

A Forensic Investigation of the Objective Reassembly of the Public by Mahsa Majidian

This series of images is of event-spaces from the recent conflicts in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Let us call them "situations." The practice of resistance and conflict exercised in these situations registers them as territories within broader systems, as heterotopias or islands. I would like to call them "The Other Cities."

The Other City works on three levels. The first is situated within an everyday city and includes objects of everyday life. It motivates both ephemeral and spectacular inversions of normative social and political relations through the agency of these objects. The second level is the disturbance of a city-system within a regional network of nation states with similar political conditions. For example, a person in Tripoli finds the struggles of a Tunisian man similar to his, and is motivated to form a similar "public" in protest. The third level of the Other City is the point of view of people in the West experiencing the emergence of an "other" form of urbanism through images online.

The Other City is a point of view (an internal space), a spatial quality, and a form of urbanism. While it is formed by a set of internal relations—Actors and Networks¹—its “otherness” is achieved through the fact that it sits in relation with the everyday city that surrounds it and cities we know around the world. For centuries, the idea of the Other City has been, and continues to be, the “reserve of imagination.” Without the Other City, “dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.”²

The otherness of the Other City, as well as the reassembly of its Actors, is understood, rendered, obfuscated, and imitated through images, which are the permanent evidence of an

ephemeral condition. Their effect also contributes to a “resonance” something emerging in one island reverberates with the wave emitted by something emerging from another island. Each situation is “the sudden creation, not of a new reality, but of a myriad of new possibilities.”³

This project is a forensic investigation of the image as a piece of evidence, deconstructed and organized to bare its claim-making objects. In this journal it illustrates five examples of Other Cities. For each, readers are presented with an aerial plan where the form of the Other City is cropped from the larger city that surrounds it, and annotated with dates, locations and objects. Above each map, some of these objects are defined in order to express their unique contexts. Surrounding it, a range of images and video stills have been gathered from a variety of online sources, including both official news media and citizen journalist accounts, each labeled and accessible for readers to make connections among them. These images illustrate the claim-making objects defined on all five of the maps.

This work's title is taken from *Shahre Farang*, which literally means "Other City" in Farsi, a portable urban viewing box that was a precursor to cinema in the early 1900s, which presented images of European capitals for the edification and pleasure of the citizens of Persian Towns. Here, each page can be seen as a viewing box and includes significant and widely published images of the Other City in each urban context, the map and a selection of definitions. Readers will have to build up events from this fragmentary evidence in a forensic (forum-building) representation—as they reconstruct the situation, and reassemble "the public" of the city. x

Notes

1. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
2. Michel Foucault, "Des espaces autres" (paper presented at the Cercle d'études architecturales, march 14, 1967)," trans. Jay Miskowicz, *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* 5 (1984): 46-49.
3. Alain Badiou, "Tunisie, Egypte: quand un vent d'est balaise l'arrogance de l'Occident," *Le Monde*, February 18, 2011. Available in English at http://www.lacan.com/thesvttom/?page_id=1031.

Mahsa Majidian is a recent graduate of the University of Toronto's Daniels School of Architecture Landscape, and Design, who has also studied in Vancouver (UBC), Buenos Aires (UBA), and Tehran (University of Art). Her interests lay in critical theory, the public sphere, complexities of urbanism, and forensic aesthetics, and her thesis was a curated event based on Actor-Network Theory called "The Other City."

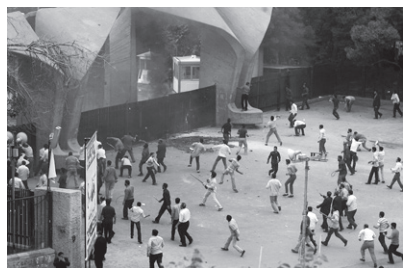
The Other City

Tehran, Iran

شہر فرنگ

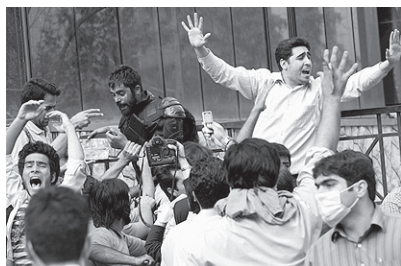
Building

- x **University:** An institution of higher education and scholarly research that may confer graduate, undergraduate, and postgraduate academic degrees. The site of universities has served as the locus of political or economic protest movements at many times in late 20th and early 21st centuries.



