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Revolution, Rebellion, and Radical Changes

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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

I am delighted to introduce the seventh volume of *Inquiry & Insight*, the University of Waterloo's Graduate Journal of Political Science. Building off of the past two years, this year's edition fostered a close and rewarding partnership with the Political Science Graduate Students' Association's Annual Conference. Consequently, the papers presented throughout this volume contain the expanded work of those authors who were invited to share their research at the conference in March, 2014. This event, hosted by the University of Waterloo and the Balsille School of International Affairs, presented the opportunity to express diverse views on recent events and provided a fantastic stage for exchanging ideas and receiving feedback about the research presented below.

There are many thanks to be given for the success of the conference and this volume. First, I would like to thank Dr. Anna Drake and Dr. Jingjing Huo, our faculty coordinators, for their organization, guidance, and support throughout. Second, I would like to thank all of the members of the Graduate Conference Organizing Committee for their tireless work in coordinating such a wonderful event. Third, I would like to thank all of the members of our Editorial and Abstract Review Board, and all of our graduate student editors, for their countless hours in ensuring the quality and composition of this volume. Finally, I would like to thank and congratulate all of the authors who were chosen to present at our annual conference and who were subsequently published in this volume of *Inquiry and Insight*.

This past year has seen a resurgence of inquiry into the various aspects of revolution and radicalism within the field of Political Science. Further evidenced by recent events, the importance of conceptualizing how we define these concepts and what they indicate for the various populations of the world has become of paramount importance. Thus, in the effort of drawing insight into these compelling and challenging debates, this year's volume and conference were centered on the overarching themes of 'Revolution, Rebellion, and Radical Changes'.

To contribute to the diversity of these ongoing debates, authors' articles were selected under three broad and distinct categories: theories of radical resistance and revolution, societies in revolt, and inter-group conflict and reform. Organized under the category of 'theories of radical resistance and revolution' are the papers written by Bojan Ratkovic, Adam Foster, and Ryan Phillips. Under the category of 'societies in revolt', are the papers written by Brittany Renken and Hassan Hamaed. Finally, under the category of 'inter-group conflict and reform' are papers written by Madeliene Merrick, Adam Kingsmith, and Minh Do.

I hope that you enjoy the research presented throughout this year's volume of *Inquiry and Insight*,

Sincerely,

David Lark
Editor-in-Chief

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Rousseau and Revolution: The Influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Ideas on the French Revolution and Beyond

Bojan Ratkovic

Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) left a lasting legacy on the discipline of political science, and the influence of his ideas can be seen in the works of such diverse thinkers as Kant, Wollstonecraft, Hegel, Marx, Rawls, and Derrida. Rousseau's ideas are said to have inspired the ideals of the French Revolution, and it is popularly believed that Robespierre carried a copy of Rousseau's *Social Contract* everywhere he went. Consequently, liberal thinkers from Benjamin Constant to Isaiah Berlin have suggested that the excesses of the French Revolution (including the Terror) have their roots in Rousseau's work, implying that his ideas are dangerously radical and thus have no place in the modern world. In order to fully understand the relationship between Rousseau and revolution, we must give careful consideration to the core principles he puts forth and the implications of those principles on revolutionary thought and practice. First, this paper addresses some misconceptions about the connection between Rousseau and the French Revolution. Second, it analyzes Rousseau's understanding of the social contract, including his famous distinction between the illegitimate contract through which the rich oppress the poor and the legitimate contract that is yet to be established and which is intended to correct the injustices of the first. Next, it considers how within the new, legitimate social contract the people as a whole become synonymous with the sovereign. Finally, the paper explores Rousseau's revolutionary legacy and examines the significance of his ideas for our understanding of resistance and revolution in the 21st century.

Rousseau's Revolution?

There is little doubt that Rousseau's work had a profound influence on the French Revolution. During the first phase of the Revolution (1789-1792), many of the revolutionaries praised Rousseau and the *Social Contract* as their great inspiration. In October of 1790 a bust of Rousseau was installed in the Assembly Hall alongside a copy of the famous book, and two months later in December of the same year the deputies passed a motion to bestow public honors on

Rousseau. Although Robespierre and his Jacobins would come to publicly glorify Rousseau above all other thinkers during the second and bloodiest phase of the Revolution (1792-1794), his influence was actively present from the beginning, and not only among the radical elements but among the revolutionaries in general. Even after the fall of Robespierre and his subsequent execution, the revolutionaries maintained their respect for Rousseau. The transfer of Rousseau's remains to the Pantheon, initiated by the Convention in the spring of 1794, was not carried out until October of the same year at the initiative of the "Thermidorians", the very people who had ousted Robespierre from power.¹ Thus, while Robespierre certainly claimed Rousseau's works as an inspiration for his actions, the revolutionaries of that period did not believe that the Jacobins had a monopoly over Rousseau's ideas, nor did they necessarily feel that Robespierre had been faithful to them in the first place.

Nevertheless, by the summer of 1795 influential revolutionary figures, including the Abbé Sieyès, began to question Rousseau's notion of unlimited sovereignty of the people (people as sovereign), and in this they were seconded by intellectuals such as Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant. By the end of the 18th century, "the spirit of the age turned not against Rousseau the great man of letters, but against the supposed role his political philosophy had played in the failure of the Revolution."² Some interpreters of the Revolution, such as Edmund Burke, blamed Rousseau's work for what he considered to be the abstract ambitions of the revolutionaries, and in 1800 Napoleon Bonaparte told Pierre Louis Roederer: "He was a real lunatic, your Rousseau; it was he who led us to where we are now."³ In the decades to come and for much of the 19th century, Rousseau and his work were central in the debates about the proper interpretation of the Revolution; the supporters of a stable bourgeoisie government criticized him, while the proponents of a more democratic form of government praised him as a philosopher of the people.⁴ This debate would continue well into the 20th century. While influential political thinkers such as Allan Bloom and John Rawls considered Rousseau to be one of the most important modern philosophers, theorists such as Isaiah Berlin and Jacob Talmon suggested that Rousseau's ideas contained within

¹ Furet, François, "Rousseau and the French Revolution," in *The Legacy of Rousseau*, ed. Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 168.

² Ibid., 169.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, 172.

them the seeds of 20th century Communist Revolutions and what we have come to call totalitarianism.

Interpretations aside, it is important to address some of the misconceptions regarding Rousseau's influence on the French Revolution. As François Furet points out, "the revolutionaries were quite unfaithful to the *Social Contract*: between 1789 and 1800, they devoted all their energy to founding a representative government, the very type Rousseau had declared intrinsically corrupt, since the will of the people could not be transferred and therefore could not be represented."⁵ Revolutionaries like Sieyès argued that the unenlightened masses did not possess sufficient virtues of citizenship to take a direct and active part in governing, and his solution was the representation of the less enlightened by the more enlightened. He proclaimed that "without alienating their rights, citizens may delegate their exercise," a statement that could not be any more contrary to the principles of the *Social Contract*. Ultimately, the representative institutions that were established during the French Revolution were "obviously incompatible with Rousseau's insistence in the *Social Contract* on the formation of the law by the general will."⁶ Furthermore, Rousseau cannot be blamed for the fact that the French revolutionary period was so receptive to an absolutist conception of sovereign power, a conception that was ultimately abused by Robespierre and the Jacobins. The reality is that prerevolutionary France was also the France of absolutism; the revolutionaries carried over the tradition of absolute sovereignty in France from monarchy into republicanism. Tocqueville demonstrated that the absolute monarchy of prerevolutionary France "constituted in itself a first revolution that was in itself a necessary condition for that of 1789," and as Furet observes, France's "experience of absolutism led directly to a unitary concept of sovereignty. Experience and the habits it bred were surely more compelling than the effects of reading the *Social Contract*—which had hardly been a best-seller."⁷

In sum, Rousseau's political philosophy was not responsible for the excesses of the French Revolution. This is a fact that was understood by the revolutionaries themselves, and although subsequent interpretations of the events surrounding the Revolution both praised and vilified the role of Rousseau's ideas, a rudimentary comparison between Rousseau's principles and the actions of the revolutionaries demonstrates that the main actors of the Revolution, including Robespierre

⁵ Ibid., 173.

⁶ Ibid., 174.

⁷ Ibid., 175.

himself, were clearly unfaithful to Rousseau's philosophy. Although Robespierre paid lip service to Rousseau's notion of popular sovereignty (people as sovereign) in the early years of the Revolution, after expelling the Girondins from the National Convention Robespierre "would unceasingly defend the national representation against any popular intervention, and his notion of the dictatorship of public safety, which he exercised by virtue of powers granted by the Convention and only the Convention, no longer resembled in any way the ideas of the *Social Contract*."⁸ Thus, it is clear that the revolutionaries were not directly following Rousseau or any of his political formulas during the course of the French Revolution. Nevertheless, his work remains a critical tool for evaluating the successes and failures of a Revolution that was inspired by the same spirit of freedom and equality that Rousseau first brought to life in his writings. In order to truly understand the influence of Rousseau's ideas on the French Revolution and beyond, it is critical to first analyze those very ideas on their own merits.

The Two Contracts

According to Rousseau, those who claim that the state of nature is one of violence, competition, and inequality (Hobbes especially, but also Locke and others) do not go back far enough. Man in the state of nature is largely self-sufficient and able to satisfy his needs without depending on other human beings, and his natural compassion prevents him from being intentionally cruel and malicious toward others. In the *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau contends that before the development of society man led a simple way of life—an existence similar to that of animals. The difference that set man apart from all the other creatures was his unique ability to consciously share in his own operations, to decide his own fate. Unlike animals, understood by Rousseau to be ingenious machines of nature governed solely by instinct, man is a creature governed by free will. It is our free will that sets us apart from animals, and it is our free will that gives us the unique ability to act against our natural instincts, if we so choose. As Rousseau points out in Book III of *Emile*, "nature never deceives us. It is always we who deceive ourselves."⁹ All living creatures are born with the self-regarding *amour de soi*. This natural love of self, guided in man by reason and modified by compassion, makes natural man a humble and noble being; a being free from the vices that we have come to associate with civil society. For Rousseau, there is no

⁸ Ibid. 177.

⁹ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Emile: or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 203.

original sin in the human heart; all vice comes from the (wrong) choices we make of our own free will. It follows from this that man, unlike other animals, is able to progressively develop complex and interdependent social relationships with other human beings that go beyond the mere instinct for self-preservation. However, out of man's ability for complex social relationships we see the eventual development of pre-political societies, and this ultimately gives rise to what Rousseau calls *amour-propre*: an artificial love of self that is dependent entirely on the opinion of others. Whereas *amour de soi* directs us to pursue our well-being relative to ourselves alone, *amour-propre* is "a relative and fictitious feeling . . . that drives each individual to make more of himself than all others."¹⁰

Amour-propre is synonymous with narrow self-interest, selfishness, vanity, and an extreme dependency on the opinions of others. We see ourselves through the eyes of others, and our own identity depends on what others think of us. According to Rousseau, as men in the state of nature become more social, they begin to compare themselves to others, become mindful of their opinions, and develop a sense of pride that often degenerates into jealousy and rivalry. Ultimately, *amour-propre*, this uniquely human characteristic, becomes the source of all the inequality and corruption in society. It causes men to engage in endless competition over property, honour, and power, thereby becoming selfish, petty, and ruthless creatures completely removed from their natural selves. Simply put, *amour-propre* is the root cause of all the vices of civil society and the primary source of injustice in the modern world. In Rousseau's view, natural man is self-regarding and compassionate. When Hobbes spoke of the "state of nature" as a state of war of all against all, he was not talking about man in his natural state, but about man in a state of pre-political society already corrupted by the negative effects of *amour-propre*. Hobbes fails to see the state of nature as it was before pre-political societies were formed, and he also fails to acknowledge the universal principle of compassion which governs natural man. According to Rousseau:

There is another principle which has escaped Hobbes; which, having been bestowed on mankind, to moderate, on certain occasions, the impetuosity of [*amour-propre*], or, before its birth, the desire of self-preservation, tempers the ardour with which he pursues his own welfare, by an innate repugnance at seeing a fellow creature suffer. I think I need not fear contradiction in holding man to be possessed of the only

¹⁰ Cladis, Mark. S., "Redeeming Love: Rousseau and Eighteenth-Century Moral Philosophy," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 28, no. 2 (2000), 224.

natural virtue, which could not be denied him by the most violent detractor of human virtue. I am speaking of compassion.¹¹

As men begin comparing themselves to others in society, they begin competing for wealth, esteem, and property, and they also begin exploiting each other for their own private advantage. Rousseau argues that this constitutes “the first step towards inequality, and at the same time towards vice.”¹² He explains:

Insatiable ambition, the thirst of raising their respective fortunes, not so much from real want as from the desire to surpass others, inspired all men with a vile propensity to injure one another, and with a secret jealousy, which is the more dangerous, as it puts on the mask of benevolence, to carry its point with greater security. In a word, there arose rivalry and competition on the one hand, and conflicting interests on the other, together with a secret desire on both of profiting at the expense of others. All these evils were the first effects of property, and the inseparable attendants of growing inequality.¹³

Thus, we see a Hobbesian state of war emerging not out of the state of nature but out of the state of society, poisoned by the negative passions of *amour-propre*.

As the state of pre-political society becomes a state of war, those who had amassed great wealth and property by exploiting their fellow man found their ill-gotten riches constantly threatened by the poor masses who knew that the rich had no legitimate claim to their unequal wealth. To the poor, the rich were nothing more than imposters and usurpers of the fruits of the earth, which belong equally to all. Rousseau famously states:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this imposter; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.¹⁴

¹¹ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The Social Contract and the Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1963), 182

¹² *Ibid.*, 197.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

Eventually, the rich minority decides to protect their own unequal wealth from the poor majority by creating political institutions which, under the guise of preserving order and security, in effect secured the usurpations of the rich against retaliation from the poor. Thus, just as he rejects Hobbes' account of human nature, Rousseau disavows Locke's take on private property. Rousseau argues that free and equal people would never consent to the great inequalities of wealth that characterize modern society. Locke's contract in effect justifies and defends class divisions, exploitation, and vast inequalities because Locke is primarily concerned with the so-called rational and industrious man, the bourgeoisie, and his "right" to protect his property from both the king and the poor masses. Rousseau, on the other hand, is concerned with all citizens, including the poor, and while he maintains that one can in fact own the fruits of his labour, he asserts that no one has the right to unlimited acquisition.¹⁵ Private property is justified, within reason.

Ultimately, Rousseau declares that civil society in its current form is nothing more than a trick perpetrated by the rich and powerful against the poor and powerless. The social contract as it exists today is illegitimate because it "irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable right, and, for the advantage of the few ambitious individuals, subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery, and wretchedness."¹⁶ Simply put, those who rule have power over the people but they do not have legitimate authority over them. This is because the current social contract in effect formalizes and institutionalizes the law of the strongest, a condition it was originally designed to remedy. It is a contract into which mankind entered unwittingly and under false pretences. On that basis, Rousseau declares the current social contract null and void, and he sets out to establish a new, legitimate contract that has the moral and political authority to govern man. In so doing, Rousseau sets the stage for the development of modern critical theory by asserting that the current status quo is neither natural nor desirable, and by arguing that the political system can and ought to change for the better. This amounts to one of the earliest critiques of the modern bourgeoisie state, which publicly claims to affirm natural equality and freedom but fails to uphold these values in practice. Today, even defenders of capitalism admit that the inequality that results from the capitalist system is wrong, and they maintain that the system can be reformed. Nevertheless, Rousseau was among

¹⁵ Bloom, Allan, "Rousseau's Critique of Liberal Constitutionalism," in *The Legacy of Rousseau*, ed. Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 152-153.

¹⁶ Rousseau, *Social Contract and the Discourses*, 99.

the first to expose these deeply-rooted logical and practical failings of the modern bourgeois state. As Allan Bloom observes, today “we find ourselves, at least partly because of Rousseau, in the interesting situation where we do not entirely believe in the justice of our regimes.”¹⁷

The Moral Republic and the People as Sovereign

Having established that the current social contract is illegitimate because it is founded upon arbitrary force and has no moral basis, Rousseau sets out to develop a new legitimate social contract founded upon morals and reciprocity. According to Rousseau, “society must be studied by means of men, and men by means of society. Those who want to treat politics and morals separately will never understand anything of either of the two.”¹⁸ For Rousseau politics is not merely about security or private property, it is about *morality*. Conceding that it is no longer possible for man to return to the state of nature, Rousseau wants to find a way to bring diverse groups of individuals together in civil society and turn them into a sovereign people in a way that would end the unequal dependence of men on each other (e.g. the dependence of the poor on the rich) and replace it with the reciprocal dependence of each individual on the whole. Rather than allowing the continuation of the oppression and subjugation that characterize the first social contract, the new contract must ensure that each man gives himself to all, and yet remains as free as before.

As previously mentioned, Rousseau rejects the notion that a state monopoly on the use of violence enforced through civil institutions and the rule of law can in itself justify the authority of rulers. For Rousseau, the claim to legitimate political authority must be founded upon morals. Since the current social contract lacks this moral foundation, everything up to and including revolutionary action by the people against their rulers is justified. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau seeks to establish legitimate sovereign authority, and he does so by providing a moral foundation for sovereignty. Ultimately, this moral foundation is supplied by the general will. As G. D. H. Cole observes:

Rousseau’s purpose in the *Social Contract* is to show that the ‘sovereign’—the people, considered collectively as a body with the authority to lay down absolutely binding law for each of its members—has a moral claim on our allegiance that stems from our having (whether actually or in thought) given ourselves to its authority

¹⁷ Bloom, “Rousseau’s Critique of Liberal Constitutionalism,” 156.

¹⁸ Rousseau, *Emile*, 235.

without reservation. This supposes that we are so completely members of the state to which we all owe allegiance that there is no competing moral authority in our lives; and Rousseau gave great offence to his contemporaries by relegating religion to a subordinate role in the political system, and doing everything possible to remove the possibility of conflict between our duties to God and our duties to the 'sovereign'.¹⁹

According to Rousseau, the true sovereign within the Moral Republic is neither a particular ruling class nor the formal institutions of the state, but rather the body of the people as a whole. The people govern through the enlightened will of all; a will that is indivisible and always aims at the common good. In essence, being a citizen of the Moral Republic means overcoming one's narrow-self interest in the name of the common interest—overcoming one's particular will in the name of the enlightened will of all; the general will. That which is best for the whole is ultimately best for the individual, who is an essential part of that whole. It is this general will—this enlightened part of ourselves that aims only at the common interest—that pulls us up by our chains and forces us to be free. It forces us to reciprocate the virtues, duties, and responsibilities of our compatriots; forces us to be *citizens*.

The general will is a shared moral horizon that all citizens have in common, and it alone constitutes sovereignty. The general will establishes a moral and collective body, *le moi commun* (the public person), which Rousseau defines as “a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.”²⁰ As Rousseau explains:

At once, in place of the individual personality of each contracting party, this act of association creates a moral and collective body, composed of as many members as the assembly contains votes, and receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life and its will. This public person, so formed by the union of all other persons, formerly took the name of city, and now takes that of Republic or body politic; it is called by its members State when passive, Sovereign when active, and Power when compared with others like itself. Those who are associated in it take

¹⁹ G. D. H. Cole, trans., *The Social Contract and the Discourses* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1958), xx.

²⁰ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 49-50.

collectively the name of people, and severally are called citizens, as sharing in the sovereign power, and subjects, as being under the laws of the State.²¹

Rousseau declares that the Moral Republic must directly bestow authority to the people since only the general will aims at the common good of all. This is a complex concept, and Rousseau's critics often claim that it is difficult to determine what the general will of a group of people really is in practice. Furthermore, his critics argue that it is equally difficult to determine whether the general will ultimately aims at the common good of all. After all, is it not possible for a large group of people to collectively decide to plunge the state into war and chaos? Is it not possible for the general will to become destructive and harmful for society as a whole?

Rousseau holds that the general will is always right and always tends to the public advantage because "undertakings which bind us to the social body are obligatory only because they are mutual; and their nature is such that in fulfilling them we cannot work for others without working for ourselves."²² For Rousseau, the only human law that is worthy of obedience is the law we make for ourselves. The general will presupposes a reciprocal agreement between citizens who share common interests—in making political decisions we ourselves must submit to all of the conditions we impose on others. This principle of reciprocity, reminiscent of Aristotle's commitment to "ruling and being ruled," sets Rousseau apart from the liberal understanding of freedom, which holds that in order to enjoy the majority of his natural freedom within society man must give up a part of it to the sovereign. As Allan Bloom points out, "[the liberal formula] leaves everything unresolved.... The arrangement contains no element of morality or obligation, only contingent calculations of immediate interest. Utilitarian morality is no morality at all."²³ Rousseau rejects most elements of liberal constitutionalism; the liberal constitution is a compromise that ultimately fails and leads to growing egotistical individualism, which goes hand in hand with dangerous abuses of centralized government power. Rousseau's great task is to resolve to the greatest degree possible the constant struggle within society between particular interests of individuals and the general will of all, a struggle the liberal state fails to address. The idea of the general will is Rousseau's "attempt to establish a moral politics that does not degrade man or rob

²¹ Ibid., 50-51.

²² Rousseau, *Social Contract and the Discourses*, 204.

²³ Bloom, "Rousseau's Critique of Liberal Constitutionalism," 157.

him of his freedom.”²⁴ At the heart of this moral project lies the idea of self-overcoming, or the ability and willingness of the citizen to move past his narrow self-interests that concern only himself as an individual in order to grasp, understand, and act upon what is in the common interest of all. This capacity for willing generally constitutes a new kind of freedom; a freedom that moves beyond the mere satisfaction of animal instincts and inclinations, thereby allowing man to make genuine moral choices. This is an enlightened form of human rationality clearly distinct from the strictly self-regarding calculation of personal benefit. The ability to will generally allow citizens to reach their true potential as human beings and accomplish feats that would have been impossible outside the Moral Republic. In other words, citizens of the republic have at their disposal unique choices and opportunities that they would not have anywhere else. Reminiscent of Plato’s *Philosopher Kings*, Rousseau’s moral citizens are *freer* than other men; by overcoming the inclination to merely satisfy base animalistic desires at the expense of everything else, citizens stop being slaves to their appetites and become truly free. As Bloom suggests, “obedience to the general will is an act of freedom. This is the dignity of man, and a good society makes possible and encourages such dignity.”²⁵ In submitting himself to the rule of the general will, the citizen commits himself to the pursuit of the common good; the good of society as a whole, and by extension, the good of each individual member of said society. The general will can never strive to harm the people because the general will is the will of the people, and the people will never strive to harm themselves. Thus, in obeying the general will man obeys only himself. As Rousseau outlines in the *Social Contract*, “each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.”²⁶ Only through this reciprocal moral commitment can citizens attain the kind of political and civil liberty that exists within the Moral Republic.

It is important to note that the general will is not the sum of the particular wills of individuals. It is also not necessarily unanimous, although for a will to be general the votes of all free citizens must be counted.²⁷ Rousseau explains:

There is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will; the latter considers only the common interest, while the former takes private interest

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Rousseau, *Social Contract and the Discourses*, 194.

²⁷ Ibid., 200.

into account, and is no more than a sum of particular wills: but take away from these same wills the pluses and minuses that cancel one another, and the general will remains as the sum of the differences.²⁸

Hence, the general will is the enlightened will that takes shape once particular wills are canceled out; the general will always aims at the common good of all, never the particular good of individual parts at the expense of the whole. Although narrow self-interest may at times cloud the judgment of individual citizens, thereby leading them to will particularly rather than generally, in the majority of cases moral citizens will be able to recognize and actualize the general will.

The general will is indivisible, and because it is indivisible an act of the sovereign is not the convention between a superior and an inferior but rather a convention between a body and its parts. The sovereign itself cannot be represented and must be made up of all the citizens collectively, while the executive branch of government, which is made up of representatives, must serve only as an intermediary between the sovereign and its subjects, executing the laws enacted by the sovereign while preserving civil and political liberty. For Rousseau, the government and the sovereign are two distinct concepts. Government officials are mere officers of the people and not its masters; they may not have separate political agendas of their own and they must be accountable to the sovereign at all times. The fact that the sovereign cannot be represented means that all of the citizens collectively constitute the sovereign power, and hence they must all participate in the democratic process. Rousseau's vision is one of radical democracy akin to that of Ancient Athens, a system in which all citizens take an active part in governing themselves—the people as sovereign.

Now the question becomes: how can citizens come to will generally? They do so by setting aside narrow self-interests and, guided by their enlightened will, committing themselves to pursuing the common good of society as a whole. Simply put, we arrive at the general will by equating the fate of all our fellow citizens with our own individual fate and the common good of all citizens with our own individual good. In short, we must wish onto others as we wish onto ourselves. With that in mind, Rousseau asserts that one of the requirements for willing generally within the Moral Republic is a strong love of one's country, to which one owes not only his life, but also the morality of his actions and the love of virtue. According to Rousseau, it is within one's

²⁸ Ibid., 202.

country that man “learns to struggle with himself, to conquer himself, to sacrifice his interest to the common interest,” and thus, without one’s country, man would never attain virtue, morals, or true liberty.²⁹ In order to overcome our narrow self-interest in the name of the common interest of all citizens, we must come to love our fellow citizens as we love ourselves and our own families; we must come to love our community and our nation. Rousseau’s model of citizenship treats all citizens as an extended family, and he places a strong emphasis on the love of community and nation. In order for the wills of individual citizens to be (as much as possible) in alignment with the general will, we must not rely on institutional mechanisms. Rather, we must instill in the hearts of citizens a love of their nation and its laws. This is best done not through the apparatus of the state but through education, and through the habituation of citizens within the community by way of mores, customs, and opinions.³⁰ These particular aspects of his thought have earned Rousseau the reputation of being one of the fathers of modern nationalism.³¹

Ultimately, Rousseau’s vision of the Moral Republic reflects a conception of sovereignty that is more egalitarian and democratic than that of liberal constitutionalism. The political device of representation is but a halfway solution to the problem of freedom, and it has come to epitomize corruption, greed, and division within modern politics. For this reason, Rousseau puts forth a powerful critique of the bourgeois state, which has taken on a Lockean contractual character and that has given way to interest politics and factionalism, thereby dividing the general will and rendering the collective pursuit of the common good inapplicable. Rousseau conceives of a more egalitarian and democratic vision of sovereignty; the people as sovereign. Sovereignty cannot be divided or represented, it takes shape through the enlightened will of the citizens themselves, and it stands as the source of all moral authority and legitimacy within the political community. No political thinker prior to Rousseau could justify on moral grounds why a citizen ought to obey laws that he considers contrary to his self-interest; it was Rousseau who revealed to us that beyond the narrow particular wills of mankind lies an enlightened will that requires overcoming oneself and committing to the common good of all. As Bloom outlines:

Only Rousseau found the formula for that, distinguishing self-interest from moral obligation, discerning an independent moral interest in the general will. He

²⁹ Rousseau, *Emile*, 474.

³⁰ Plattner, Marc F., “Rousseau and the Origins of Nationalism,” in *The Legacy of Rousseau*, ed. Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 189.

³¹ Rousseau’s connection to nationalism will be considered further in the following section.

discovered the source of moral goodness in modern political principles and provided the flag democracy could march under. So, at least, it was understood. Regimes dedicated to the sole preservation of man do not have the dignity to compel moral respect.³²

Thus, Rousseau conceives of a political community that is fundamentally democratic in character, and his contributions to the democratic tradition would come to influence everyone from Alexis de Tocqueville to contemporary proponents of deliberative and radical democracy. He leaves us with the inescapable feeling that our own representative political systems are missing something fundamental, and that they fail to deliver on the liberty and equality they promise. As such, Rousseau's potent critique of the bourgeois state would come to influence a number of prominent political ideologies and revolutionary movements, from socialism and Marxism to nationalism and radical democracy.

Legacy of Revolution

For over two centuries critics have tried to implicate Rousseau's ideas in the excesses of the French Revolution and the terrible crimes that took place during the Terror. Robespierre, the leader of the Jacobins and initiator of the Terror, is often portrayed as a zealous follower of Rousseau and his actions are presented as the inevitable consequence of trying to implement Rousseau's ideals in practice. However, it would be academically dishonest to blame Rousseau's work for the actions of the revolutionaries, or to try to hold him responsible for the Revolution's failings. The revolutionaries, including Robespierre himself, had their own agendas and in pursuing them they did not hesitate to disregard Rousseau's fundamental ideas and principles. A close study of his work shows that Rousseau would not have condoned the excesses of the Revolution and, as Bloom proclaims, "Rousseau would... certainly have disapproved of Robespierre."³³ Nevertheless, while the French Revolution was not "Rousseau's Revolution", Rousseau's ideals have in fact inspired a wide variety of revolutionary movements throughout the world. Rousseau's critique of the status quo as reflected in the first social contract and his bold call to end the inequality, elitism, and corruption that characterize the liberal bourgeois state would

³² Bloom, "Rousseau's Critique of Liberal Constitutionalism," 156.

