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Disagreement Without Dissensus: The Contradictions of Hizbullah's Mediatized Populism

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How should claims to embody "the people" be reckoned with when such claims issue from multiethnic polities? What social and cultural dynamics obtain when political actors involved in transnational and regional conflict make populist claims in divided media landscapes? This article explores these questions by examining claims to be the guarantors of national sovereignty (and at times the voice of a truly universal patriotism) made by Hizbullah, the Lebanese political party and militia. This article explores the contradictions in Hizbullah's populist claims by analyzing two phenomena—the commodified forms present at the party-run "Museum of the Resistance" and its gift shop, and the televised announcement of the party's participation in the Syrian war alongside the Asad regime. Doing so demonstrates how the new right-wing populism can embody the intensified articulation of ethno-sectarian idiom within contemporary capitalist formations. I build on Rancière's theory of dissensus, arguing that groups such as Hizbullah both claim to speak on behalf of the "part who have no part" and also represent a form of capitalist intensification.

Keywords: populism, Rancière, Hizbullah, television, museums, global media, Arab media, Lebanon, Middle East

In May 2010, the Lebanese political party and armed group Hizbullah opened its "Museum of the Resistance," set on a decommissioned guerilla outpost on a mountaintop. The museum gives an official history of this specific site and the broader conflict that it was a part of. This tension—between telling the particular history of Hizbullah, and the claim to national or even universal significance that the museum aims at—is a key aspect of the site. The museum stages and attempts to reconcile a contradictory claim—that the story of the Resistance is one of a particular historical experience, but also that the party's extraordinary military successes are of and for the whole of the nation or even oppressed people everywhere. Claims to the nation are always difficult to make, and they play out in a way quite noticeable at a pavilion at the site called "the Outlook." Visitors are afforded unobstructed views of the countryside

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below, above which fly the Lebanese and Hizbullah flags side by side. The presence of both flags was typical during my first visits to the site,[2] before the party officially confirmed its military involvement in the Syrian civil war in May 2013. The Hizbullah flag appeared there only intermittently from that time until May 2016 as making overt claims to the nation became more contentious in the domestic context. Whether or not this reflects a purposive attempt to soften a potentially contentious bid to the national, these two flagpoles illustrate the different registers in which visitors less comfortable with the party's pro-Asad stance could be read.

Hizbullah's claims to represent "the people" embody a key contradiction of populism in multiethnic polities. Examining the party's communicative practices allows insight into the dynamics of right-wing populism when ethnic or ethno-sectarian idiom is articulated within contemporary neoliberal and militarist formations, a critical task that becomes essential when opposition to U.S. power in the region needs to be disentangled from the claims made on behalf of the figure of the people. I show how the contradictions underlying Hizbullah's populist claims are accentuated by its involvement in regional geopolitical struggle—marked by the widening of its local and transnational popularity following conflict with Israel, and narrowing significantly following the party's public announcement of its involvement in the war in Syria in support of the Asad regime. However, as the term applies to both the name of the phenomenon and the phenomenon itself, populist movements and rhetoric present a number of analytical challenges. Not the least of these is differentiating between common and problematic denigrations of the specter of the will of the people, and the genuinely regressive political tendencies that speaking in their name can embody (Mazzoleni, 2008; Panizza, 2005). I argue that Rancière's conception of disagreement and dissensus offers a useful way to grapple with claims to represent or defend the people. Hizbullah's tenuous claim to be the guardians of national sovereignty and popular dignity demonstrates the importance of a key difference between political disagreement, and Rancière's theorization of dissensus—a more radical rupture from an existing political order. I explore how this difference manifests in relation to two phenomena—the commemoration of the guerilla war with Israel in South Lebanon found at the Mleeta museum, and the televised address by party leader Hassan Nasrallah that officially confirmed the party's military involvement in Syria. The contradictions that mark these two cultural forms also demonstrate the importance of grasping populism as something other than just an inherently abnormal political phenomenon reducible to rhetorical excess. Rather, the figure of the people is one pole around which democratic appeals may be staged. In what follows, I first clarify my reading of Rancière and then provide some context for my two objects of analysis.

Disagreement and Dissensus

Rancière's political thought opens up a fruitful way of parsing Hizbullah and mediatized populism because of how it specifies the political content of a truly egalitarian break with a dominant order. Rather than an aggrieved community demanding its fair share, Rancière (1999) contended that a more fundamental rupture with a political order begins when people begin to enact radical modes of equality within conditions of inequality:

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[2] I first visited the site in early June of 2010, and visited on at least a yearly basis until the Fall of 2014, and multiple times a year until the time of writing in April of 2017.