State Institutions

- × Moral Police/Revolutionary Guards/ Religious Police: Moral Police/Revolutionary Guards/ Religious Police: Enforces the application of Islamic Sharia law in some Islamic countries. In authoritarian regimes that follow the Sharia Law as part of their constitution, the Religious Police might also be entitled to police the allegiance of individuals to the ruling party, and take any necessary action when criticism of the government is raised.



People

- × **Student:** A person enrolled in an educational institution. Students of post-secondary institutions (colleges and universities) have often been associated with civil disobedience, occupations, and unrest.

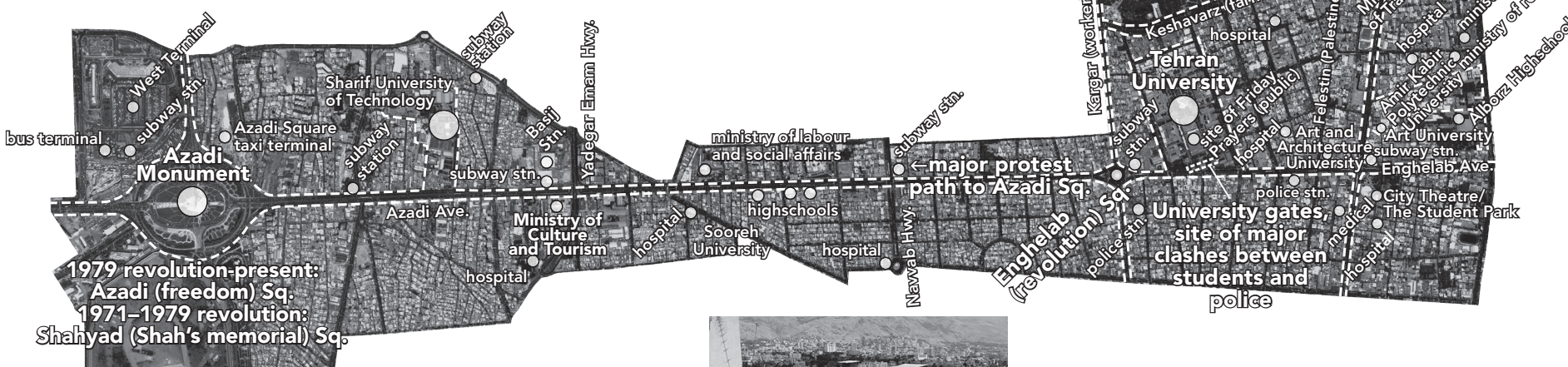
Communication Devices

- × Satellite TV: Television programming distributed through communication satellite(s) stationed in space and orbiting the earth, and received through outdoor antenna or parabolic mirror dish. Since the distribution of satellite television cannot be controlled by states that do not have physical access to particular communication satellites, the use by civilian populations of small antenna or satellite dishes grant access to many foreign media television channels.



Moving Signs

- V Sign:** A hand gesture in which the index and middle fingers are raised and parted, while the other fingers are clenched. It has various meanings, depending on the cultural context and how it is presented. It is most commonly used to represent the letter V as in "victory" (e.g. in The Middle East and Northern Africa), as a symbol of peace, and as purely expressive gesture with no intended meaning.



- 1.Plain cloths attacking the protesters in front of University of Tehran gates.
No credits.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/07/100708_119_anniversary_18tir_unrest.shtml.