³³ Ibid., 163.

sow the seeds of dissent and resistance. These would bear fruit for centuries to come, from the French Revolution to the modern day.

Rousseau believes that freedom is the essence of man, and genuine civil and moral freedom is impossible without genuine equality. With this Rousseau challenges the Lockean belief in a natural right to the unlimited accumulation of private property, a principle that would become a staple of the liberal bourgeois state. Rousseau argues that it is not enough to rid ourselves of absolute monarchy only to replace it with another profoundly unequal system, one that allows the rich capitalists and bourgeoisie to share power with the nobility while still excluding the rest from playing a meaningful role in governing themselves. Rousseau asserts that the emancipation of property from political control in the name of natural right is illegitimate and amounts to theft and usurpation, which is one of his most poignant and revolutionary claims. Though he does not oppose private property altogether, Rousseau firmly believes that the state and the people as sovereign have the right to set limits on the distribution of wealth in order to ensure that no citizen is rich enough to buy another or poor enough to have to sell himself. Each individual citizen is an autonomous moral agent who deserves equal regard as every other, but in practice the bourgeois state alienates the majority of its citizens by making them dependent on the rich and powerful. As Bloom points out, “Rousseau, followed by Marx, taught that the inner logic of acquisition would concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands, completely dispossessing the poor and alienating them from the means of becoming prosperous.”³⁴ The market society treats human beings as means to be exploited instead of autonomous moral agents and ends in themselves. Equality, morality, and basic human dignity are sacrificed in the name of strengthening the economy. It is a critique that would influence a variety of socialist movements to come, and Karl Marx himself picks up on this line of thought in Rousseau, ultimately building a potent critique of the bourgeois state which inspired countless uprisings and revolutions. Nevertheless, while Marx’s solution to the problem is fundamentally an economic one, Rousseau’s prescription goes beyond relations of production; Rousseau’s solution is a moral transformation of the individualistic man into the virtuous citizen. Once this is achieved, economic justice will naturally follow.³⁵

³⁴ Bloom, “Rousseau’s Critique of Liberal Constitutionalism,” 155.

³⁵ Dannhauser, Werner J., “The Problem of the Bourgeois,” in *The Legacy of Rousseau*, ed. Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 10-11.

Rousseau is rightly considered one of the fathers of modern nationalism, and the various movements for national independence that formed primarily during the 20th century are also an important part of his revolutionary legacy. Nationalism is a controversial concept that during the last century came to be associated with everything from chauvinism and fascism to the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movements in the Third World. Even the democratic movements seeking independence from the Communist Bloc have borrowed from nationalism. Though some scholars have disputed Rousseau's connection with nationalism, describing him as simply a theorist of republican democracy, an abundance of evidence speaks to the contrary. Marc F. Plattner states that "the thinker perhaps most commonly identified as the key source of the nationalist idea is none other than Jean-Jacques Rousseau."³⁶ Hans Kohn claims that Rousseau "provided the modern nation with its emotional and moral foundations" and prepared "the modern basis" of "the identification of nation and state." A 1939 volume by the British Royal Institute of International Affairs states: "The importance of Rousseau's thought in the development of the idea of nationalism can hardly be exaggerated... Rousseau provided the theoretical foundations upon which alone the nationalism of the nineteenth century could be built."³⁷ Rousseau's strong emphasis on love of fellow citizens, love of community, and love of nation as prerequisites for the general will and, by extension, for the just society laid the framework for the development of the modern understanding of national identity. Furthermore, Rousseau's vision of the people as sovereign and his deep conviction that the only morally acceptable political system is one in which the people collectively govern themselves inspired the idea of national self-determination. In his *Plan for a Constitution for Corsica*, Rousseau declares: "Every people has or ought to have a national character, and if it lacks one, the first step must be to give it one."³⁸ His belief that a common national character is inherently valuable, and that this character can help shape citizens into virtuous members of the Moral Republic provides nationalism with a moral justification that continues to appeal to nationalist thinkers to this day. Thus, Plattner argues that "whatever Rousseau's deepest intentions or hopes for the political future of Europe may have been, without question his thought played a crucial role in laying the foundations of modern nationalism."³⁹ All of the national independence movements and revolutionary struggles that came after him owe their

³⁶ Plattner, "Rousseau and the Origins of Nationalism," 184.

³⁷ Ibid., 184-185.

³⁸ Ibid., 192.

³⁹ Ibid., 195.

philosophical roots to Rousseau. Furthermore, Plattner suggests that Rousseau may not only be the founder of modern nationalism, but also of modern internationalism, which is fundamentally defined by the nation-state system which Rousseau helped create. According to Plattner:

One might say that modern nationalism, unlike the patriotism of the ancient city, does not *necessarily* entail harshness to foreigners. Indeed, a Georgian political thinker, Ghia Nodia, has argued that “the idea of nationhood is an idea of membership in humanity” and points out that the United Nations, based on the principle of respect for national sovereignty, is the first political organization to embrace virtually the whole world. Thus it may not be so paradoxical as it first appears that Jean-Jacques Rousseau might be viewed simultaneously as a founder of both modern nationalism and modern internationalism.⁴⁰

Finally, in recent years the modern liberal state, which functions within a system of competitive representation and embraces conventional forms of rights-based constitutionalism, has come under attack by those thinkers who advocate a more participatory and deliberative approach to democracy, one that is more open and engaging than liberal pluralism and competitive representation. These thinkers refer to themselves as either radical democrats or deliberative democrats, and their impassioned calls for rethinking interest-based politics in modern liberal societies have been gaining ground. In essence, radical or deliberative democracy combines elements of direct democracy and representative democracy in an attempt to develop a more participatory political system that is practically feasible in the modern world. In this, radical and deliberative democrats draw inspiration from Rousseau’s vision of the people as sovereign and his commitment to ensuring that all citizens take part in governing themselves. As Joshua Cohen and Archon Fung explain:

Radical-democratic ideas join two strands of democratic thought. First, with Rousseau, radical democrats are committed to a broader participation in public decision-making. Citizens should have greater direct roles in public choices or at least engage more deeply with substantive political issues and be assured that officials will be responsive to their concerns and judgments. Second, radical democrats emphasize deliberation. Instead of a politics of power and interest, radical democrats favour a more deliberative democracy in which citizens address public problems by reasoning together about how best to solve them – in which no force is at work, as Jürgen Habermas (1975: 108) said, “except that of the better argument.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid., 196-197.

⁴¹ Cohen, Joshua and Archon Fung, “Radical Democracy,” *Swiss Journal of Political Science* 10, No. 4 (2004): http://www.archonfung.net/papers/Cohen_Fung_Debate_SPSR2004.pdf.

Deliberative or radical democracy places greater demands on its citizens than is the case with liberal constitutionalism. Liberal democracy requires citizens to, at the very least, abide by the law and respect the autonomy of others and, at the very most, maintain constant vigilance of political elites. Deliberative democracy, on the other hand, requires citizens to be well-informed and educated, to be rational and open-minded, to engage actively in the democratic process, to think critically about the views of their fellow citizens and about their own views, and to sacrifice their own time and personal resources for the public good. In essence, deliberative democracy requires citizens to exhibit genuine moral and civic virtue. As Weinstone and Kahane emphasize:

Deliberative democracy in almost all of its forms requires a more active citizenry and one with crucial dispositions, aptitudes, and virtues. Deliberative democratic citizens must be disposed to seek agreement with other citizens, possess deliberative traits that facilitate this process, and adopt a questioning, potentially critical, attitude toward their own conceptions of the good. Plainly, the development of the deliberative democratic personality requires an ambitious educational project.⁴²

The parallels between the principles of deliberative democracy and Rousseau's critique of liberal constitutionalism are significant. Furthermore, the idea of overcoming narrow self-interest in the name of the common interest is a crucial theme in both the works of Rousseau and the project of deliberative democracy. Weinstock and Kahane explain:

Deliberative democracy clearly places moral demands on citizens. They cannot simply press their self-interest but must be willing to exchange reasons with their fellow citizens and to accept that the force of the better argument – the “balance of reasons” – might lead to outcomes less favourable to their interests than could have been obtained through a more confrontational politics.⁴³

Therefore, its proponents “must remain alive to the possibility that deliberative democratic politics will sometimes mean citizens doing less well by the standard of their narrow self-interest.”⁴⁴ In short, the system of deliberative democracy depends directly on the citizens' ability to overcome their narrow self-interests and on their willingness to treat fellow citizens with the

⁴² Daniel Weinstock and David Kahane, “Introduction,” in *Deliberative Democracy in Practice*, ed. David Kahane et al. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

same respect they would afford themselves. In this, deliberative democracy echoes Rousseau's general will, a fundamentally democratic vision of sovereignty that treats every individual as an autonomous moral agent and aims accommodate the common good of all. In fact, it can be argued that the general will presupposes deliberative democracy and that deliberative democracy presupposes the general will.

As was the case with socialism, Marxism, and nationalism, Rousseau's influence is directly evident in the works of contemporary proponents of radical and deliberative democracy. Although these various movements are very different, what they have in common is the fact that their collective roots lie in Rousseau's critique of the illegitimate first contract of the liberal bourgeois state and his call for meaningful change embodied in the idea of the people as sovereign. Rousseau's legacy is one of challenging the status quo and of demanding that our modern regimes deliver on the promise of providing meaningful equality, freedom, and democracy to its citizens. For this reason, Rousseau's ideals still resonate with scholars, activists, and revolutionaries alike, and will continue to do so as long as we have reason to doubt in the justice of our regimes.

Conclusion

Rousseau is a truly revolutionary political thinker in that he combines the idealism of the ancients with the modern insistence that the good regime be actualized. He is not content with simply contemplating the just regime like Plato; instead, Rousseau declares that all current regimes are illegitimate and that only the truly just regime is morally acceptable.⁴⁵ In so doing, he taps into a fundamental human longing for justice and dignity, and therein lies the lasting appeal of his political philosophy. We know that our current regimes are characterized by inequality and injustice, and we don't want to settle for that. We want something better, something more worthy of ourselves, and more often than not it is something we are prepared to fight for. When that fight commences, whether through reform or revolution, there is no one we can rely on to expose the inherent hypocrisies of the liberal bourgeois state more effectively than the inescapable Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This was understood by the actors of the French Revolution, and it is still understood today by the revolutionaries and scholars of the 21st century.

⁴⁵ Bloom, "Rousseau's Critique of Liberal Constitutionalism," 163.

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“Tell Me Again What the Body is For”: A Deleuzo-Guattarian Epistemology of Revolution

Adam Foster

Introduction

In contemporary society, one is increasingly confronted with the notion that politics may no longer be in accordance with our traditional understandings and definitions used to categorize it; this is to say, politics is no longer as seemingly bound to the state as perhaps it once did. While this is not to undermine the importance of the state in the study of politics, it is to emphasize that certain events evade the current structuring of political units. For example, the Occupy Wall Street movement began as a criticism of American capitalism – a non-state entity. It is possible to make the argument that Wall Street and big business was so engrained into the fabric of American politics that it was a State-based political protest. However, it soon grew into an international protest movement superseding the state in traditional hierarchies of geopolitics, but still remaining inherently political nonetheless. The Arab Spring is perhaps another example, having existed beyond the level of the state while continuing to be inherently linked across state borders. These political movements being ever present in current global affairs, and with more on the horizon, scholars of revolutions are faced with an intriguing question: how do we theorize revolution in societies where politics is not always captured by the state, yet nonetheless offer the people with collective connections?¹

This paper offers a somatic epistemology of revolution. This is to say, a means of knowing about revolution that alludes to the concept of the body. However, this is not the human body, but rather the concept of the body in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze – both his individual work as well as his work co-authored by Felix Guattari. The two are not unrelated, with Deleuze's readings of Baruch Spinoza and Freidrich Nietzsche being clear influences on the body as a productive and anti-liberal force seen in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project that was co-written by the two theorists. In analyzing the Deleuzo-Guattarian body in this light, the reader is given further insight into the meaning and uses of the body in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia's* two volumes, and allows for an epistemological understanding of

¹ In Deleuze and Guattari, movement refers to the constant ontological flux of the subject; something is never constantly “being” something, but is rather in a continual process of “becoming” something. Therefore, in using movement, I refer – not only to social movements and revolutions – but the constant changing nature of a group of peoples in realizing their political goals or desires.

revolution as a concept that is enacted. The paper will thus work as follows: it will begin with definitions of the body, revolution, the state, and nomadic thought. This will be followed by four different conceptions of the body. Each of these body-models will be followed by a consideration of a historical revolutionary case explained through the model.

What is a body? Bruce Baugh defines it as “any whole composed of parts, where these parts stand in some definite relation to one another, and has a capacity for being affected by other bodies [...] a body can also be a body of work, a social body, or a collectivity, a linguistic corpus, a political party, or even an idea.²” It is clear then that the body is not merely a biological unit for our consideration, but rather can refer to a large number of entities with parts that work together with a singular goal.

What is revolution? For Deleuze and Guattari, revolution is less of an event as it is an attitude or something one does; they stated that “Becoming-minoritarian as the universal figure of consciousness is called autonomy. It is certainly not by using a minor language as a dialect, by regionalizing or ghettoizing, that one becomes revolutionary; rather, by using a number of minority elements, by connecting, conjugating them, one invents a specific, unforeseen, autonomous becoming.³” To be minoritarian refers to a relation with the concept of minor-literature,⁴ or a literature⁵ in which every individual is bound to politics and everything gains a collective value, enunciating the revolutionary potential.⁶ Furthermore, they posit that it should not be considered in the context of temporality, arguing that “becoming-revolutionary remains indifferent to questions of a future and a past of the revolution; it passes between the two”.⁷ From this perspective, Deleuze is referring to the notion that a becoming revolutionary is not related to a past or a future, but rather pulls in both directions from the point of the becoming; it is the becoming that is important, not what precedes or follows it.⁸ Therefore, if we are to synthesize a

2 Bruce Baugh, “Body,” in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 30–31.

3 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 106.

4 Verena Conley, “Minoritarian,” in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 164.

5 Which need not be a literary corpus. Returning to Baugh's definition of the body, this could be a body. The use of literature stems from the application of this concept to the works of Kafka and the enunciation of a story.

6 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, *Theory and History of Literature* v. 30 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 17.

7 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 292.

8 Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, *European Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 1.

revolution of from these two passages, revolution is a collective political action wherein the group enacts a continuous change that is not concerned with the past and future of a Hegelian historical determinism.⁹

Revolution herein remains counter to the state by way of its characterization within the minor literatures.¹⁰ For Deleuze and Guattari, the state is ultimately an apparatus of capture, with a “power of appropriation.”¹¹ This power of appropriation captures that which is exterior to the state's perimeters by bringing it inside the state's peripheries where its sovereignty is applicable.¹² By equating with the minor literature, this has been the case of the revolutionary potential by virtue of the minor literature existing within the major literature.¹³ This control of the state is so extreme that it even controls the way in which thought is enacted, with the State appropriating philosophy. This State philosophy “end product would be “a fully legitimated subject of knowledge and society” – each mind an analogously organized mini-State morally unified in the supermind of the State”¹⁴ and bound to “the three domains of representation, subject, concept, and being.”¹⁵

To expand upon the matter, Deleuzian philosophy boasts a political conception of epistemology¹⁶ in which the tradition has rendered all minds as subservient to a single mode of thinking that can be equated to the state, and in doing so confines thinking to two concepts for representation. The issue with this is that it strips the thinker of agency and power where Deleuze and Guattari argue that “the State does not give power (*pouvoir*) to the intellectuals or conceptual innovators; on the contrary, it makes them a strictly dependent organ with an autonomy that is only imagined yet is sufficient to divest those whose job it becomes simply to reproduce or implement of all of their power (*puissance*).”¹⁷ Therefore, State philosophy strips the thinker of his potential which can be identified as necessary cause to challenge such constricting philosophy.

9 Hegelian philosophy posits that history is continuously working towards a goal, and when this goal is reached the world will exist in a state of stability.

10 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 17.

11 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 437.

12 Ibid., 360.

13 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 17.

14 Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 4.

15 Ibid., 5.

16 The philosophy of how knowledge is formed.

17 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 368.

The alternative is to engage in a form of nomadic thought, a form of counter-philosophy¹⁸ which “does not lodge itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element or exteriority.”¹⁹ The potential for nomadic thought exists *a priori* to the encapsulation of the thought by the state, as Deleuze and Guattari notes that “every thought is already a tribe, the opposite of a State.”²⁰ What differentiates it from State thinking is its location in the exteriority. Deleuze and Guattari explains Kleist as denouncing “the central interiority of the concept as a means of control – the control of speech, of language, but also of affects, circumstances and even chance.”²¹ The solution is then to think in the exterior;²² to think outside of the speech and language that has been captured to the becoming-thinker. Becoming and affects is accepted as inherently somatic features and are equated with the body. Therefore, in freeing the mind from the powers of the State control, one does so through the body. To enact a revolution is to free a body from the State's control.

Anti-Oedipus and the Organism

Though the concept of the body is not elaborated upon in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia's* first volume, *Anti-Oedipus*, it is here that a consideration of the body must begin. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari put forward the models of the mechanic-organism and the body without organs as a binary opposition. Considering that we have seen the body is inherently a whole comprised of parts in Baugh's definition, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of a certain type of body called an organism. In an organism these parts are termed organs.²³ But what is an organ other than a part of a body? Deleuze and Guattari argue that “an organ-machine is plugged into an energy-source-machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts.”²⁴ In other words, an organ is a part that derives the energy for its function from another source; it takes that raw energy and harnesses, transforms or (to use Deleuze and Guattari's terms) reterritorializes it into a particular function. The question that follows is thus; what is a machine?

A machine is something that produces. The production of desire is the first example of these phenomena, which they argue is enacted through “machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines

18 Gilles Deleuze, “Nomad Thought,” in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison and David B. Allison (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 149.

19 Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 5.

20 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 377.

21 Ibid., 378.

22 Ibid.

23 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 43.

24 Ibid., 1.

driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections.²⁵ In other words, one might think of machines as interconnected cogs and gears; machines are plugged together and connected in such a way that the workings of one machine aids in the working of another, and is itself aided by other machines. Machines cannot function on their own. This is also true for organs as they work together in harmony with one another and are dependent on them within the confines of the organism. In the human body, a heart cannot exist without veins and arteries through which it can deliver blood, and it depends on lungs to provide it with oxygen. The concept of the organism argues that parts of a body are interconnected and dependent on one another in such way that their placement and role is not the product of arbitrary collision; there is rhyme and reason to how the body's parts are constituted and arranged.

The question that follows is what is this rhyme and reason behind the body's composition? In addressing this issue, the argument made in *Nietzsche & Philosophy* concerning domination applies.²⁶ In that work, Deleuze reads Nietzschean philosophy as arguing that the body is created out the joining of two forces; a dominating force called the active force and the other called reactive force which is dominated.²⁷ In so far that the body is subject to the phenomena of organization, there is an inherent domination of the body, subjecting it to a particular purpose or nature through force.²⁸ In this sense, the body's composition is structured around its capacity to produce something.²⁹ Specifically, the entirety of the body and its organ-parts are compartmentalized and structured around the production of desire.³⁰ One might consider the body and desire to be two opposing forces. In such an interpretation, desire can be read as the active force. The body is thus the reactive force that must adapt to and accommodate the active force. In other words, the notion laid out in *Nietzsche & Philosophy* would suggest that the body is *forced* into organizing itself around desire, a claim that seems plausible given the abundance of the term “productive forces” in *Anti-Oedipus*; production is a forceful process in creating its product, and

25 Ibid.

26 This is not a coincidence, and the Nietzschean reading of *Anti-Oedipus* is not only possible, but it is implicit. In his introduction to the book, Mark Seem argues that *Anti-Oedipus* seeks to do to Freudian psychoanalysis what Nietzsche's *The AntiChrist* did to Christianity (Ibid., xvi.) and as a reworking of the Freud/Marx synthesis to a combination of Nietzsche and Marx (Ibid., xviii.).

27 Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 40.

28 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 9.

29 Ibid., 8.

30 Ibid., 1.

pressure to conform to the model presented in the first chapter³¹ and the comparison of productive forces in desire for labour of the proletariat in Capitalist society.³²

To use the organism as a model for a revolution is to observe the phenomena with every individual part having a particular function and working together towards a specific goal. Whereas Deleuze and Guattari are critical of the organism for the forced organization of its parts, equating it to the capitalist-industrial phenomena and repression of psychoanalysis, the model can still be used to explain revolutionary forces. Such an example is the 1979 Iranian revolution. Though a state governed by the Shah Mohammad Reza had been in place, and a society formed around this governance with the creation of an increasingly large middle class.³³ However, Ervand Abrahamian argues that the crowd are – not “as irrational, fickle, swinish, and bloodthirsty”³⁴ – are a rational entity.³⁵ These crowds formed organisms based around the production of a theological society for Iran; the crowds comprised of theology students and ayatollahs.³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari argue that “desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations”³⁷ with desire referring to “experimentation on a plane of immanence,³⁸” or, experimentation on the level of where philosophy or thinking is undergone,³⁹ in this case, the ideology of how society ought to be structured. Therefore, an organism existed in the Iranian revolution insofar that there existed the desire for an Islamic republic with societal forces plugged together and structured as such.

The Body Without Organs

It is tempting to read *Anti-Oedipus* in light of *Expressionism in Philosophy's* conception of the body. Whereas both the organism and the composite body are comprised of parts, one might be quick to infer that the organism of *Anti-Oedipus* is a statement as to how domination inevitably occurs in a body comprised of parts. However, the organism is merely one of two types of composite bodies present in the book. The second is the body without organs. Despite its name, it is not actually lacking parts, but

31 Ibid., 2.

32 Ibid., 10.

33 James Buchan, “The Iranian Revolution of 1979,” *Asian Affairs* 44, no. 3 (2013): 420, doi:10.1080/03068374.2013.826016.

34 Ervand Abrahamian, “The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution,” *Radical History Review* no. 105 (Fall 2009): 13.

35 Ibid., 14.

36 Ibid., 18.

37 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 5.

38 Alison Ross, “Desire,” in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 63.

39 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 37.

instead missing the organization and domination of an organism. It is true that the organism is a cautionary tale that domination can occur in the body that is comprised of parts. However, an alternative exists, and it is the body without organs.

Unlike in *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, where domination is an inescapable facet of the body, Deleuze and Guattari argue an alternative to the dominated organism. The notion of the organism is conflated against the notion of the “body without organs.”⁴⁰ Deleuze and Guattari borrow this term from Antonin Artaud, arguing that he “discovered [the body without organs] one day, finding himself with no shape or form whatsoever, right there where he was at that moment.”⁴¹ The importance of the body without organs is that it argues that the body need not be subject to domination, with Deleuze and Guattari arguing that “the body has no need for organs.”⁴² I can therefore be stated that a body can exist without being organized with collective organs. It vehemently resists becoming organized by presenting “its smooth, slippery, opaque, taut surface as a barrier.”⁴³ When parts do attach to the body without organs, they do so in a free-flowing manner and may come and go. The body without organs can be seen as reactionary to domination insofar that its sole purpose is to cancel out the intensive flows of the organism. In this regard, it is a product of nomadic thinking. Given that *Nietzsche & Philosophy* presents domination as an inescapable aspect of the body (the body is always born from the joining of two forces⁴⁴), the body without organs serves as a counter-philosophical purpose; it exists outside of the peripheries of the organism that represents the domination seen in conventional philosophy⁴⁵ and offers an alternative way of engaging with this subject matter.

As a model for revolution, the body without organs must represent the dissolution of an organism like entity since the organization of the parts and functions of the pieces are becoming unhinged from the machine into free-flowing anarchy. This is an applicable model for cases plagued with instability or a lack of structure (neither of these meant in a negative sense, but rather as an acceptance of these characteristics on their own merits). One such example is Occupy Wall Street, which strove to depart from these organized and hierarchical organizations. Manissa McCleave Maharawal argues that “at the

40 The body without organs appears first in *Anti-Oedipus* as an entity to counter desiring-production. It reappears in *A Thousand Plateaus* where it is further re-articulated and considered in a more positive light; that is, as having purpose of its own, and not merely as an entity for countering desiring-production.

41 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8.

42 Ibid., 9.

43 Ibid.

44 Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 40.

45 This depends on a reading of *Nietzsche & Philosophy* as being critical of the domination it describes.

heart of Occupy's attempt at radical inclusivity was the use of consensus method for collective decision making. This method was an attempt to forge structures that were nonhierarchical and allowed a large number of people to take part in the decision-making process.⁴⁶ Therefore, it is an inherently structural issue; Occupy Wall Street seeks to integrate radical inclusivity and equality in its revolutionary model; no one person is held above another. This does not mean it was lacking structure. In fact, McLeave Maharawal states that "this enactment of directly democratic decision making was far from "structure-less"; indeed consensus decision making as it was practiced at Occupy Wall Street was highly structured, technical, and often laborious.⁴⁷ What it is instead is fluid; the decisions need not adhere to any overarching purposes or goal (with the exception of their critical goals) and can change according to necessity, as can their membership.

The Body Itself

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the overarching philosophy of the body – that is, a philosophy that applies to the function of all types of bodies – is provided. The body is defined as cartographic, in so far that it is comprised of a longitude and latitude upon which we can plot it as we do a point or line in the mathematical Cartesian coordinate system – a means of conceiving the body that Deleuze and Guattari argue was first thought of by Spinoza,⁴⁸ and is seen in Deleuze's *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*.⁴⁹ Deleuze and Guattari argue that the "body is defined only [...] under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential.⁵⁰" Both aspects of the coordinate system must be elaborated upon.

Movement here, unlike in Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy* (where it referred to a means of existence),⁵¹ refers to movement from one experiential state – or becoming – to another. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the movement "has an essential relation to the imperceptible [...] perception can grasp movement only as the displacement of a moving body or the development of a form.⁵²" In other words, movement cannot in itself be perceived; only the body's point of origin – where it starts from- and its

46 Manissa McCleave Maharawal, "Occupy Wall Street and a Radical Politics of Inclusion," *The Sociological Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2013): 178, doi:10.1111/tsq.12021.

47 Ibid.

48 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 261.

49 Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 127.

50 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 260.

51 Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 1990), 208.

52 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 280–281.

destination can be. It is here that movement and becoming are equated, being described as “pure relations of speed and slowness;⁵³” that is, how fast the body is moving from this experiential state to another. To say that movement is a pure relation of speed and slowness does not tell us what the body is moving towards. Answering this question depends on exploring the notion of becoming.

Becoming, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is inherently a transformation. Deleuze and Guattari argue that, when one undergoes a becoming, “one is deterritorialized.⁵⁴” This places identity or essence in spatial terms, and thus when a becoming enables deterritorialization, it allows the individual to move to a different identity or essence.⁵⁵ Deleuze and Guattari argue that “movement is extensive; speed is intensive.⁵⁶” In other words, movement pertains to the individual's external world, whereas speed is internal; speed is how fast the individual moves across the plane.

Affect in this context refers to “a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution of that body's capacity to act.⁵⁷” This is in essence a reworking of the Spinozan conception of affects seen in Deleuze's individual work on the philosopher. First, they reflect an increase or decrease in the body's capacity to act, as is seen in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, where Deleuze argues passive affects stem from external to the body and decrease the capacity to act, whereas active impacts stem from within and increase the capacity to act.⁵⁸ Second, they reflect the notion that the body is in constant flux, changing from one state to another.⁵⁹

What this conception of affects adds is that it argues the concept of standing outside of consciousness; that is, a body is unaware that it is being subject to affects. The second is the notion of affect as intensity. Eric Shouse defines this intensity as “a moment of unformed and unstructured potential.⁶⁰” In so far that they are unformed and unstructured, they evade linguistic understanding and can only be known – or rather *felt* – viscerally, as “the body has a grammar of its own that cannot be

53 Ibid., 281.

54 Ibid., 291.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., 381.

57 Brian Massumi, “Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements,” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.

58 Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 92.

59 Deleuze, *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy*, 49.

60 Eric Shouse, “Feeling, Emotion, Affect,” *M/C* 8, no. 6 (2005): 5, <http://www.journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>.

fully captured in language.⁶¹”Therefore, we might understand affects as a force unknown to the body that moves it from one state to the next through the body's power to act. This is where the notion of speed and movement – the other gradient to the body – becomes into relevant; they refer to the temporal rate at which the body changes or becomes.

The body as described here allows for a very clear and succinct analysis of *le Printemps Érablé*, or, the 2012 Quebec student protests – a notion I borrow from Darin Barney.⁶² This analysis assumes that the student body of the province of Quebec are a body – and this will be seen with the analysis that follows, wherein they meet all the four characteristics of the body's Cartesian coordinate system.