> The political begins precisely when one stops balancing profits and losses and worries instead about distributing common lots and evening out communal shares and entitlements to these shares, the axiai entitling one to community. For the political community to be more than a contract between those exchanging goods and services, the reigning equality needs to be radically different from that according to which merchandise is exchanged and wrongs redressed. (p. 5)

In this understanding, the moment of the political is the reintroduction of disagreement with the terms of the debate, of who might make claims to speak, and contesting the terms under which communities are constituted. Rancière specified that politics should be understood as the moment the part who have no part in a dominant order assert their claim against a political consensus, which always already produces their voices as unintelligible. Continuing this line of thought, Rancière (1999) argued:

> consensus, before becoming the reasonable virtue of individuals and groups who agree to discuss their problems and build up their interests, is a determined regime of the perceptible, a particular mode of visibility of *right* as *arkhê* of the community. Before problems can be settled by well-behaved social partners, the rule of conduct of the dispute has to be settled, as a specific structure of community. The identity of the community with itself must be posited, along with the rule of right as identical to the elimination of wrong. (pp. 107–108)

Political consensus is made up of an aesthetic regime—a configuration (or distribution) of what is sensible and not, even what is perceptible or not. Writing in reference to recent debates around immigration and race in France, Rancière (2013) argued not for a substantive definition of the people, but rather that "what exists are diverse and even antagonistic images of the people, figures constructed by privileging certain modes of assembly, certain distinctive features, certain capacities or incapacities" (para. 3). In this line of reasoning, politics is not primarily about debates within a political order (or disorder if one likes)—or about claims to rights by those who have been produced by a political order as not having them, or presidential primaries and parliamentary run-offs, however else all these may be important. I argue that it is important to not equate disagreement—an antagonistic political/aesthetic mode—with the more specific content implied by an expression of *dissensus*. The essence of politics (as opposed to the policing of the political) is dissensus. In his essay "Ten Theses on Politics," Rancière (2010) elaborated:

> Dissensus is not a confrontation between interests or opinions. It is the demonstration (manifestation) of a gap in the sensible itself. Political demonstration makes visible that which had no reason to be seen; it places one world in another. . . . A political demonstration is therefore always of the moment and its subjects are always precarious. A political difference is always on the shore of its own disappearance: the people are always close to sinking into the sea of the population or of the race; the proletariat is always on the verge of being confused with workers defending their interests; the space of a people's public demonstration is always prone to being confused with the merchant's *agora* and so on. (pp. 38–39)

This conception of dissensus does not equate the part who have no part with a specific group or identity per se, but refers instead to a nascent quality of a people's coming into being, understood to be a continuous process. Following Rancière, then, dissensus is something beyond disagreement—which is often understood as a more general clash over the terms of political contention, or what the terms of debate are. Dissensus involves a more fundamental rejection of hierarchy and inequality, in which the part who have no part already speak and act as though their speech is sensible. Dissensus often appears to consensus as disordered movement in public space, or impossible or unreasonable demands made inappropriately, when in truth it is better to understand as the enactment of a social ontology of equality against foundational and epistemic violence of various forms.[3] Unlike a Habermasian conception of communicative action whereby political exchange is presumed to require a minimum of agreement, Rancière asserted that politics is better understood as a disruption of common *sense*—a contestation of who might speak and what there is to speak about (Rancière & Panagia, 2000). A politics of equality does not mean a political model that seeks recognition (Honneth & Rancière, 2016), or inclusion, or a model that makes demands of an existing order (politics as a settling of accounts), but a radical rejection of all moves that would require accepting foundational violence and inequality as the terms for inclusion.[4] Dissensus, then, should be understood to be a specific kind of action or expression that affirms a fundamental equality as it emerges from within unequal conditions, in the modality of disagreement.

Dissensus can take on a populist tenor, but not all rhetorical and mediated claims to represent "the people" are in favor of the kind of equality that the term implies. On this point, Laclau's (2007) analysis of populist reason is productive in two primary ways. First, Laclau directs definitions or taxonomies of populism away from the social basis of a political movement (e.g., rural discontent with urbanization and industrialization) to a form of political reason whose rhetorical form is to summon and speak in the name of the people. Second, Laclau showed how conceiving of populism as an abnormal political phenomenon, or a merely rhetorical one, tends to miss how those features denigrated in populist discourse also inhere in the formation of all political spaces (Laclau, 2007). When separated from the fear of the crowd or the masses, the nature of populist rhetoric can be more precisely grasped.

The difference between disagreement and dissensus is quite productively illustrated by the difference between Hizbullah's involvement in support of the Asad regime being seen as "resistance," or as an indication of the party's fundamental compatibility with a reigning global order, and its geopolitical cleavages and cultural forms. It is also the difference between anticolonial authoritarianism—the claim to safeguard the sovereignty of the people in a 21st-century idiom—and the more radical conception of democracy that Rancière posited. Indeed, such conceptions are readily found in the thought of radical, decolonial, and indigenous thinkers and movements the world over. To take one example, one can see a resonance between the analysis of Lebanese Marxist Mahdi Amel, who some time ago arrived at the insight that equating class with a particular sect in Lebanon's system of sectarian political representation would ultimately result in obscuring the class basis of politics within Lebanese sects, and Rancière's distinction that the part who have no part should not be equated with a pregiven community.[5]

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[3] Mirzoeff (2011) historicized this as a decolonial "right to look."