2. Supporters of Mir Hossein Mousavi try to calm down fellow demonstrators as they rescue a bloodied riot policeman (center) who was beaten during a protest in Valiasr Street in Tehran on June 13, 2009. Photo: BEHROUZ MEHRI/AFP/Getty Images.
http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2009/06/irans_disputed_election.html.

3. Student protesters stand on the roof of their university campus.
Photo: Getty Images.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/gallery/2009/jun/16/iran-protest?picture=34892974#/?picture=34892970&index=1>.

4. Iranian police destroying satellite dishes in Tehran.
Photo: ISNA.
http://vitalperspective.typepad.com/vital_perspective_clarity/2006/08/total_informati.html14.

5. Protests continue in iran over disputed presidential election.
No credits.
<http://electionupdates.caltech.edu/2009/06/16/protests-continue-in-iran-over-disputed-presidential-election/>.

6. A riot-police officer sprays tear-gas at a supporter of Mir Hossein Mousavi, who is attacking him with a police stick during riots in Tehran on June 13, 2009.
Photo: OLIVIER LABAN-MATTEI/
AFP/Getty Images.
http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2009/06/irans_disputed_election.html.

The Other City

Manama, Bahrain

شہر فرنگ

Building

- × **Monument:** "The primary element closely identified with an event or piece of architecture which characterizes the city." (Aldo Rossi) Monuments are typical in that they summarize questions of consequence to the city, and are special in that they have a meta-economic value.



Mechanical Implements

- × **Tear Gas Grenade:** Formally known as a lachrymatory agent or lachrymator, TGG is a non-lethal chemical weapon which irritates mucous membranes in the nose, mouth and lungs, and stimulates the corneal nerves in the eyes, to cause tearing, sneezing, coughing, pain, difficulty of breathing, and even blindness.



People

- x **Protestor:** One who participates, either by words or actions, in an act of protest, or expression of objection to any particular set of events, policies or situations. Protesters may organize a protest in order to make their opinions heard publicly, and thus influence public opinion or government policy; or they may undertake direct action in an attempt to directly enact a desired change themselves.

Transport

- x **Truck with Mounted Water Cannon:** A truck carrying a device that shoots a high-pressure current of water, often over hundreds of feet, used in firefighting and riot control. Modern versions do not expose the operator to the riot, and are controlled remotely from within the vehicle by a joystick. Subtanks are also available to dispense dyes and/or chemicals.

Occupation Devices

- × **Roadblock (Barricade):** Barricade, from the French *barrique* (barrel), is any object or structure that creates a barrier or obstacle to control, block or force the flow of traffic in a desired direction. Adopted as a military term, barricade can also denote any improvised field fortification, most notably established on city streets during urban warfare. Barricades can be highlighted by setting on fire objects such as trash bins or vehicles.



1. The monument in Pearl Square that had become the defining monument to anti-government protestors was razed on Friday (Manama, Bahrain).
Photo: Hamad I Mohammed/Reuters.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/19/world/middleeast/19bahrain.html>.

2. Bahrain's Financial
Harbour.
Source Unknown.

3. A Bahraini woman shows empty packages of tear gas and sound bomb used by riots police in Manama, February 14, 2011.
Photo: Reuters.
<http://makanaka.wordpress.com/2011/02/17/the-streets-of-bahrain-ai-giers-sanaa/>

4. The 2011 F1 Bahrain Grand Prix was cancelled after anti-government protests and a police crackdown. Photo: Hamad I Mohammed/Reuters
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2012/feb/09/bahrain-fl-gp-attack-sword>

5. Military vehicles passed protesters in Manama, Bahrain's capital.
Photo: Agence France-Presse/Getty Images.
<http://www.nytimes.com/images/pages/2011/03/17/world/jp-1BAHRAIN1.html>.



The Other City

Cairo, Egypt

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City Fabric

- × **Bridge:** Bridge: A built construction spanning over a body of water such as a river, channel, lake or spring; or a road or highway. Characterized by their height, and thus distinguished in urban centres from their surrounding built environment; bridges often serve as focal points in the control of contested urban spaces.