First, the affect. Cayley Sorochan details how “in early 2010, the Parti Liberal du Québec (PLQ) led by premier Jean Charest announces its intention to raise tuition fees by 75 per cent over five years beginning in 2012” which was met with “early response on the part of students to this proposal [in the form of] a petition signed by 30,000 against the hikes as well as a series of one-day strikes and demonstrations that attract tens of thousands.”⁶³ The strike began in 2012 when the government failed to recognize the students concerns.⁶⁴ Thus, the body entered into movement; it set forth in changing its experiential state – as one whose concerns the government does not recognize to another – the becoming that is the government recognizing their concerns. This becoming was achieved, in so far that it spurred elections which lead to a Parti Québécois minority government and the freezing of tuition in the province of Quebec.⁶⁵

The Assemblage

Given the clear Spinozan influences in *A Thousand Plateaus'* conception of the body, the notion of simple and composite bodies enters into question. True, when Deleuze and Guattari speak of bodies, one could simply infer that they are referring to this Spinozan conception (and I would argue they ought to do so). However, one must ask if these notions entered into the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari considering other Spinozan notions such as affect and movement did. Paul Patton argues that the

61 Ibid.

62 Darin Barney, “The Truth of Le Printemps Érablés,” *Theory & Event* 15, no. 3 (2012), http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.acadiau.ca:2048/journals/theory_and_event/v015/15.3S.barney.html.

63 Cayley Sorochan, “The Quebec Student Strike – A Chronology,” *Theory & Event* 15, no. 3 (2012): 2010–11; pre-strike organizing, http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.acadiau.ca:2048/journals/theory_and_event/v015/15.3S.sorochan.html.

64 Ibid., 2012: the strike begins.

65 Aziz Choudry and Eric Shragge, “The 2012 Student Strike: Many Lessons Were Learned and Taught,” *Social Policy* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 12.

composite body is seen in *A Thousand Plateaus*, but does so under a different name; that is, under the name of the assemblage.

Patton defines an assemblage as “a multiplicity of heterogeneous objects, whose unity comes solely from the fact that these items function together, that they “work” together as a functional entity.⁶⁶” This strongly echoes the language of composite bodies seen in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, where bodies are described as forming a larger body of the same nature, working together to create an increased power of the body.⁶⁷ Furthermore, given that the body is defined by a longitude and latitude in both *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*⁶⁸ and *A Thousand Plateaus*,⁶⁹ it follows that the assemblage be a body in so far that it too is defined by a Cartesian coordinate system.

The concept of the assemblage is defined as having a horizontal axis, wherein the assemblage is comprised of “two segments, one of content, the other of expression;⁷⁰” a distinction that first appears in *Expressionism in Philosophy*. By content and expression, Deleuze and Guattari mean that the assemblage is, on the one hand:

[...] a *machinic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other it is a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies.⁷¹

In other words, the content of the assemblage refers to what the assemblage is comprised of, and that is bodies. In so far that the assemblage is machinic in terms of its content, it refers back to the notion of the organism in *Anti-Oedipus*; its parts all plug into each other, allowing each other to function, and working towards a collective goal. However, the hierarchy and domination of the organism is not present; the unity of parts in the assemblage is not coerced. The expressive component of the assemblage refers

66 Paul Patton, “Metamorphic-Logic: Bodies and Powers in *A Thousand Plateaus*,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 25, no. 2 (1994): 158.

67 Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 210.

68 Deleuze, *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy*, 127.

69 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 260–261.

70 Ibid., 88.

71 Ibid.

to the actions of these bodies, and the transformations that they enact. In so far that it relates to transformations of bodies, the horizontal axis can thus be said to situate the assemblage temporally.

The vertical axis of the assemblage instead situates it spatially. Deleuze and Guattari wrote that “on a vertical axis, the assemblage has either territorial sides or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away.”⁷² In other words, the assemblage occupies a space. The territorial sides situate it in this space and render that space its territory, and the deterritorializing sides refer to the ability of the assemblage to cut itself away from this space and move freely to a new spot, which it will claim as its territory. Territory, in this sense, refers to space in the world it occupies and situates its meaning in. In analyzing the assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari stated “the first concrete rule for assemblages is to discover what territoriality they envelop, for there always is one.”⁷³ This demonstrates that the assemblage always claims territory. In so far that this territory is not constant, and the assemblage is constantly carving out new territory, one can understand this as the aforementioned “incorporeal transformations” of the assemblage.

Given that the chief distinction between bodies in *Capitalism & Schizophrenia* lay in the binary of the organism and the body without organs, the assemblage's relationship to these concepts must be addressed. Deleuze and Guattari describe the assemblage as having a side facing “the strata, which doubtless make[s] it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a *body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate.”⁷⁴ This does not represent the assemblage as a middle ground between the two extremes. Rather, it represents two aspects of the assemblage. Patton posits that, with the assemblage, “on the one hand, there is a constitution of territory, a movement of reterritorialization.”⁷⁵ This is to suggest that the assemblage is productive; in setting out a territory, it codifies a certain space and gives it meaning and structure. Given that this territory is occupied by the assemblage, it follows that the meaning and structure it provides gives its constituent parts roles, which is why it renders the assemblage an organism for Deleuze and Guattari. However, Patton argues that “on the other hand, there is always a movement of deterritorialization, a line of flight along which the

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., 503.

74 Ibid., 4.

75 Patton, “Metamorphic-Logic,” 158.

assemblage breaks down or becomes transformed into something else.⁷⁶” This is to say that the assemblage also has an aspect in which it is not restricted to this meaning the strata gives it; the assemblage is able to break free and occupy a new territory. Thus, it is capable of a becoming – just as are other types of bodies.

As a model, one need to focus on the ambiguity in the assemblage in terms of becoming the organism or the body without organs; it is capable of becoming territorialized on any extreme. Therefore, the assemblage is apt in cases where the outcome is not clear, such as the Arab Spring, where – in a number of cases – it is not clear if the new regime in the Arab countries will be an improvement over their predecessors, or if they will be just as bad if not worse. The assemblage is a model of ambiguity.

Conclusion

The body is a horizon. In *A Thousand Plateaus'* model the body is the point of departure; this is to say, one accepts the existence of the body, and then asks how one must think about it. The Spinozan model posits we ought to think of the body in terms of power – or its capacity to act – and how that is inhibited or increased. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the notion that this fluidity in the body's capacity to act reflects a change in the body's inherent nature or essence is given primacy. Instead of thinking of the body as centered on action, Deleuze and Guattari center the body around change and movement – which is enacted through the power to act (or lack thereof).

How then is the body a horizon? Before this question can be answered, it must be asked what a horizon is. There is an inherent double meaning to the term horizon, both of which are applicable to the present understanding of the body and politics. The first is the horizon as a simulated line in which the earth and sky are separated. Therefore, if the body is to be a horizon in this sense, one might consider the body as a point⁷⁷ in which two or more aspects diverge and become separate. These two aspects are the body itself and the state, as the body engenders a way of thinking that is separate and distinct from thinking of politics through the lens of the state. One should not make the mistake of believing that – because they become separate in the horizon –the body and state are antithetical to one another. State and body become separate insofar that they allow for two fully autonomous and distinct philosophical

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ The term point is an ambiguous term, and thus needs clarifying. By point, I do not mean a point in time. The body is not a political horizon in so far that we reach a historical moment in which a new mode of thinking emerges. Rather, I mean point in a spatial sense, as if body and state exist on a map as one road, and at this “point” they fork off into two separate directions.

systems for understanding the political. It follows that – because in the horizon the two entities diverge – that prior to the horizon, body and state were synonymous terms. In actuality, however, body and state are not synonymous. Rather, the body was deemed to be subservient to the state; this is the subject of what we might call biopolitics. Drawing on Foucault, Ben Anderson defines biopolitics as “a mode of power based on the attempt to take control of life in general ‘with the body as one pole and the population as the other.’⁷⁸” This is to say that the body, through the capture of life by the state, becomes an object of control and is weighed against the population, or, the whole that is the state. The body as a political horizon is the moment in thinking when it becomes clear that the political body can exist distinct from the state; politics can exist and occur when bodies flip this phenomenon and capture politics, or, engage in politics by their own accord.

The second meaning to the word horizon is a limit of knowledge. The notion of “expanding one's horizons” is a very common adage to refer to the notion of learning more, and expanding the boundaries of one's understanding to be more diverse in his or her thinking or beliefs. Therefore, to say that the body exists as a horizon is to say that the body is the limit to which we can think about politics; it represents the boundary or periphery of knowledge. Instead of saying that the body is *the* horizon or limit, I instead would argue that the body is a *new* horizon. This is to say that it presents a new limit of political epistemology⁷⁹, and an expansion of the boundaries of what we might consider when thinking of the political. What is expansive about this consideration of the body is that it conceptualizes the body as an agent or subject of politics, instead of an object that is subservient to politics. In other words, we can begin to think of politics through the body.

The question that follows from this is, what bearing does this new method of thinking have on the state? Insofar that it moves away from thinking through the state, one should not make the mistake of thinking that it is either advocating or prophesying the dissolution of the state. The state that comes under attack here is not the actual entity of the nation-state, but rather the concept of the state organization as a method of thinking in the same way the body is mobilized. Whereas it has been elucidated what notions the body addresses in politics, how the state model conceptualizes politics has not been addressed. It theorizes politics through enslavement and capture. Deleuze and Guattari argue that “there is a unique moment, in the sense of a coupling of forces, and this moment of the State is capture, bond,

78 Ben Anderson, “Affect and Biopower: Towards a Politics of Life,” *TRAN Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37, no. 1 (2012): 28.

79 By political epistemology, I refer to the idea of how we might come to know about, understand, or define politics.

knot, *nexum*, magical capture.⁸⁰ In other words, when we think through the state, we consider what the state appropriates as its own and incorporates into the public sphere, or in other words, the territory to which the state claims ownership. This is enacted in a number of ways through the notion of “overcoding.”

Before one can understand what it means to be “overcoded,” they must understand what is meant by a code. Massumi argues that a code is “a pattern of repeated acts [...] an order or organization of functions.”⁸¹ This is to say something is codified through a standard of how it should repeatedly act, and how it should function. It is not likely that Massumi would use the word “organization” without knowing the bearing this word has to those who have read *Anti-Oedipus*. In that work, Deleuze and Guattari define a code as “on the one hand, the specific determination of the full body as a territoriality of support; on the other hand, the erection of a despotic signifier on which the entire chain depends.”⁸² The first part of this quote argues that codification occurs on the body, and the second demonstrates that codification is a biased act in which all meaning is enforced or inscribed by the meaning determined by an unruly figure. This reiterates the bio-political aspect of the body-state binary that was previously mentioned; codification occurs on the body⁸³ and strips it of its freedom to act, rendering it passive instead of active. Overcoding refers to this phenomena to an extreme capacity; in *A Thousand Plateaus*, it is defined as “effectively drawing a line; not a line of writing but a line of rigid segmentarity along which everyone will be judged and rectified according to his or her contours, individual or collective.”⁸⁴ Segmentarity implies a certain cutting; the agent of overcoding is defined as the “cutting telescope” which “is used not to see with but to cut with, to cut out shapes.”⁸⁵ In other words, overcoding segregates and separates units; in so far that an object is coded and given strict meaning and function, its ties with other objects are cut off and it exists in solitude. Deleuze and Guattari equate overcoding and capture with slavery – and this can be seen in the stripping of autonomy from the body. However they argue that this act of overcoding cannot occur without “also freeing a large quantity of decoded flows that escape from it.”⁸⁶ We might then consider capture and overcoding as an act of grasping, in which certain things slip out of

80 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 460.

81 Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 51.

82 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 327.

83 Returning again to the expansive notion of the body that is not confined to the human subject, but rather as an entity – collective or individual – that has the capacity to act or is subject to forces.

84 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 200–201.

85 Ibid., 200.

86 Ibid., 448.

the state's hand. In so far that these new flows exist *outside* of the state, it confirms that we must not conceive of Deleuze and Guattari as nihilistically describing the totalitarian power of the state without any way of undermining it. It reaffirms that an alternative to the state can occur and exist through its inability to ever capture all that it seeks to control.

This reaffirms that the state is a “moment” in thinking; there are times when the state is not seen to be effective if it is unable to capture the object of consideration. Attention must be given to the term “moment.” The state is not a *way* of thinking in the manner that the body is, but rather it is a *moment* in thinking. In thinking about the political, there are moments in thought where the conditions are met when the state emerges. When something becomes appropriated into the whole, in that moment the state emerges. As the notion of State philosophy would demonstrate – bringing the minds of the individual under the control of the State – there are far more moments that are state-ist than ones that are not. The purpose of somatic thinking is thus, not to replace the state, but to provide a means of understanding politics in the moments in which the state is not constituted. In doing so, one considers how the body had been taken capture by the state, and now exists in a moment in which we are able to think of it as autonomous from the state like the splitting of sky and earth upon the horizon.

In conclusion, the body is a new political horizon because it allows for the expansion of the political to encompass these moments in which the state is *not* constituted. This is does not mark a change in the ontology of politics – this is to say, it does not mark a change in terms of how politics is actually constituted, and certainly this method of thinking can be applied to historical scenarios. Therefore, previous conceptions of politics have been excessively narrow. The body as a political horizon thus allows for us to consider the political as being present in all moments. To return to the Deleuze and Guattari's adage that everything is political, using the body as a method of political thinking allows us to truly understand how politics is present in all moments of thinking.

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The Earth Liberation Front: A Critical Analysis of Violence, Terrorism, and the Democratic Justifications of Radical Environmentalism

Ryan Phillips

Introduction

For several decades, the radical environmental movement has been demonized in the West as a dangerous force of violence and terrorism. As such, post-9/11 ‘security’ measures have consistently targeted members of this social movement and portrayed them as a serious threat to citizens and society as a whole. One faction of this movement in particular, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), has become the specific focus of many critics due to the group’s extreme and often controversial tactics, such as arson. While some individuals have recently begun to critically analyze and defend the actions of the ELF, arguing that members of the group are in fact part of a legitimate social movement and not terrorists, there is still a void in the existing literature and political discourse regarding justifications, or even advocacy, for these radical methods. As such, this paper will provide a critical analysis of the ELF and their extreme methods of social dissent, and ultimately provide both a sound theoretical and practical argument justifying these tactics. Specifically, several sections of the paper will utilize an environmental perspective of John Rawls’ fundamental assessments of Justice and dissent. Furthermore, the concept of violence will be addressed and carefully scrutinized in order to determine whether or not the ELF are in fact as violent as their media and political portrayals would suggest - or even, if the actions of the ELF can be understood as constituting violence at all. In addition, the empirical and philosophical facts pertaining to the lack of death or harm caused by the ELF’s tactics will be presented, in addition to the statistical and ideological reasons as to why these actions - though illegal and extreme - do not pose any threat of death or harm to any individuals (whether human or non-human). Ultimately, this paper will provide both philosophical and empirical justifications for the radical tactics of the ELF in order to demonstrate that this faction of the larger environmental movement is indeed a legitimate group of social dissenters, and that their actions are completely in-line with both the theoretical and practical conceptions of democracy.

History of the ELF

Inspired by a re-emergence of animal rights and welfare philosophy, in addition to the counter-cultural spirit of the punk movement, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) arose in 1979 England.¹ This new social movement was founded on the principle that humans were in fact one of many sentient species on the planet, and therefore believed that other non-human animals were equally deserving of moral rights. Essentially, the ALF sought to extend the principles of anarcho-socialism and left-libertarianism so as to also adhere to notions of social justice for non-human animals. Based on this philosophical starting point, members of the ALF movement adopted strict vegetarian and vegan diets, protested slaughterhouses and research laboratories, and engaged in acts of vandalism in order to actively promote animal rights.² In the early 1980s, the ALF movement quickly spread to North America and also spawned the Earth First! Movement as their environmental equivalent. Earth First! members became an active force of social justice through means of civil disobedience, engaging in such acts of dissent as sit-ins, chaining themselves to trees in order to prevent logging, and creating blockades at oil drilling sites.³ Given their ideological overlap and tendency to target the same or similar industries and individuals, the environmental and animal rights movements have often been identified as sub-categories of a larger social movement.⁴ For example, the ALF, Earth First!, Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd, and the Sierra Club are typically all regarded as encompassing the same radical environmental movement, though with each respective group addressing specific issues or utilizing specific methods of dissent. However, there is one faction of the contemporary radical environmental movement that has gained the most media and political attention due to its uncompromising and extreme methods of social dissent: the Earth Liberation Front (ELF).

Frustrated with the lack of progress being made by groups such as the ALF and Earth First!, in addition to becoming disenfranchised with more traditional and moderate methods of social dissent, the ELF emerged in the early 1990s as a more extreme group within the radical

¹ M. Loadenthal, "Deconstructing "Eco-Terrorism": Rhetoric, Framing and Statecraft as seen through the Insight Approach," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 62, no. 2 (2013): 92-117.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ P. Joose, "Elves, Environmentalism, and "Eco-Terror": Leaderless Resistance and Media Coverage of the Earth Liberation Front," *Crime, Media, Culture* 8, no. 1 (2012): 75-93.

environmental movement.⁵ While the ALF and Earth First! tend to utilize mostly methods of resistance in response to environmental degradation and animal abuses, the ELF engage in more direct, proactive acts of dissent. In this sense, the ELF can be understood as employing the offensive maneuvers, whereas the ALF, Earth First!, and other radical environmental groups are typically more defensive in their tactics. However, spokespersons and scholars have noted that three core guiding principles still underlie the philosophy and thereby set ethical limits on the group's actions. These core guiding principles, according to assessments by Joose,⁶ Potter,⁷ and Vanderheiden⁸ among others, are typically outlined as follows:

1. To inflict *economic* damage to those profiting from environmental damage/ animal abuses.
2. To reveal, and educate the public on the atrocities being committed against the Earth and *all* its inhabiting species.
3. To take *all necessary precautions* against harming any individuals (whether human or or non-human).

While all three of these values are significant in assessing the democratic nature of the ELF, it is perhaps this third principle that is often either ignored or misunderstood by the media, political opponents, and the general public. This notion will be further discussed in greater analytic detail, though first it is essential to examine exactly what sort of radical actions the ELF has taken in its attempt to restore democracy.

Radical Tactics of the ELF

During the height of their activities (between 1990-2004), members of the ELF were responsible for somewhere between 600 and 1,200 criminal acts causing upwards of \$46 million in damages.⁹ These acts include such things as arson, vandalism, theft, and trespassing among others. As such, the ELF was subsequently labelled a domestic terrorist group by the FBI.

⁵ Loadenthal, "Eco-Terrorism"

⁶ Joose, "Elves, Environmentalism, and "Eco-Terror""

⁷ Potter, "Green is the New Red"

⁸ S. Vanderheiden, "Radical Environmentalism in an Age of Antiterrorism," *Environmental Politics* 7, no. 2 (2008): 299-318.

⁹ Joose, "Elves, Environmentalism, and "Eco-Terror""

Specifically, the ELF has been labeled an *eco-terrorist* group, a term coined in the 1980s by staunch anti-environmentalist Ron Arnold, and officially added into the Oxford English Dictionary in 1997.¹⁰ This transition shows the rapid shift of the ‘eco-terrorist’ label from right-wing lexicon to mainstream vocabulary, regardless of its semantic misguidance and a lack of actual discourse regarding the prejudicial nature of the term. Indeed, since its inception in the early 1990s, and even following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the FBI has consistently ranked the radical environmental movement - and the ELF in particular - as the number one domestic terrorist threat.¹¹ In addition, the FBI has never - and often actively avoided - labeling neo-Nazi groups and anti-abortionists as ‘terrorists’. This is true despite the myriad instances of these groups performing acts that would almost universally be accepted as terroristic in nature. For example, in the United States between 1977 and 2011, anti-abortionists have been responsible for 8 murders, 17 attempted murders, 663 bioterrorism threats, 4 kidnappings, and 524 accounts of stalking.¹² During the early 2000s, Demetrius “Van” Crocker and William J. Krar, two U.S. neo-Nazi white supremacists, separately attempted to build and utilize explosives capable of killing thousands of people. These two individuals specifically planned to target government buildings in order to coerce citizens and policy makers through fear and threat of violence. They were never officially labeled or referred to as ‘terrorists’ by any U.S. authoritative agencies such as the FBI or CIA.¹³ In contrast, neither the ELF nor the radical environmental movement as a whole have ever been responsible for the death or injury of any human or non-human, precisely because of both their philosophical beliefs and practiced methods.

While there exists a myriad definition of ‘terrorism’, there is not yet any universally agreed upon definition of what precisely constitutes an act of terrorism. However, Garrison notes that most agree that terrorism relies primarily upon the perceived efficacy of fear and violence in attaining one’s goal.¹⁴ As such, Garrison outlines the rhetoric of violence in the works of such individuals as Robespierre and bin Laden. Garrison also differentiates between ‘terrorism’ and ‘guerrilla warfare’ on the bases that terrorism do not typically target enemies directly and

¹⁰ Vanderheiden, “Radical Environmentalism”

¹¹ Loadenthal, “Eco-Terrorism”

¹² Loadenthal, “Eco-Terrorism”

¹³ Potter, “Green is the New Red”

¹⁴ A. H. Garrison, “Defining Terrorism: Philosophy of the Bomb, Propaganda by the Deed and Change through Fear and Violence,” *Criminal Justice Studies* 7, no. 3 (2004): 259-279.

purposefully cause civilian deaths.¹⁵ While Garrison outlines the core tenants of terrorism while simultaneously examining the ELF as a terrorist group, the author never actually provides empirical or even theoretical connections between the concepts of terrorism and the actions of the ELF. Indeed, there is a definite pattern within the anti-ELF literature wherein individuals will make this or a similar claim without providing a rationale, other than the counterfactual notion that the ELF are actually a violent group. This notion is fundamentally misguided, given that the ELF - and in fact, the radical environmental movement as a whole - has never been responsible for even a single death or injury to any sentient beings, whether human or non-human.¹⁶ Even with this fact in mind however, some have argued that the acts of the ELF (especially arson) present scenarios in which the risk death or harm is significantly augmented, and that the lack of death or harm thus far is merely attributable to luck.

This criticism too, however, has been discredited. During a trial in which several members of the ELF were being charged as terrorists due to potentially violent crimes, the defense called statistician Dr. Zelda Ziegler to mathematically assess the group's actions. Based on a statistical analysis, Dr. Ziegler determined that the probability of the ELF being responsible for, as stated above, between 600 and 1,200 criminal acts with none of which resulting in death or injury being attributable to luck is 1 in 90 septillion.¹⁷ To put these data in perspective, Dr. Ziegler noted that this probability was roughly "ten thousand trillion times better than picking all six winning numbers in the lottery".¹⁸ Furthermore, Dr. Ziegler noted that if even one fourth of these crimes were arson (a fairly liberal estimate, given that relatively few ELF acts are actually arson), the odds of zero deaths or injuries being attributable to luck would still be one in three million.¹⁹ Based on these empirical facts, in conjunction with the philosophical underpinnings of the ELF's third core value of taking all necessary precautions against causing any harm, it becomes increasingly difficult to sympathize with the arguments of Garrison or the propaganda of the FBI. The ELF have also been accused of other isolated instances of violent acts, perhaps most notably the tactic of 'tree spiking' in North America. However, these accusations were also eventually found to be false. In several separate instances, loggers were seriously injured while using chainsaws to cut

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Joose, "Elves, Environmentalism, and "Eco-Terror""

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

into trees that were implanted with metal spikes, which upon contact with the saws shot out of the tree trunks and into the workers. Initially, these acts were blamed on the ELF with widespread media coverage of the dangers of 'eco-terrorism'. However, further police investigations found that all of these instances actually involved disgruntled ex-employees of the logging companies who had been previously fired, though the media coverage of these discoveries and actual criminal prosecutions was almost non-existent.²⁰ Instead, tree spiking remains a tactic commonly associated with the ELF, despite the empirical fact that no member of the ELF has ever utilized this method.

Violence

Still, some would argue that the damages caused by the ELF constitute violence of a different sort. For example, Morreall provides a very liberal definition of what constitutes violence, suggesting that any form of coercion or even persuasion can be considered violent acts.²¹ According to Morreall's position, violent acts are always those that 'get at' people, whether by direct physical harm or by property damage. It is important to note however that Morreall also makes clear the distinction between violent acts directed towards property that another individual values and non-violent acts of aggression towards objects which are understood to have relatively little or no value.²² With regards to inherent elements of violence in coercive and persuasive acts, Morreall assesses the example of blocking train tracks carrying troops. According to Morreall, this act would still constitute violence, as it denies the autonomy of railroad owners to exercise control over their own property.

Morreall's central argument pertains to the relationship between civil disobedience and violence, and is indeed intended to defend the notion that violence is sometimes justified in acts of civil disobedience. However, the result of Morreall's argument is that violence becomes a concept far too vague to be adequately discussed, given that it subsequently comes to encompass almost any act. While it is true that actual violent acts of dissent are sometimes justifiable - for instance, in cases attempting to prevent further violence from occurring - the malleability of Morreall's violence makes it difficult to conduct specific discourse on the matter. Instead, the argument that violence can be carried out against inanimate objects has been used as the basis for such corporate-

²⁰ Potter, "Green is the New Red"

²¹ J. Morreall, "The Justifiability of Violent Civil Disobedience," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1976): 35-47.

²² *Ibid.*

state sponsored legislation as the PATRIOT Act. In 2001, the U.S. PATRIOT Act capitalized on rampant post-9/11 fear amongst citizens in order to address the issue of dissent by the radical environmental movement. Specifically, the PATRIOT Act expanded the U.S. legal definition of terrorism to include acts that purposefully destroy or attempt to destroy property and/ or communications which deal with either interstate or foreign commerce.²³ Similarly, the Animal Enterprise Terrorist Act legally makes it an act of terrorism to disrupt the capital gains of businesses that rely on animals.²⁴ As a result, such measures have essentially made it not only illegal but also an outright act of terrorism to protest rodeos, videotape animal abuses at slaughterhouses (even from off the property), or demonstrate outside of animal testing labs. Some legal scholars have even noted that, based on the vagueness of the language used in many of these legislature, U.S. courts could potentially find individuals guilty of the crime of terrorism merely for adhering to a vegan diet since this lifestyle prevents animal agribusiness from gaining capitol. Thus, it becomes apparent that overextending the terminology of ‘violence’ has the capacity to silence otherwise peaceful dissenters.

In contrast to the views of Morreall and the PATRIOT Act, there do exist actual working definitions of violence as a concept. Typically, violence refers to any acts of aggression, or gross negligence of and indifference to the situations of others, intended to cause physical harm and carried out against another living person or sentient being.²⁵ As such, it becomes apparent that Morreall’s argument is premised on a faulty definition. In contrast, *aggression* and *harm* are both concepts that can by definition be related to objects. For example, an act of aggression carried out towards another person would constitute violence, whether or not the act resulted in harm being done. However, an act of aggression carried out towards an object could still cause harm (whether psychologically, emotionally, economically, etc.), based on the relationship between the object and its owner, though could never be considered an act of violence.²⁶ Essentially, violence is always preceded by aggression, though aggression does not always constitute violence.²⁷ In addition, it is the intent to cause harm rather than whether or not actual harm results which makes an action either aggressive or non-aggressive. In this sense, we can understand that what Morreall

²³ Vanderheiden, “Radical Environmentalism”

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ M. Ramsay, “Liberal Democratic Politics as a Form of Violence,” *Democratization* 17, no. 2 (2010): 235-250.

²⁶ Morreall, “Justification of Violent Civil Disobedience”

²⁷ Brehm et al., “Social Psychology”

and the PATRIOT Act are truly addressing is aggression, though both utilize the term violence in order to artificially augment their respective cases. As such, while it is true that some tactics of the ELF are in fact aggressive (arson in particular), and could be considered as causing economic harm, absolutely none of the ELF's tactics can be considered violent.

Types of Harm and Violence

The task now is to determine whether or not the actions of the ELF constitute harm. Furthermore, if these actions do constitute harm, it is important to determine both who is being harmed and who is bearing the cost of that harm. A very broad understanding of harm could be conceptualized as any actions that prevent another individual or group from attaining their goals, whether these goals be deliberate and extravagant (preventing someone from enjoying a new car by stealing it) or accidental and insignificant (preventing someone from being on time for work by parking in the last available parking space). As such, the actions of the ELF can certainly be considered as causing harm that, though deliberate, is still minimal and ultimately insignificant. Furthermore, though the actions of the ELF can be considered harmful, it will be shown that these minimal harms are inflicted in order to stop or prevent exceedingly greater levels of harm from being carried out. As such, it is important to begin by distinguishing between various types of harm and violence.

