specialised in election pre-predictions using modelling and simulations. He added that uniformity in survey design is possible and effective. "You can ask the same questions in different countries, especially using standard Arabic language. Concepts can translate country to country, no problem. This is why polls like the World Values Survey can ask the same questions everywhere". There is no need then for polling to be a hyperlocal pursuit, rather, it works best when it is conducted at higher levels of abstraction.

The CSS has an "official" air to it. Pollsters take pride in the prominence of the centre and are keen to discuss the technical aspects of their research. The lead pollster stressed that they follow ESOMAR standards and are "the only polling centre in Jordan to do so", and "no one can criticise" the centre for bad practices and protocols. The CSS sees itself in a different league than other polling actors in the region and seeks to position its work as scholarly, not commercial. At the same time, it distances itself from Western pollsters who share some of the same scientific values. "The West think they are the best in the world [at polling]. They think they have the best methodology". The same pollster went on to say that if closer attention is paid to methodological innovations taking place at the CSS—relating to sampling, questionnaire design, and methods of interpreting data—we will see micro-advancements to the field that are unique to the Middle East.

Actor 2: The Long-Trusted Pollster of the State

This pollster defies the assumption that localised polling in the Arab region is a recent phenomenon. Since 1962, he has helped to spearhead a polling firm that that has remained stable through decades of change. The company was initially established in Lebanon in 1962 with support from George Gallup, who was involved in setting up Gallup outposts outside the United States after World War II. Together with the German polling company EMNID (also affiliated with Gallup), funding was assigned to poll the Middle East. In its early years, the company primarily worked in market research, with the exception of polls conducted for the USIA during the 1960s in Lebanon. Between 1962 and 1976, the company's operations grew to the point where they were "doing research in every Arab country except Algeria and Djibouti". This included Cyprus, Iran,

and Turkey; unusual additions to Arab-region surveys. Prior to working with Gallup, the pollster studied psychology and trained at the British Market Research Bureau in London in the early 1960s and had some work experience in public relations. Between 1963 and 1975, he "observed new techniques" in the international community of research and sought to bring in his training in cognitive behaviour. He remarked, "Psychology is not the whole story [of public opinion], only part of it", but it allows you to experiment with qualitative techniques that "put you in the frame of everyday people". His approach has therefore combined psychology and sociology into the practice of polling, and he has conducted hundreds of focus groups over decades to find "anomalous" information and things that polls otherwise miss.

The pollster achieved a seal of approval after correctly predicting the 1971 by-election in Lebanon "against all odds, for a candidate who was not previously involved in politics". When civil war broke out in 1975, he moved operations to Jordan, continuing with election-related polls both in Jordan and Egypt. He recounted how the trust in his methods and intuitions around elections was on the rise in the 1970s; his reputation was strengthened, his profile grew, and his work became of interest to the state. In 1989, the Jordanian Prime Minister requested the pollster to conduct a pre-election poll of the entire Jordanian electorate, curious as to whether people would respond honestly and reliably to interviews. The pollster's work left a positive impression and in 1992, he was commissioned by King Hussein of Jordan to conduct regular election polling for the state. Around this time, parliamentary changes were enacted that limited the number of seats for political parties. The pollster recalled his intuitive sense that these structural changes in governance would require changes in polling design, and he reformulated approaches to constructing sample quotas in order to take into account "certain segments of the population outside the cities, to better understand the reality of the national public". He also recalled how many government-sponsored polls came from questions that King Hussein himself had pondered about the electorate, for instance, whether people would participate in the elections, their perceptions of the United States, or their attitudes toward privatisation. King Hussein, as he fondly recalled, used data down to the last comma and in many ways they were able to "speak the same language" to one another.

Among his international clients, he counts the IRI, and formerly the UNDP and USAID. But it is his career as a trusted pollster of the Jordanian state that seems to define him. His company also has a close bond with the CSS, where he has worked as a consultant and trained new generations of researchers. But while the CSS has worked more with donor agencies, making research publicly available, this pollster has taken commissions on a selective basis "only from actors who value research". At its height, he presided over a team of forty-three researchers, of which fifteen worked as full-time field interviewers.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the pollster said that the field of public opinion research was primarily taken up with methodology, scientific best-practices, and devising analytical frameworks. But later, the focus shifted to the question of "How do you read results?", namely, what is in a number? This move toward interpretation, he argued, is now more important than ever, as traditional and social media are in the habit of reproducing problematic and unreliable interpretations. He also talked about how a poll should not be used independently of other information, but should be supported by data from pre-existing studies, as best as possible. It is not a "standalone" method.

At an advanced stage in his career, the senior pollster works out of a small office on a main street in Amman, where there is one secretary and one or two other senior field supervisors working alongside him. In his office, there is no computer. The only sign of technology at his desk, strewn with papers and hand-drawn maps, was a large calculator, which he used to show how to calculate sample quotas. Around his office, one can find career memorabilia; newspaper clippings and pictures of him with the late King Hussein and the current King Abdullah II. Often he pulled decades-old paper surveys out of desk drawers, and recalled in great detail the technical issues and learnings from each of these. For instance, in a question with a Likert scale, he showed how he chose to use a 4-point and 10-point as opposed to an odd-numbered scale because "midpoints are an excuse" for respondents to choose indifference. In another example, he showed a series of two-step questions he designed, where the first is meant to position the respondent on the issue, and the second measures the degree of sentiment on that issue. Further, he argued that questions worded "What is the likelihood that you will vote?" result in bad data in Jordan, and a subtle change

to a two-part question that asks "Do you intend to vote?" followed by "Did you vote in the last election?" has proven far more accurate when compared to voter turnout. He described methodological tweaks like these as his own innovations, and said that he is meticulous about process, often calling and monitoring interviewers to ensure they are "doing things correctly in the field". His surveys use face-to-face methodology, and he does not conduct telephone or online polls.[40] In the interview process, he believes the gender of the interviewer does matter; people are likelier to open up to female interviewers in general, though interviewer selection must also consider the nature of the questions being asked. When qualitative interventions are needed, he now partners with another Jordanian research company to create a "division of labour".

The pollster rejected the label "Arab public opinion". To him, it negates the essence of the local and prevents experts from other countries having a say on a what is asked. Each poll has to be adapted to the local culture. This belief comes from a recognition that societies have unique communicative cultures; for instance, he described how British publics are verbally forthcoming, while there is more reticence to talk in the Middle East. A "discussion framework" must therefore be implemented in each study, and at times, this may mean choosing not to poll but selecting a qualitative alternative. The procurement of public opinion does not rest on the poll; rather, the nature of publics dictates the choice of method. Finally, he lamented the state of questionnaires today, saying that surveys are rife with poorly-worded, non-sensical, and broad questions that come about because of either ignorance or political interests, where pollsters want to produce results that support certain convictions. For him, "Public opinion research should help you describe the thing that is obscure to people", to help them work through their thoughts and beliefs without manipulating them.