[4] Equality is a concept that Rancière returns to time and again in his writing. For a lengthier elaboration on the different sources of inequality in the foundation of a political order, see his essay "The Community of Equals," reproduced in *On the Shores of Politics* (2007).

The argument that the defense of national sovereignty is the political relation that must come first and that justifies all others—a claim commonly made in defense of Hizbullah and the Asad regime—begins to ring particularly hollow when thinking in terms of dissensus. The historical erasures that such a perspective demands, and the politics of possibility that it forecloses, have been most cogently analyzed by Yassin Al Haj Saleh (Haugbolle, 2015; Massouh, 2015). It is in this sense that Hizbullah, as the most powerful military actor in the Lebanese political system, represents a narrow form of political disagreement that recreates consensus. Hizbullah demonstrates a key dynamic in mediatized populism today—the reformulation of consensus politics within and through the fracture of a multipolar geopolitical order, operating within and through capitalist formations. A form of populist disagreement appears without dissensus. Put differently, such formations attempt to forestall a politics of equality by making over ethno-nationalist, racial, or ethno-religious modes of belonging imagined to be more primordial than the political economic order that they are a part of.

Contexts

The Hizbullah of the era of the war in Syria is not the same party that emerged in the midst of the Lebanese civil war, or the same party of the decade after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. This is true of the party's political platform and rhetoric, military capabilities, and domestic programs. There are three contextual factors that are commonly understood to have conditioned the emergence of Hizbullah—existing Shia political movements within Lebanon aimed at redressing sectarian disenfranchisement prior to the civil war, the Iranian Revolution and subsequent foreign policy of exporting revolution and alliance with Syria, and the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon (Cammett, 2014; Daher, 2016; Norton, 2007).[6] The Taif Agreement, which brought a formal close to the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, granted the party official recognition as a resistance to the continued Israeli occupation and, as such, it was the only militia allowed to remain armed. The decade and a half that followed the end of the civil war saw broad transformations to the party's social and political platforms, and public rhetoric. As Alagha (2011a, 2011b) has shown, the party gradually adapted to the role of an active participant in parliamentary politics. This included moderating one of the bolder goals stated in the Open Letter of 1985 (a founding document and public announcement of the formation of the Resistance) of fostering and founding an Islamic republic in Lebanon. With the rearticulation of the exclusions of the sectarian system at the end of the civil war with the Taif Accords, Hizbullah grew to also become a provider of social services, education, and health care, even organizing infrastructural work and reconstruction efforts. The military wing of the party has long been the most well-armed, trained, and effective in the country, including the Lebanese army. Thus the neoliberal state and the institutional form of the party are best understood to be mutually constitutive.

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[5] As Daher (2016) argued, Amel (1986) differed from other Marxist thinkers of his generation in Lebanon on this point, in that he refused to equate class with a particular sect, as advancing such a politics would only reinforce how domination exists through confessional representation.

[6] As Abisaab and Abisaab (2014) showed, Hizbullah's rise to power was also part of a conservative wave, which in Lebanon was often directly opposed to Leftist and Marxist currents within the Lebanese Shia community.

In another sense, Hizbullah's status as a para-state or "state within a state" is paralleled in the party's media organizations, even if it is not unique in this regard in the Lebanese context. As Chakravartty and Roy (this Special Section) argue, attending to the political economic and media historical specificities informing mediatization allow a more precise understanding of the context of populism. At the end of the civil war, radio and terrestrial television broadcasting was defined by greater pluralities than the spectrum could accommodate, as every militia and political group with the desire to do so put out radio and even TV broadcasts. The reallocation of domestic broadcast licenses in the mid-1990s reflected both a formal sectarian political balance—no one sect was granted more licenses than any other—and the political clout of specific business interests (Dajani, 1992; Kraidy, 1998, 1999). By the end of the 2010s, Hizbullah operated a significant and sizable media organization, expanding from terrestrial broadcast to the launching of its Al Manar satellite channel in 1997 alongside newspapers, publishing houses, production companies, and other cultural organizations (Harb, 2009; Lamloum, 2009a).[7] Hizbullah's media thus track with how the contours of local sectarian politics are connected to regional geopolitics, defined by a tenuous and self-reflexive position in regional and global media landscapes (Harb, 2011, 2016; Lamloum, 2009a). Carrying the satellite channel has been deemed illegal in the United States, where doing so is considered providing material support to a terrorist organization, and in most of Europe, where it has run afoul of rules regulating anti-Semitic speech (Lamloum, 2009b). As much as it is oriented toward domestic and local concerns and a fragmented national TV audience, Al Manar's immediate context is also that of the plural and contested field of Arab television. The channel has even struggled to secure satellite bandwidth in the Arab world and was booted off ArabSat in April 2016 by the Gulf monarchies for its support for the Asad regime,[8] and switched to a Russian satellite with a regional footprint.