As noted above, violence by definition refers only to acts of aggression, or gross negligence and indifference, intending to cause physical harm. However, concepts such as emotional violence or economic violence can still be useful when considering the consequences of aggressive acts, though many individuals (such as Morreall) systematically misuse these concepts. Consider for example, Morreall's description of psychological violence:

"Psychological violence is often far more damaging than mere physical injury. Consider the case Garver mentions of the parents who, when they learned that their teenage daughter had spent the night with a married man, took the girl and her pet dog into a field and told her to dig a shallow grave. Then they gave her a pistol and told her to kill the dog and bury it. When she turned the gun to her own head and fired, she was not acting under physical coercion, and the law could not touch the parents because they had committed no physical violence against her. But quite obviously the gravest violence had been done to the girl." (Morreall, 1976, p. 37-38).²⁸

²⁸ Morreall, "Justification of Violent Civil Disobedience"

Though true that what Morreall describes in this passage constitutes psychological violence, the author's reasoning as to *why* is still flawed. For simplicity, this assessment will ignore the fact that the parents coercing their daughter to murder her pet is a blatant act of violence, and will instead focus on the girl's suicide. When asserting that psychological violence causes great harm to the girl despite a lack of direct physical injury, Morreall is disregarding the fact that the end-result of the scenario was still physical harm to the girl. Though not directly carried out by her parents, the girl's death still came as a direct result of her parents' psychological mistreatment. As such, this case exemplifies psychological violence specifically because the aggressive actions of the parents result in physical harm to the girl.

Based on the working definition above however, some might argue that the suicide of their daughter was never the intention of the parents, and therefore this act is not violent given a lack of intent to cause physical harm. This criticism too however, is flawed. Consider for example the reasoning behind laws against drunk driving: knowingly consuming an intoxicant purposefully creates a scenario in which the risk of physical harm to oneself or others is increased significantly due to the severely impaired ability to operate a motor vehicle. In other words, consciously creating a scenario in which physical harm is significantly more likely to occur still constitutes violence, given the elements of negligence and indifference. In Morreall's case then, the girl's parents can be understood as having instigated her suicide by gross negligence of, and indifference to, her psychological well-being, thus engaging in an act of psychological violence.

Who Bears the Cost of ELF Actions?

Regarding the actions of the ELF, it can certainly be argued that aggression and harm are involved, though still never violence. This is particularly true in cases of arson, wherein an aggressive act is carried out by members of the ELF in order to inflict economic harm to corporations responsible for damaging the environment. In terms of consequences however, it is also crucial to examine the ripple effects of such actions in order to determine whether any violence may still occur as a result of negligence or indifference. As already shown above, the immediate consequences of the ELF actions do not involve negligence or indifference, given the extensive precautions taken by activists to ensure that no persons are subjected to physical harm, injuries, or death even by accident. But what about the indirect consequences? In order to address this issue

and ensure conclusively that the actions of the ELF can still not be considered violent, I will now examine - and ultimately refute - the possibility that ELF actions have far-reaching economic and psychological consequences that could be interpreted as violent.

As noted above, the actions of the ELF have been responsible for millions of dollars' worth of damages to large corporations. However, while harmful, this empirical fact still does not justify the terminology of economic violence. This is so given that the corporations typically targeted by the ELF are already multi-million dollar organizations that do not significantly suffer (even economically) from these actions. Recall that economic violence as a concept requires some form of physical harm resulting or potentially resulting from an aggressive act. As such, if instead the actions of the ELF were to cause such extreme economic harm to a corporation that it were forced to declare bankruptcy, and as a direct result the CEO was fired and unable to find employment anywhere else which lead to the CEO's lack of access to basic necessities, then could these radical tactics be considered economic violence. Clearly, this logic demonstrates a sort of 'slippery-slope fallacy utilized by critics of the ELF. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine that the CEO, or even the employees, of a discontinued organization would be unable to find work or means of financial support elsewhere. (Indeed, even if this were the case, the element of economic violence would still be due to systematic negligence and indifference of the state's inability or unwillingness to provide adequate social welfare programs).²⁹ Thus, while economic harm is certainly caused, and often advocated by the ELF, the scale of these tactics still does not constitute economic violence. Conversely, the case could easily be made that the actions of those targeted by the ELF constitute economic violence, in that they systematically deplete scarce resources that sentient beings (both human and non) rely on for survival. While this counter-argument is certainly interesting, it nonetheless constitutes something beyond the scope of this paper, given that I am, for now, concerned primarily with justifying the actions of the ELF rather than criticizing those of environmentally unsustainable corporations.

A similar criticism can be refuted regarding psychological violence. As in Morreall's example, the physical harm resulting from the aggressive psychological harm to the young girl by her parents is what distinguishes the act as psychological violence. In the case of radical environmentalism however, it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which the owners of the property

²⁹ Ramsay, "Liberal Democratic Politics"

targeted by the ELF would become psychologically harmed to the extent of physically harming themselves or others. While some critics argue that these tactics still constitute terrorism given that they instill politically motivated fear into citizens, these fears are in reality based on political, scholarly, and media misrepresentations of the ELF. As such, I will now examine the contemporary arguments being made in defence of radical environmentalism as non-terroristic.

Defenses of ELF Radical Tactics

A recent trend within the academic world and environmental movement has been to defend the radical actions of the ELF, highlighting the positive aspects of the group while critiquing their opponents. However, this somewhat apologist approach still tends to avoid actually providing justifications for legitimizing the actions of the ELF. For example, Joose provides an insightful analysis of the portrayal of the radical environmental movement in the media and popular culture.³⁰ Specifically, Joose notes that there exists a strange paradox wherein members of the ELF are portrayed as be tree-huggers, hippies, idealistic or rebellious teenagers, while simultaneously being considered and treated as extremely dangerous terrorists. This odd juxtaposition has developed into what Joose believes to be a ‘dangerous clown’ image, wherein the public generally entertain both of these ideals in conjunction.³¹ As such, media coverage and political actors are able to avoid constructive discourse regarding the motives of the radical environmental social movement by utilizing cop-out labels such as ‘tree-huggers’, ‘hippies’, and ‘terrorists’ - all typical identifiers of individuals whose opinions are of no ‘real’ value.

Will Potter’s *Green is the New Red: An Insider’s Account of a Social Movement Under Siege* provides a highly detailed, journalistic account of the reasons why members of the ELF (and the radical environmental movement in general) are not terrorists.³² Potter provides empirical evidence of the non-violent actions of the ELF, also showing supporting evidence which suggests that there is in fact not even a potential threat of harm by these actions (through both statistical, practical, and theoretical facts and arguments). In addition, Potter draws on various legal statutes and precedents that specifically outline the actions of the ELF as not constituting terroristic acts. As such, Potter argues that the witch-hunt for environmentalists merely represents a

³⁰ Joose, “Elves, Environmentalism, and “Ecto-Terror””

³¹ Ibid.

³² Potter, “Green is the New Red”

contemporary parallel to the McCarthy-era Red Scare, in which communists, socialists, and essentially any citizens espousing left-wing political ideals were treated as treasonous villains. Indeed, Potter notes that the use of the term ‘terrorist’ in general and perhaps ‘ecoterrorist’ specifically have become the post-9/11 equivalent of the scapegoat term ‘communist’ of the Cold War-era in the West.³³

Vanderheiden notes that typically, radical and mainstream environmentalists are ideologically similar if not identical, and that these factions differ only with regards to whether or not they endorse property damage.³⁴ Furthermore, Vanderheiden suggests that the radical environmental movement serves as a sort of pressure valve for the broader environmental movement, and that vilifying this faction may actually lead to escalating radicalism (though, as discussed above, this is ideologically impossible based on the fundamental values of the progressive environmental movement and ELF).³⁵ Vanderheiden also suggests that the term ‘ecotage’ (i.e. a combination of ‘ecology’ and ‘sabotage’) may be better suited to describing the actions of the ELF, rather than eco-terrorism given the latter’s negative connotations. However, though Vanderheiden, Potter, and Joose - amongst other recent individuals - provide defenses of why members of the ELF are not terrorists, these authors still typically stop-short of actually justifying and potentially endorsing the activities of the radical environmental movement.

Justifications of ELF Radical Tactics

Justifications for the radical actions of the ELF are based on the fundamental principles of democracy, which have recently come to be understood as inextricably linked to environmentalism. Norton for example, identifies environmental sustainability as a core element of any democratic society given the universal reliance of inter-generational individuals on environmental resources.³⁶ Indeed, Matthew Humphrey further argues that environmental protection occupies a distinct position within a democratic society, and is therefore subject to different rules. For example, John Rawls’ popular conception of democracy identifies the general understanding that democratic policies and legislations are agreeable by all parties based on their

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Vanderheiden, “Radical Environmentalism”

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ B. G. Norton, “Intergenerational Equity and Environmental Decisions: A Model Using Rawls’ Veil of Ignorance,” *Ecological Economics* 1, no. 1 (1989): 137-159.

reversible nature.³⁷ What this means is that, even if a ruling political party passes a law that is later found to be harmful to society or citizens, the democratic process would still allow either for that law to be repealed/ amended, or else for an opposition party later being elected and changing the harmful law. This also relates to the notion of civil disobedience, in which citizens openly engage in illegal acts in order to protest an unjust law or laws. What this demonstrates then, is that while the individual or group still adheres to the general rule of law, they find some element of a particular law to be unjust and undemocratic.³⁸ Indeed, reversibility of unjust laws is an integral component of the democratic society.

In most cases however, the actions of the ELF are not carried out in public, especially in instances involving crimes such as arson. As such, critics are typically quick to point out that the ELF failed to respect the rule of law, and therefore conclude that their actions must be unjustified and illegitimate. While the use of extreme tactics such as arson by other social movements or radical groups such as the civil rights movement or anti-abortionists may very well constitute illegitimate dissent, this may not necessarily be the case with regards to environmental activists. This is so in that environmental activists have a certain distinct status within any democratic society, and while this position may seem biased or to privilege some activists over others at first glance, it is in fact grounded in sound philosophical and practical reasoning. As noted above, Humphrey notes that a core element of democracy is that any changes to the current system can be reversed or changed if later found to be unjust.³⁹ For example, anti-abortionist activists protesting a bill that would legalize abortion can still at least find solace in the fact that the bill can eventually be amended or reversed. As such, if new scientific evidence, philosophical reasoning, or any other form of argumentation were to come to light regarding the unjust nature of abortion, justice would still (in theory) ultimately prevail in a truly democratic society. As such, though any number of fetuses would have been aborted whilst the law were still in effect, the eventual reversal or amendment would ensure that this would no longer occur in the future. (It is important to note that this is merely an example, and that it is neither the intent to argue nor the assumption by the author that abortion, as currently understood, is either ‘just’ or ‘unjust’, as this debate is well

³⁷ M. Humphrey, “Democratic Legitimacy, Public Justification and Environmental Direct Action,” *Political Studies* 54, no 2. (2006): 310-327.

³⁸ John Rawls, “The Justification of Civil Disobedience” In *Civil Disobedience in Focus* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1999).

³⁹ Humphrey, “Democratic Legitimacy”

beyond the scope and subject matter of the current paper). Thus, as Humphrey rightly points out, a key component to the functionality of a democratic society is the possible reversibility of decisions.

However, this notion of reversibility is not present when dealing with some environmental matters, given the finite nature of the Earth's natural resources. For example, if a group of environmental activists protesting a proposed oil pipeline are dismissed by policy makers, the oil subsequently removed by private companies could never be restored. As such, the ability to reverse this potentially dangerous act is non-existent, and therefore the adequate practice of democracy becomes nullified. Thus, Humphrey argues that the direct actions and political dissent of environmental activists, even radicals such as the ELF, are subject to standards distinct from those of other activists, given the fundamental relationship between the environment and democratic practice as well as the irreversible effects of environmental damage.⁴⁰ Therefore, although the actions of the ELF do not conform to the exact criteria traditionally outlined by Rawls, they do still rely exclusively on non-violent methods as a means by which to defend concepts of Justice within democratic societies. This is true even in instances of extreme methods such as arson, wherein the radical environmental movement is attempting a last resort measure by which to preserve the natural environment until changes to the legal system are decided and implemented. Indeed, while the tactics of more mainstream environmentalists (i.e. campaigning, pamphleting, etc.) are also crucial components of the movement, the radical actions of groups such as the ELF are essential to the protection of the natural environment, as well as the fundamental conception of Justice within any democratic society.

Conclusion

The radical environmental movement in general, and the ELF in particular, serve a necessary role in the advocacy and protection of democracy. As Humphrey argues, decisions that negatively affect the natural environment and the Earth's resources represent non-reversible political acts that are fundamentally at odds with democratic practice. As such, radical, direct action tactics of groups such as the ELF are justifiable in cases involving either government or private corporations/ individuals harming the environment (whether directly or through

⁴⁰ Ibid.

negligence). This justification stems from environmental accounts of democratic society, such as Norton's analysis and theoretical expansion. In addition, criticisms that denounce the tactics of the ELF as violent are fundamentally flawed. While the ELF do certainly utilize extreme measures in order to further their cause and protect the environment from destruction, even the most extreme of these tactics (arguably, arson) do not constitute violence. Though these tactics are aggressive in nature, the lack of physical/bodily, psychological, or even sufficient economic harm (given that the corporations being targeted continue to accumulate great wealth), is evidence that the actions of the ELF are by definition non-violent. This fact is further supported by the empirical findings that, not only have the actions of the ELF never caused a single death or injury, these actions do not even present situations in which death or injury could potentially occur, given the intensive planning and execution of the group's members. Whether or not actual acts of violence as a means by which to protect the environment are justifiable is another matter altogether, and certainly one beyond the scope of this paper. Rather this paper sought specifically to investigate the tactics of the radical environmental movement and ELF as they have been planned and carried out in reality. As such, it remain the case that the radical environmental movement and ELF in particular have never engaged in acts of violence in order to promote their cause, nor is there any potential for violence, death, or injury to result from these carefully orchestrated methods. These empirical facts, in conjunction with the philosophical underpinnings of Humphrey, Norton, and Rawls, suggest that the extreme methods of social dissent utilized by the ELF are justified in the attempt to establish and maintain a democratic society. As such, there appear to be no conceivably justifiable grounds upon which to vilify members of the ELF, nor to denounce their radical methods, in cases where extreme (though non-violent, and certainly not terroristic in nature) measures are required as a last resort to the protection of the environment, and by extension, democracy.

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Violence and Nationalist Movements: The Need to Problematize Nationalist Discourse in the Former Yugoslavia

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Introduction

The regions that constituted the former Yugoslavia have had a tumultuous history. Violence has frequently been the result of the quest for self-determination and national recognition by the region's multiple national groups. This paper examines how violence in social movements can be explained by nationalist discourse through the examination of the violent nationalist movements that took place in the former Yugoslavia. These nationalist movements were ongoing, but in terms of violence the paper refers primarily to the national movements during the Yugoslav wars that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia. It argues that it is necessary to problematize nationalist discourse in order to understand the violence that took place during the nationalist movements in the former Yugoslavia. It does so by examining the social, political, and economic context that led to the rise of the nationalist discourse and movements, explaining how the role of identity and cultural narratives that are constructed through this discourse created dichotomous identities and a culture of insecurity, and how these combined factors contributed to the violent nationalist movements. The paper does not justify this, or any, violent nationalist movement. Rather, the intent is to draw upon prominent authors of nationalism and ethnic violence to explain how several conditions enabled violent nationalism in the former Yugoslavia, and the implications.

Nationalism can be an ambiguous term. Throughout this paper, nationalism is understood as a theory that seeks uniformity of the state and the nation. More specifically, it seeks to draw territorial boundaries, and often to achieve self-government, for the people that constitute said nation.¹ This means that the state should protect specific human traits rather than foster diversity.² Nationalist movements, then, push for the state's population to be homogenous in terms of its heritage and culture. Likewise, nationalist discourse can be very diverse. For the purpose of this paper it is considered to encompass the dissemination of doctrines, attitudes, and ideas, be it

¹ Bhikhu Parekh, "Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse," *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 1 (1995), 27.

² Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996), 9; Parekh, "Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse," 25.

through formal mechanisms like politics or the media, or informal avenues like everyday language and cultural understandings. Framing, which is a crucial element of social movements, is also an element of discourse. Frames present a movement in a certain way, which actively produces meaning.³ How a movement is framed can directly influence mobilization, including who mobilizes. These terms will be important throughout the paper.

The literature on nationalism and discourse suggests two broad viewpoints about nationalist violence that took place in the former Yugoslavia. The first is that political elites were primarily responsible for using discourse to fuel nationalism in republics that were otherwise capable of living peacefully alongside each other. Elites purposefully engaged in framing the conflict to suit their interests. The other viewpoint emphasizes a more diffuse role for nationalist discourse. It does not discredit the role of the elite in encouraging nationalist violence, but advocates that the stress of pre-existing conceptions of identity and longstanding mistrust among the former Yugoslavia's various national groups better explains nationalist violence surrounding the breakup of the country. According to both viewpoints, nationalist discourse and identity were socially constructed, which led to violence. This is because perceptions are critical to the formation of violent nationalist movements, and they can create both national enemies and solidarity with one's own nation.⁴

Why Problematize Nationalist Discourse?

Nationalism can foster identity and create a sense of belonging. It can encourage patriotism without inviting conflict.⁵ However, it can also lead to violence, as this paper explores. Nationalist discourse is problematized in much academic literature because of this. Nationalism was particularly problematic after the fall of communism, and its effects ricocheted worldwide, during which time the violent nationalist movements in the former Yugoslavia took place.⁶ Nationalist discourse suggests that nationalism is incompatible with diversity. Moreover, it suggests that

³ Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Psychology* 26 (2000), 613-614.

⁴ Glenn Bowman, "Constitutive Violence and Rhetorics of Identity: A Comparative Study of Nationalist Movements in the Israeli-Occupied Territories and the Former Yugoslavia," *Perspectives on Peace and Conflict Research* (2003), 118.

⁵ Parekh, "Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse," 26.

⁶ Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and Civil Society: Democracy, Diversity, and Self-Determination," *International Sociology* 8, no. 4 (1993).

national identity should take precedence over other forms of identity.⁷ As such, it is exclusionary. Nationalism is most likely to take hold in regions where there are few alternatives to the dominant discourse due to a lack of opportunities to participate in the public sphere.⁸ It can be argued that this was the case in the former Yugoslavia, as the government had tight control over the media. For these reasons, nationalism also continues to be a global concern in the post-Cold War world.

Social, Political and Economic Context

The rule of Eastern Europe has been largely unstable since the 19th century. The region is comprised of several distinct ethnic groups, but they have seldom enjoyed self-rule. After World War I (WWI), the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was formed under monarchical rule.⁹ This is important because this geopolitical context illustrates how, as early as 1918, nationalist sentiments and feelings of superiority were beginning to form. The Serbs, for example, preferred a unified version of federalism, viewing Serbia as the political hub that would govern the rest of the federation. However, the Slovenes, Croats, and Bosnians (many of whom were Muslims) advocated for more autonomy. These tensions were exacerbated by the economic hardships following WWI, and violence ensued. As a result, King Alexander renamed the federation Yugoslavia in an attempt foster unity and stability, but the violence continued after his assassination in 1934. By the time World War II (WWII) began, during which Yugoslavia was occupied by Germany, the country had succumbed to civil war.¹⁰

Marshall Josip Broz Tito, born Josip Broz, emerged as the successful leader of Yugoslavia. He was the leader of the Partisans, which put a communist regime in place based on the Soviet model, consisting of the republics of Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Serbs and Croats were Yugoslavia's most numerous national groups, but even the Serbs, the largest individual group, only comprised approximately 40 percent of the population, illustrating the country's ethnic diversity.¹¹ By 1948 the country had declared independence from the Soviet Union and appeared to be prospering. However, Tito ruled by exercising strict authoritarian control, and repression when necessary, to control the republics and

⁷ Calhoun, "Nationalism and Civil Society," 1993.

⁸ Calhoun, "Nationalism and Civil Society," 1993.

⁹ "What Happened to Yugoslavia: The War, the Peace, and the Future," *Center for European Studies* (2004), 1-2.

¹⁰ "What Happened to Yugoslavia," 2004, 3.

¹¹ Vesna Petic, "Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis," *United States Institute of Peace* (2009), 1.

any opposition.¹² Each of the republics felt it had been subjected to unfair treatment because of this.¹³ Tito's actions, for example, were interpreted by Serbians as anti-Serbian.¹⁴ Therefore, although his style of governance has been subject to much criticism, Tito played a large role in keeping Yugoslavia together. After his death in 1980, it was clear the country was headed towards dissolution.¹⁵

The elections of 1990 were important, as the republics pushed for independence, or at least increased autonomy, and Slobodan Milosevic remained in power as leader of Serbia's communist government.¹⁶ Milosevic supported a Greater Serbia, in terms of both land and power. Civil war broke out in 1991, with the Yugoslav army attempting to prevent the republics from claiming independence. The conflict was primarily between the Serbs and Croats, Albanians in Kosovo, and Bosnian Muslims, though other groups played lesser roles. This was instigated by vicious nationalist propaganda through various forms of media.¹⁷ By February 1992 Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina had all claimed independence, but the conflict continued. The Bosnian war ended in 1995, during which genocide was perpetrated against Bosnian Muslims, with the creation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state entity and the signing of the Dayton Accords.¹⁸ Violence continued to plague the region until the Kosovo war ended in 1999 with intervention by western powers through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the subsequent surrender of Milosevic. Today, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo are all independent states.

The Mobilizing Capacity of Identity and Cultural Narratives

It was this social, political, and economic context that led to dangerous identity constructs and narratives, and ultimately violence. Identity is an extremely powerful mobilizing factor for social movements, including nationalist movements. Identities can be deployed in a way that

¹² "What Happened to Yugoslavia," 2004, 3.

¹³ Pesic, "Serbian Nationalism," 2.

¹⁴ Stef Jansen, "Why Do They Hate Us? Everyday Serbian Nationalist Knowledge of Muslim Hatred," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 13, no. 2 (2003), 218.

¹⁵ "What Happened to Yugoslavia," 2004, 2.

¹⁶ "What Happened to Yugoslavia," 2004, 5-6.

¹⁷ David Bruce MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian Victim Centered Propaganda and the War in Yugoslavia* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 1.

¹⁸ Guy M. Robinson and Alma Pobric, "Nationalism and Identity in Post-Dayton Accords: Bosnia-Herzegovina," *The Royal Dutch Geographical Society KNAG* 97, no. 3 (2006), 237.

encourages collective action.¹⁹ Identity deployment is used strategically to gain support for movements, so it coincides with the first framework mentioned above, in which nationalist discourse is purposefully framed by the elite. Identity deployment is successful because it draws upon deeply held conceptions of self and kinship that people feel strongly about which, as the paper outlines, was the case among the national groups in the former Yugoslavia in their quest for self-determination and national recognition. Conceiving of identity in this way implies a notion of sameness, in terms of shared history and culture.²⁰

Interestingly, although language, religious, and cultural variations developed over time, each of the groups that are now considered distinct ethnic groups are actually all of Slavic heritage. Different groups, however, developed such ethnic differences based on political rule, such as through the increased reach of the Ottoman Empire when many Bosnians adopted Muslim traditions.²¹ This illustrates the social construction of identity and how it can come to have such strong meaning for individuals and groups simply due to social and political arrangements. Additionally, the modern system of states, which has existed since the sixteenth century, equates identity with territory. This development was a western concept, and it has not always been the case. For instance, territory meant little to traditional African and Muslim communities. Instead, their identity was constituted by their common practices, which they carried with them regardless of the territory they inhabited. This also explains why the Ottomans allowed Christian and Jewish populations under their rule to carry on their own traditions.²² Further, this explains why nationalists among the various ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia perceived a threat to their territory as a threat to their identity. It also illustrates that identity is a social construct that changes over time.

Nationalists were able to strategically rework their nations' histories to frame the conflict and gain support for their causes by portraying their own group as victims.²³ Milosevic and former Serbian President Franjo Trudjman especially capitalized on victim-centered discourse which, it can be argued, then became embedded in the psyches of their nations as an integral part of their

¹⁹ Mary Bernstein and Kristine A. Olsen, "Identity Deployment and Social Change: Understanding Identity as a Social Movement and Organizational Strategy," *Sociology Compass* 3, no. 6 (2009), 871.

²⁰ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* 2 (1990), 223.

²¹ "What Happened to Yugoslavia," 2004, 5.

²² Parekh, "Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse," 27.

²³ MacDonald, *Balkan Holocaust?* 1-2.

identities.²⁴ This again illustrates the power of identity, which is problematic because such discourse was used to legitimize and justify nationalist violence.

The work of Frantz Fanon can be drawn upon to explain the violence in the former Yugoslavia. Fanon writes primarily about decolonization, arguing that violence is not only justified, but also necessary for national liberation.²⁵ While the national groups within the former Yugoslavia were not colonial subjects, they were subject to many of the same grievances associated with colonialism that are discussed by Fanon, making Fanon's argument a relevant one. First, the aforementioned history of political instability in the Balkan region and the ongoing quest for national recognition by Serbians, Croats, Slovenians, and Bosnians illustrates a rudimentary need for change. Fanon describes this need as being embedded in the consciousness of the colonized.²⁶

Likewise, it can be argued that the recognition of repression and need for change can be applied to the national groups of the former Yugoslavia in their quest for statehood. Essentially, the complex and continually changing political history of the region demonstrates that the peoples were always governed by an "Other." In the years preceding the breakup of Yugoslavia the regions were granted a greater degree of self-governance, but the country's federal political system made it necessary for each to make concessions to the others. Therefore, the interests of each national group were never fully represented. Nationalism emerged within Yugoslavia's various national groups with the justification that "they were finally liberating 'the people's memory' from communist oppression."²⁷ It is in this context that nationalist discourse by the Serbian elite was constructed in order to mobilize a violent nationalist movement. Stuart Hall uses the work of Fanon to explain how many prominent social movements, including nationalist movements, have emerged as a result of a group's history being marginalized by an oppressor because this constitutes a loss of identity. In using violence to overcome oppression, national groups rediscover

²⁴ MacDonald, *Balkan Holocaust?* 4.

²⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

²⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1.

²⁷ Stef Jansen, "The Violence of Memories: Local Narratives of the Past after Ethnic Cleansing in Croatia," *Rethinking History* 6, no. 1 (2002), 78.

their identity.²⁸ This explanation can be applied to Serbian nationalism. In doing so, however, Serbian nationalists then pushed others to the sidelines.²⁹

More importantly, Fanon states that violence is central to the human condition. It becomes internalized in subjects. When tensions finally become too much, because repressed subjects realize they have suffered for too long, violence has a restorative capacity, returning victims to their proper place in society.³⁰ In this way, the Serbian past as victims was tapped into by Serbian nationalists to mobilize people. One cultural myth held by Serbians surrounding the 1389 battle of Kosovo is particularly important for understanding Serbian nationalism in this context. This battle took place before the emergence of modern European states, yet it is one of the most important narratives of Serbian nationalism.³¹ Beginning on June 28, 1389, the Catholic Serbs entered into a battle against the Ottoman armies. The Ottomans were the victors, but the Serbs saw themselves as the spiritual winners of the battle. The date is now referred to as Vidovdan and is celebrated each year as a national holiday. Since then, several important historical events, such as the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Bosnian Serb and the surrender of Milosevic, purposefully took place on this date, solidifying its importance. More concretely, the myth represents the Serbian claim to Kosovo, giving it importance in the context of the Greater Serbia movement.³²

The 1389 battle has been interpreted in different ways. There is disagreement over the facts, and the story has changed over the years, but this narrative shaped Serbian nationalism and has served to contextualize the modern conflict. Essentially, Serbia has developed along with the Kosovo myth, so the myth played a role in shaping the country as it now exists.³³ This is important because it represents the perceived historical injustices suffered by Serbians, and how it has shaped Serbian understanding of their own identity and their relation to cultural “Others.” Such myths are part of the nationalist discourse used by the political elite to justify violence and take back what they perceive as rightfully theirs. That nationalist discourse can be manipulated in accordance with

²⁸ Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 223-224.

²⁹ Jansen, “The Violence of Memories,” 78.

³⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 3.

³¹ Florian Bieber, “Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering: The Kosovo Myth from 600th Anniversary to Present,” *Rethinking History* 6, no. 1 (2002), 95.

³² Bieber, “Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering,” 95-96.

³³ Bieber, “Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering,” 96.

political goals is what makes it so powerful, but also problematic. The myth's endurance has resulted in it becoming embedded in the identity of Serbians: "The Kosovo orientation is not [only] a national idea, but also a trait of character which makes a Serb a Serb."³⁴ This enables the political elite to use the myth for mobilization purposes. Therefore, while there are fundamental differences between Fanon's conception of decolonization and the case of the former Yugoslavia, Fanon's fundamental assumptions about violence, human nature, and identity can be used to explain how people, many of whom committed acts of violence on their neighbours, were easily mobilized by elite-driven nationalist discourse.