Actor 3: The Tech-Driven Entrepreneur

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[40] According to the pollster, there is no framework for telephone polling because it can never be used to design a representative sample. At the same time, mail-out surveys only see a twenty percent response rate. By contrast, the success of face-to-face interviewing "never falls below 82%", meaning that four in five people respond to interviews.

This Jordanian pollster began his career in 1994 as a data collector at the CSS, receiving training from Actor 2 above. Later appointed as a full-time researcher, the CSS sponsored the completion of a Master's and PhD degree at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom, where he specialised in Political Sociology. Here, his research focused on political Islam using data from the World Values Survey. In 2006, he travelled to the United States as a Fulbright Scholar, working for at least some time with the Committee on Foreign Affairs (Middle East and North Africa) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Upon returning to Jordan, he was named Deputy Director of the CSS in 2009. His polling work crossed borders when he became the Director of IRI Lebanon in 2009 and later helped to lead research at the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) in Qatar. During this time, he also worked as a consultant for King Abdullah II of Jordan in the government's survey department. In his own words, he has carved a path "combining research and public opinion prescription in Jordan" as well as experience in academic settings.

In 2016, the pollster established a research, polling, and consultancy firm in a new, gated business park development in Amman. At the time of interviewing, the pollster's entrepreneurial venture was less than a year old, employing just under ten people as analysts, and between five and thirty women at a time to conduct field interviews at a time (as mentioned above, gender was found to have an effect on the success rates of interviews in Jordan). Most if not all of the staff are locally-based. The pollster remarked, "You need to know the context. You have to live the culture. That's why you need real local people as researchers, and it cannot be automated or outsourced". He stressed that this knowledge is essential for interviewing respondents, as it's not just their answers that are recorded, but the non-verbal signals are picked up on as well.

Already the business venture counts as clients a number of international actors, for which it conducts polls: IRI and USAID, the European Union, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE), LSE Enterprise, the Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute (MEMPSI), the World Values Survey, and the Mediterranean-Gulf Forum. It also services Jordanian clients like the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence, the Royal Scientific Society, and maintains a close relationship with the Arab

Barometer. The business sees its relationship with clients and staff as "partnerships", with all parties on equal footing. The pollster discussed the importance of investing in staff, promoting a "horizontal structure" whereby training is sponsored as it was for him. For instance, the company has established links with King's Academy (Deerfield) and encourages staff to attend training and educational programs abroad.[41]

The pollster has a firm pro-technology stance with regards to face-to-face interviewing techniques (CAPI or computer-assisted personal interviewing). Field interviewers are sent out with advanced tablets with the capability of immediately uploading data to a central repository. Audiences (i.e., commissioners and analysts) of surveys can read the results of survey questions in real time and suggest adjustments to the study design, even while in the field, thus the process of research is not static. Behind his pro-tech stance is a belief that technology eliminates human error and speeds up processing times. It "allows total control of the data" and is less expensive overall. Technology is therefore valued as a tool that smooths irregularities and gives immediate results; and he considers seamlessness, speed, and access to be the future of polling. But while the technology to enable real-time polling has existed for some years, it has been developed with the North American market in mind. Recognising a gap here, the pollster is working on "developing Arabic-enabled technology for the company" in order to improve communication capabilities through technology, that will appeal to overseas markets.

Finally, on the subject of his dedication to the local market, the pollster discussed the importance of research from within the Arab region for countering the misinformation propagated by sensationalised issues like global terrorism. He believes that information from outside the region can misconstrue and misrepresent issues, with terrible consequences. External misinformation can be countered with internal clarity and more indigenously produced research.

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[41] King Abdullah II of Jordan graduated from Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts 1980. Deerfield helped established the King's Academy in Madaba, Jordan in 2007.

3.2   The Case of Lebanon

I identified eight major polling actors in Lebanon, two of which were prolific producers of data prior to the 1980s (working in university departments), while the remainder mainly worked in private commercial firms. Below, I introduce three unique actors among the interviews conducted. There were three common themes identified in each interview. The first was that polling in Lebanon faces minimal restrictions. The state and the industry of polling "do not speak to each other" and the state is relegated to a background role in the process. Rather, pollsters have strong relationships with non-state actors interested in public opinion data, policy specialists, and the people they interview. A second lesson was that all pollsters agreed on the need for localisation in questionnaires. The same questions cannot be cut and pasted and asked of people across countries, as it is considered "inappropriate" to assume that the social, political, and cultural contexts are similar enough to warrant standardisation. A third interesting point was that the absence of an official census (the last and only one was conducted in 1932) has no bearing on the practice of research. As one pollster put it, "Figures are a point of view in Lebanon anyways" and there are ways to get at census data through reports compiled by NGOs and other independent parties. Thus in this case, we see workarounds to the standardised, status quo procedures of polling encouraged elsewhere on the global level.

Actor 1: The Media Darling

It was in discussion with one of Lebanon's foremost pollsters that the extent to which Arab polling actors formed a loose epistemic network became most evident. This pollster was another who spent time training at the CSS in Amman and mentioned a number of others—Jordanian, Palestinian, and Egyptian pollsters and statisticians—who "all trained together in our early days. We are the pioneers of research in the region". Many of them have built independent careers establishing research institutes or polling firms in different markets, not necessarily in the country from where they originate. To some extent, their diverging career trajectories have created distance between them over the years; they are not necessarily involved in each other's day-to-day activities. Rather, they "have a certain complicité": they interact with and assist each other from

afar, send projects to one another as friends and colleagues, and "act as a de facto unit" when representing research on the regional level.

Following a similar pattern of training, this pollster studied outside the region, completing a Masters in Statistics and DEA in Canada. He spent time "in Washington 'on the hill' for policy work" before returning to Lebanon after the civil war. His public opinion career began in Lebanon with a poll published in a British Arabic magazine on the 1992 general election and contentious policy-making. He described this first attempt as "haphazard, both methodologically and in terms of results" and recalled how only he and his secretary worked on the study. The sampling frame was incorrect, and the questions generated bias, but through a trial and error process, the polling process was refined. In 1994, he launched a research firm in Beirut that has grown to employ fifty-five people today. He positions himself not as a political or market research pollster, but as a specialist in public affairs. The majority of his work lies at the nexus of policy and communications and privately commissioned by political parties, media outlets, private sector firms, and international bodies like the US State Department, Gallup, UN, UNICEF, the World Bank, the IRI, and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. Using a mixed-methods approach, he combines qualitative focus groups "that reflect what was not said in the polls" with face-to-face interviews. At the time of interviewing, he had conducted nearly fifty focus groups in Lebanon and had a fleet of thirty cars and teams of part-time researchers, and four full-time enumerators so that large-scale surveying could be done entirely in-house and systematically.