After the Israeli withdrawal in May 2000, Hizbullah enjoyed a position of newfound respect in Lebanon and in the region, even among people who might otherwise disagree with the party's ideology and politics. Yet it would also wind up on the other side of regional United States–Iran rivalries five years later. The public assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri led to new domestic political polarizations marked by massive demonstrations for and against the continued involvement of Syria in Lebanese politics, culminating in the withdrawal of Syrian forces a few weeks later. This new polarization informed much of the political period that followed, with Hizbullah and its allies dubbed the March 8 alliance—the date of a major political demonstration thanking the Syrian regime for its presence. The March 14 alliance, headed by the Sunni Future Movement, demanded its immediate withdrawal at a similar demonstration.

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[7] The institutional relationship between the party's leadership and these media organizations is not one of simple dictation, although its staff is composed of party members. The most complete account of Hizbullah's political communication is Khatib, Matar, and Alshaer (2014), which includes chapters devoted to the periods leading up to and after the Israeli withdrawal.

[8] Annahar's English service reported that Nilesat soon followed suit. See http://en.annahar.com/article/348102-hezbollahs-al-manar-goes-off-air-in-lebair-in-lebanon-after-arab-satellite-drops.

Popular accounts of Lebanese and regional politics in the period between 2005 and 2016 frequently tell a story of two warring camps fundamentally opposed to each other—Sunni versus Shia, and United States/Saudi Arabia versus Iran/Syria. At times, these supposed binaries are also thought to discursively map onto a colonial/anticolonial binary. Yet this is a highly misleading perspective, because Hizbullah is inherently a product of and compatible with the neoliberal reordering of the Lebanese state. Before Hariri's assassination, the party supported the introduction of neoliberal debt restructuring programs, economic policies that depressed wage growth, and, more generally speaking, bolstered its claim to a political base through providing social services that the state then would not. Leaving an anti-American and anti-Israeli platform aside, the postwar political consensus may have frayed, but was always premised on the active participation of Hizbullah within the political economy of globalization and neoliberal reform (Daher, 2016). Public opinion surrounding the 2006 war is illustrative of this cleavage. Even though the party laid claim to the right to sovereign decision-making through its ability to defend "the people" in the war with Israel in 2006, many of the party's opponents later decried its independent military action on the country's Southern border and blamed it for leading the country into the conflict in the first place. The party also found admiration and support in domestic and global circles as a result of its battlefield success and defiant rhetoric. Yet this kind of official and popular support of or opposition to the party does not depart from the broader political consensus of the postwar period. The official commemoration of such events is best understood within intersecting and unequal fields of transnational power relations (Deeb, 2008), but can also problematically link recently lived historical experiences to consensus.

Exiting Through the Gift Shop at the "Museum of the Resistance"

Approximately four years after the 2006 War, a decade after the Israeli withdrawal, and two after the formal close of the Lebanese civil war, Hizbullah opened the "Museum of the Resistance" at Mleeta. The Mleeta museum demonstrates how Hizbullah is best understood not as an expression of dissensus in Rancière's sense of the term—not an alternative or other *to*, but a different geopolitical camp *within* the contemporary capitalist order and consumer practice. The museum manifests a key contradiction in Hizbullah's mediatized populism, which materializes in the aesthetic forms that define the site, and the site's construction of the nation. The museum's task is twofold—to give institutional form to the party's (and therefore the people's) history of guerilla resistance to Israeli occupation, while at the same time making the claim that this specific history is one of national or even universal significance—a struggle that belongs to and is for all of the people, even if only some of the people took part in it. In addition to the optics of raising the Lebanese and party flags discussed earlier, two aspects of the museum embody this contradiction—the aesthetics of guerilla concealment that the site invites visitors to feel with, and the memorabilia at the museum gift shop.