The sense of a shared national history is also apparent in the idea that Bosnian Muslims hate Serbs.³⁵ Before WWI, Serbs were socio-economically disadvantaged in comparison to Muslims. The tables turned somewhat in the lead up to WWII, and as a result many Muslims joined the Nazis in subjecting Serbs to extreme violence. However, many Serbs were part of Tito's victorious Partisans and came to occupy many high-ranking positions in post-war Yugoslavia. Still, narratives of Serbs as victims continued to circulate and by the late 1980s tensions were high. By the time the conflicts of the early 1990s broke out, Serbs feared rape and massacre by Muslims. As such, Serbian violence was explained as purely self-defense.³⁶ Common Serbian knowledge encompassed "the notion that Serbs had historically been victimized by the hatred directed at them by various national others."³⁷ Thus, it was the fear of Muslim hatred that shaped Serbian narratives, and subsequently shaped Serbian nationalism.³⁸ Again, Serbian nationalism was led by the political elite but violence spread easily due to deeply embedded cultural understandings of perceived injustices.

The primordialist view of ethnic violence is one way of interpreting the motives behind the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Primordialists suggest that ethnic identities are inherent within a culture. As such, identifying with others of one's own ethnicity is instinctive.³⁹ This is relevant to the case of the former Yugoslavia because several national groups appeared to live alongside

³⁴ Bieber, "Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering," 98.

³⁵ Jansen, "Why Do They Hate Us?" 215.

³⁶ Jansen, "Why Do They Hate Us?" 219.

³⁷ Jansen, "Why Do They Hate Us?" 218.

³⁸ Jansen, "Why Do They Hate Us?" 220.

³⁹ Anthony Oberschall, "The Manipulation of Ethnicity: From Ethnic Cooperation to Violence and War in Yugoslavia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 6 (2000), 982.

each other peacefully, but ethnic tensions and hostility had long been brewing. It only took elite leadership to catalyze nationalist violence.⁴⁰ In this respect, it can also be argued that Fanon's argument is a primordialist one, as he suggests that suppressed populations attempt to curb and redirect their violence, but it ultimately surfaces. This is because the settlers and the natives are fundamentally different, and violence is always necessary for liberation.⁴¹

On the other hand, a different viewpoint downplays the role of interethnic conflict and intolerance between ethnic groups. Rather, according to Dusko Sekulic, Garth Massey, and Randy Hodson, elite framing of the conflict provides a better explanation.⁴² Thus, Sekulic, Massey, and Hodson would reject the primordialist view because they reject the common conception that ancient ethnic hatreds fuel ethnic conflict. In Yugoslavia, this is primarily because interethnic relations were quite good before the Bosnian war spurred hatred; the various national groups had managed to live alongside each other peacefully for several decades.⁴³ Eric D. Gordy takes a similar position, suggesting that national groups generally accepted each other, or at least lived alongside one another civilly, before the breakup of the old Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.⁴⁴ This is exemplified by the relatively high occurrence of intermarriage among these groups. Between 1950 and 1957, for example, mixed marriages constituted 13 percent of total marriages.⁴⁵ Additionally, from the early 1960s to the early 1980s, the instance of people identifying themselves as Yugoslav in the census, as opposed to a more distinct nationality like Serb or Croat, increased by more than 4 percent. This constitutes more than 315,000 people.⁴⁶ Though this represents only a small increase, it illustrates the growing existence of an overarching Yugoslav identity. Those who self-identified as Yugoslav tended to be younger and more educated, which illustrates that identities change over time, thus they are socially constructed. It also presents a challenge to the primordialist view because it suggests that ethnic hatreds are not inherent.

⁴⁰ Oberschall, "The Manipulation of Ethnicity," 982.

⁴¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 102.

⁴² Dusko Sekulic, Garth Massey, and Randy Hodson, "Ethnic Intolerance and Ethnic Conflict in the Dissolution of Yugoslavia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 5 (2006).

⁴³ Sekulic, Massey, and Hodson, "Ethnic Intolerance and Ethnic Conflict," 799.

⁴⁴ Eric D. Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 4.

⁴⁵ Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia*, 4.

⁴⁶ Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia*, 5.

Moreover, the nature of Serb, Croat, and Muslim identity and how each was understood was reconstructed during the war in 1990, becoming much more clear-cut and contentious, dividing identities into categories such as Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Muslims. Franke Wilmer refers to this as “hybridization.” The hybridization of identity was largely done by the state, which was problematic for individuals who had previously conceived of their identity as a private issue.⁴⁷

Ethnic categories are at least problematic—no more so in the former Yugoslavia than elsewhere, just more *obviously* so. They are *naturalized* through political discourses, but not necessarily *natural*...Stories contain the emotions of past experiences, including trauma, and collective memories that can be conjured up by warmongering political wizards in the present. To understand how states are created and destroyed, we must understand the construction of narratives that underlie them.⁴⁸

It is clear, then, that national identities were exacerbated by the political elite. As a result, threats by one national group to another were constructed, resulting in an atmosphere of insecurity. This served to fuel nationalism further.⁴⁹

Fearon and Laitin also link identity construction and ethnic violence. Though it plays a role, grassroots cultural discourse alone cannot explain ethnic violence. Rather, incompatible ethnic identities are constructed and then manipulated by elites, which creates a propensity for violence. Arguably, elite construction of identities is more likely to lead to violence because elites tend to portray identities as opposing and mutually exclusive, because they are manipulating identities for their own political gain. Elites benefit from the violence, so their motives are relatively simple.⁵⁰ Applied to the case of the former Yugoslavia, elite manipulation of cultural discourses produced violence. More complex, is why general populations mobilize in accordance with elite interests.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Franke Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War: Identity, Conflict, and Violence in the Former Yugoslavia* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 29.

⁴⁸ Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War*,” 29-30.

⁴⁹ Pesic, “Serbian Nationalism,” v.

⁵⁰ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity,” *International Organization* 54, no. 4 (2000), 846.

⁵¹ Fearon and Laitin, “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity,” 846.

The aforementioned primordialist view provides one answer to this question. However constructivism provides an opposing explanation that is not fixed in human nature.⁵² Instead, constructivism emphasizes that social categories are not fixed:

For instance, a constructivist might argue that the peoples known as Croats and Serbs might, with a different nineteenth-century political history, be known as the South Slavs, or simply as the Serbs. The claim is that not only does the content of social categories change over time but so do the boundaries between them.⁵³

In this respect, conflict and violence between ethnic groups are not inevitable. Politicians and the media often use primordialist narratives to simplify ethnic conflicts, but constructivists argue that these tend to be inaccurate.

Framing by the media is common, as is nationalist propaganda as a mobilization tool.⁵⁴ Propaganda was a tactic commonly used by both the Serbs and Croats in their nationalist campaigns to liken the genocide of Jews during WWII to the Serb and Croat experience.⁵⁵ This is problematic because the propaganda as part of nationalist discourse was a significant mobilizing force. Before 1991, for example, there was very little objective or opinion reporting surrounding the conflict and how it was viewed by the parties involved. Two years later, however, the opposite was true as a media war preceded the real war, creating an atmosphere of hatred and insecurity.⁵⁶

It is a common conception that nationalist violence is more likely when governments monopolize the media. Milosevic, for example, used television as a means to harness support for war.⁵⁷ For example, he launched a television campaign in 1987 to spread the message that Serbs residing in Kosovo, a then-Serbian province, were experiencing injustices inflicted by the Albanian majority. Milosevic strategically chose which stories to air, framing his message in a way that would harness Serbian support.⁵⁸ By the early 1990s, nearly half of the Serbian population claimed to prefer the independent media to the state-run media.⁵⁹ This suggests that the public was aware and wary of the elite manipulation of the media. However, the state does not create values

⁵² Fearon and Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," 848.

⁵³ Fearon and Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," 849.

⁵⁴ Snyder and Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," 5-6.

⁵⁵ MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts?* ix.

⁵⁶ MacDonald, *Balkan Holocaust?* 2.

⁵⁷ Snyder and Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," 7-8.

⁵⁸ Snyder and Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," 26.

⁵⁹ Snyder and Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," 29.

and beliefs. Nationalist propaganda will only be successful if it appeals to pre-existing ideas held by the population. It was the receptiveness of the Serbian public to Milosevic's media campaign, rather than his monopoly over the media alone, that fuelled nationalist violence.⁶⁰ As far as framing by the media is concerned, be it state-run or otherwise, it played a significant role in mobilizing the public but this was only possible because an atmosphere of insecurity already existed. This suggests an interplay of top-down and grassroots nationalist discourse.

These examples illustrate that there is much debate about the nature of ethnic and nationalist violence. The literature seems to center around two general viewpoints, one being the view that elites were responsible for framing identities and nationalism in a way that encouraged violence, and the other being the view that the role of the elite was minimal as a result of strong and longstanding nationalist discourses. What is important is that, no matter how it is accounted for, nationalist discourse succeeded in mobilizing mass violence in the former Yugoslavia. Language is a powerful tool because it has the power to ascribe social meaning to differences that would not otherwise exist. Further, the power of identity is based in its shared social meaning.⁶¹ Therefore, it is necessary to problematize nationalist discourse, as doing so has the potential to limit violence.

Conclusion

This paper has drawn upon various theories of nationalism and ethnic violence to account for the violent nationalist movements that took place in the former Yugoslavia. It focused primarily on Serbian nationalism and the Yugoslav wars during the country's dissolution, though other nationalist movements in the region, as well as the role of Balkan history in shaping these movements, were also discussed in order to place the conflicts within the appropriate political, economic, and social context. With this in mind, the role of cultural narratives and dichotomous identities were explored, with the conclusion that they developed as a result of *both* perceived historical injustices and elite leadership. While the political elite in the former Yugoslavia were responsible for purposefully disseminating nationalist discourse in order to mobilize a violent nationalist movement, these narratives and understandings of identity were deeply embedded within nationalist groups, giving them the capacity for hatred and violence.

⁶⁰ Snyder and Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," 20.

⁶¹ Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War*, 3.

There is scholarly disagreement as to whether nationalist violence was more a product of elite framing or grassroots cultural discourse, but it is clear that there was an interplay of the two to a certain extent. Whether one takes an elite or grassroots stance, the central role of nationalist discourse remains constant. So, the violence preceding the breakup of Yugoslavia cannot simply be explained by nationalist discourse during the 1990s. Rather, one must take into account the nationalist discourses that evolved throughout the course of Balkan history. Essentially, this paper argued that it is necessary to problematize nationalist discourse in the former Yugoslavia because such discourse unquestionably had mobilizing capacity, fuelling violence.

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Why Middle East Studies Failed to Predict the Arab Spring

Hassan Hamaed

Introduction

The wave of revolutions that began in December 2010 and swept through much of the Arab world have brought forth a historic episode that would considerably alter the political and social developments of the region for years and decades to come. This is perhaps the most significant manifestation of the greater Middle East since the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire and certainly the most important global occurrence since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Within a matter of months popular uprisings were successful in toppling a number of authoritarian rulers that had occupied Arab political life for decades. As of this writing, the wave of revolutions that came to be known as the ‘Arab Spring’ have already resulted in overthrowing dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Moreover, these revolutions are threatening the regimes in Syria and Bahrain. In fact, none of the decades old Arab regimes seem to be completely immune from this ‘domino effect’.

Long overdue democratic principles appear to have a tangible opportunity to take root for the first time in the region’s history. Equally as important are the long repressed ethnic, tribal, and religious identities that have been manifested and are seriously threatening the very nature of the states that have formed the Arab world for almost an entire century. Global superpowers are extremely concerned about their influence and interests in this strategic and oil-rich region given the quick and recent changes that have occurred. Hence, many observers would say that the onset of these revolutions marks the birth of a ‘New Middle East’. Nevertheless, before one attempts to predict the characteristics of the ‘New Middle East’ one must ask a very obvious and imperative question: Why have Middle East Studies failed to foresee these historic and transformational developments?

This paper argues that the generally flawed understanding of the Arab world rendered any anticipation of the recent wave of revolutions nearly impossible. Scholars were preoccupied with emphasizing and explaining the strength of authoritarianism in the Arab world while at the same

time downplaying the many weaknesses inherited in the Arab regimes.¹ Furthermore, the mere occurrence of these revolutions refutes many of the basic assumptions that Middle East studies have long made about the Arab world. Most scholars have adopted the following five unreasonable assumptions: (1) the Arab rulers would always be able to exercise total control over their military and security forces; (2) while neoliberal economic policies create new challenges, they do not pose a serious threat to the region's firm authoritarianism²; (3) authoritarian Arab regimes are central to the region's stability and for monitoring Islamism therefore the international community would continue to provide legitimacy and assistance for their survival; (4) the Arab masses are secondary political actors; and (5) the charm of a common Arab identity that crosses the region's borders has disappeared in recent decades.³

Arab Authoritarianism in Crisis

Authoritarianism has been a remarkable and resilient feature of the Arab state system since its emergence from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Juan J. Linz defines authoritarian regimes as follows:

...political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.⁴

The Arab world has displayed an extensive and decades old catalogue of such regimes up until the recent wave of revolutions. Arab authoritarianism, however, has often taken more than one form. Middle East studies have commonly classified authoritarian Arab regimes into two groups: Nazih Ayubi categorized each authoritarian Arab regime as either a "radical, populist republic" or a "conservative, kin-ordered monarchy"; Alan Richards and John Waterbury grouped

¹ F. Gregory Gause. "The Middle East Academic Community and the "Winter of Arab Discontent": Why Did We Miss It?" Center, The Henry L. Stimson. *Seismic Shift: Understanding Change in the Middle East*. (Washington: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2011), 12.

² Ibid.

³ F. Gregory Gause. "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no.4 (2011), 81-83.

⁴ Juan J. Linz. "An Authoritarian Regime: the Case of Spain." *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*. Ed. Erik Allard and Stein Rokkan. (New York: Free Press, 1970), 255.

these regimes as either a “socialist republic” or a “liberal monarchy”; and Roger Owen classified them as either a “single party regime” or a “family rule”.⁵ While these scholars have labeled the authoritarian Arab regimes differently, they tended to use parallel criteria and analysis in their classification. Essentially, they grouped these regimes based on their political culture, political institutions, economic structure, and regime-society relations.

Scholars have placed Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, and Iraq (when mentioning Iraq we mean the country prior to the Second Gulf War) in the radical/socialist/populist/single-party subgroup of regime. These regimes have displayed a number of common features in that they were all republics and they were each politically dominated by a single party that was ruled by a dictatorial president. The single-party in these states was extremely large and had branches established throughout their countries. In general, presidents hailed from the military, a core institution of their political systems. Presidents also relied on the political and material resources of their political party in order to exercise their power. Moreover, they normally selected individuals from the party to perform key bureaucratic functions in an attempt to guarantee loyalty with policy implementation. Rulers also used their party to dispense patronage to supporters and to mobilize public support for the regime. In addition, they arranged phony parliamentary elections where their ruling party always won most if not all of the seats.⁶

Prior to the 1970s the single-party regimes endorsed pan-Arab nationalism, as envisioned by the former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.⁷ These regimes were committed to socialist economic policies and development agendas and the state was given leading roles in the restructuring of economies. The state successfully nationalized many industries, invested capital in industrialization, executed land reform programs, and built massive bureaucracies.⁸ However, during the past few decades and due to major changes in their domestic, regional, and international environment, these regimes have moved away from both pan-Arabism and socialism. In essence, they have implemented selective neoliberal economic policies and have become occupied with

⁵ For a classification of authoritarian Arab regimes see Nazih Ayubi. *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*. (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995); Alan Richards and John Waterbury. *A Political Economy of the Middle East*. Second Edition. (Boulder: Westview, 1996.); and Roger Owen. *State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁶ Michele Penner Angrist, "The Making of Middle East Politics." *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East*. Ed. Michele Penner Angrist. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2010), 17.

⁷ *Ibid*, 18.

⁸ Roger Owen, *State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 24-31.

domestic issues rather than pan-Arab issues (will be discussed in more details in later sections).

Scholars have classified Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE as conservative/monarchies/family rule regimes. The right to rule within these regimes is grounded on claims that a specific family has legitimacy for a monopoly of power.⁹ However, the nature of such legitimacy claims varies from one country to another. Within Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE these legitimacy claims were structured around a family's historic role in establishing the state. On the other hand, within Morocco and Jordan they revolved around a family's religious lineage to the Prophet Muhammad. Nevertheless, these arguments were supplemented with a range of other measures aiming at ensuring political, social, and economic control. For instance, members of the royal families and politically trusted individuals commanded the armed and security forces and occupied key cabinet positions. Moreover, in order to strengthen political loyalty amongst their population, oil-rich monarchies (all except Morocco and Jordan) utilized shares of their wealth to provide generous public social welfare programs and assistance.¹⁰

As in the case of single-party regimes, the monarchies engaged in state-led economic expansion. The state established large public sectors that provided citizens with free education, health care, and an extensive list of social welfare services. The state also played a central role in creating and shaping private economic sectors through regulations and government investment. However, in contrast to the single-party regimes, the monarchies avoided the populist and redistributionist philosophy when fulfilling their economic development goals. Furthermore, the monarchies did not endorse pan-Arab nationalism; rather, they regarded it as a threat to their conservatism.¹¹

The regime in Libya is a unique case, as it embodies some of the characteristics of both monarchies and the single-party states. While Libya is rich in oil, its political system throughout the past four decades has differed significantly from the Arab monarchies. Under Muammar al-Gaddafi's rule Libya became a *Jamahiriya* - a 'state of the masses' – supposedly administrated by the General People's Congress, a number of revolutionary committees, the military, and a number of ministries. In practice, however, al-Gaddafi had the freedom to constantly experiment with new

⁹ Michele Penner Angrist, *The Making of Middle East Politics*, 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 19.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

types of political and economic practices.¹² In the same manner as the Arab monarchy rulers, al-Gaddafi relied on allocating oil wealth to gain political support and he appointed loyal individuals to fill key bureaucratic positions. During the first two decades of his power al-Gaddafi endorsed pan-Arab nationalism; however, in later decades he played a central role in leading the African nations toward further cooperation and integration.

While authoritarianism has taken more than one form in the Arab world, the capacity of authoritarian Arab rules to remain in power for decades has puzzled scholars of Middle East politics for a long time. Muammar al-Gaddafi became the leader of Libya in 1969. The Assad family took charge of Syria in 1970. Ali Abdulla Saleh rose to the presidency of Yemen in 1978. Hosni Mubarak became the president of Egypt in 1981. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali took charge of Tunisia in 1987. The Hashemites have been ruling Jordan since its formation in 1920. Finally, the al-Saud family has been running Saudi Arabia since 1932.

Explaining this outstanding record of authoritarian rule occupied a significant share of contemporary Arab affairs literature. Literally, up until the night before Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation - which triggered the recent wave of revolutions - scholars of Middle East politics were still very busy exploring the strength of Arab authoritarianism. In the process, however, they have made a number of assumptions that turned out to be unfitting in 2011 and were actually instrumental in preventing the prediction of the Arab Spring.

The Myth of Arab Ruler-Military Solidarity

In elucidating the robustness of authoritarianism in the Arab world, most scholars emphasized the will and the capacity of the regimes to use their military and security forces to repress democratic initiatives. Since their independence, Arab states - particularly Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia - have had some of the largest militaries in the Third World in relation to their populations, and the most expensive in relation to their GDP.¹³ Arab state military expenditures averaged 6.7% of GDP in 2000, compared to the global average of 3.8%.¹⁴ Growth in the size and cost of the armed forces throughout the post-independence period has ultimately resulted in the expansion of its political role. However, while Arab militaries were still under-

¹² Roger Owen, *State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 54-55

¹³ Nazih Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, 257.

¹⁴ International Institute of Strategic Studies. "The Military Balance 2001-2002." (London: Oxford, 2001), 304.

institutionalized and their political role took the form of *coups d'état* during the 1950s and 1960s, in the later decades they gradually became stable coercive instruments in the hands of the rulers.¹⁵

In the 1970s Arab armies were no longer a 'force of change'. Academics have identified a number of factors to explain this shift. First, the seizure of power through mobilizing a small number of tanks became impractical once the armies became larger and stronger. Second, Arab rulers – although many of them came to power through military coups - became more cautious and utilized various strategies and organizational patterns to guard against coups and to ensure their tight control over the activities of the armed forces.¹⁶ Greater professionalism was encouraged in Egypt and Tunisia while patrimonialism was employed in Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Libya, and Morocco.¹⁷

In Arab states where the ruler adopted patrimonial strategies, the staffing decisions were guided by nepotism, favouritism and the promise of political reliability.¹⁸ For instance, the kings of Morocco and Jordan consistently select their relatives to fill the main military positions. Similarly, entire divisions of the security forces and the military within Syria and Saudi Arabia are virtually treated as the private property of the ruling family.¹⁹ Moreover, very tight security and intelligence arrangements were used extensively in both Syria and Iraq. Ethnic and sectarian ties were also employed to ensure political loyalty amongst top military elite units and personnel. For example, entire elite units were overwhelmingly Alawi in Syria whereas they were Sunni during Saddam Hussein's era in Iraq. For their part, the Saudi and Jordanian kings relied on the loyalty of the tribes and the Bedouin to balance the power between various military branches. In the case of Jordan, officers of Palestinian origins were not permitted to rise above the rank of lieutenant colonel or major, as their loyalty was perceived as ambiguous.²⁰

This tight control over military and security forces permitted authoritative Arab rulers to use their armed forces to crash hostile political initiatives during the period stretching from 1970 until 2010. In 1970-1971 the Jordanian army effectively managed to defeat the Palestinian

¹⁵Nazih Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, 257.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middel East." *Comparative Politics*, (Jan 2004): 149.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ayman al-Yassini, *Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. (Boulder: Westview, 1985).

²⁰ Alexander Bligh, "The Jordanian Army: Between Domestic and External Challenges." In *Armed Forces in the Middle East*, edited by Barry Rubin and Thomas Keaney. (London 2002), 150.

Liberation Organization (PLO) forces in reaction to an attempt by some elements of the Palestinian organization to overthrow King Hussein. Similarly, Hafez al-Assad used the Syrian army to put down an Islamist rebellion in the 1970s, which ended in the massacre of the city of Hama in 1982.²¹ Likewise, Hosni Mubarak ordered the Egyptian army to crush a low-level military force in 1986 that revolted in response to undesired work conditions and low salaries. The revolting force was successfully defeated within a few days. Perhaps most famously, Saddam Hussein successfully used his military to attack Shia and Kurdish rebellions after his defeat in Kuwait in 1991. International intervention prevented Hussein from taking control of the Kurdish-populated northern territory.²² The Saudi regime has used armed forces repeatedly to attack disobeying Salafists and Shia since the 1970s.

Given these repeated victories when using armies to defeat opposition, most scholars have assumed that the authoritarian Arab rulers would always be able to utilize this coercive capacity. As stated by F. Gregory Gause, "...[t]his record of successful regime maintenance through repression led to an assumption that Arab militaries always would see their own corporate interests as identical to that of the ruling regime...The scholarly community basically assumed that the military and the regime were one".²³ However, this assumption was shown to be incorrect in 2011.

Academics specializing in Arab affairs did not consider the variable ways that Arab armed forces would respond to a crisis involving a massive number of peaceful protesters.²⁴ A preliminary examination of the Arab Spring, however, suggests that Arab armed forces have reacted quite differently to pro-democracy movements. The military in Tunisia has emerged to support the demands of the protesters right from the beginning. Moreover, they refused to employ violence against protesters and have participated in the forced expulsion of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from the country. Similarly, the Egyptian military sided with demonstrators against the ruler Hosni Mubarak - although, the military seemed less open to the pro-reform movements when

²¹ Barry Rubin, "The Military in Contemporary Middle East Politics." *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no. 1 (March 2001), 61.

²² Ibid, 62.

²³ F. Gregory Gause, "The Middle East Academic Community and the "Winter of Arab Discontent": Why Did We Miss It?", 13-14.

²⁴ F. Gregory Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability, 83-84.

compared to the Tunisian case.²⁵

A completely different response to the protesters movement was displayed in Libya. Popular uprisings led to a shattering of the armed forces and a subsequent civil war. Military units in the city of Benghazi quickly defected from the army and turned the city into a stronghold for the rebels. On the other hand, the armed forces deployed in Tripoli - the capital city of the country - continued to be loyal to Muammar al-Gaddafi even after NATO's intervention in the crisis.²⁶

In a similar manner, popular uprisings in Yemen have resulted in a breach of the military and in a civil war. However, the situation in Yemen has remained much less violent than in Libya. The revolts in Syria and Bahrain displayed yet another type of reaction by the countries' armed forces. In both Syria and Bahrain the security forces have managed to operate as a unified institution and have displayed violent hostility to the protesters. Still, in the case of Syria the army has experienced some level of defection, although it does not seem to threaten the survival of the regime at the time of this writing.²⁷

From an analytical standpoint it seems that in homogenous Arab countries and in places where the military is highly institutionalized and professional (i.e., Tunisia and Egypt) the armed forces have sided with the protesters. On the other hand, in states where the military is under-institutionalized and where some branches are private instruments of the ruler, the armed forces have split up or dissolved in response to such massive uprisings (i.e., Libya and to some extent Yemen). Alternatively, in societies where rulers established a military controlled by an over-empowered sectarian or ethnic minority the armed forces have largely sponsored the regimes (i.e., Syria and Bahrain).²⁸

These distinctive responses to the protest movements by the Arab armed forces have been decisive in shaping the process and the outcome of these revolutions. Essentially, they have determined the fate of a number of authoritarian Arab rulers. These unanticipated responses refuted long held assumptions stating that the Arab rulers and their armed forces would always display a state of political harmony. Furthermore, they demonstrated our limited knowledge of

²⁵ Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings and Armed Forces: Between Openness and Resistance." *Security Sector Reform*, The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, (2011), 21-27.

²⁶ Ibid, 30-38.

²⁷ Ibid, 41-50.

²⁸ F. Gregory Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability, 83.

civil-military relations in the Arab world, an area that is very crucial for determining the prospects of successful revolutions in the region. Exaggerating the capacity of Arab rulers to control the will of their armed forces prevented Middle East scholars from accurately anticipating the response of armed forces to massive pro-reform movements.

Misinterpreting the Economic Factor

The supremacy of the state's role in the economic sphere was another pillar that Middle East studies have long emphasized in explaining the strength of authoritarianism in the Arab world.²⁹ The social contract in the contemporary Arab world has for decades been instituted on a strong state, responsible for managing the economy and for redistributing the wealth. This is particularly true of the oil producing monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula that are often labeled "rentier states".³⁰ The rentier state argument, which appeared in the 1980s, suggested that the availability of oil in large quantities permits Middle Eastern regimes to avoid relying on tax revenues extracted from their populations to fund the activities of the state. Furthermore, oil wealth allows these regimes to provide their citizens with many generous social services and programs in exchange for political support.³¹ Still, non-oil producing states also benefit from the oil revenue as they have access to labor migration, transit-associated earnings, and direct financial assistance from the wealthy monarchies.³² The rentier Arab states argument generally refers to the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council as well as Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Yemen, and Egypt.

Given this rentier wealth, post-independence Arab states were capable of establishing a huge state apparatus that embraced large bureaucracies, armed forces, and a significant number of public enterprises. What surprised scholars is the small variation in the level and span of state intervention across the region despite the enormous differences in access to nonproduction wealth.³³ Middle East studies have long assumed that the oil wealth and the large role of the state in the economy has allowed Arab rulers to link the interests of a significant share of their

²⁹ F. Gregory Gause, "The Middle East Academic Community and the "Winter of Arab Discontent": Why Did We Miss It?", 5-6.

³⁰ Nikos E Tsafos, "The Arab Economic Challenge." *SAIS Review* 27, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2007), 227.

³¹ Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World." In *The Rentier State*, edited by Hazam Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, 49-62. (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 57-59.

³² For political dynamics of "rentier states" see Rex Brynen, "Economic Crisis and Post-Rentier Democratization in the Arab World: The Case of Jordan." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (1992): 69-97.