The industry of polling in Lebanon was described as a highly competitive and growing arena. Each actor is aware of others in the field, and not all are treated equally respected. The pollster described the industry expanding like a "mushroom cloud", with small players on the rise who produce low-quality data. However, "even if the industry is not so organised, the market will organise it", meaning that inevitably, small players will be swallowed up. There is very little evidence of domestic collaboration between pollsters, unlike at the regional level. What further distances this pollster from others in Lebanon is his media affiliations. In 2006, he launched his own news media service with a mission to offer "objective nonpartisan news, as they happen", which places him in the

unique and altogether rare position of being both a pollster and newsmaker. And since predicting the 2009 election "with 100% accuracy", he became something of a star commentator, appearing on political talk shows and radio programs as a public expert on electoral politics in Lebanon. His media appearances allow him to talk to the public, which breeds a cult of popular familiarity around him. The extent to which political bias appears in his polls and media platform is unclear, but he is widely sought out by local and foreign parties, and is the Lebanese delegate for both the World Values Survey Wave 7 (in process) and the Arab Barometer.

Actor 2: The Pre-Civil War Pollster

Pollsters tended to display excitement in interviews when answering questions related to methods, technical aspects of the practice, and personal success, while shying away from talking about difficult times. Polling, like any professional field in Lebanon, was disrupted by the outbreak of civil war in 1975. This pollster established an independent polling firm just before the war, having built his early career polling for the BBC in Lebanon. While this firm has mostly worked in the area of market and consumer research, through the course of four decades, political opinion research had been conducted (though the company was reluctant to share any further information). Rather than shutting down operations, the outbreak of war led this pollster to grow his practice. He was forced to move to Jordan, where he lived and built a second establishment. After the war ended in 1990, he returned to Lebanon and has continued to run both offices since then. The years spent in both countries has given him a profound understanding of the differences in civic culture and the role of pollster in political life. "The people are different. The streets are different. You have to understand the difference in mentality". In Lebanon, polling is seen to have "peaked" and the intensity of political discussion and debate is "felt everywhere. Politics affects daily life, and it is present in all media and all channels". Here, the pollster has free reign, and there are no restrictions on asking politically sensitive questions. "People have been living with war and politics their whole lives. They are willing to speak and are very vocal". But in Jordan, the need to obtain permission from the state for each fresh survey forces the self-censorship of the researcher. The result is that questions are asked differently and people as

interview subjects are more reserved and harder to pick apart. For this pollster and his small team, knowledge of these differences is wielded as a strength and lends them credibility.

The pollster's operations draw strength from simplicity. Taking an anti-technology stance, the team seems to revel in the human activity of the fieldwork process. "The most important part of the entire research process is the fieldwork". It requires you to reject your ego and engage with the field in body and in mind. While the team is aware that polling is becoming increasingly computerised, paper and pen are still used to conduct their face-to-face interviews. As another pollster working in the company described, "It's something material, something to touch. It's personal, and is really more efficient". It is a difficult task to maintain neutrality, but the pollster stressed that the personal beliefs of researchers "mean nothing and should not appear". She also described fieldwork as a form of entertainment, and in this sense it is performative. There is entertainment for the interviewer, who comes into contact with unique perspectives and never repeats the same experience, and the people who are interviewed "are entertained. They get to talk to someone, have a conversation about things they might not normally speak about". They are listened to and are found to be appreciative of the experience. This level of care and attention for the field was not expressed in any other interview conducted, but it is a sign that public opinion research need not be impersonal, with participants held at arm's-length as a matter of methodological course.

Actor 3: The Small Fish

Described by other Lebanese pollsters as a boutique operation, this pollster's firm represents a "small fish in a big pond" market scenario. Based in the Hamra district of Beirut, the small scale of his operations precludes him from conducting costly face-to-face interviews, instead choosing computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) as the main method. But rather than a conversation about data and comparing methods, the interview veered more toward assessing the state of the polling industry in Lebanon, which in the pollster's view had changed tremendously since the civil war ended, when restrictions were lifted for researchers conducting politically sensitive studies.

The freedom to poll in Lebanon on nearly any subject is one reason for the high density of actors in the field. This explosion of polling has resulted in negative runoffs, some progress, and realisations about what the field should strive to be. For instance, a negative byproduct has been the phenomenon of "fake" or impressionistic research, where inaccurate results from questionable polls are purposefully published because data sells easily, and methods are subjected to less scrutiny when data is in demand. The pollster was willing to assume that eighty percent of published research in Lebanon was false or impressionistic, and by contrast, unpublished (private) data backed by heavy funding can be trusted to be far more thorough and accurate. Another negative runoff is the subcontracting problem in polling, i.e., the outsourcing of different parts of the polling process to third parties. Often, three to four contractors will separate the body who commissions the poll from the people on the ground. The subcontracting problem comes about when actors prioritise cost-effectiveness (it is cheaper to outsource the research process) and fail to see the benefit of working in close proximity to the public.

The increase of polling has positively resulted in a more politicised civic culture. "Especially in Lebanon where leadership is not close to the public, research helps policymakers to understand what the people want. Polling keeps people in contact with democracy", and further "we need polling for citizens to see who they are part of more broadly". For the pollster, polling democratises Lebanon and breaks down false understandings and stereotypes because it floods the system with information. Especially when polling is made public, the pollster argued that people and the communicative discourses they enact become richer. He saw an informed public as a way to counter the "indifference" of leaders.

The pollster also lamented the compartmentalisation of the industry in Lebanon and of the Arab region more broadly. For him, a more participatory community of epistemic actors who build each other up is the ideal. In his mind, this means that researchers should partake in conferences, engage in deeper discussions with one another, compare their methodologies and try to advance practices by comparing themselves to regional actors, as opposed to aiming for total global standardisation. Importantly, he felt that the cultural context cannot be ignored; the same questions cannot be asked everywhere at all times. Therefore, the field

needs "real researchers" who have a second sense for the local as opposed to "people who just execute" methodological processes without care for the people whose opinions have the potential to transform political systems.

3.3   The Case of Palestine

Palestine presents a unique case for the study of public opinion, and one for which we have some existing research on the emergence of the practice. In particular, two unpublished doctoral dissertations (Hawatmeh 2001 and Schwarze 2012) on polling in Palestine, as well as research on the development of the field of social science (Hanafi 2018) provide an adequate starting point. The systematic study of public opinion in Palestine has flourished since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993; indeed, the twelve main actors I identified emerged between 1993 and 2007. These centres, almost all of which are headquartered in Ramallah, have been led by pollsters and researchers whose careers effectively began during the process of negotiations with Israel; far from neutral observers, many were participant in multilateral discussions around peace and security and had a personal stake in Palestinian self-determination. Polling here is an inherently political act: "from inception, opinion polls were seen by civil society pollsters as an instrument used to exert pressure on leadership, warning decision-makers off straying too far from public expectations" (Schwarze 2012, 142). Polling as a form of epistemic inquiry has thus belonged to the local level from the outset. For Schwarze, "Palestinian polling has been at the forefront of survey research in the Arab world, lauded for its overall reliability and professionalism" despite setbacks faced in the sector of research (2012, 136). While her study presents a nuanced analysis of supporters and sceptics of polling in Palestine, it is the insights from pollsters themselves that are the most relevant for my purposes and against which I can compare my own findings. I detail three key actors in the field below, but the overarching sentiment that binds all interviews is in line with Schwarze: "pollsters expressed a profound belief in the ability of their work to contribute positively, if slowly, to the increasing importance of public opinion in decision-making" (2012, 137). It is this normative dimension that makes the Palestinian case especially noteworthy.