- × Roundabout: A circuitous road used to efficiently redirect high volumes of vehicular traffic; generally used in place of an intersection, and often, where multiple roads or streets intersect. In major urban centres, that space may become the site of a monument, as in Place du 14 Janvier 2011 (Tunis), Azadi Square (Tehran), Tahrir Square (Cairo), New Clock Square (Homs), Pearl Roundabout (Manama)

Transport

- × **Truck with Mounted Water Cannon:** A truck carrying a device that shoots a high-pressure current of water, often over hundreds of feet, used in firefighting and riot control. Modern versions do not expose the operator to the riot, and are controlled remotely from within the vehicle by a joystick. Subtanks are also available to dispense dyes and/or chemicals.



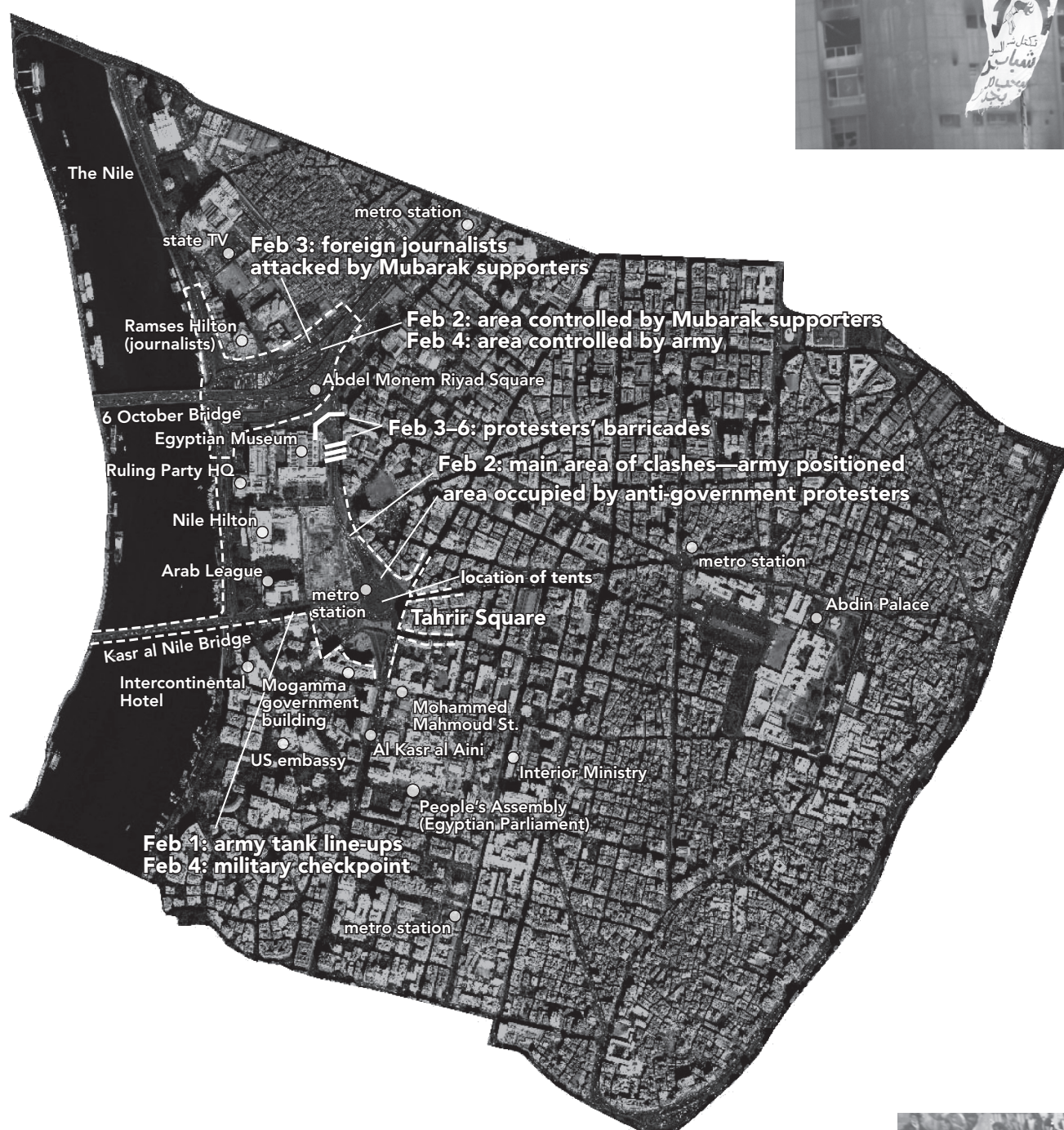
Communication Devices

- × **Social Media/News Blogs:** Any of a number of internet-based communication applications that support the exchange of user-created content for social/political interaction. Their content can come in the form of text, images, and/or audio based feeds; and, in contrast with the content of traditional printed press, has become increasingly difficult to control, due to the fragmented nature of its distribution.

People

× **Islamist:** A controversial term, which generally reflects a person or persons whose ideologies maintain that Islam is both a religion and a political system. The term may or may not refer to persons strictly adhering to Sharia Law, and/or the moral code and religious laws of Islam.

- × **Foreign Media:** Foreign Media: Individuals representing the media outlets of foreign news agencies who 'independently' document, and report on events through written articles, photo-journalism, and/or video footage—such as al Jazeera, BBC Persian, VOA, and France24.



1. Anti-government protesters fill Tahrir Square in Cairo February 10, 2011.
Photos: REUTERS/Dylan Martinez.
<http://totallycoolpix.com/2011/02/the-egypt-protests-part-04/>