³³ Alan Richards and John Waterbury. *A Political Economy of the Middle East*. Second Edition. (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 173.

population with their own survival and to appease other constituencies with economic assistance in times of crisis.³⁴

However, while the oil-producing states continue to rely on oil returns to escape economic reform, the economic crises of the 1970s the global trend of economic liberalization, as well as the pressure placed by foreign aid donors over the past few decades has obligated non-oil-producing countries to streamline their economies. Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Jordan, and Morocco, have privatized many state establishments in recent decades and have reduced state spending and subsidies, crafted incentives for foreign investors, and supported growth in the private sector. Although corruption was very evident in these programs, many Arab affairs academics argued that these reforms were very selective and, thus, they strengthened authoritarianism as they have coped with the challenges of a growing population. This academic logic can be best illustrated through a quote from Steven Heydemann's influential article entitled *Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World*:

Across the region selective processes of economic liberalization provide enhanced economic opportunities for regime supporters, reinforce the social base of authoritarian regimes, and mitigate pressures for comprehensive economic and social reforms...These selective changes also secure the privileged position of military-industrial establishments that have become large-scale economic actors. Limited reforms also co-opt important segments of the private sector that strongly support selective processes of economic liberalization.³⁵

The recent wave of revolutions largely refutes this economic argument of regime stability, especially in relation to non-oil-producing countries.³⁶ For instance, Egypt and Tunisia have embraced neoliberal economic reform more than any of the other Arab states. However, their regimes were the first to collapse. Although these two countries had reached acceptable rates of economic growth over the past few decades, their politically focused reforms did not increase the durability of their regimes. Instead, these policies served to weaken the stability of these regimes

³⁴ Giacomo Luciani, "Linking Economic and Political Reform in the Middle East: The Role of the Bourgeoisie." In *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, edited by Oliver Oschlumberger, 161-176. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007), 161-163.

³⁵ Heydemann, Steven. "Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World." *The Saban Center* (The Brookings Institution, October 2007), 13.

³⁶ F. Gregory Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability, 84.

because they generated a new class of unpopular and corrupt bourgeoisie, many of which were members of - or economically linked to – the ruling families. Furthermore, the assumption that the beneficiaries of economic liberalization would rally to back the authoritarian regimes in times of difficulty turned out to be false in 2011. As noted by F. Gregory Gause, "...[t]he state-bred tycoons either fled or were unable to stop events and landed in post-revolutionary prison. The upper-middle class did not demonstrate in favor of Ben Ali or Mubarak. In fact, some members became revolutionary leaders themselves".³⁷

In summary, while the majority of academics specializing in Middle East studies have acknowledged that neoliberal economic policies have produced political complications for the region's governments, few have anticipated their far-reaching consequences and their capacity to shake these regimes to the core. Scholars have overrated both the positive outcomes of the economic growth generated by the reform policies and the political power of those who gained the most from them. They have also misjudged the negative consequences as well as the public rejection of favoritism and corruption in the privatization processes and in the reform programs as a whole.³⁸

Underestimating the Political Role of the Arab Masses

The absence of massive political movements occupying the Arab streets, at least since the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser, had prompted those engaged in Middle East studies to consider the Arab masses as secondary political actors. In fact, a low degree of political mobilization amongst the masses was long identified as a key source of authoritarian stability.³⁹ Eva Bellin suggested that this lack of popular mobilization in the Arab world was largely due to the success of the regimes in equating public mobilization with threats to order and security, which made the cost of repressing hostile movements relatively low. Even when Islamists managed to mobilize large numbers in an effort to realize political change, such as in the case of Syria in the 1980s and Algeria in the 1990s, the state was able to minimize the loss of domestic and international legitimacy by highlighting the potential social, security, and political dangers of Islamism.⁴⁰

³⁷ F. Gregory Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability, 85.

³⁸ Ibid, 86.

³⁹ Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East." *Comparative Politics*, (Jan 2004):

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Given these facts, the majority of the literature written on the region's political actors has focused mainly on the rulers and on a small number of influential political elites. Countless books were written on the psychology, personal characteristics, political abilities, leadership styles, and international networks associated with Arab rulers. Only a small amount of literature was produced on Arab opposition and it largely ignored both the political capacity and the will of the masses. Instead, this literature concentrated on frustrated political elites and on Islamists. Nevertheless, the revolutionary events of 2011 refuted the assumption that popular mobilization existed at a low level and illustrated the determination and the competency of the Arab masses to determine their future.

Massive growth in the use of the latest communications technology and social media throughout the past decade has empowered Arab citizens and has turned out to be crucial in mobilizing the masses and in shaking the coercive capacity of authoritarian regimes. At the time of the revolution in Egypt about 12% of the country's population owned computers while in Tunisia the percentage of computer users was estimated at 25%. Furthermore, during the past decade, the number of Arab satellite TV channels outside of government control has increased enormously. More than 100 TV channels, some of which are the most effective in the world, provide Arab citizens with very high quality news coverage supplemented by political analysis periods by influential specialists.⁴¹ These channels have opened the eyes of the Arab people to the outside world and have allowed them to see the relative economic and political misery of their countries, which in turn has created the necessary mindset for revolution.

Moreover, the spread of new media in the Arab World has facilitated a high degree of popular mobilization by reducing the transaction cost of communication and organization and by enhancing the visibility of even minor demonstrations.⁴² Social media in particular has permitted likeminded Arab individuals to locate one another and to share their beliefs in a semi-public setting. This new sphere of interaction has allowed them to express long subjugated aspirations and to break the social isolation imposed by the regimes. Furthermore, it has allowed politically focused users to organize themselves in small groups on the web prior to expanding their

⁴¹ Michael Sakbani, "The Revolutions of the Arab Spring: are Democracy, Development and Modernity at the Gates?" *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 4, no. 2 (April-June 2011), 134.

⁴² Marc Lynch, "After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State." *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 2 (June 2011), 303-306.

movements to attract the wider public. The new media has also enhanced the possibility of collective action by increasing the cost of repression for the regimes. Documenting the brutalities and circulating them throughout the web has placed a lot of domestic and international pressure on the regime.⁴³

When the violent events began in Tunisia those in the country as well as those across the Arab world followed live on TV channels and on their smartphones. Smartphones and computers have permitted Arab youth and opposition groups to commune and organize free of the regimes' control.⁴⁴ When they then mobilize in large numbers it becomes very difficult to repress them. In sum, new media has turned out to be crucial in raising the level of popular mobilization in the Arab world and in shaking the repression capacity of the regime. Failing to see these revolutionary changes has precluded Middle East studies from anticipating this high level of popular mobilization.

Misjudging the Durability of International Support

Access to international support was another source of regime stability spotted by Middle East studies. The authoritarian Arab regimes have long enjoyed a distinctive position in the international arena. Like many authoritarian regimes around the world, they have benefited from the Cold War by earning aid from western and eastern superpowers in exchange for taking sides for or against Communism. However, unlike authoritarian regimes in other regions, these Arab regimes did not lose their international patronage when the Cold War ended. This was the case because the Arab world continued to represent a strategic region for western powers and the authoritarian regimes were thought to be capable of safeguarding western interests. Particularly, these regimes were presumed necessary for monitoring Islamist threats, ensuring a reliable oil supply, and for preserving Israel's security.⁴⁵

These interests have led to excessive western generosity in delivering patronage to many authoritarian Arab regimes. Regimes in Tunisia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, and Algeria have each received substantial political, military, and economic support from the West. The

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Michael Sakbani, "The Revolutions of the Arab Spring: are Democracy, Development and Modernity at the Gates?", 134-135.

⁴⁵ Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middel East." *Comparative Politics*, (Jan 2004), 148.

rationale amongst western officials is that these authoritarian regimes are willing and capable of containing Islam, guaranteeing consistent oil supplies, and upholding peace with Israel.⁴⁶ Taking advantage of the West's various interests and security worries has guaranteed international backing for authoritarian Arab regimes. This generous external sponsorship, in turn, has boosted the resiliency of these authoritarian regimes.⁴⁷

Given this history and these facts, Middle East studies have assumed that the survival of the authoritarian Arab regimes is necessary for safeguarding Western interests. Hence, the assumption is that they would continue to receive international support for years and decades to come. Even those regimes that did not represent reliable allies for the West, including the Syrian and the Libyan regimes, were assumed important for the maintenance of Western interests; particularly, they were supposed to represent a better alternative than political Islam.⁴⁸ Yet, the events of 2011 demonstrated that these assumptions were incorrect. Middle East politics specialists did not reflect on the variable ways in which external sponsors would react to massive pro-democracy movements in the region. Yet, an analytical survey of the Arab Spring thus far indicates that the Western response to pro-democracy movements was inconsistent and very selective. The West backed protestors in Egypt and Tunisia and placed pressure on its decades long allies, Mubarak and Ben Ali, to resign. In both cases the West trusted the professional militaries, those that have for years relied on Western assistance and training, to lead the transition from an authoritarian rule to democracy.⁴⁹

While the sudden breakout of a revolution in Tunisia and Egypt was not in the interests of the West, the West seemed to have learned a lesson from the Iranian revolution of 1979. This lesson is that once a spontaneous revolution erupts it becomes very difficult to stop. Moreover, if you attempt to challenge it and fail, the post-revolution regime is very likely to perceive you as an enemy. Therefore, it is in your best interests to support the revolution while at the same time attempting to shape its processes and outcomes through influencing and bargaining with key

⁴⁶ Clement Henry and Robert Springborg. *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 32.

⁴⁷ Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East." *Comparative Politics*, (Jan 2004), 149.

⁴⁸ Brownlee, Jason. "Political Crisis and Restabilization: Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia." In *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, edited by Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist, 43-62. (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2005), 58-59.

⁴⁹ Keiswetter Allen L, "The Arab Spring: Implications for US Policy and Interests." *Middle East Institute*, (Jan 2012). <http://www.mei.edu/content/arab-spring-implications-us-policy-and-interests>.

institutional figures and revolutionary actors. The West appeared to assume that supporting the regimes in both Egypt and Tunisia would not guarantee their survival and that doing so would create mistrust within the post-revolution regime - such as the case of Iran in 1979. Therefore, the West supported the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and utilized their moral authority over the military to shape its processes and outcomes.

In Libya, where the regimes were not a reliable ally for the West, the West committed NATO forces to provide aerial firepower, military technology, and training to assist the rebels in overthrowing Muammar al-Gaddafi. Similarly, the West placed extensive political and economic pressure on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to resign. However, the Russian, Chinese, and Iranian backing of the Assad regime has prevented the West from repeating its Libyan military scenario in Syria. On the other hand, although the West avoided a clear backing of Al Khalifa's Bahraini regime, it did not resist the intervention of the Saudi armed forces on behalf the monarch.⁵⁰ Moreover, the West did not place pressure on rulers to quit as they did in Egypt and Tunisia. The West appears to have recognized that the fall of the regime would enhance Iran's influence within the country, given that the vast majority of the protestors were Shiite and nurtured a strong relationship with Iran. As for the case of Yemen, the West relied on the mediation efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to achieve a restrained transition of power.

The presence of such varying responses to the Arab revolution by the West, like the responses of the Arab armed forces, have been critical in shaping the process and outcome of the revolution. Moreover, the responses have played an important role in deciding the fortune of a number of rulers. Nonetheless, these surprising responses contest the assumption of a steady international backing of the authoritarian Arab rulers, which was long held by Middle East Studies. Overstressing the durability of the international sponsorship of Arab authoritarianism precluded Arab affairs scholars from anticipating successful revolutions within the region.

A Neo-Pan-Arabism

Another element overlooked by Middle East Studies that has also prevented anticipation of the recent wave of Arab revolutions has to do with cross-border identity. A significant share of Arab affairs literature, particularly what was written about the era of President Gamal Abdel

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Nasser, was devoted to explaining and analyzing Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism. These studies focused predominantly on how Arab leaders have employed the idea of a mutual Arab identity and fortune in order to gain political popularity and backing across state borders. However, most scholars in recent decades have assumed that the notion of common Arab identity had lost its political significance and populist appeal.⁵¹ In an influential article published in 1979, Fouad Ajami announced the end of pan-Arabism: "An idea that has dominated the political consciousness of modern Arabs is nearing its end, if it is not already a thing of the past. It is the myth of pan-Arabism...".⁵² While Ajami was perhaps the first scholar to assertively make this conclusion, many other Middle East scholars seem to have accepted it.⁵³

A number of significant changes within the Arab environment over the past few decades have led academics to reach such a conclusion. One of such changes was the weakening of Egypt's influence and power due to its military defeat against Israel, major economic challenges, and the death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Still, the financial influence of Saudi Arabia, a monarchy that viewed Arab nationalism as a threat, was increasing considerably. Moreover, beginning in the 1970s many Arab regimes focused more and more on domestic issues and narrow state nationalism.⁵⁴ The regimes also began to pay greater attention to enhancing the power of their national symbols and to celebrating national days, all of which came at the expense of pan-Arab emblems.⁵⁵

In addition, Egypt and Jordan have in recent decades contracted peace treaties with Israel, breaching a central taboo of pan-Arabism. Also, while the American-led military campaigns against Iraq in 1990-91 and 2003 provoked opponents in the Arab world, it did not disrupt the regimes that collaborated with the foreign attackers. These factors and occurrences have led Middle East politics scholars to assume that the Arab regimes and states had become robust enough to guard against regional ideological pressures. Therefore, they considered pan-Arabism a dead

⁵¹ F. Gregory Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability, 87.

⁵² Fouad Ajami, "The End of Pan-Arabism." *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 2 (1978): 355-73.

⁵³ For a critical assessment of Arab nationalism see Martin Kramer, "Arab Nationalism: Mistaken Identity." *Daedalus* 122, no. 3 (1993): 171-205; Khashan Hilal, *Arabs at the Crossroads: Political Identity*. (Gainesville: Univeristy Press of Florida, 2000).

⁵⁴ Roger Owen, *State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 63.

⁵⁵ Emmanuel Sivan, "The Arab Nation-State: in Search of a Usable Past." *Middle East Review* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1987), 25-28.

matter.

Nonetheless, the spillover of revolution from one Arab country to another contradicts this belief and illustrates that the appeal of a common Arab identity is still significantly strong. Although Arab opposition groups and intellectuals attentively observed the Iranian protest movements in 2009, the Arab people did not take to the streets in an attempt to duplicate the revolt of their neighbors. However, the 2011 breakout of the Tunisian revolution easily spilled over to a number of other the Arab countries.⁵⁶ The protest movements across the Arab world used the same slogans, raised identical demands, and employed similar tactics. The motto of “the people want to topple the regime” was passed from Tunisia to Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain.⁵⁷

Furthermore, the degree of collaboration and mutual backing across the Arab world was unprecedented. When the uprising broke out in Libya, demonstrators in Tunisia and Egypt established networks to provide food and medical supplies to their neighbour, despite being exhausted from their own revolutions. Some rebels and experienced combatants even crossed the border to provide assistance and expertise to revolutionaries in other Arab countries. People from all across the region organized internet-based fundraising campaigns, volunteer forums, and news pages to influence happenings on the ground.⁵⁸ This communal and interconnected wave of revolutions suggests that the Arab masses still maintain a strong sense of common identity, even though they live in 22 different states.

Nonetheless, this recent display of common Arab identity seems very different from the pan-Arabism manifested under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser. A half-century ago Nasser employed his charisma and the resources of his powerful government to promote nationalist ideas, to encourage the Arab masses to resist their own governments, and to establish Arab unity under his leadership. The neo-pan-Arabism, on the other hand, appears to be a leaderless and grass roots movement rather than driven by elite forces. Furthermore, in contrast to its predecessor, the pan-Arabism of the twenty-first century does not seem to threaten the regional map; the Arab masses’

⁵⁶ F. Gregory Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability, 85.

⁵⁷ Susan De. Muth, "Towards a New pan-Arabism." *Middle East*, no. 442 (May 2011), 22.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

demands are mostly domestic and do not endorse Arab unity. Also, the common enemy of the Arabs in 2011 is neither colonialism nor Israel, but the Arabs' own rulers themselves.

In sum, Middle East studies have, at least since the 1970s, inaccurately assumed that the appeal of a collective Arab identity had disappeared. In doing so scholars have failed to foresee how a major political event taking place in one Arab country could spill-over to other Arab countries and, hence, result in regional transformations. While the four unreasonable assumptions discussed earlier prevented Middle East Studies from anticipating the occurrence of discrete revolutions, the perceived decline of a common Arab identity precluded scholars from expecting a communal wave of revolutions.

Conclusion

This chapter has engaged the occurrence of an Arab Spring and demonstrated how 'imperfect knowledge' of Arab society and state prevents social scientists from predicting the occurrence of revolutions. Overall, this paper has argued that the largely limited knowledge of the Arab world precluded scholars of Middle East Studies from expecting the recent wave of revolution. During the past few decades these scholars have dedicated much of their academic resources and energy toward explaining the robustness of authoritarianism in the Arab world; however, in this process they have overlooked many of the prevalent vulnerabilities in the structures of Arab regimes. Scholars have made unrealistic assumptions about Arab civil-military relations, the impact of neoliberal economies on the stability of the regimes, the political role of the Arab masses, the durability of international sponsorship of the regimes, and the strength of a cross-border Arab identity. The region seems to have changed much faster than what scholars have expected. Hence, scholars in the field of Middle East Studies must reassess their assumptions and rethink the theoretical principles that have long guided their analysis of the Arab world.

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The Revolution of Communications Technology and Democratic Protest: The Case of Egypt

Madeliene Alyson Merrick

Introduction

The latest phenomenon of social media has created new means for association and dissent. By appropriating public space in the virtual world, users are able to take such spaces and apply them to any means they wish. Such means can include fan clubs, news organizations, and even political associations. This paper, therefore, discusses the ability of activists to appropriate public space for dissent within social media sites. More importantly, it argues that social media has created a new medium for *coordination and discussion* unavailable to previous generations, further allowing activists the ability to prepare for mass protests in a safe yet public space.

This new medium allows for protesters to be more effective for multiple reasons. First, protesters are better able to participate due to the minimal amount of time and effort it takes to use the Internet – which can be used almost anywhere and at anytime – further allowing for greater participation rates. Second, through the development of forums and groups used by like-minded individuals, social media sites have created the means for groups to foster a sense of community, thus creating a strengthened sense of unity. Third, due social media usually being a space for general public association, users are able to spread awareness of their movement through posting information on public boards that are also used by non-dissenters. Fourth, by creating a public space in which participants do not have to physically attend, participants are better able to conceal their identity, further allowing for them to remain safe from authorities, as well as, allowing for those who would normally not be respected due to an array of societal norms (i.e., youth) are better able to participate and even create new social movements. Finally, since social media sites are also used for means other than dissent, it is difficult for states to simply dismantle them, most social media sites are used by more users for other means than dissent, it is difficult for states to dismantle the site, allowing their role as a public space for political opposition to perpetuate.

This paper will be divided into multiple sections, further outlining all necessary details. The first section consists of a short outline of the state of Egypt before the revolution, and will be followed by a description of the increased usage of social media and the Internet in Egypt that

arguably led to the overthrow of the Mubarak regime. The paper will continue from this into a theoretical discussion of the appropriation of public space, focusing on how participants positively used the creation of virtual space for better coordination and discussion. Following theory, the discussion will shift to practice, discussing the appropriation of space within social media, through an analysis of the 2011 Egyptian protests that took place between January 25th and February 11th.¹

Egypt's Tyrannical State and its Increased Use of Communications Technology

The state of Egypt has been plagued by corruption, poverty and oppression in recent decades. Since 1967, Egypt had been under a near constant state of emergency, which allowed for the government to censor media, detain citizens without a formal charge, and squash any attempts at civilian protests.² In more recent times, under the fourth President Hosni Mubarak (14 October 1981 – 11 February 2011), citizens of Egypt were under tight dictatorial rule.³ Thus, during this time, “presidential and parliamentary elections lacked transparency; corruption permeated all government bodies; and political conditions for Egyptian citizens were oppressive, preventing free expression, protest opportunities, and general political participation”.⁴ In 2007, President Mubarak drafted 34 constitutional amendments that increased his control; such amendments “included powers to try civilians in military courts, revoke judicial supervision of parliamentary elections, and impose restrictions to prevent unaffiliated independents from running for office”.⁵ Alongside the political tyranny seen within the state, Egypt's social and economic strength was also weakening, further decreasing the population's ability of maintaining the minimal standard of living necessary for survival. One example of this change is seen in the poverty rate; the poverty rate had increased from 19% in 2005 to over 25% by the beginning of 2011.⁶ Such conditions as these, combined with increased social awareness, fueled the Egyptian masses' demand for change.

¹ See appendices

² Eltantawy, Nahed, and Julie B. Wiest. "Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory." *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1207-1224.

³ Ghannam, Jeffrey. "In the Middle East, This is Not a Facebook Revolution." *The Washington Post*. 02 18, 2011. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/18/AR2011021802935.html> (accessed 12 2, 2013).

⁴ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1210-1211.

⁵ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1211.

⁶ The World Bank. Poverty Headcount Ratio at National poverty Line (% of population), 2013. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC/countries/EG?display=graph> (accessed 12 02, 2013).

Alongside the rapid decline in living standards in Egypt, the state underwent an increase in access to communications technology. Within the last decade, communications technology has rapidly advanced, further allowing for the creation of social media networks. These networks are virtual spaces in which individuals can share information, connect, and foster a community. Such networks consist of sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit, and various blogging sites. To show the scale of these networks, by the beginning of January 2009, Facebook alone recorded more than 175 million active users globally, and at the same time, over 10 hours of content was uploaded to YouTube every minute.⁷ In regards to Egypt, and more specifically in the usage of such media in 2011, it was estimated that between 20-30% of Egypt's population (15-25 million people) had access to the Internet through a personal device.⁸ Of these people, approximately 9 million were mobile-phone Internet users.⁹ Therefore, it was no surprise that in March of 2009 – when Facebook launched an Arabic version – Egyptian Facebook users tripled in two years, thus creating more than 5 million Egyptian Facebook users.¹⁰ Ironically, the reason for the substantial increase in access to social media within Egypt stems largely from the government's intensive programs designed to improve the states socioeconomic development through the expansion of information technology. Starting in 1999, the Egyptian government created initiatives that included low-cost computers, free Internet access, and the expansion of Internet access centers.¹¹ Such efforts successfully led to the growth of communications technology within the state, further allowing for civilians to better connect.

The Appropriation of Public Space

Social media has inadvertently created virtual public space, in which all persons are capable of assessing no matter their race, religion, or ideals. Virtually or physically "space" is conceptualized as a realm which offers the dynamic ability for all individuals to change and shape opinions, contribute to global knowledge, and personally connect with others through their shared beliefs. Such spaces, owing to the users' ability to broadcast and share information as well as,

⁷ Kaplan, Andreas M, and Michael Haenlein. "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons* 53 (2010): 59-68.

⁸ Barrons, Genevieve. "'Suleiman: Mubarak Decided to Step Down #egypt #jan25OH MY GOD': Examining the Use of Social Media in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2012): 54-67.

⁹ Aouragh, Miriyam, and Anne Alexander. "The Egyptian Experience: Sense and Nonsense of the Internet Revolution." *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1344-1358.

¹⁰ Aouragh and Alexander, 2011: 1347.

¹¹ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1212.

connect at a personal level such spaces have allowed for social media to become a sphere of dissidence. Spheres of dissidence are “spaces in which it is possible to articulate an intellectual challenge to dominant ideas about the social and political order”.¹² However, with the creation of the Internet and the advancement of social media sites, these 'spheres' have been adopted into the virtual world. With this move towards the virtual world, dissenters are better able to engage in mobilization, further improving the advancement of ideas and coordination within a social movement.¹³

Before the rise of the Internet as a means for connection, spheres of dissidence were usually physical spaces such as coffeehouses, meeting halls, and even private homes. Since users can access any space within the Internet through the use of their own private technology or even public technology (found in libraries and cyber cafes), social media has also allowed for resource poor actors to join the conversations.¹⁴ By allowing those who formerly were unable to participate in public dissent due to restrictions caused by financial, spatial, or temporal constraints,¹⁵ social movements today are better able to increase their numbers and improve their legitimacy. This difference between the old use of physical spaces and the new use of virtual spaces is paramount, for the new sphere allows for a greater number of participants of varying social statuses.

Social media has created a sense of community in the virtual space through the sharing of information, creating space for conversation, and by protecting protesters. As noted previously, such websites appropriate public space in which the sharing of information creates a means for public dissent. Since any user can upload his/her own opinions, or even documents, information has become infinite within the network. Alongside the ability to easily share information, “social media introduced speed and interactivity that were lacking in the traditional mobilization techniques, which generally include the use of leaflets, posters, and faxes”.¹⁶ This increase in speed allows for users to be in contact more frequently, thus creating a better sense of understanding. Social media has also been able to build a community for social dissent through fostering a society.

¹² Aouragh and Alexander, 2011: 1347.

¹³ Fahmi, Wael Salah. "Bloggers' Street Movement and the Right to the City. (Re)claiming Cairo's Real and Virtual "Spaces of Freedom"." *Environment and Urbanization* 21, no. 89 (2009): 92.

¹⁴ Gerbaudo, Paolo. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. New York: Pluto Press, 2012.

¹⁵ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1208

¹⁶ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1213

Since many of these sites consist of ‘groups’ in which users can join and participate in, they develop a safe space or community for those of similar beliefs to converse. The communities that are developed empower the “dissidents by connecting them with like-minded people and assuring them that they are not alone in their opinions”.¹⁷ As such, social media allows users to appropriate public space, where coordination and dissemination creates a sense of shared awareness and like-mindedness, further fostering a sense of comfort and community within the participants.

Not only does virtual space allow for greater numbers of like-minded peoples to participate in a group, other forums, where group identities are unable to form allow for non-members, or those who are uninterested in the subject to be aware of the movement. One example of this is seen through the use of the social media site Facebook. Facebook, due to its service providing public boards for each user, users are able to see posts by those whom they have added as a ‘friend’ on the site. By creating public boards, where information by all members within a network is posted, those who are usually unaware or do not care about a subject are given a space where their “friends” posts about a social movement is immediately seen. These public boards, which every member of the site has, creates a new medium that increases information sharing beyond like-minded groups, but to society as a whole. Thus, by appropriating this public space in which such information can be broadcasted to a greater population, non-members of these social groups are more likely and able to become attracted to a topic, further increasing both general local and global awareness and participants for the group.

Within these new spheres of public space, all individuals are allowed to participate, further increasing the amount of information within the space to include both important and irrelevant information; making it important to mention the anonymity of virtual space. The ability for participants to hide their identity affects how users participate in the forum. Thus users are able to do multiple things that both positively and negatively affect the information, discussion, and coordination of potential protests. First, those like-minded individuals who truly want to promote change are able to upload important information – such as statistics of how their government is becoming more tyrannical, where good locations for protest are, means for safety during the protests, and so on – further improving the associated groups ability to dissent. Second, in a virtual space where identity is concealed, individuals who previously would not be respected due to array

¹⁷ Barrons, 2012: 57.

of societal conceptions are able to both participate in informing the group, and even organizing the creation of a group. Finally, those who oppose the movement are able to conceal their identity, and participate in the space in a negative way. Such peoples are able to go about sabotaging the movement by providing false information. Therefore it is extremely important that dissenters in virtual public spaces are careful when discussing facts – i.e., locations, times, etc. – in the virtual space for any person can participate. Thus, while social media has created a new means for outsiders to participate in public dissent, it does come at with risk of government infiltration.

Not only does social media allow for users to appropriate a safe space for public dissent, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, due to the large array of information users share, have created a space that cannot be controlled by any regime. As stated by Barrons,

“Tools designed specifically for political dissent can be shut down with very little political penalty, but tools designed with a broader purpose (e.g., sharing pictures of cute cats on the Internet), draw much wider public outcry when they are taken away”.¹⁸

Social media networks allow for users to create groups in which they can freely and safely coordinate and dissent against social issues within their own state, and even internationally. As such, social media has created a means for dissenters to appropriate a safe public space for better discussion and coordination in regards to the advancement of a social movement.

Case Study – Egypt’s 2011 Revolution

As stated, new forms of social media have allowed for users to appropriate public space within the virtual world where they can safely dissent. Not only has such space allowed for anonymity, further protecting the identities of participants, it has also allowed for greater participation by the masses, increased awareness, and improved abilities for all persons to contribute to discussions. Social media has provided the means for users to appropriate public spaces, but it has also aided the ability for protesters to coordinate in the 2011 Egyptian revolution. This section will examine how social media has improved the ability of dissenters in Egypt in accomplishing a successful revolution. This will be completed through a general discussion of the

¹⁸ Barrons, 2012: 57.

uses of social media in Egypt, followed by a detailed study of the two most frequented social media site during the revolution: Twitter and Facebook.

Through the appropriation of public space, social media allowed for directed mobilization on the streets of Cairo. By complementing existing forms of physical gatherings, social media was able to direct “people towards specific protest events, in providing participants with suggestions and instructions about how to act, and in the construction of an emotional narration to sustain their coming together in public space”.¹⁹ As such, social media has contributed to the construction of a new logic of social centrality, in which ideals upon occupied squares are “transformed into trending places, or venues of magnetic gatherings”,²⁰ which are shared not only with those within the occupied physical space, but with those within the occupied virtual space. This power to compel emotions beyond those within the physical space has increased those who feel attached to the collective identity designed by the movement. By logging on to social media sites, non-participants were immediately drawn to the posts by their “friends” on Facebook and those they follow on Twitter, which showed pictures of the riots and police brutality, or verbal descriptions of such events.²¹ As such, those who did not participate in the revolution, who previously had no care for the matters, were unable to avoid the bombardment of information and images showing the happenings of the revolution. As argued earlier, this appropriation of public space through social media both increased awareness, as well as, fostered a community. Thus, only through the appropriation of public space, through the means of social media can such an impact be collectively identified by the greater masses.