Actor 1: The Activist

Like others in the field, this pollster and pioneer of Palestinian research completed a PhD abroad, at the University of Michigan in the field of Sociology. Returning to Palestine in 1993 with a social science background, his first poll was conducted a few days before the Oslo I Accord was officially signed in September, and probed how Palestinians felt about the agreement. He described early survey research as non-scientific, especially as the demographics of Palestine were not well understood, and adequate sampling frameworks could not be drawn up. While he and other Palestinian pollsters acknowledged that foreign development aid and American democratic institutions like the IRI and NDI "gave way to regular local polling", these foreign bodies with their specific interests and targets were not the reason that polling has grown and succeeded. The market for Palestinian public opinion data has thus always been under the control of local researchers. The Palestinian pollster's activist position is a unique and unexpected characteristic, especially when one imagines a pollster in the abstract. In his own words, he "has always operated from the Palestinian perspective and for the Palestinian cause". Acting as an uninvolved or removed external observer would betray the opportunity to better society. Over the twenty years spent running a polling centre in the West Bank, he has ensured that "the process of polling and analysis is owned by Palestinians, from question design to research dissemination". This is not "polling for the sake of polling" but a political activity imbued with purpose. His maxim—"polling for all"—effectively means that questions are designed to incorporate minority views and the needs of different subgroups and marginalised voices in society. This maxim, he contends, must be reflected in the workplace as well. For instance, training must be offered for all employees so that the experience of the job allows employees to contribute to society. The feminist perspective of the researcher must be present as well, and he seeks a gender balance in his hiring practices so that the field of polling in the Arab world can be further diversified. Of all the interviews conducted with male pollsters in the region, this was the only one in which the unequal status of women in the field was lamented.

The growing closeness between Palestinian pollsters and their publics has allowed for him to poll on some of the most politically sensitive topics. Questions relating to violence and religion and the peace process have been probed in depth, and in recent years, the diversification of questions has sparked deeper

social conversations about issues ranging from perceptions of corruption, opinions on leadership, and positions toward honour killings, to attitudes about sex and awareness of sexually transmitted diseases (traditionally taboo subjects). The success rates for research are measured by the ability of polls to affect political decision-making, and the activist-pollster gave examples of moments when policy changes were precipitated by particular polls. These examples also certainly help to bolster faith in the polls. But importantly, he viewed a parallel relationship between pollsters and policymakers, and pollsters and civil society. The pollster thus sits directly between the two and must serve both. As to how he distinguishes himself from others in the field, he said that it comes down to this positioning. While pollsters are commonly strategists, commercially-inclined, or journalistic, he describes himself as based in the community.

Pollsters in Palestine are known public figures who publish their own analyses in newspapers and feature prominently in the media. As the pollsters remarked, "public opinion leaders are influencers in Palestine" and must be aware of the normative aspects of their role. Rather than prioritising scientific objectivity and accuracy, the work of pollsters is legitimated by their attention to nuanced contextual knowledge. The pollster argued that polling is approached more as a sociological field of study in Palestine rather than as a science, the reason being that "culture of polling" existed first, and a "culture of science" was added to it later as technologies became available and international training and knowledge-sharing became more accessible. For this reason, he maintains close links with the academic community. He established a research centre at Birzeit University in 1998 and is one of a number of pollsters and practitioners who engage in teaching public opinion polling and survey methods at the undergraduate level. As he sees it, pollsters have the capacity to be educators in addition to their roles as activists, influencers, and policy specialists. They are uniquely positioned to participate in the emancipatory project of the Palestinian state.

Additionally, the pollster considered the Palestinian case in relation to other markets. In his view, polling in Jordan serves either the regime (from a security perspective) or marketing, and Lebanon is closer in kind to Jordan than Palestine. "In Jordan, all polls have to be accredited formally, so big personalities in universities, or in the royal court, or UN people make it through the gates. The

problem with this is that they already have a self-censoring system for information, and a controlled system leads to corruption. It is a self-reinforcing system". By contrast, Lebanon is more commercial and sectarian in nature and this creates its own challenges. "The first centres in Palestine became its own industry and its own field. Here, you can defend academic freedoms. There is a free culture". Despite these differences, he is an advocate for creating a formal network of Arab pollsters (he mentioned that while he has been trying to create something like an ARABPOR, modelled on AAPOR, this has not yet materialised). He has cross-trained researchers in Lebanon, Jordan, Oman, and Yemen and has polled in Iraq, Syria, and Libya with the help of EU funding. He has also worked with a Jordan-based women's leadership group for which polling was done in Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.

Finally, he shed some light on obstructions to polls under non-democratic governments by revealing that if you understand the system, polling is possible. Research bans have come into effect in Palestine from time to time, recently in Hebron. In Morocco, political polling has been heavily restricted by the state. When it does take place, it is usually through market research companies and the questions are politically benign. Building relationships with these actors may be one way to gain access and ask more sensitive questions. In any case, this Palestinian pollster and others I interviewed operate on the basis of being able to do their job unobstructed. They do not appear to concern themselves with authoritarian control over the production of knowledge, because more often than not, these periods of silencing are temporary. They know well that polling is both in demand and a "mobile" endeavour that allows them to move in and out of countries, adapt, and persist. As the pollster emphasised, "There is always a way".

Actor 2: The Elite Negotiator

As one of the most prominent actors in the region, this pollster, born in Gaza, recalled teaching Palestinian politics during the 1980s only to realise that while history could be readily accessed, any attempt to understand the current value system in Palestine required empirical knowledge that was altogether missing. He earned a PhD in Political Science and Statistics from Columbia University in 1985 and remained in the United States until his involvement in peace

negotiations with Israel in 1992 allowed for him to return and establish a research centre in the West Bank. Here, he trained researchers in the method of face-to-face interviewing and produced his first major poll in 1993. His research interests were centrally focused on state-building and peace-building, and he noted that the scarcity of actors in the field in 1993 necessitated work-sharing between his centre and the only other existing survey research centre at the time, the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC), a Palestinian NGO based in East Jerusalem. Since then, he has maintained a working relationship with the JMCC, who commenced polling activities in 1993 with their data used directly in the negotiations process. Together, the two work-sharing organisations aimed to "strengthen the voice of the public by providing information on public attitudes to Palestinian negotiators" (Schwarze 2012, 141). Negotiators and leaders did listen; there was a lot of interest in data at the time, it was taken seriously, and it had the effect of shaping and constraining strategic decisions, speeches, and the priorities of social research.