2. "The Battle of Qasr al-Nile Bridge" January 28, 2011. Being attacked by water cannons by the Police, the demonstrators sit down to pray, turning the police attack into an 'unholy' act as well. Photographer unknown.
<http://boingboing.net/2011/01/28/egypt-photo-proteste.html>

3. Egyptian opposition supporters near Twitter graffiti in Tahrir Square, Cairo, in February. Social networking sites were used to help organise opposition demonstrations.
Photo: Steve Crisp/Reuters.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/mar/03/internet-facebook>.

4. A man takes part in Friday prayers while on top of a light pole at Tahrir Square in Cairo.
Photo: REUTERS-Mohamed Abd El-Ghany.
<http://english.al-akhbar.com/photoblogs/egypt-reclaiming-revolution>.

5. Cairo, a group of anti-government protestors and journalists. No credit.
<http://www.popgive.com/2011/11/defensive-gear-of-egyptian-protesters.html>.



The Other City

Tripoli, Libya

شہر فرنگ

Building

- x **Military Compound/Base:** A facility directly owned and operated by, or for the military, or one of its branches, which shelters military equipment and/or personnel, and facilitates military training and operations. In most cases, a military base will rely on external provisions to operate; however certain complex bases are better equipped with food, water and other staples to sustain themselves during more prolonged periods of siege.



State Institutions

- State-Sponsored Media: Mass communication outlets such as television and radio stations, and newspapers, which, in contrast to independent or private media, are sponsored, overviewed and funded by the state.

Static Signs

- Urban Name: An urban name refers to the name of a piece of urban fabric; and can be changed for various reasons. For example, a changed political regime can trigger widespread changes in urban names, following independence, revolution, etc. Name changes are often an attempt to “rewrite” history, by eliminating/acquiring a historical, political, or cultural reference.