Within Egypt, social media had also acted as a catalyst for change due to its unscripted, unrestricted measures. Because Egyptian news agencies were acting under the governmental control, their legitimacy was quite weak in broader society. The mainstream Egyptian media barely covered the events, and when it did, it reported with a complete state-centric bias.²² This “discrepancy between reality and the national Egyptian television’s distorted coverage of the 2011 revolution, which played down the protests and did not reflect an accurate image of what was

¹⁹ Gerbaudo, 2012: 12.

²⁰ Gerbaudo, 2012: 13.

²¹ Aouragh and Alexander, 2011: 1348.

²² Hamamsy, Walid El. "BB = BlackBerry or Big Brother: Digital media and the Egyptian revolution." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47, no. 4 (2011): 454-466.

going on in the streets”.²³ Thus individuals had to take to other forms of media to get a true picture of what really was happening.²⁴ Since social media sites like Twitter and Facebook were able to provide the mediums for coverage of the revolution in real time, civilians were more likely to take to the spaces provided by social media to extract the truth of the revolution. As such, social media fostered a greater sense of national and global awareness.

Not only was social media a tool for providing information about the protests, but it was also a tool for security. Egyptian activists provided information to one another through Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube alike, to better help those on the streets to escape from government surveillance. Such posts consisted of how to blur one's face within a video, and how to change your network to appear to be outside of Egypt's territory, thus allowing for protesters to remain unknown to the state. Information about how to face rubber bullets, how to reduce the impact of tear gas, and how to set up barricades was also provided on such social media sites.²⁵ Interestingly, Tunisian 'veteran' protesters had also supplied messages to their Egyptian counterparts, posting protesting advice:

Protest[ing] at nighttime for safety, to avoid suicide operations, to use media to convey their message for outside pressure, to spray-paint security forces' armored vehicles black to cover the windshield, and to wash their faces with Coca-Cola to reduce the impact of tear gas.²⁶

Due to the uses of most social media sites beyond dissent, it was impossible for the state to shut down this information flow, leaving the participants capable of improving their ability to hold their ground within the protests.²⁷ Protesters were supplied with an influx of advice over social media to better their experience and to keep them safe, up until the blackout on the 28th of January, where the state decided it had to shut down the Internet entirely to stop this information flow.²⁸ Therefore, by creating the means for dissenters to share information publically – regarding

²³ Khamis, Sahar. "The Transformative Egyptian Media Landscape: Changes, Challenges and Comparative Perspectives." *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1159-1177.

²⁴ Hamamsy, 2011: 458.

²⁵ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 2013-1214.

²⁶ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1215.

²⁷ Gerbaudo, 2012: 13.

²⁸ Papacharissi, Zizi, and Maria de Fatima Oliveira. "Affective News and Networked Publics: The Rhythms of News Storytelling on #Egypt." *Journal of Communication* 62 (2012): 266-282.

safety and other means to maintain the protests in physical spaces such as Tahrir square –the participants were able to create a virtual sense of community in which they felt both local and global support.

At the same time as Egypt, citizens of Tunisia were becoming fed-up with their corrupt state. Thus, through appropriating public space within the virtual world, Tunisian citizens were able to create safe spaces for public dissent. In such spaces, much like the Egyptians, they began sharing their concern of the affairs of the state, and began discussing plans on how to make a change. Since the Internet is not subjected to one state, citizens of both Egypt and Tunisia had found each other within chat rooms and other social media sites, learning that they were both in the same situation. This mutual understanding, therefore, led to citizens of both states contacting each other through social media for almost two years. These citizens had thus created spaces in which they could discuss the “use of technology to evade surveillance, commiserated about torture and traded practical tips on how to stand up to rubber bullets and organize barricades”.²⁹ Tunisia, despite discussing tactics for dissent with Egypt had started their protests earlier.

The Tunisian revolution began on December 17th 2010, and ended on January 15th 2011 with the fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.³⁰ Due to the successes of the Tunisian protests, and the direct contact Egyptians had with those who participated, the Egyptians gained a strengthened “sense of collective identity and purpose, primarily because of similarities in the oppressive conditions under which both groups lived and the goals of citizen-activists”.³¹ As such, the Egyptians were able to gain knowledge from the Tunisian protests to better their chances within their own protests. Since the Egyptian protesters were able to follow the developments in Tunisia, and kept in contact with those who participated, Egyptian protesters were able to better understand their circumstances, thus giving the participants greater confidence.³² This international appeal for

²⁹ Barrons, 2012: 61.

³⁰ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1212.

³¹ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1212.

³² Lotan, Gilad, Erhardt Graeff, Mike Ananny, Devin Gaffney, Ian Pearce, and Danah Boyd. "The Revolutions Were Tweeted: Information Flows During the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions." *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1375-1405.

information sharing proves the ability for social media to facilitate a space in which dissenters can foster a community that allows for all users to participate in.³³

Twitter

Twitter had been a spectacular means of communication for global spectators and supporters of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. According to Chebib and Sohail, between January and March 2011, there were 1,131,204 Twitter Users in Egypt alone.³⁴ Due to Twitter's development of hashtags on messages, it allows for audiences to be able to easily develop and search for specific words that define a revolution. In the case of Egypt, the most popular example was seen under the hashtag of #Jan25, and #Egypt. The number of tweets that had the hashtag #Egypt increased substantially leading up and to the January 25th revolution, from 122,319 tweets between the 16-23 of January to over 1.3 million tweets between January 24-30th.³⁵ With such an influx of users demonstrating support or even mentioning the events increased local and global awareness of the subject.³⁶ It is worth mentioning, however, that of these tweets, only 0.24% of them were posted by users listed to be within Egypt.³⁷ Despite this fact, however, it has been proven that many of these users were in Egypt, but to ensure their security, they listed themselves outside the state. Unfortunately there has been no report of the exact numbers. Since Twitter had a minimal amount Arabic users, over two-thirds of the tweets regarding the revolution were also in English; and as of 2011, only 35% of the population was fluent in English, however, English was a mandatory subject for all students, leaving many capable of intermediate comprehension.³⁸ It must be noted that the movement mainly consisted of the youth population (which consists of over 50% of the population).³⁹

³³ Tufekci, Z, and C Wilson. "Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations from Tahrir Square." *Journal of Communication* (Wiley Online Library), 2012.

³⁴ Chebib, Nadine Kassem, and Rabia Minatullah Sohail. "The Reasons Social Media Contributed To The 2011 Egyptian Revolution." *International Journal of Buisness Research and Management* 2, no. 3 (2011): 139-162.

³⁵ Barrons, 2012: 63.

³⁶ Gerbaudo, 2012: 6.

³⁷ Barrons, 2012: 63.

³⁸ Ramaswami, Sowmya, Iyad Sarraf, and Jon Haydon. *English Language Quantitative Indicators: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen*. Report, The British Council, London: Euromonitor International, 2012.

³⁹ Barrons, 2012: 58.

Many analysts⁴⁰ have noted that the use of Twitter was more of an outsider tool to be able to monitor the happenings within Egypt at the time. Due to the blackout, foreigners, who, though unable to directly participate, were capable of putting international pressure on the state, only saw all the tweets that were reported within Egypt. These same analysts have also noted that Twitter was not a place for interaction, but a place for quick facts, leaving most tweets on Egypt to be only re-tweets of other facts. Alongside this, the most amount of tweets were posted on February 11th after the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, a reactionary measure instead of a means for coordination.⁴¹ As such, Twitter has been a tool that has allowed for individuals to increase their social awareness for broader viewpoints, however, it restricts users from being able “to engage in meaningful conversation”.⁴² Despite the seemingly minimal impact Twitter had on the revolution for those actually within the state, it is interesting to note the actions of outsiders during the blackout. Google and Twitter created a voice-to-text service which allowed Egyptians to call in their tweets from landlines.⁴³ This service allowed for information to continue to be leaked for outside observers.

Though Twitter was not an ideal tool for coordination for the Egyptian revolution, it did act as a means for developing an ‘always-on’, ‘always-connected’ virtual space in which like-minded individuals were able to contribute or pass-on information about the happenings of the situation. As such, Twitter was an incredible tool for the appropriation of space that allowed for greater understanding and mobilization.

Facebook

Like Twitter, Facebook had been a tool of mass communication. With over 5.5 million active Facebook users in Egypt, the social media site acted as a perfect catalyst for revolution.⁴⁴ Not to mention, Egypt was reported to have the largest increase of Facebook users in the first quarter of 2011 among the Arab countries.⁴⁵ With its service that creates a means for users to appropriate space, Facebook unintentionally developed a perfect tool for users to practice safe

⁴⁰ Barrons, 2012; Ghannam, 2011; and Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2012.

⁴¹ Barrons, 2012: 63.

⁴² Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2012: 268.

⁴³ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1216.

⁴⁴ Ghannam, Jeffrey. Social Media in the Arab World: Leading up to the Uprising of 2011. Washington: The Center for International Media Assistance, 2011.

⁴⁵ Chebib and Sohail, 2011: 140.

dissent. Proof of the usage of Facebook and its relation to the revolution are quite obvious after examination of general user statistics. For example, after the first day of the protests, there was a massive surge of Internet use in Egypt. On this day, it was recorded that 39% of the traffic was on Facebook, while only 27% of it was on news sites.⁴⁶ This example shows that the protesters, and those watching the protests trusted the sources of individuals on Facebook, rather than trusting the sources from news sites.

What is most interesting about Facebook, is that due to the networks it forms between individuals, it creates a space of permanent public consciousness. Whether you wish to follow the events of Egypt or not, mentioning's of it were impossible to ignore within the social medium. Individuals would constantly post pictures, stories, links to new articles and other sources on their walls, which would be directly uploaded to other users' main boards. This persistent barrage of information on these sites creates a continuous public awareness that is almost unavoidable.

Facebook, due to its group-formation functions, had inadvertently created a virtual hub for dissenters to discuss ideas and plans.⁴⁷ One example of such a group that used Facebook as a tool to appropriate a public space for dissent is the *April 6 Youth Movement*. This group on Facebook was originally created in "2008 to support workers in the town of El-Mahalla El-Kubra who were planning a strike".⁴⁸ On April 6th of 2008, thousands of textile workers rioted, leaving four dead and over 400 arrested by Egyptian police.⁴⁹ Though the strike was unsuccessful, the group continued on, further gaining members. As of 2010 it had over 100,000 members,⁵⁰ and today it maintains over 550,000 members. The group has lived on as a political organization, which consists of apolitical youth who wish for political freedom in Egypt. Between the 2008 riots and the 2011 revolution, this group maintained itself as a space for the public to disseminate information about the misconduct of the Mubarak regime. Such information that was leaked included general facts about legislation and statistics regarding unnecessary arrests, as well as, personal videos and stories of violence and misdeeds caused by the regime. Leading up to the Egyptian protests in January of 2011, members of the April 6 Youth Movement began discussing

⁴⁶ Barrons, 2012: 60.

⁴⁷ Gerbaudo, 2012: 13.

⁴⁸ Barrons, 2012: 60.

⁴⁹ April 6 Youth Movement. 02 22, 2011. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/inside-april6-movement/> (accessed 12 02, 2013).

⁵⁰ Barrons, 2012: 60.

dates and locations for the protest. After much speculation, it chose January 25th, 2011 as their protest date, for it was a public holiday in Egypt: Police Day.⁵¹ On the 10th of January, the group set up an “operation room” in which it could discuss details about maintaining contact during the protests, as well as, ensuring information was present for all Egyptians.⁵² During this meeting, they also discussed means for overcoming state security that was designed to end the demonstrations. As such, the April 6 Movement became one of the primary organizational resources for the January 25th protests.

Another important group that had appropriated public space for dissent by using Facebook was the group called *We are all Khaled Said*. Khaled Said was a young Egyptian man who, on June 6th 2010, was killed in Alexandria. Said was killed “because he was in possession of video footage showing police officer sharing the spoils of a drug bust”.⁵³ Outraged by his death, a 30-year-old Egyptian Google marketing executive named Wael Ghoneim created the Facebook group.⁵⁴ By January 2011, the group had attracted almost one million members.⁵⁵ Those who were attracted to the group began to take advantage of the space, further using it as an outlet for information exchange, encouragement, and support. Like April 6 Youth Movement, this group had morphed into a decisive group for conversation, coordination, and dissent. Thus, conversations emerged, where information upon dates, locations, and protest etiquette were discussed and shared.

Facebook, through its services as a social media site, created a means for dissenters to appropriate public space, in which any user can participate in; further fostering a greater sense of community and global awareness. Like Twitter, Facebook also provided the means – though its creation of unavoidable public boards in which all posts are fed into – for non-participants or those who would usually lack interest to be enlightened by the happenings of the social movement. Therefore, making Facebook an incredible means for dissenters to coordinate and discuss means for protest, as well as, increase general public awareness.

⁵¹ April 6 Youth Movement, 2011.

⁵² April 6 Youth Movement, 2011.

⁵³ Lim, Marluna. "Clicks, Cabs, and Coffee Houses: Social Media and Oppositional Movements in Egypt, 2004 – 2011." *Journal of Communication* 62 (2012): 231-248.

⁵⁴ Ghannam, 2011.

⁵⁵ Lim, 2012: 241.

Counter Argument

Some researchers have claimed social media had not contributed to the events as greatly as presented above. These scholars believe otherwise due to the happenings on January 28th, where the government shut down the Egyptian population's access to the Internet. They claim that since the week long blackout, where no Egyptians could access the Internet, happened right in the midst of the protests, leaving citizens unable to use social media proves that there is no way for it to have affected the movement. Frank Rich, a columnist for New York Times, is one who believes this to be true. He claims that the reliability on social media must not be to the extent many believe for the protesters would not have been able to last during the blackouts.⁵⁶ Though a good point, this argument lacks the understanding of the development of the revolution before the actions had taken place, and the effect shutting down the Internet had on the curiosity of others.⁵⁷

When President Mubarak realized the extraordinary ability for information to flow within the Internet, how it created public opinion within the masses and the affect it had on the revolution that was taking place within his state, he decided to “cut off Internet and cellular phone communication across Egypt on January 28”.⁵⁸ Fortunately for those participating in the protests, news of this was reported before the fact, further allowing for them to broadcast the information both nationally and globally.⁵⁹ Once the blackout began, it lasted over a week, leaving civilians within the state unable to communicate through such means. Though this was a hard hit to the protesters, further weakening their ability to broadcast the violence caused by the state, it did not remove their ability to continue.

There are two interesting points about the blackout, which proves the ability for social networking had majorly affected the outcome of the revolution. First, by shutting down the Internet nationally, it made the greater population even more aware of the tyrannical structure of the state, and its ability to control every aspect of their lives. With such an act, the Mubarak regime had not only justified the acts of the protesters, but also pushed non-participants to visit the places of protest to either gain information on the true happenings or finally participate due to their new

⁵⁶ Rich, Frank. “WallFlowers at the Revolution.” The New York Times, 04.02.2011.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/opinion/06rich.html/> [accessed 5 2, 2011].

⁵⁷ Barrons, 2012: 64.

⁵⁸ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1216.

⁵⁹ Tufekci and Wilson, 2012: 363.

realization.⁶⁰ Thus, within the time of the blackout, the number of protesters had risen drastically, further legitimizing the revolution.⁶¹ Second, despite the blackout within the state, Egyptians were still able to access Twitter through the use of proxies. Engineers from Twitter, Google, and SayNow had also developed the ‘speak to tweet’ initiative, which “enabled activists to call with voice messages that were instantly turned into Twitter messages”.⁶² This initiative allowed for Egyptians to by-pass the blackout, further broadcasting the happenings globally. Despite the efforts to continue tweeting did not affect those on the ground during the blackout, it did allow for global citizens to pressure the Mubarak regime into change.⁶³

Not only did the efforts during the blackout prove the success of social media campaigns as a catalyst for revolution, the most significant time for the use of social media was before the revolution took place. During the planning of the revolution, activists were able to appropriate public space in which they could coordinate and design the future protest.⁶⁴ By having an online headquarters where activists could discuss locations, slogans, and other means for dissent, the participants of the revolution were able to safely gain mass support. By removing social media from the equation, it becomes difficult for participants to actualize the same means for sharing information. Social media created the means for the greater population of Egypt to know about the problems of the regime, and it was social media that allowed for dissenters to share information on coordination to all citizens of the state. Without such a means for dissent, it would have been impossible to coordinate protests at such a large scale.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed how social media had created the means for dissenters to appropriate public space in order to improve their ability to successfully protest. Unlike any other traditional means for the coordination of protest, social media has appropriated virtual public space in which users can coordinate and discuss practices more quickly and easily than before social media. This is proven through the ability of many users to be able to participate due to the ease of online access, which transcends borders. By allowing for more like-minded individuals to

⁶⁰ Aouragh and Alexander, 2011: 1350.

⁶¹ Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1217.

⁶² Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1216.

⁶³ Khamis, 2011: 1163.

⁶⁴ Gerbaudo, 2012: 12.

participate more quickly and frequently, social media has created a greater means for dissenters to foster a sense of community and trust, further increasing the group's confidence and strength. Since social media sites were usually created for other means than dissent, it allows for activists to broadcast information on public walls seen by both their own group and outsiders, further increasing public awareness. Social media, due to its appropriation of virtual space, allows for participants to remain anonymous, further allowing for them to elude state authorities. Anonymity also allows for those usually unable to participate due to societal norms against that group (i.e., youth), increasing knowledge and numbers of protester ranks. Finally, social media, due to its users in general not using the sites for dissent, makes them difficult for the state to destroy, further allowing for it to be a safe zone for dissenters to coordinate.

Therefore, within the Egyptian revolution of 2011, social media had been a catalyst for change, further creating a means for dissenters to safely coordinate, increase awareness, and increase its numbers to successfully remove the tyrannical regime that controlled the state for over 30 years. Since this revolution was a youth based revolution, it becomes clear how social media had become a catalyst for discussion, and later revolution. Without the use of social media as a tool for coordination, the movement would have been much weaker. This is because Egyptian youth - consisting of 50% of the population – were the main users of social media; and this population knew how to use the tool to appropriate public space.

Appendix

Timeline of the Egyptian Revolution

- 2005
 - Egyptians began to use blogs, cellphones, Twitter, Youtube, and Facebook to document police excess and brutality
 - Egyptian bloggers began to create hybrid spaces both physically and virtually for dissent
- 2008
 - Facebook group 'April 6 Youth Movement' was created to support workers who were planning a strike (the strike was unsuccessful)
- 2010
 - The 'April 6 Youth Movement' had more than 100,000 members and became a space for open discussion and political dissent
 - Facebook group 'We are all Khalid Said' was created after the young man's death caused by police brutality
 - The Facebook group 'We are all Khalid Said' morphed into a space for political discussion and coordination
 - On the 17th of December the Tunisian revolution began
- 2011
 - On the 15th of January the Tunisian revolution ended with the fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali
 - On the 25th of January the first demonstrations were held by protesters in Tahrir Square
 - On the 28th of January the government issues a blackout, blocking all citizens of the countries' ability to use the Internet
 - On the 1st of February President Mubarak promised more constitutional reforms
 - On the 3rd of February violence occurs in Tahrir Square leaving five dead and many wounded
 - On the 5th of February the blackout ended
 - On the 11th of February Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigned

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From the Virtual Margins: Social Media as Rupture from Epistemic Violence within the Arab World

Adam T. Kingsmith

Introduction

While experienced from very different perspectives, for the colonizer and the colonized, power is diffuse rather than concentrated, enacted rather than possessed, and relatively discursive rather than purely coercive. It is an everyday socialized and embodied phenomenon. And in this sense power is pervasive, in constant fluctuation, and thus constituted through discourses of knowledge production.¹ Presently, dominant forms of knowledge production are grounded in a western discourse that constitutes power by monopolizing ways of knowing in order to establish which ideologies are permitted to function as ‘true,’ and conversely, which ideologies are not. This current ‘regime of truth’ is the product of imperial discourse, reinforced and institutionalized through education, media, and prevailing political, economic, and cultural norms. By silencing non-western subject formations that challenge imperial conceptions of what is ‘true,’ this power/knowledge nexus facilitates an epistemic violence that designates colonized peoples to an exploitive cycle of cerebral/corporeal ‘othering’, revealing that while the political edifices of colonial empire may be gone, the thought structures continue to operate.

It is within this imperial cycle of power/knowledge as epistemic violence of (non)identity that postcolonial theory challenges dominant claims to ‘truth’ by emphasizing how “the general liberal consensus that ‘true’ knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not ‘true’ knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced.”² As such, this paper is an attempt to inform a postcolonial exploration of the subjugating questions of power and knowledge production with/in the Arab world for the virtual age. *Theoretically*, it will engage with scholarship by Fanon, Said, Alatas, and others to make visible the violent traits of traditional western discourses—defined as an *intellectual imperialism* that enacts exploitation, dependence, and

¹ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (trans.), New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1975.

² Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York, NY, Random House Incorporated, 1979: 10.

conformism—before challenging its power by highlighting the emancipatory capabilities of organic non-western discourses. *Methodologically*, it will employ this foundation to examine recent spaces of protest and subject formations in the MENAT region—the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey—in order to explore the rupturing capabilities of socio-digital technologies—*Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, BlogSpot*, mobile phones—as well as interrogate the possibilities that these new tools of dissension can be co-opted to assist in (re)productions and (re)assertions of traditional western discourses of power/knowledge production. *Lastly*, it will conclude by alluding to the transformative potentials of multiple identities put forward by *worldism*,³ as well as some critical self-reflections and subjectivities.

Being an analysis that seeks to question modes of representation, appropriation, subject formation, and the imperializing gaze, this paper emphasizes the ways political and economic institutions of imperialism simultaneously generate parallel structures that direct and restrict the knowledge(s) held *by/of* subjugated peoples. As such, it views discourse(s) as the social construction of power relationships expressed through linguistic/epistemic forms, which can be mobilized for imperializing (traditional/western) or emancipating (organic/non-western) subject formations. This paper does not try and strictly present another analysis of social media in the Arab Spring. Rather, it seeks to stimulate larger discussions regarding the contextual natures of power/knowledge discourses in the virtual age by making specific references to the intellectual imperialism being enacted upon the Arab world. Accordingly, this paper is an attempt to argue that contingent upon pre-existing energies of discontent, socio-digital technologies perform as invaluable tools in movements of dissent in the Arab world—and beyond—by facilitating the organic non-western discourses necessary to manifest physical spaces of rupture and therefore challenge the epistemic violence committed by the western power/knowledge monopoly. Or in the vein of Fanon, to usurp the coercive structuring of space as the defining reality of social domination, thus creating places where people can articulate their vision.⁴

³ Agathangelou, A.M., & Ling L.H.M. *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

⁴ Agathangelou, A.M. “The Living and Being of the Streets: Fanon and the Arab Uprisings,” *Globalizations* 9:3 (2012): 451-466.

The Violence of Intellectual Imperialism

At the socio-cultural register, traditional western discourses of power/knowledge in the Arab world are the (un)conscious continuation of colonial practices. According to Alatas, “colonialism in its more fundamental aspects is far from becoming a moribund force. The forces which it has released and nurtured in the course of centuries are still actively moving towards crises and disturbances.”⁵ As such, these forces constitute alienating acts of violence, legitimized and internalized through western discourses that supplant indigenous histories and cultures with newly constructed spatial/geo/slave colonial and racial ideologies.⁶ They do so by constructing an interchangeable sequence of knowledge manipulations, imaginative and material restructurings contained and represented by dominating ideological frameworks that have generated Arab/Oriental peoples as something to be judged, studied, and represented.⁷ These processes, expressed here as intellectual imperialism, comprise of *three* distinct yet interconnected practices of *exploitation*, *dependence*, and *conformism* that seek to erase non-western identities, impart self-subjugating mentalities, and (re)shape the colonized mind into one that endeavours to be western, all the while reinforcing the internalization (or in a Fanonian sense), the epidermalization that colonized peoples can never equal the colonizer.

The exploitation of intellectual imperialism is a similar practice to more political and economic forms of colonialism. As opposed to extracting valuable minerals from the colony, the colonizer extracts information on local customs, traditions, religions, social structures, and ways of knowing.⁸ This raw data on topics of interest to the western discourse is then brought back to the west, where it is processed and manufactured into what Fanon calls “a constellation of postulates [and] propositions that slowly and subtly—with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio—work their way into one’s mind and shape one’s view of the world of the group to which one belongs.”⁹ Western media reports, articles, academic scholarship, books, documentaries—to an extent they all utilize rural villagers, peasants, local

⁵ Alatas, Syed Hussein. “Intellectual Imperialism: Definition, Traits, and Problems,” *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 28:1 (2000): 33.

⁶ Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York, NY: Grove Press, 1952.

⁷ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York, NY, Random House Incorporated, 1979.

⁸ Alatas, Syed Hussein. “Intellectual Imperialism: Definition, Traits, and Problems,” *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 28:1 (2000): 23-45.

⁹ Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York, NY: Grove Press, 1952: 118.

bureaucrats, politicians and non-western scholars as types of informants. Extracting their life experiences, cultural artifacts, and raw intellectual resources and manufacturing them into finished western knowledge productions that are then exported back—usually without any acknowledgement or further analysis—to the Arab world in order to ‘teach’ these ‘uncivilized’ peoples the approved (i.e. westernized) ‘truths’ about themselves.

To an extent, the west continues to assume Arab peoples cannot be depended upon to develop their region because “they do not have the technical know-how.”¹⁰ In the case of intellectual imperialism this dependence takes the form of logical know-how. If colonized peoples want a ‘real’ education they are told they must master western languages, study at western institutions, read western literature, follow western media, and even practice western thought. Arabic cultural representations, media outlets, and scholars are made inferior through the imperial power/knowledge nexus.¹¹ It is asserted that ‘true’ knowledge can only come from/be produced in the west, meaning for colonized peoples within the Arab world, “the center of gravity for the acquisition of knowledge is located outside the[ir] nation itself.”¹² This institutionalized dependence on the west as the site of knowledge production creates the illusion that whatever discourses non-western peoples have constructed are both incomplete and defective, and that the standards of more organic ways of knowing cannot be applied to speak *of* or *to* the west, for only the west has discovered universal ‘truths.’

In processes of colonization, dominant powers expect conformism of the body.¹³ Intellectual imperialism expects conformism in thought, impeding subject formations by conditioning colonized peoples—through what Fanon calls ‘divided self-perception,’ to embrace the culture of the colonizer. Sites of subject manipulation become state-run media outlets, despotic political establishments, and westernized academic institutions that in many cases serve as collaborators to the identity-destroying violence enacted.¹⁴ However at the same time that Arabic peoples are told to conform to power/knowledge productions, traditional discourses also seek to

¹⁰ Alatas, Syed Hussein. “Intellectual Imperialism: Definition, Traits, and Problems,” *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 28:1 (2000): 25.

¹¹ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York, NY, Random House Incorporated, 1979.

¹² Alatas, Syed Hussein. “Intellectual Imperialism: Definition, Traits, and Problems,” *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 28:1 (2000): 41.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York, NY: Grove Press, 1952.

separate them from the west. After all, the intellectual imperializing process is what Said (1979) calls a system of representations, a discourse for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Arab/Oriental. It is an institution claiming to know fundamental differences between the western Self and the non-western Other—serving as the rationalization for a civilizing mission by way of the imperial monopoly over ‘truth.’ Yet as much as intellectual imperialism is a performance of exploitation, dependence, and conformism at the colonial register, its legitimacy relies largely on western discourses, and depending on who is leading the discussion, discourses can also provide space for anti-imperial forms of resistance.

Organic Discourse as a Space for Rupture

For all the epistemic violence, silence and destruction that discourses of intellectual imperialism have wrought on the minds, bodies and identities of Arab peoples through the imperial cycle of power/knowledge, there have always been cerebral/corporeal spaces that sustain resistance against western universalization. Where imperializing discourses see intellectual subjugation as a process occurring explicitly at the cerebral register, organic non-western discourses ground their processes in the material struggles of their existing society. Thus, as much as traditional discourses produce spaces of subjugation and domination—as in the case of the western ‘regime of truth,’ organic ones can expose and undermine those spaces, rendering them fragile and thus susceptible to rupture. Since intellectual imperialism is an everyday (re)socialized and (re)asserted phenomenon, rupturing the imperial cycle of epistemic violence requires the organic (de)constructing and (de)centralizing of historical and material discourses to widen the spaces of resistance for decolonizing subject (re)formations. For as Said points out when articulating “the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced,”¹⁵ challenging dominant power relations is not a matter of seeking ‘apolitical truth,’—which is in any case a socially constructed violence, but detaching the power of truth from the forms of epistemic subjugation within which traditional discourses operate.