Obtaining data, however, was not so simple. While learning to draft questionnaires required a mix of precedent, training, and intuition, basic demographic information like census data was simply unavailable in the early 1990s. Knowledge of the self (as a population) was therefore extremely limited and relied on the piecemeal collection of statistical data from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA), which certainly did not amount to a census. In the years that followed Oslo, Israel amassed census data on Arab populations, but often purposefully withheld it. The negotiator-turned-pollster described the ways in which "Palestinians have developed their own capacity to get data" in an environment of missing information. This included creating their own territorial and urban maps and other "self-identifying" documentation. These early actors were more than just pollsters and negotiators; their role required them to become proxy demographers and social scientists, as well as to build relational links with NGOs and international institutions who might help to provide and procure data when needed. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) was founded in 1993 and only released a full first census in 1997, which forced the methodology of polling to undergo change and resulted in earlier studies being treated with scepticism due to missing this necessary element for scientific sampling.

The pollster's reputation precedes him. He has conducted joint Israeli-Palestinian polls since 2000, which have proven to be a point of contention for Palestinians who have sensed political motivation in his poll results (he was attacked by mobsters and his offices ransacked in 2003). Still, he has persevered and today is as involved in polling at the regional level as on the level of Palestinian politics. He has strong partnerships with the Arab Barometer, the Arab Democracy Index (led by the Arab Reform Initiative, an independent think tank engaged in democracy-building), and the Arab Security Sector Index. He has conducted many studies of Palestinian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon. Through his work with international actors like the Brookings Institute, the Wilson Center, and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), he has polled in a dozen Arab countries and has access to hard to reach publics, for instance in rural Egypt. While he views American institutions like Gallup and Pew as technically adept, questions, language, and wording are the leading cause of the "failure" of Western polls in markets other than their own. He explained that "People are more careful in their own societies. Western pollsters will naturally pay more attention to their people, and so they will succeed more in the West. They do not have the capacity to adapt their questions". And while he often works with Western pollsters, he sees his main contribution as being able to adapt their surveys to suit the setting and the people being interviewed, and there remains a perceptible discord that can only be mended with strong indigenous research contributions.

Finally, Palestine's unique "culture of polling" necessitates particular methodological specificities. Face-to-face interviewing has been proven to be among the most effective (in terms of depth of responses) and "friendliest" method to reach people. While methods such as online and telephone surveys are favoured in other markets for their ease of administration, diminishing costs, and wider reach, the data that they produce is found to be comparatively stilted—a more reserved and less expressive form of public opinion emerges. There is something in the moment of human interaction between pollster and public that creates a space for trust and a channel for civic participation. Each form of polling (whether face-to-face, online, and telephone) has its own specific "culture" that differs, especially when comparing across countries in the region. Once one

understands the culture of polling in Palestine, "Public opinion is no longer a mystery as it used to be in the past".

Actor 3: The Networked Expert

Another American university-trained statistician, this pollster began his career in 1996 under the wing of Actor 2 above. He was described by pollsters in several different interviews as one of the best statisticians in the region, and defines himself as a technical expert in survey research. He built early ties to the CSS in Jordan through a Ford Foundation grant that commissioned joint-surveys in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt, and it was at the CSS where he laid the technical infrastructure for incoming researchers and spent time training international participants. As a statistician, the normative aspect of Palestinian research propelled him to create indices for different variables, such as a fear index and a democracy index as a composite measure of change. These indices were based on polling data, and his early work in this area was sponsored by the IRI and NDI. He has also been involved in polling for foreign institutions like NORC, IFES, USAID, and the World Bank.

In these early years of polling in Palestine, the pollster explained how the practice was met with distrust on a number of levels. People as interview subjects were weary of the technical abilities of pollsters and their motives, some feared the ramifications of sharing their political views, and others were hesitant about the predictive quality of election polling. Interviews had to be conducted outside homes or in communal places before the practice became normalised. And people were reticent to speak freely for fear of being held accountable for their political views, especially if they expressed a minority position. But he noted a rising confidence over time that strengthened the relationship with the public and ultimately led people to enter into open dialogues with pollsters. Early pollsters were thus keen on building a culture of civic participation in Palestine. They saw themselves primarily as activists, as opposed to neutral social scientists, and felt themselves to be just as much a part of the public sphere and as involved in its construction. This had an encouraging effect on the culture of polling in Palestine. Further, pollsters were increasingly seen as acting in the interests or on behalf of the people, as opposed to political parties, religious factions, or foreign donor agencies. Ideas about polling in the minds of the public

thus shifted from "public opinion as elite opinion" to "public opinion as the voice of everyday people". Yet pollsters are also monitored and tested on their predictive skills. Polling around elections is a tricky endeavour (the mixed political system allows separate votes for an individual and a party), and the 2006 general election in which Hamas claimed victory created a crisis for pollsters, who had predicted a safe win by the ruling Fatah.

Finally, reflecting on the ties built with pollsters in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and elsewhere, this pollster asserted that polling could serve as a gateway to regional participation. He sensed a desire among the research and expert community to work more closely as an identifiable network specifically because "this is not a united region" and the relationships and infrastructure to enable a strong network already exist. In the end, he expressed the hope of creating a more prominent regional body of Arab pollsters, expanding on the legacy of the "old boys' club" as a forum for future generations of researchers.

4   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to uncover a new stage in the pursuit of public opinion in the Arab world—one characterised by increased agency on the part of local, indigenous actors whose ability to shape and speak for the field is especially palpable in the wake of the Arab uprisings. Up to this point, we have seen the ways in which local public opinion has been extracted, (re)framed, spoken for, and put to use by foreign actors. At the same time, the adaptation of standard polling practices by local actors trained in the West have been adjusted, in some instances to fit with local conditions and compensate for missing information. Over time, the foreign monopoly of Arab public opinion has been displaced. The rate at which the local market has expanded in recent years is evidence of this. Further, pollsters are empowered by the inclusion of non-scientific forms of knowledge as part of their practice. While I do not attempt an assessment of data quality (which is a known issue in the region) to determine the effects of localisation on the final product of data, I do note a more participatory ethics of research and the guiding normative position that appear to be unique for each researcher.

I identify the Arab uprisings as a transformational juncture that helps to explain the advent of Stage 3. Mass social mobilisation brought about the fall of heads of state, shifts in power structures, and made way for new voices, generated solidarity beyond borders, and opened up new areas for social science research in and on the region. Specifically, the opening up of new ways of understanding and researching the Arab world has helped to decenter existing ways of knowing. To decentre requires us to challenge the politics, concepts and practices that enable certain narratives to be central; "decentring is also a way to put forth and participate in other kinds of narratives and politics that have different 'starting' points" (Nayak and Selbin 2010, 4). It seeks to challenge privileged or dominant perspectives that have traditionally been legitimised by powerful actors and institutions.

Writing in 1973 on the state of social science research in North Africa, Zghal and Karoui expected that decolonisation would facilitate a more participatory and sovereign approach to social research.

> The recent decolonization and attainment of political sovereignty by the former colonies should be logically translated into a new form of participation by the societies in sociological thought and more generally in social science research. On the level of scholarship, such societies should be expected to pass from the state of an object (for foreign researchers) to that of the subject (more or less lucidly confronting its own contradictions and identifying its own questions) (12).