The natural setting of the museum is quite striking—set on a mountaintop in rugged terrain with sweeping views and ample greenery, and well-maintained grounds. The location of the museum on the actual site of a now decommissioned underground bunker is key to the museum's pedagogical goal of taking visitors into the experience of armed struggle, giving institutional form to disparate memories of a historical period rendered both distinctly past and not yet over. The museum provides visitors with an experience of a visual modality that I term *concealment*—a condition of hiddenness that aims to keep people and sometimes media infrastructure itself unseen. Concealment is a live visual relation that typically combines a heterogeneous array of techniques—camouflage, institutional secrecy, signal encryption—to maintain a noncommunicative or selectively communicative state. Many exhibits at the museum at Mleeta tell stories of fighters who were able to remain hidden from the aerial view under the ample tree cover at the site. Guides recount how attempts to burn down the local vegetation were thwarted by a seemingly miraculous complementarity between the dampness of the natural surroundings and the rootedness of fighters in the soil itself. The bunker—dug into solid rock mostly with hand tools and tremendous physical effort—extends the visitor experience into an underground architecture of concealment. As one of the main attractions of the museum, "the Bunker" is accessed via a portion of the museum titled "the Path," which extends under the tree canopy some ways down the mountain and back again. "The Path" invites visitors to learn of the experiences of the fighters who built and eventually were stationed at this site through empathic identification. The physical difficulty of the descent and ascent is construed to be equally important to understanding what it was to fight as the experience of doing so under a canopy of trees. The guides and signage inform visitors that the tree cover made it so fighters could more easily remain hidden from detection.

The bid to encourage visitors to identify with the embodied experience of fighters is augmented by a number of scenes of guerilla activity staged with dummies. Many of the dummies at Mleeta are posed in ways that feel eerily lifelike, adopting postures that very closely resemble human body language. Some of the scenes staged are of everyday activities, such as a fighter standing guard or sitting down to take a break, as well as more heroic scenes of commandos stalking almost undetected through the foliage. This martial reenactment inscribes the dummies in a hyper-masculine performance. Such commemoration of martial and masculine prowess is noticeably different from the way that militia fighters from the civil war are often figured (Haugbolle, 2012), in that the fighter's involvement in conflict is cast as a commitment to the defense of home and country in recognition and fulfillment of a heroic calling. Guides frequently share stories about the exploits of the fighters, constituting a semiofficial lore that has gradually solidified over the years in the form of placards placed around the site. The embodied experience of concealment in replica and in situ encourages an oppositional relation to an aerial gaze, tied to an imagined rootedness in locality.

I have been given slightly different versions of the guided tour script depending on how the guides have placed me or how they have placed the people I am with. When visiting alone, I have usually been read as a diasporic Lebanese (occasionally more specifically as a Sunni Beiruti) sympathetic to the cause, meaning that our conversations were in Arabic with varying levels of religious references left in. The one time I visited with someone who identified himself as a party member, we received more details about two features of the site otherwise given briefer treatment—the spots marked as the places where fighters had died, and the weapons garden. The guides, all men, have been invariably welcoming, friendly, and almost always on-script. They alternate between giving formal descriptions of the site and the history that its features represent, and sharing informal and personal anecdotes. Typically when I have visited with people who have been read as Westerners, the group would be treated like outsiders presumed to have an understanding of the party's history filtered through a discourse about terrorism in need of correction. Conversations would be in English. Anticipating common liberal political critiques, many of the stories would incorporate or end with statements like "See, we aren't terrorists, we just fought for our land and want to live free and with dignity," or "We aren't fanatics," or "Our problem is with the Israeli government, not Jews." Concerns like this would commonly emerge later in the tour after a rapport between guide and guided had developed. Guides were invariably patient when discussing matters of such a potentially charged nature, even happy to directly address such concerns. Most of my interactions with personnel at the site were with guides, and almost all interactions remained within these parameters.

The museum gift shop is located so that visitors pass it on their way in and as they exit. It caters to a broad range of tastes in memorabilia spanning snowglobes and keychains to the collected speeches of the party's leader Hasan Nasrallah on DVD—a consumerist balm capable of accommodating a variety of potentially conflicting subject positions in relation to the official ideology presented elsewhere. The appeal to the people—bounded by the nation or by the universal story of liberation that the museum aspires to—dissolves into retail therapy for some, and ironic purchases for others. The gift shop is one place where one can most clearly see the unity of categories that are often presumed to irreconcilable and clashing—war and tourism, religion (or just Islam) and capitalism, conflict and kitsch.[9]