People

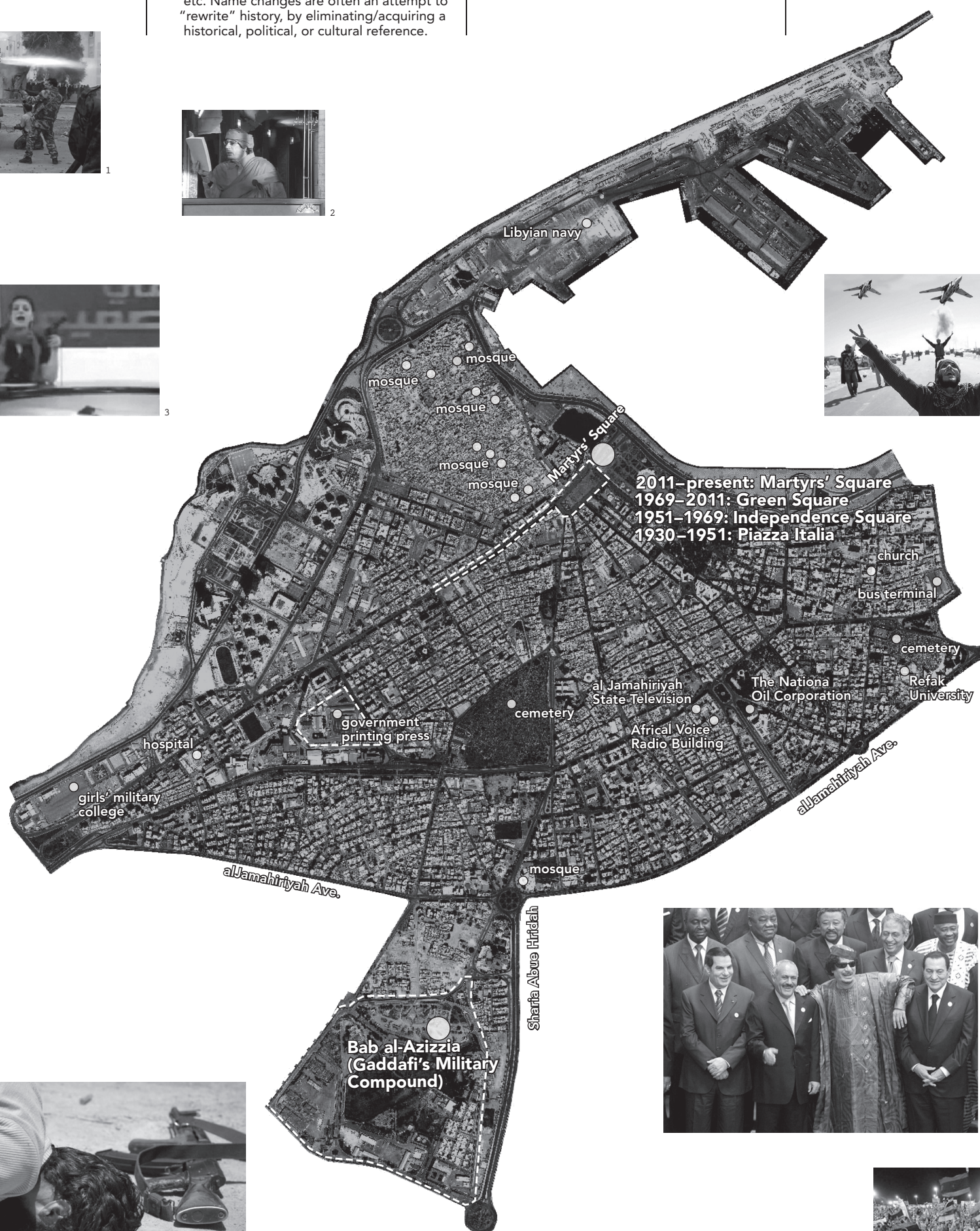
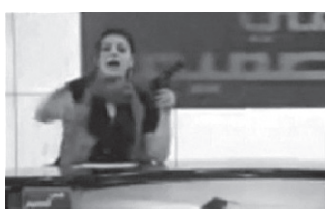
- × Head of State: The individual serving as the 'chief public representative' of a monarchy, republic, federation, etc. He/She is responsible for legitimizing the state and exercising the political powers, functions, and duties granted to the head of state in the country's constitution and laws.
- × Armed Rebel: A person engaged in rebellion, uprising or insurrection, as a refusal of obedience and/or order. The term, therefore, can be associated to a wide range of behaviour that is aimed at destroying or replacing an established authority such as a government or a head of state.