The presence of Stage 3 would suggest that, in some ways, this has indeed been realised for the study of public opinion. By identifying the branching off of Stage 3, I do not mean to say that this represents a moment when local curiosity finally emerges. Rather, it is from this point that local actors lay greater claim to local opinion than foreign actors. The implications of this shift for policy and the politics of the region remains to be seen. What I am able to show at a fairly high level of abstraction is a continuum of knowledge production punctured by transformational junctures, which have ultimately resulted in a reclamation of the epistemological positions, practices, ideals, and assumptions by which knowledge of Arab public opinion is being pursued, though still under the broad banner of global opinion polling.

The "stages of inquiry" model used here in Part 3 brings to mind Al-Hardan's question of the legacy of colonial epistemologies in Palestine: he asks, "How does the 'before' and 'during' of the research come to bear on the 'after'?" (2014, 67). In the case of Arab public opinion inquiry, there remains much to be understood and there is room to venture further into critical terrain and consider the more nuanced applications or problems for the findings. But upon completing a first attempt at identifying a field of knowledge and problematising its production, I end the Arab case in the same spirit as Al-Hardan, by pondering how the before and the during of inquiry come to bear on current and future states of knowledge concerning "Arab public opinion".

Chapter 8
Conclusion

It falls to others, then, less enclosed by the demands of science's own self-understanding, to disclose the "thickness" of scientific language, to scrutinize the conventions of practice, interpretation, and shared aspirations on which the truth claims of that language depend, to expose the many forks in the road to knowledge that these very conventions have worked to obscure, and, in that process, finally, to uncover alternatives for the future.

Evelyn Fox Keller (2001)

The motivating question that propelled this thesis was: How can we explain the rise of public opinion knowledge in the Arab region? In the end, it grew to be a more complex endeavour, as I have attempted to build a historical account of the pursuit of "Arab public opinion" as an epistemic object. This broadening of the research agenda derived from necessity; "Arab public opinion inquiry" does not appear in any existing (English-language) texts, and very little in the way of theoretical research has been produced on the subject. The idea that a field of public opinion inquiry on people inhabiting the MENA region has developed in unique stages through time was not an *a priori* assumption; rather it was the result of a detailed mapping exercise and a process of identifying relevant actors in the field. This process encouraged a comparison between the modes of inquiry that dictate the field of research today and past iterations of similar processes, assumptions, or procedures for creating and producing knowledge about global (and specifically Arab) publics.

This concluding chapter begins by synthesising and building on some of the key learnings of the thesis, followed by a discussion of the limitations and ways in which this research endeavour stands to be broadened. This thesis offered an unconventional starting point for the interrogation public opinion. In calling for conceptual clarity, the question of how dominant ideas or ways of thinking about public opinion was first raised. Distinguishing between public opinion as an

ideal (*public opinion₁*) and public opinion as an epistemic pursuit, practice, or object (*public opinion₂*) allows the analytical lens to narrow in on specific practices and artefacts embedded in the dominant modes of knowledge production. Taken together, these practices and artefacts render reality knowable in specific ways. Further, they are premised on fundamental epistemological assumptions that privilege the Western social scientific approach to understanding the world, such as the attainability of objective truth through scientific means. What is largely absent from conventional critiques on public opinion (in the Arab world and beyond) is an analytical engagement with pollsters—the class of actors who engender these assumptions through the practices that they enact—as a non-state actor operating in the international system. This thesis thus begins the task of re-framing discussions about power and knowledge as they relate to the production of public opinion knowledge.

More than simply filling gaps in the study of global public opinion in IR, I endeavor to contribute to the advancement of "global IR" as described by Tickner, especially by recognising and laying bare "the link between knowledge and power—that is, whose knowledge, and what kind of knowledge, is counted as legitimate (and 'scientific') by the mainstream of the discipline" (2016, 157). Breaking from the traditional canons of public opinion theory and building on some of the more critical and sociological perspectives, this thesis sits at the nexus of public opinion, epistemology, and the politics of knowledge. I encourage a sociological approach that considers the relevant epistemic actors, practices, and the epistemic legacies they carry with them. In this attempt to problematise the dominant modes of opinion knowledge production, I see my contribution as within the realm of IPS. Beyond IPS, adding the element of epistemology into conceptual development is an exercise that benefits IR and other fields.

The conceptual framework that I propose in the thesis is just that—a proposal. A "stages of inquiry" approach provided a means of systematising the empirical work. As a way of devising a historical and sociological account of Arab public opinion inquiry focused on the development of actors and practices in the field since the early twentieth century, this particular framework generates several conclusions. To start, it broadens the definition of what counts as public opinion

research. The earliest examples presented in this thesis (the King-Crane Commission and Daniel Lerner's piece, *The Passing of Traditional Society*) are not based on systematic polls and surveys but were devised using qualitative approaches (ethnographic and sociopsychological) combined with acts of counting and classifying bodies. By conventional standards, studies such as these would not be brought into the fold of discussions about public opinion research. Yet, as I have shown, to interrogate public opinion knowledge means to recognise it (at any point in history) as the product of a mode of inquiry with specific characteristics: a reductionist epistemology, an unchallenged emphasis on scientific principles and protocols, an adherence to the act of measurement, and a purposeful isolating of the variable of opinion (in statistical and in normative terms) from its vital context.

The conceptual framework, while helpful for the purposes of organising my findings and building theoretical discussions, is limiting in the sense that it is backward and not forward-looking. Recounting the story of Arab public opinion inquiry as a logical progression through space and time leads to the natural question: Where do we go from here? The framework I propose does not allow us to conceive of a Stage 4 or 5 or beyond. To counter this, I have tried to show how the modes of inquiry that emerged in each of the three stages I defined perpetuate in some form today. We find vestiges of Stage 1 in war-time institutions like the State Department and USIA, who continue to poll in the Arab region today. Stage 2 actors maintain their embedded and collaborative research trajectories; many are still around. Stage 3 and its processes of localisation are relatively recent developments and there is no indication that a major shift or reckoning will happen again in the near future, but there is also no guarantee that it will not. Instead of trying to adjust the framework to account for future possibilities, I am more interested in how we go about deepening the case study such that more is learned about localisation and the ways in which it either uplifts or compromises the study of public opinion.

The epistemological arguments in this thesis, while important, are only one piece of the puzzle, and solely focusing on epistemology does not help us to understand the everyday work of pollsters and practitioners in the field of public opinion research. There are many more aspects to their professional activities

beyond making methodological decisions and building knowledge claims. Those who lead teams and manage offices worry about employee morale and corporate culture. Those who work on a commission basis spend time building their client base and maintaining relationships and networks, and others who work on the basis of government or donor funding cycles are concerned with how to plan ahead. But to me, the more exciting findings are found in the localisation of inquiry in the sites that I explored.