Snowglobes of scenes of battle and Nasrallah keyrings are at the heart of the meaning of an institution such as Mleeta, and the logical conclusion of the political logic that Hizbullah embodies. The official title of the museum is the "Mleeta Tourist Landmark," and it was established as part of a broader set of cultural and economic priorities geared toward creating new forms of tourism outside of Beirut's immediate vicinity. There are plans to open a number of other tourist sites in the area, including a re-creation of the infamous prison at Khiam. Dummies were also an important part of the exhibit established at Khiam, which, until its destruction by Israeli air power in the 2006 war, also engaged a recent experience of the Israeli occupation (Deeb, 2008). The Khiam prison was widely known for horrific torture it housed when it was in the hands of the South Lebanon Army (a proxy for the Israeli Defense Forces) during the occupation. There is even a nearby water park, and there are rumors that a hotel and shopping complex are to be constructed nearby. Plans for the creation of a "resistance tourism" geography in the South, if not what Deeb and Harb (2009) described as an "Islamic milieu," seem well under way. This trend is one of the ways that Hizbullah can be thought to embody what Atia (2012) called pious neoliberalism, a term that theorizes the intersection of faith-based organizations that aim at development projects as evidence of the ways that "actually existing neoliberalism" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002) demonstrates compatibility between religiosity and market ideology. The complex relationship between political movements, the state, and ideological formations belies the idea that there is a single coherent neoliberal project. Having said this, Hizbullah should be distinguished from the Cairo-based organizations that Atia analyzed, in that the party emerges out of a history of Shia disenfranchisement and activism with a different pattern of urban-rural migration, and alongside a different way that neoliberal policies have worked in relation to the Lebanese state (Marei, 2016). The project of resistance tourism as found at the museum should also be understood as part of a longer and problematic history in which Hizbullah has sought to appropriate populist and Arab nationalist causes, as well as the Palestinian cause, often in the name of solidarity (Khalili, 2007).

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[9] Refuting the idea that Islam and capitalism are somehow inherently incompatible is not a novel argument. Maxime Rodinson's classic study *Islam and Capitalism* (1974) and Tim Mitchell's argument about "McJihad" (2002) are two illustrative examples.

There are different sorts of investments and attachments that motivate visiting the museum and that modulate how it is received, but like other forms of war tourism, party supporters, members, and all others are positioned alike as tourists.[10] At the equivalent of just a few dollars, the price of entry confirms that profit from the sale of tickets is not the primary motive. Much like the free and multilingual tour guides, the museum is operated for a broad public. The contradictions of mediatized populism embodied by the museum are those of the rhetorical appeal that is defined by openness to those beyond the politically loyal. It takes the experiences of those who have lived the history of the South of the country and aims to marshal them into order. It should be no surprise that the film reel that tells the official history of the museum gives the task of spiritual guide/tour guide to Hassan Nasrallah—appearing on screen and narrating the museum as he does in the media landscape at large.

Nasrallah on the Livefeed

Since the 2006 war, Nasrallah has given public addresses in person on only the rarest and most unpredictable of occasions. Such security concerns are not unfounded, but they do effect a curious physical disappearance of the speaker in the same moment that his image proliferated transnationally. As Matar (2008) argued, Nasrallah and his broadcasted speeches became central components of party communication and political events unto themselves as Al Manar sought to establish a place in local, regional, and global media landscapes. Nasrallah's speeches have often received popular commentary commending them as feats of linguistic mastery, deftly switching from the heights of classical Arabic, formal media Arabic, and colloquial Lebanese dialect. This shifting of linguistic gears also affects a kind of code-switching—dropping down into colloquial dialectic to "tell it like it is" or address "hard truths." The full complexity of this linguistic dimension of Nasrallah speeches, especially the engagement with Islamic thought and legal argument, is deserving of separate treatment. For the purposes of the present analysis, it is worth noting how this linguistic performance enacts a relationship between Nasrallah and the audience—at times as official speaker of the party responding to official matters, and at other times embodying the political affect of the voice of a people figured in idealized terms by the spoken performance. If the average Nasrallah speech is a media event unto itself, then the viewing (and listening) public that it enacts is marked by a sense of affirmation in the face of a broader media landscape that is to be questioned or even resisted.

Contrary to common characterizations of populism as being inherently prone to anti-intellectualism and ant-ielitism, a key part of Nasrallah's public persona is the performance of intellectual capital and linguistic dexterity required of Islamic scholars whose facility with classical Arabic is a demonstration of learned authority. The emotional script may be similar to other right-wing populist rhetoric, but Nasrallah does not affect the brand of sweeping anti-intellectualism that is often thought to inherently accompany it. Many of his speeches seek legitimacy by presenting a line of reasoning that justifies a decision taken or policy enacted, and directly asking viewers or listeners to judge for themselves the soundness of the reasoning presented.

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[10] As Debbie Lisle (2016) showed, war and tourism are not inherently opposed activities.

These rather general features are exemplified in the speech in which Nasrallah officially confirmed the party's involvement in Syria—a speech that also usefully foreshadows the contradictions of Hizbullah's mediatized populism in this period. Most of the features discussed here are readily found in other speeches of the period that followed. The speech in question was given on May 25, 2013, which had been commemorated as Liberation Day on party and national calendars.[11] The speech had to broach the divisive topic and explain Hizbullah's military involvement in defense of the Asad regime, which it argued was justified by a series of interlocking points: that the Syrian regime was under attack by terrorist organizations funded by numerous enemy states and that the regime was an essential ally, so the party's involvement was crucial to its continued ability to defend the sovereignty of all Lebanese against Israeli aggression and global enemies. Unlike the Mleeta museum's fluid conflation of a particular historical experience with party ideology, the announcement speech made the credibility of the claim to be able to speak for the people through the party's legitimacy as guarantor of national sovereignty in the face of Israeli aggression, and an existential threat that would threaten Lebanese of all backgrounds should the Syrian regime fall to "takfiri groups" (the name used by the party for a range of radical armed antiregime groups in Syria). The difference from dissensus (or even the more generic term *resistance*) lies not simply in the reduction of all political relations to that of the sovereign decision taken by Nasrallah, or the party's alliance with the Asad regime; it is also in the nature of the social formation that the event of the speech participates in and enacts.