Transport

- × Military Aircraft: Any fixed-wing or rotary-wing aircraft that is operated by a legal or insurrectionary armed service of any type, which can be either combat or non-combat.

City Fabric

- × **Piazza:** An open square (especially in an Italian town) used for public gathering, and where multiple streets converge. These spaces can be used for political rallies and public speeches.



1. An anti-Gaddafi fighter fires a Grad missile during clashes with Gaddafi forces October 11, 2011, Libya. Photo: REUTERS/Asmaa Waguih.
<http://www.reuters.com/article/slideshow/idUSL5EYKT4YC20111011#s=1>.

2. Gaddafi reading from his Green Book on Jamahiriah Network (video available on euro-news website. Originally broadcast on Tripoli's Jamahiriah Network).
<http://www.euronews.com/2011/02/23/gaddafimad-dog-of-the-middle-east/>.

3. The controversial Hala Misrati, waving a pistol on her last broadcast before the fall of Libyan State TV. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hala_Misrati.

4. from left: Former President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen, Libya's Gaddafi, and Egypt's former president Hosni Mubarak. Photo: AFP.

5. Thursday, April 14, 2011 file photo, a Libyan rebel fighter belonging to a battalion commanded by Abdel-Moneim Mokhtar makes noon prayers in the desert on the outskirts of Ajdabiya, Libya.
Photo: Photo AP/Ben Curtis.
<http://ziomania.com/imagez/2011/04/43.html>.

6. A National Transitional Council fighter, showing a Victory sign.
Source Unknown.

7. Tens of thousands of Libyans celebrate the arrest of Muammar Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam and the partial fall of Tripoli.
Photo: GIANLUIGI GUERCIA/AFP/Getty Images.
<http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/08/21/libyan-rebels-take-tripolis-green-square/>.

The Other City

Homs, Syria

شہر فرنگ

Communication Devices

- × **Telephone:** An electronic device for the two-way transmission of speech. Most modern cellular telephones have added functionality of taking and transmitting photographic images and video, as well as access to email, internet and social media access.
- Mechanical Implements**
- × **Mortar:** An indirect fire weapon that fires explosive projectiles known as (mortar) bombs at low velocities, short ranges, and high-arcing ballistic trajectories.

City Fabric

- × **Street:** A length of well-travelled surfaces for automotive and pedestrian transportation. In popular uprisings, the street is often considered contested ground between the state and those committed to protest, in form of rallies, sit-ins, group prayers, and even battle-grounds.
- × **Cemetery:** A place in which dead bodies and cremated remains are buried. Funerals in Islam follow fairly specific rituals. The journey from where the post-mortem prayers are performed (usually a mosque) to the burying grounds (cemetery), could potentially take a political gesture, such as a rally.

Building

- × **Hospital:** An institution for the medical and surgical treatment of illnesses, injuries, and disease, and serviced by professional physicians, surgeons, and nurses. Hospitals are usually funded by the public through the state, or by health organizations (for profit and non-profit), charities, or religious orders.

People

- × **Political Opposition:** An organized political party or parties who do not currently hold the seat of power in the state, and who are generally opposed to the current. Political opposition may be oppressed as in an authoritarian regime, or recognized as in the official opposition in a parliamentary system.



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|---|--|--|
| <p>1. Stills from video uploaded by user homs20111 (around 0:35).
 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2xvXoRYSYMU.</p> | <p>3. Residents of Homs carrying a dead man's body through the city for burial.
 Photo: Reuters.
 http://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2011/08/201183175446100290.html.</p> | <p>4. Syrian protester tagging the phrase "Down with Bashar," during the Syrian Uprising 2011.
 Photo: Flickr Commons.
 http://www.theworld.org/2011/08/syrian-troops-shell-protesters/.</p> |
| <p>2. Stills from BBC's Sue Lloyd Roberts's secret coverage of Homs conflict.
 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15344158.</p> | | |