Localisation provides an alternative to the push to standardise public opinion research globally, which was seen as early as 1946 when opinion research was enshrined in liberal international organisations, and as recently as the latest annual best practices reports from global professional associations like ESOMAR. Localisation reverses this external oversight and control by fostering community-oriented research. Palestine is one of the strongest cases for this idea of community-based knowledge; the ways in which polling is understood as a political act with roots in the struggle for self-determination is an entirely unique perspective. Evidence of localisation in Stage 3 allows us to draw a thread between the participatory and activist ethics of polling invoked in cases like Palestine, Lebanon, and at times in Jordan, and the emancipatory definition of public opinion discovered in Chapter 3. Thus, the findings in Stage 3 align with ideas about public opinion that prioritise the normative potential of polling rather than its scientificness. Put otherwise, where public opinion data is seen as a public good with the potential to elevate communities and enhance the well-being of societies, we find instances of localisation at work.

Another finding from the process of interview research was the existence of a strong epistemic network (an "old boys' club") of pollsters in the Arab region, relationally linked but geographically dispersed. While the interview process began with the assumption that actors working in the same fields and markets will be aware of one another and may even work closely together, this particular finding goes beyond simply identifying an epistemic community of actors animated by the same research thematic. These are the self-described pioneers of opinion research in the region. Each of them trained in the West, picking up the tools, methods, and assumptions of opinion research and helping to transplant them in the local setting. Each of them serve as directors or chief representatives

in their respective markets, and no two inhabit in the same office. The discovery of this unique epistemic network came at a late stage in the research process, and once the fieldwork was complete and the existence of this group had been verified by multiple actors within it, there was no further opportunity to pursue deeper questions about the group. For instance, how do their research practices and epistemological positions converge or diverge? Are there common perceptions or opinions about the field that I was not able to uncover, and what might these be? How does each view their role within this network and within the field of global opinion research more broadly? Here lies an opportunity for future research.

Given that the emancipatory view of public opinion (the third discourse outlined in Chapter 3) aligns, to some extent, with localisation in Stage 3, what can we make of the other findings? In some ways, we can similarly align the scientific view of public opinion (the first discourse) with Stage 1 and the malleable view of public opinion (the second discourse) with Stage 2. This is summarised below:

Public opinion conceived as scientifically objective → *Stage 1*

Public opinion conceived as a malleable construct → *Stage 2*

Public opinion conceived as emancipatory → *Stage 3*

Depicted visually in Figure 20 below, this historical and conceptual progression describes the emergence of different ideas about public opinion:
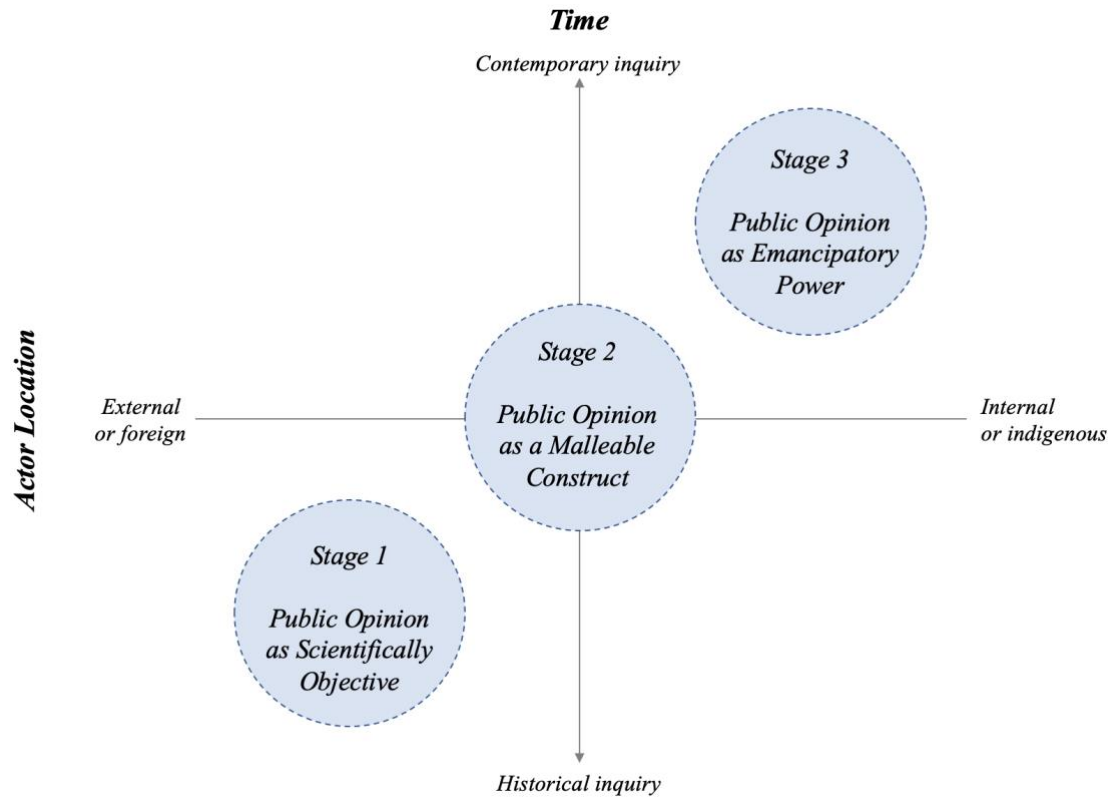
Figure 20: Combining stages of development in Arab public opinion inquiry and conceptualisations of public opinion.

Of course, this is to some extent artificial, and I am not claiming that such a neat correlation of ideas is altogether true. The different conceptualisations of public opinion can be found in all three stages, at different times by different pollsters. Still, the concept of public opinion as scientifically objective was most strongly suggested by those researchers who participated in the kind of program of epistemic intervention and control we find in Stage 1. Those early actors relied on this characterization of public opinion because their work was premised on the idea that materials and methods could be extended from one context to another without loss in epistemic quality. Contemporary actors who uphold the same view of public opinion work in large institutions with prominent reputations built on the principles of objectivity and accuracy. More than other actors, the pollsters who endorse the scientific view of public opinion are at least partly responsible for the hegemony of polling in social research. The second notion of public opinion as malleable and socially constructed was found in each stage, yet seems to find its most powerful and natural expression in Stage 2. This follows because actors in Stage 2 are at a crossroads. "Universally applicable" modes of

inquiry have been embedded in a new domain, and in the process these actors have faced obstacles to the widespread application of opinion polling. At the same time, their findings are publicised and implicated in political decision-making. One natural way to square this tension is to portray public opinion as malleable and only part of the picture. These actors recognize that they are not providing "the" public opinion as those in Stage 1 or Stage 3 might, but they do not think their efforts are wasted. Rather than simply recording the *vox populi*, they must first (re)construct it. Finally, while the notion of public opinion as an emancipatory power is also found in Stages 1 and 2, it is most powerfully expressed in Stage 3. In the earlier stages, the emancipation was being conceived on someone else's behalf. Such emancipatory aims are certainly possible and sometimes laudable, but they are most easily recognized as emancipatory when they are self-directed.