The speech opens with a commemoration of Liberation Day and consists of an excursus on the relationship of the historic moment as it relates to Arab history, told as the foil of the Palestinian Nakba in 1948 and the Arab defeat in 1967. The structure of the speech centers on an enumeration of two existential threats to the continued ability of the party to defend Lebanese sovereignty—Israel to the South, and the emerging threat of takfiri groups in Syria. Much of the speech walks commonly trod ideological terrain that links the party to the Palestinian cause, the fate of Arab nationalism, and the continued security of "the Lebanese people." The speech also links the emergence of the party as an armed movement and its continued armed status after the civil war to the threat posed by Israel that the Lebanese state has never been able to recognize or contend with. Nasrallah actually goes into some analytical detail as to the woefully inadequate capacities of the Lebanese state to respond to these threats, caused by a political system defined by rampant corruption and infighting that abandons the common good (an outcome that the party is imagined to not be a part of). For example, this is presented in the first part of the speech in a comparative assessment of Israeli civil defense and emergency preparedness, found to be particularly well developed when compared with an inadequate or even nonexistent equivalent in Lebanon. The speech carefully differentiates this assessment of the condition of the state from being the fault of any one group, or the army, whose lack of capability is attributed not to a lack of fighting spirit but to insufficient armaments. He says:

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[11] Like most speeches, it was originally broadcast simultaneously on Al Manar and Al Nour radio. It can be viewed in its entirety with English subtitles on YouTube currently at (Farhi, 2013). It is often taken down and then re-uploaded, typically locatable by searching for "Nasrallah May 25 2013."

> The real fear when it comes to the Lebanese army is the fact that it is a national army. If this army were given the capabilities this army would fight just like the Resistance. Why? The men of the army are just like the men of the Resistance! They are the sons of the people—the youth and the men of this people! They are the men of this national culture, the Lebanese people. (Farhi, 2013, 18:29)[12]

Unlike the politically misguided and the underprepared Lebanese state, the people of the Resistance are commended for their clear-eyed understanding of the need for arms and for producing a distinctly militarist masculinity. He goes on to proudly proclaim that those domestic critics who would seek to disarm Hizbullah are unable, as the arms were used in defense against Israel, and "the People of the Resistance protect the weapons of the Resistance." (Farhi, 2013, 27:18) Soon after this conflation, Nasrallah reiterates the military wing of the party's willingness to join the Lebanese army, were it not for the weaknesses and factionalism of the Lebanese state. The inability of the state to recognize existential threats posed to the people/national sovereignty therefore justifies the militia's continued independence from state institutions.

It is this same inability to recognize existential threats to the people that serves as the hinge for the second part of the speech, dedicated to assessing the threat posed by the potential collapse of the Syrian regime and justifying the party's active military involvement on its behalf. While Hizbullah had long acknowledged fighting on the Lebanese-Syrian border against "terrorist/takfiri groups," and news media had long speculated that the party had boots on the ground elsewhere in Syria, this was the first official confirmation of such activity. This justification responds implicitly to the public criticism that Hizbullah had faced by arguing that the threat was one imminent to all:

> These armed groups taking control of . . . Syrian provinces, especially those close to Lebanon we consider this a big threat to Lebanon. We consider it more so to all Lebanese, not just to Hizbullah, not a danger to only the Shia. (Farhi, 2013, 47:19)

He then drops into Lebanese dialect and says (untranslated in the subtitles), "I'm gonna talk without any, how do you say . . . you kno." (Farhi, 2013, 47:36). As he says this, he smiles apologetically, and gestures as though washing his hands. He then continues in media Arabic, saying, "It is a danger to Lebanon and the Lebanese, to the state, to the Resistance and to the coexistence in Lebanon" (Farhi, 2013, 47:50).This claim is followed by a description of the kinds of political killing organized by a group then going by the name of the Islamic State in Iraq, noting that Sunni leaders found to be apostates were targeted alongside Christians and other groups.