There are issues that this thesis does not contend with for the sake of maintaining clarity and focus but would surely benefit from being discussed in the context of my findings. First, I have refrained from analysing the extent to which data influences political processes in the Arab region, or the ways by which pollsters influence political elites. The decision to omit this, while it would have been extremely valuable, came down to a matter of access and the problem of self-selective bias. From my position and as a doctoral student without prior connections in the countries I visited for research, it would have been difficult for me to conduct interviews with political elites and people in government (and this would amount to a different project altogether). The problem of self-selective bias arises when we put the question to pollsters: Does public opinion data shape political decision-making and does your work have a bearing on political processes? This was a question that I asked every pollster I met through the process of in-depth interviews. Unsurprisingly, the answers that every pollster gave to the questions were yes, and yes. A technique in social science methods to overcome such bias is to ask for particular examples, and some pollsters could provide these (particularly in Palestine and Jordan). But naturally some could not as they were unaware of how exactly their work was being used in the public and elite spheres. Certainly, pollsters would expect and hope that their work shapes the political world, and if they thought for a moment that it did not, they might face a small existential crisis. Nevertheless, pollsters are not the only actors

who we should investigate in order to understand the effect of polling on governance, and there is room here to combine insights from pollsters as non-state actors with a deeper analysis of political processes in the MENA region.

Second, there are missing cases in my research. I conducted no interviews in North Africa, and only a handful in the Gulf region. Insights from both locales would have helped to confirm the findings of localisation and the legacies of foreign epistemic intervention. The research conducted in Doha provided some insights, though not enough to include in the thesis because they are hunches rather than findings. The main hunch is that public opinion in the Gulf is closer in kind to public relations, and that Gulf states are interested in understanding public opinion inasmuch as it performs a function similar to political arithmetic or shapes discourses of administration. Many polls are conducted on social welfare or community improvement issues, and when governments respond to these polls by making facelift changes, it appears as if they are responsive to the opinions that the polls poll. Political opinion polling in the Gulf does not appear to be growing at the same rate as elsewhere in the MENA. As these are hunches based on preliminary interviews, as opposed to clear findings, I refrain from making any claims about the Gulf case. Lastly, and relatedly, future research trajectories would do well to consider other instances of global public opinion research and the empirical construction of other regions of the world through the dominant practices of polling. Comparative cases could include other postcolonial contexts or non-democracies.

A third issue that I have not dealt with here is social media, a form of public communicative engagement that played a crucial role during the Arab uprisings. The reason for not engaging with social media is simply because pollsters have little involvement with it. Social media enacts different political processes altogether and is analysed using other means, methods, and technologies (we should look to the field of digital analytics here, as opposed to polling). Social media does not have historical legacies in the same way that polling does (though I would like to see this assumption challenged).

Fourth, I raised the possibility of a feminist critique of polling in Chapter 3. While I have not found such a critique in the literature and I am not well-positioned to describe what it would entail, Evelyn Fox Keller's meaningful work on gender in

science (2001) and other feminist critiques of epistemology and the hard sciences would be a helpful place to start. It might begin with the view that the language of science is non-neutral. For instance, consider the distinction between hard and soft science, or the terminology used to label experimental and control groups in social research. Terms like these can be "understood in a far larger sense than has been the custom—describing not only the control of variables, but also of the ways of seeing, thinking, acting, and speaking in which an investigator must be extensively trained before he or she can become a contributing member of a disciple" (Keller 2001, 137). A constructive accompaniment to the critical study of global opinion polling might therefore examine the gendered language of (social) scientific research and its role in creating hierarchies of knowledge.

Fifth, and finally, we (often) have on our hands a crisis of the polls. In fact, faith in the polls and specifically in their ability to accurately predict short term political outcomes rises and falls, and patterns in this flux of faith goes as far back as the advent of polls themselves. Most recently, the failure of the polls to predict Donald Trump's presidential win or the success of the Leave campaign in the United Kingdom's Brexit referendum sparked a heated debate over whether polls are still meaningful enough to pay attention to. These crises galvanise the polling industry, usually causing pollsters to go on the defensive and brush off criticism (for instance, pollsters have said that American polls during the 2016 presidential election predicting a win for Hillary Clinton were accurate if we focus on the results of the popular vote). While I did not explore public faith in polls in the Arab case, it would be interesting to understand whether similar patterns hold. While it is true that polling experiences its moments of crisis, I sense that we (global societies) are always keenly observing the polls, and that polling remains a "safe science" with no strong alternative. And many who are skeptical about today's or yesterday's polls typically harbour a general optimism about the future of polling, one that coheres with the assumption that scientific methods constantly improve.

Perhaps this is where lessons can be drawn from the pollsters that I engaged with. Methodologically-speaking, many of them are more than pollsters. Their approaches are eclectic—they employ both quantitative and qualitative techniques because the one bolsters the other and because the complex nature of

the field, where telephone and online methods are becoming increasingly ineffective tools, requires them to employ more innovative modes of research. One pollster, in a conversation about the state of knowledge today, lamented that this "fact-free time" means that truth itself has an uncertain future outlook, which may substantially re-shape future modes of inquiry. Experts feel increasingly ostracised, and scientific facts do not inspire public or political trust in the same way as they once did—"people and elites are becoming less sensitive to facts". I asked if there is any way through this. The pollster asked whether I had heard Khalil Gibran's story of the Wise King.

> *Once there ruled in the distant city of Wirani a king who was both mighty and wise. And he was feared for his might and loved for his wisdom.*
>
> *Now, in the heart of that city was a well, whose water was cool and crystalline, from which all the inhabitants drank, even the king and his courtiers; for there was no other well.*
>
> *One night when all were asleep, a witch entered the city, and poured seven drops of strange liquid into the well, and said, "From this hour he who drinks this water shall become mad".*
>
> *Next morning all the inhabitants, save the king and his lord chamberlain, drank from the well and became mad, even as the witch had foretold.*
>
> *And during that day the people in the narrow streets and in the market places did naught but whisper to one another, "The king is mad. Our king and his lord chamberlain have lost their reason. Surely we cannot be ruled by a mad king. We must dethrone him".*
>
> *That evening the king ordered a golden goblet to be filled from the well. And when it was brought to him he drank deeply, and gave it to his lord chamberlain to drink.*
>
> *And there was great rejoicing in that distant city of Wirani, because its king and its lord chamberlain had regained their reason.*

The pollster explained that this is what it feels like to be an expert in the current political climate, and the only way to overcome the "madness" it by producing more facts and more research—by engaging in a relentless pursuit of truth. The

chamberlain refuses to drink the reason-giving liquid, insisting that it is the public who should change its ways.

While this thesis helps to explain the particular phenomenon of the rise of Arab public opinion inquiry as situated within the broader context of the history and development of the field of global public opinion polling, I also hope that it will be a step towards an inclusive epistemology that draws together the strengths of IR, sociology, and cognate fields like the history of science and Science and Technology Studies. Such an epistemology must be the end goal of any comprehensive attempt to explain the pursuit of global knowledge and the dominant practices of inquiry. Importantly, in any such explanation, we must reserve a place for the active role of the researcher and the burdens of knowledge and history that they might bear.

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