Hizbullah's support for the Syrian regime is thus construed as a strategic move that upholds the condition of possibility for liberal plurality among Lebanese. In this logic, the Asad regime and consensual politics become the condition of possibility for the people to exist. This support for the Asad regime is justified as upholding the possibility for there to be a people at all, claiming that those in Syria who legitimately want reform should join a national dialog that the regime is said to desire, but also that supporting the regime is the only way to oppose terrorist groups who are said to primarily target the people as such. The policing and military activities of the second decade of the 21st century thus appear to be frequently directed at managing the people and population, even as such threats are described as coming from a geopolitical and cultural other. Political commitment to and support of the party and its speaker are thus cast in populist terms, and the measure of political or even moral belonging.

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[12] I have retained the translation in the subtitles to ensure consistency with the most commonly viewed YouTube clip.

Nasrallah speeches are not all the same, but most are marked by two kinds of doubling of the audience. The first doubling is found in the reaction shots of the live audience to the speaker on split-screen with that of the audience presumably watching at home—a diagram of the staging of the people and the embodiment of their voice in a televisual circuitry. The second doubling of the audience is dialogical—Nasrallah's speeches are addressed to an audience understood to be sympathetic supporters, but also to a broader audience assumed to potentially include Lebanese, other Arabs, non-Muslims, and viewers from across the globe—or even sometimes Israelis in particular. Nasrallah's speeches work to negotiate the friction between the visual and dialogical, also one of the key functions of iconic "leaders of the people," particularly in the polarized and fractious political and media landscapes.[13] Many of these speeches aim for a performance of rhetorical mastery for sympathetic audience members by creating a clever play at this dialogical dimension. Commentary threatening the enemies of the party for all to hear invokes an affective space typically filled with on-screen audience response, such as thunderous applause, appreciative cheering, or performances of disciplined support for the person of Nasrallah.[14] At other points, such public address aims at less flashy rhetorical flourishes, operating in a quieter mode of affirming "the truth" of a situation that all common people can see. Speaking the truth (of, to, or for the people) against a lying media establishment is a hallmark of many Nasrallah speeches, and also many forms of reporting from Syria after 2011, which, as Al-Ghazzi (2014) showed, troubles many common definitions of citizen journalism.

The ripple effects of the Syrian civil war and Hizbullah's involvement in this period manifested in a ratcheting up of the divisiveness of Lebanese politics, resulting in paralysis in the Lebanese parliament between the March 8 and March 14 blocs. As the number of dead, wounded, and displaced increased, it became easy to imagine this geometry of sectarian division to be age-old as opposed to the function of the contemporary consensus. Yet to mistake this division within opposing geopolitical proxies as one of actual political alternatives or a coming equality is a fatal error. This point can be clarified by reference to Rancière's terminology—in which political disagreement is not the same thing as dissensus, that more fundamental break with an existing political and aesthetic order.

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[13] Lefort (2015) examined similar dynamics present in the formation of the image of former general Michel Aoun, leader of the Christian Free Patriotic Movement, and allied to Hizbullah since his return from exile in France in 2005.

[14] On this count, the speech analyzed here is a relatively muted affair. A strong example of this kind of audience/speaker interaction can be found in the "balance of forces" speech of 16 February 2010, often covered in the newspress as the speech announcing "if you bomb Beirut Airport, we'll bomb Ben Gurion Airport."

Conclusions

I have endeavored to explore here the contradictions of contemporary mediatized populism through the lens of Rancière's conception of the politics of disagreement and dissensus, through a selection of Hizbullah's appeals to and claims to act and speak in defense of "the people." The cultural form that the appeal to "the people" takes is of primary importance here—far from secondary to the rhetorical mode, televisuality is key to the performance of speaking to and for that people. Indeed, the media landscape into which Nasrallah's speech intervenes is itself of a piece with the redistribution of domestic broadcasting licenses in Lebanon's postwar settlement, and where that channel can legally be rebroadcast in regional and global terms. The rhetorical doubling—speaking to sympathetic and unsympathetic audiences at the same time—may be one of the formal hallmarks of contemporary populism. Television and teleconferencing meld in such events—staging the leader and the people on screen for the people watching at home (or those listening, often in cars). The museum's embodied pedagogy of resistance, while embracing a tourist "people's history," reduces resistance to the Resistance. These appeals to the figure of the people are therefore best understood not as an excessive reaction to a global order (one common diagnosis of populism), but as an indication of Hizbullah's attempts to secure a place within a regional order.

Both of the phenomena examined here demonstrate the importance of attending to the narrowed horizons on offer in the contemporary moment, as conception of the people can reduce the future to one long on disagreement but short on dissensus. Consider two common responses to the fact of inequality. The first demands that all differences resolve into what is already held in common. A second response lays claim to a cultural central or universal without pretending to extend equality to those who are its constitutive outside. The first abandons political acknowledgment of inequality, whereas the second openly embraces it as a source of renewal. It remains as imperative as ever to find ways to articulate versions of the people that open onto an axiomatic equality rather than a settling of accounts that can never be balanced—an ends to which any means has been made to appear acceptable.

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