New spaces for rupture from the epistemic violence of intellectual imperialism can be made possible because “discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it— a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling

¹⁵ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York, NY, Random House Incorporated, 1979: 10.

point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy.”¹⁶ In short, depending on the context, discourses can be either subjugating or liberating. So while the traditional western discourses of intellectual imperialism have endeavoured to create an epistemic prison for the ‘captive minds’ of the Arab peoples, discourses more organic, material, and non-western in nature can be mobilized to resist the colonizer’s monopoly over knowledge production by reinvigorating the undercurrents of subaltern discontent. According to Said, this discursive resistance is realized when subjugated peoples practice critical engagement, historical memory, and material skepticism—thinking beyond the imperial aims of the west, reading contrapuntally and speaking truth to justice in order to be self-reflexive of one’s complicitness in unequal relations of power.¹⁷ This means thinking through the traditional discourses peddled by state-run media, unrepresentative politicians, abusive economic policies, and manipulative academic institutions in order to erode all the political and cultural conceits, all the truths marketed as universal, and all the ideals promoted as timeless.¹⁸

The unfinished national liberation struggles, military regimes, neoliberal elites, and epistemic violence(s) of intellectual imperialism—while the western cycle of power/knowledge (re)production has desperately attempted to bury undercurrents of discontent in the MENAT region under cerebral/corporeal violence, as well as promises of development, democracy, and the imperializing cycle of exploitation, dependence, and conformism, all the west has done is slow the processes of emancipation. For all the colonial successes in dominating the material worlds of Arabic politics and economics, intellectual imperialism, while invasive, has never been able to fully dominate the rich and diverse thought-worlds of distinct non-western epistemic consciousness that juxtaposes the European civilizational vanity that has become the so-called apex of history.¹⁹ So while the epistemic violence of intellectual imperialism has managed to critically delegitimize Arab cultures, norms, customs, social relations, and identities by relentlessly imposing universalized conceptions of western power/knowledge, the process has failed to eradicate Arab peoples from the historical register. Instead, as a testament to Arab revolutionary

¹⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, Robert Hurley (trans.), New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1976: 100.

¹⁷ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York, NY, Random House Incorporated, 1979.

¹⁸ Soguk, Nevzat. “Uprisings in ‘Arab Streets’, Revolutions in ‘Arab Minds’! A Provocation,” *Globalizations* 8:5 (2011): 595-600.

¹⁹ Ibid.

spirits, recent efforts to further erode local identities by introducing new socio-digital technologies has inadvertently created spaces for organic/civic discourses of resistance, which are beginning to crack the increasingly fragile western power/knowledge monopoly.

Social Media as a Revolutionary Spark

One of the key issues organic discourses face when challenging the delegitimizing processes of intellectual imperialism has been the severe power imbalance between the colonial domination of global knowledge production and the limits of local communal relationships. Especially in authoritarian contexts, many voices choose to keep their preferences private because they inaccurately believe themselves to be a small minority. Tufekci & Wilson refer to this power discrepancy as the collective action problem of *pluralistic ignorance*, which occurs when a “broadly desirable outcome is achievable if there is coordinated mass participation, but when individual participation is stifled by prohibitively higher costs.”²⁰ Authoritarian regimes not only discourage individual forms of participation by keeping the personal costs for dissent high, they also control national communicative infrastructures, making it very difficult for citizens to coordinate effective opposition or express dissent in public spaces. As such, smaller protests have a greater likelihood of being censored, isolated, or violently repressed under despotic regimes where information flows and accessibility are tightly restricted. Therefore, in the Arab world high participation in organic discourse and the manifestation of bodies in public spaces from the outset of a protest is absolutely necessary in order to initiate larger movements that may actually yield any tangible breaks from the imperial cycle of power/knowledge production.

When these larger assemblies started to manifest themselves in public spaces late in 2010, launching the ongoing protest movements known collectively as the Arab Spring—which has forced rulers from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, ignited civil uprisings in Bahrain and Syria, and spurred major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan and Turkey—politicians and journalists collaborating on intellectually imperializing discourses in both the western and Arab worlds were, for the most part, caught off guard. This is not because these revolutionary waves of protests and demonstrations popped up overnight thanks to the proliferation of interactive social technologies such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*, and mobile

²⁰ Tufekci, Zeynep, & Wilson, Christopher. “Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square, *Journal of Communication* 62:1 (2012): 365.

phones. On the contrary, it is because such social technologies made visible the self-censoring collective action problem of pluralistic ignorance by connecting revolutionary viewpoints that had been fragmented, causing so many dissenters to stay silent because they wrongly believed themselves to be small minorities. Instead of miraculously ‘manifesting a revolution,’ social media has/is a vital tool for linking together the millions of organic discourses immersed in history/materiality that make space for revolutionary conditions. As such, its role is contingent on the manifestation of bodies in street through engaging pre-existing transformative energies of revolt/discontent that have accumulated due to varying forms of violence and erasure.

At the same time, engaging in a reductionism that is unduly skeptical about the political influence and transformative potentials of socio-digital technologies by assuming them to be mere instrumental adjuncts to usual politics, as opposed to carriers of new kinds of activism, ignores the potentially transgressive impact of new media whose “influence on consciousness and behaviour may be hidden by their routine use in the lives of millions of people.”²¹ Non-political platforms can at times provide better affordances for political dissent because they serve as organic discourses of the everyday and thus can avoid being targeted and marginalized by dictators.²² Alongside statuses and photos, social media sites like Facebook host dissident pages such as Egypt’s “We are all Khaled Said,” a crucial platform for coordinating protests, and Turkey’s “#DuranAdam,” a key page for announcing new forms of civil disobedience, while Tunisian Internet Society President Khaled Koubaa insists that Twitter was “absolutely crucial” during the uprisings in his country.²³ Moreover, the everyday images of new classes of citizen journalists—people who may or may not have a history of activism, but suddenly appear to convey critical information to the public at a crucial moment—are employing mobile phones as sites of power/knowledge production to circumnavigate the channels dominated by the imperial cycle’s ‘regime of truth.’²⁴

²¹ Axford, Barrie. “Talk About a Revolution: Social Media and the MENA Uprisings,” *Globalizations* 8:5 (2011): 684.

²² Zuckerman, Ethan. *Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans in the Age of Connection*, New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

²³ Khondker, Habibul Haque. “Role of the New Media in the Arab Spring,” *Globalizations* 8:5 (2011): 126.

²⁴ Tufekci, Zeynep, & Wilson, Christopher. “Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square,” *Journal of Communication* 62:1 (2012): 363-379.

Yet when confronted with the knowledge that the uprisings in MENAT are the first wave of organic discourses since the advent of global communication technologies, it is all too easy to forget the impact of different local conditions with/in the Arab world. For as Axford points out, “the mediating influence of context is important not only to underline significant differences between the uprisings in, say, Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, but to guard against technological determinism.”²⁵ As such, the affordances supplied by communication technologies in general, and social media in particular, act differently in countries with diverse constitutions, political cultures, telecom infrastructures, histories of colonial violence, and policies towards freedom of expression. Just as it is all too easy to ignore context when discussing the role of social media, it is also tempting to downplay the role of more conventional broadcast media in reporting/analyzing the uprisings. For as Tufekci & Wilson point out,²⁶ the MENAT region’s connectivity infrastructures should be examined as a complex media ecology that includes not only the rise of dedicated social media platforms, but satellite channels such as *Al-Jazeera*—which contributed to the broadening of content and topics in the formerly very restrictive Arab public sphere²⁷—as well as the falling costs and expanding capabilities of mobile phones—societies in which it has been difficult to access information have been transformed by unprecedented increases in both mobile accessibility and infrastructure.²⁸

(Re)productions of the Discourses?

According to 2013 statistics from the UN Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (ICT), in the three years since Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation sent ripples across the Arab world, households with Internet access have increased from 23.2 to 33.6 per cent, individuals using the Internet has increased from 25.5 to 37.6 per cent, and mobile-cellular subscriptions have increased from 87.7 to 105.1 per cent.²⁹ However, upsurges

²⁵ Axford, Barrie. “Talk About a Revolution: Social Media and the MENA Uprisings,” *Globalizations* 8:5 (2011): 684.

²⁶ Tufekci, Zeynep, & Wilson, Christopher. “Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square,” *Journal of Communication* 62:1 (2012): 363-379.

²⁷ Howard, Phillip N. *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010.

²⁸ Bailard, Catie Snow. “Mobile Phone Diffusion and Corruption in Africa,” *Political Communication* 26:3 (2009): 333-353.

²⁹ UN Information and Communication Technologies Task Force ICT. *The World in 2013: ICT Facts and Figures*, Geneva, Switzerland: ICT Data and Statistics Division, 2013.

in Internet connectivity, social media engagement, and mobile phone access as spaces with which to (re)connect organic discourses, erode pluralistic ignorance, and generally provide tools that protesters can use to transform their discontent into the everyday manifestation of bodies in public spaces in order to rupture the epistemic violence of power/knowledge production are only a part of the socio-digital story. Technological advancements also mean that the colonial effectiveness in conducting surveillance is no longer limited by scale or duration. Declining costs of technologies and data storage have eradicated financial or practical disincentives to conducting surveillance, meaning governments now have the extensive capacity to conduct simultaneous, invasive, targeted, collaborative, and broad scale surveillance practices.³⁰ Moreover according to the ICT, the potential for unregulated mass virtual surveillance is not just a concern for the western regimes most in the spotlight following the Edward Snowden PRISM revelations, but for the majority of the MENAT region as well.³¹

Like surveillance, the targeted censoring of politically challenging virtual content by Arab governments is also on the rise. Beyond simple blocking and filtering, imperial powers in the MENAT region are finding new ways of restricting and controlling online content. According to the Freedom of the Net Report, there has been a serious increase in the criminalization, arrest and harassment of users who post content critical of prominent figures, the hiring of paid pro-government commentators to manipulate online discussions, requiring users to register with names or ID numbers, and deliberately interrupting or throttling Internet and mobile services.³² Moreover, as most socio-digital technologies—including *BlogSpot*, *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube*—are products of private western organizations and enterprises, the content on these platforms is a commodity.³³ As such, Arab leaders have threatened to hold social media sites legally responsible for posts, tweets, and videos that voice challenges to their regimes—a stark reminder that these

³⁰ World Wide Web Foundation. *Web Index Report: Measuring the Web's Global Impact in 2013*, Geneva, Switzerland: World Wide Web Foundation, 2013.

³¹ UN Information and Communication Technologies Task Force ICT. *The World in 2013: ICT Facts and Figures*, Geneva, Switzerland: ICT Data and Statistics Division, 2013.

³² Freedom House. *Freedom of the Net Report: A Global Assessment of Internet and Digital Media*, (eds.) Sanja Kelly, Mai Truong, Madeline Earp, Laura Reed, Adrian Shahbaz, Ashley Greco-Stoner, Washington D.C.: Freedom House, 2013.

³³ Boersma, Kees. "Internet and Surveillance," in Christian Fuchs, Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund, and Marisol Sandoval (eds.), *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.

platforms serve shareholders before any activists.³⁴ Likewise, the distractions brought on by the abovementioned social media platforms can also serve as an ally of authoritarian regimes. For as Morozov points out, the majority of entertainment online can act as a depoliticizing and demobilizing force thanks to the market's unpredicted capacity to trivialize everything, including at times, emancipatory struggles.³⁵

Incontestably, there is an extent to which the Internet can be used to strengthen what virtual sceptics like Morozov have labeled the *trifecta of authoritarianism*—surveillance, censorship, and propaganda.³⁶ With the proper tools at its disposal, an authoritarian regime can turn an activists' social media history of posting, sharing, and tweeting into an indictable list of offenses. Moreover, by working their ways into millions of homes/pockets in the Arab world, both the Internet and the mobile phone have inadvertently opened up new spaces for colonial power/knowledge production that can be utilized to (re)assert the dominance of intellectually imperializing discourses. However, while 'making an example' by crushing virtual and physical dissidents one at a time can help a regime remain in power for the short term, it may actually increase already pre-existing transformative energies of revolt over the long term. Too much repression, coupled with a discontent citizenry able to share their displeasures with each other online, can actually serve to hollow out a regime's legitimacy, ultimately crippling its capacity for repression. In other words, as Tufekci emphasizes, while increased faculties for both censorship and surveillance pose a real threat to dissension in the Arab world, broadening their subjugating apparatuses often backfires, especially under conditions that have circumvented the pluralistic ignorance of collective action and information dissemination via social media.³⁷

As a tool, socio-digital technologies serve to emphasize the tensions between a closed, imperialized society, and an open, organic mind. Breaking down pluralistically ignorant barriers, mobilizing new groups of activists, and engaging the everyday occupation of public spaces for resistance by (re)establishing the denser and mutually interdependent relationships that foster

³⁴ UN Information and Communication Technologies Task Force ICT. *The World in 2013: ICT Facts and Figures*, Geneva, Switzerland: ICT Data and Statistics Division, 2013.

³⁵ Morozov, Evgeny. *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, New York, NY: Public Affairs Books, 2011.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Tufekci, Zeynep. "Delusions Aside, the Net's Potential Is Real," *The Atlantic*, 2011: Retrieved from: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/01/delusions-aside-the-nets-potential-is-real/69370/>

collective action—there is little question that despite the surveilling, censoring, commoditizing, trivializing and imperializing forces at work on the Internet, social media continues to play a vital role in organizing and publicizing non-western discourses within the subjugating social and intellectual environments of the Arab world. Thus social media is an instrument, a means for expressing desires, and a participatory way to make new claims from the margins. However, it is equally important to be wary of the idea that there is some sort of technological logic that overrides particular histories, cultures, and subjectivities by dispensing with the need for physical bodies in the streets.³⁸ Just as socio-digital technologies can convey messages of anti-colonial discourses and subject formations, so to can they promote western discourses of intellectual imperialism. It is only when combined with pre-existing revolutionary conditions of violent colonial histories, that socio-digital technologies can open up virtual trans-spatial sites of rupture that are not limited to the traditional restraints of land and temporality.

Transformations, Conclusions, and Reflections

The diffuse nature of power discussed at the outset of this paper is embodied by the lack of identifiable institutional leadership in the Arab movements. Unsurprisingly, imperial discourses attempt to delegitimize these organic, anti-colonial revolutions because through western eyes, they lack the recognized representation and coherent, delimited set of policies and demands necessary for legitimacy. Yet this analysis misses the point entirely. For as Agathangelou emphasizes, by bringing the organic discourses of history and materiality into intimate collision with the violent practices of intellectual imperialism, the very conception of revolution is being revolutionized.³⁹ These revolts seek to broaden the imaginaries of revolution by both challenging western discourses, as well as highlighting that as social constructions of power relationships, discourses more generally can be mobilized for multiple types of subject formations. The spaces for rupture opened up with socio-digital technologies in the MENAT region do not conform to western discourses of universalism precisely because that is exactly the type of ‘truth’ people are sacrificing their bodies in the streets to challenge. These non-western organic discourses of rupture are not simply the closing down of imperial violence, but an opening up of politics as a site of multiple

³⁸ Axford, Barrie. “Talk About a Revolution: Social Media and the MENA Uprisings,” *Globalizations* 8:5 (2011): 681-687.

³⁹ Agathangelou, A.M. “The Living and Being of the Streets: Fanon and the Arab Uprisings,” *Globalizations* 9:3 (2012): 451-466.

worlds, various ways of being, knowing, and relating that register humanity's entwinements of difference, what Agathangelou and Ling theorize in detail as *worldism*.⁴⁰

“Building on the postcolonial notion that *all* parties make history, albeit with unequal access to power, worldism leads to an undeniable conclusion—our mutual embeddedness makes us mutually accountable.”⁴¹ As such, organic discourses seeking to rupture the epistemic violence of intellectual imperialism are not about replacing one form of violence with another, they are about mobilizing more participatory technologies as a means with which to arrive at more inclusive, conciliatory, and democratic world politics that allow multiple forms of subject formations. They are about posing postcolonial challenges to dominant claims of ‘apolitical truth’ as a means to detach the power of knowledge from the imperial forms of epistemic subjugation within which western discourses operate. Thus instead of measuring and categorizing these revolutions through traditional western power/knowledge discourses, worldism asks that we engage our mutual accountability by using this chaos as an opportunity to take a good long and critical look at ourselves.⁴² For those unwilling to question their own part in discourse production are complicit in the violence(s) it inflicts.

Therefore, as the starting point of critical elaboration, according to Said, is the consciousness of what one really is, and is “knowing thyself” as a product of the historical process to date, it is important to be as self-reflexive as possible.⁴³ As this paper is both a product *of* and *for* western scholarship, created by a white, male, western scholar, it is complicit in those dominant ways of theorizing. This paper has tried to engage the colonial discourses of epistemic violence, Arab utilizations of socio-digital technologies, and organic ways of knowing, thinking, and being as critical and analytical as possible without giving in to the victimizing, essentializing, and appropriating traps of western knowledge productions. Its arguments have been researched extensively and its conclusions are made with the most emancipatory of intentions. That being said, ‘From the Virtual Margins,’ is an effect of the historical and material subjectivities

⁴⁰ Agathangelou, A.M., & Ling L.H.M. *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

⁴¹ Ibid: 86.

⁴² Soguk, Nevzat. “Uprisings in ‘Arab Streets’, Revolutions in ‘Arab Minds’! A Provocation,” *Globalizations* 8:5 (2011): 595-600.

⁴³ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York, NY, Random House Incorporated, 1979.

surrounding its conception, and it is in pointing out its own biases and partialities that this paper seeks to avoid that unwillingness held by many to engage their role in discourse production and violence creation. So while it may stimulate more questions than answers, this paper is but a starting off point for a larger exploration of subject formations in the virtual age.

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Why History Matters Now: Improving Historical Institutionalism to Explain Changes in Indigenous-Settler Constitutional Relationships

Minh Do

Introduction

Although Canadian public life is exhausted from formally amending the Constitution to reflect changing social contexts, constitutional politics continue to permeate Canadian politics. A constitutional order is both the constant political reality that underpins day-to-day politics and the object of fundamental political change for dissatisfied actors. Consequently, the ways in which constitutional responsibilities influence relationships between citizens and institutions can reveal the types of political interaction that is expected in a polity. These political expectations are suspended and altered when constitutional change is at the core of political interaction between actors. The state of Canada's indigenous-settler relationship portrays how the desire to change constitutional relationships complicates the already demanding interactions between citizens and institutions. The historical circumstances of both Canada's constitutional order and the conflicting understandings of the treaty relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples affect how state institutions react to indigenous peoples' demands for constitutional change. Since citizen and state actors' decision-making is influenced by how particular past events unfold, the theory of historical institutionalism provides a useful framework for understanding indigenous-settler constitutional relationships. Yet the types of past relationships experienced by indigenous peoples and settlers call into question the relevancy of the punctuated equilibrium and critical juncture principles of institutional change within historical institutionalism theory. State institutions react and adapt to indigenous peoples' demands for constitutional change in particular ways that are inadequately captured by the current historical institutionalism literature. Although indigenous-settler relationships demonstrate the significance of historical circumstances in shaping path dependency, the experiences between Canada's indigenous peoples and state institutions also reveal the need for a new understanding of institutional change that addresses different paths for constitutional renewal and will also more adequately incorporate how indigenous collective action responds to institutional decisions and behaviours.

A brief historical account of the tensions between indigenous and non-indigenous constitutional relationships will explain why current tensions exist. The path-dependency literature is helpful in explaining how past constitutional misunderstandings lead to the current constitutional misunderstandings between indigenous peoples and the Canadian government. These constitutional tensions are brought forward to certain state institutions that ideally operate in a complementary manner to ensure consistency in Canada's constitutional order. However, the judiciary and government do not react to demands for institutional change in ways that reflect the punctuated equilibrium model. Instead, detailing how the judiciary and government already operate in tension explains how each institution may react differently to external actors' agitation against existing institutional rules. As such, an institution undergoing a critical juncture may not influence another institution to adopt changes in a complementary manner. The judiciary's articulation of the Crown's duty to consult and the government's legislative objectives outlined in Bill C-45 demonstrate the divergence within institutional systems that are meant to address constitutional tensions in a complementary manner. The subsequent acts of indigenous activism and mobilization, including the salient Idle No More movement, are reactions to the institutional dissonance between the judiciary and the government. By acknowledging the disequilibrium of institutional change, further acts of citizen mobilization to change constitutional relationships can be better explained and addressed.

Citizen-state relationships are difficult to describe in Canada because the Constitution does not explicitly articulate a vision of a Canadian "people" in one specific document. Rather, there are several constitutionally recognized documents and conventions that interpret the responsibilities between the state and the people. As a result, the constellation of political conventions and legal principles comprising Canada's constitutional order may lead to conflicting interpretations regarding citizen-state relationships. Although the ambiguity of Canada's constitutional order can lead to tensions between citizens and the state, the reliance on both a legal and political approach to understanding the constitution also provides a flexible approach to confronting those tensions. The "living tree" doctrine of constitutional interpretation states that the legal principles underpinning Canada's Constitution should be interpreted in ways that allow growth and development according to the political conventions and realities of society.¹ In effect,

¹ *Edwards v. Canada (Attorney General)* [1930], 136.

both legal and political considerations must be in congruence to reflect a constitutional order that is able to grow and adapt to changing societal contexts.

Canada's Constitution is a product of political and legal evolution that relies on peoples' political wisdom and experiences to address changes in society.² In this constitutional framework, it is necessary that the people are able to contest and renegotiate the terms of their relationship with the state. By leaving the constitution flexible for adjustment through political and legal re-interpretation, constitutional change can result from incremental challenges from citizens. Consequently, people must use their political experiences and knowledge about effectively pursuing constitutional change towards the institutions that are responsible for upholding and interpreting the constitution. An effective mobilization to change the constitutional relationship between citizens and the state requires a successful appeal to the institutional constellations that have a stake in interpreting the constitution.

Indigenous-settler relationships are constitutionally recognized in Canada through the *Royal Proclamation, 1763* and s. 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Taken together, these two constitutional provisions recognize the treaty relationships between indigenous nations and Europeans. However, these treaty relationships were arguably always under dispute and subject to different interpretations. During the first commercial compacts between European fur traders and indigenous nations, companies like the Hudson's Bay outlined their rights to access the land and resources through company Charters; but it became obvious to the traders in Canada that indigenous nations and their trading protocols would have to be respected for fur trading to be a commercial success.³ As a result, European fur traders became skilled at accommodating and participating in indigenous trade and diplomacy. These commercial compacts mark the beginning of a treaty relationship with contradictory interpretations. For Europeans, accommodating indigenous protocols of trade and diplomacy was a practical means to achieve commercial success. For indigenous nations, the early treaties represented a relationship between families, since trade only occurred when peace and complementary interests could be guaranteed.⁴

² Peter Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 265.

³ J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 12-3.

⁴ J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada*, 7-8.

The different interpretations of the treaty relationship between indigenous nations and Europeans continued as the Canadian government became responsible for managing indigenous lands and resources. The Canadian government hastily made treaties with indigenous nations when it suited the economic interests of European settlers.⁵ The oral and written treaty agreements often differed greatly. Treaty commissioners, who were pressured to secure agreements, made oral promises to uphold indigenous nations' ways of living. These oral promises did not reflect the written treaties, which included restrictions that interfered with indigenous livelihoods in ways that would have been unacceptable to many indigenous leaders.⁶ Consequently, many indigenous nations bound by treaty agreements have a fundamentally different understanding of the political and legal obligations between the Canadian government and their communities. These indigenous nations want to uphold a distinct nation-to-nation relationship with Canada characterized by non-interference, or want to be treated as equal partners in the preservation of Canada.⁷ The constellation of institutions that enshrine the treaty relationship continue to inadequately recognize indigenous understandings of treaty relationships. Indeed, indigenous peoples are forced to mobilize against the Canadian state to have their constitutional vision recognized and affirmed. Since treaty relationships were always understood differently by indigenous peoples and by the state, the political and legal institutions responsible for upholding and articulating indigenous-settler relations must confront challenges to the status quo constitutional order. The theory of historical institutionalism provides a framework for understanding how the specific unfolding of events shape these shifting narratives of constitutional relationships

Indigenous peoples have always resisted interpretations of indigenous-settler relationships that do not respect the early treaty relationships that had historically been established. Indigenous peoples have used various forms of resistance depending on the political and social context. Prior to and immediately after Confederation indigenous peoples often appealed to the British Crown by speaking directly to representatives or through petitions. When the Canadian government did not abide by the original treaty promises, indigenous nations would appeal to the honour of the Crown to protect themselves from injustices.⁸ In their direct addresses, indigenous peoples

⁵ Ibid., 221.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010): 27.

⁸ J.R. Miller, "Victoria's 'Red Children': The 'Great White Queen Mother' and Native-Newcomer Relations in Canada." *Native Studies Review* 17, no. 1 (2008): 19.

considered themselves as equal siblings alongside the Canadian government in upholding loyalty to the British Crown.⁹ The Crown was perceived as having an equal obligation to protect indigenous interests as well as the interests of the Canadian government.

As the British government renounced its responsibilities in Canada, indigenous mobilization for treaty recognition also changed. Throughout the twentieth century, indigenous peoples suffered from bureaucratic initiatives designed to enforce the assimilation of indigenous peoples into Canada's body politic. Indigenous resistance against these destructive policies included the decision to reject enfranchisement and to maintain cultural and spiritual practices, when possible. By the 1960s, indigenous peoples consolidated their organizational capacities to present a united front in rejecting government-led assimilationist policies. The White Paper in 1969 is one of the most prominent government policy documents that indigenous peoples collectively rejected.¹⁰

After the failure of the White Paper, indigenous peoples took a more militant and confrontational approach in rejecting government initiatives that failed to uphold the original treaty relationships. Continuing with the tradition of petitioning directly to the Crown, indigenous leadership, such as the National Indian Brotherhood, appealed to the British Crown to prevent their treaty relationships from ending if Canada patriated the Constitution. Once the British representatives affirmed that treaty relationships were to continue despite the distinction between the Canadian and the British Crown, the Canadian government was compelled to recognize treaties as constitutional responsibilities. The recognition of pre-confederation treaties as part of Canadian constitutional history provided the basis for indigenous peoples to secure constitutional protection and recognition of their treaty relationship. Despite the different interpretations of the indigenous-settler relationship, s. 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* guaranteed that indigenous peoples can exercise their constitutional agency to influence indigenous-settler relations. With the entrenchment of s. 35, indigenous peoples can access political and legal channels to pursue their objectives. The politically salient experiences of the militant Oka Crisis also impacted the Canadian government to issue a Royal Commission on the position and demands of indigenous

⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰ J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada*, 249.

peoples.¹¹ Despite some of the legal advances made with s. 35, indigenous peoples remain dissatisfied with how political and legal institutions interpret treaty relationships. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' clear articulation of the demands for indigenous political autonomy and recognition of treaty obligations has not eased the tension; indigenous communities remain determined to exercise constitutional rights, while the state is resolute in maintaining the constitutional status quo. Indigenous peoples continue to assert that the Canadian government eschews its obligations to negotiate a new constitutional relationship, leaving the interpretation of indigenous-settler relationships in a state of perpetual discord.

Indigenous peoples continue to dispute their current political relationship with the state. However, in keeping with the tradition of a flexible, evolving constitutional order, there are different state institutions that uphold and reinforce constitutional relationships. Ideally, these institutions act within a collaborative constellation in which constitutional rights are equally protected. The judiciary is a legal institution that gives expression to s. 35. Because Aboriginal rights are not defined or listed in s. 35, the judiciary must use historical and cultural evidence to determine the scope of Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights within the context of the cases brought forward to the courts. The historical and cultural evidence are applied to particular tests that are constructed by the judiciary. These tests outline how political and cultural relationships between indigenous peoples and settlers are expressed as Aboriginal Title or Aboriginal Rights. Parliament is also responsible for upholding and reinforcing constitutional relationships and must ensure that policies respect the constitutional rights of all peoples. Policy making also represents how the government wants to advance its relationship vis-à-vis citizens; a government's mandate should reflect its understanding of the core values of the state, including its consideration of constitutional relationships. Although Canadian politicians may avoid proposing formal amendments to the constitution after the failed Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords, interpreting constitutional principles is a fundamental aspect of policy making.

Political and legal institutions, which have an equal but different role to play in protecting constitutional rights, vary in their interpretation of indigenous-settler relationships. This variance in interpretation is the result of how political and legal institutions react to the tensions between

¹¹ Peter Russell, "Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events," in *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years since the Blockades*, Leanne Simpson and Kiera L. Ladner, eds. (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010): 39.

indigenous-settler constitutional relationships. Each institution understands indigenous peoples' contestation of their political status in a dissimilar fashion because of the unique boundaries and responsibilities attributed to the different institutions. The judiciary, most notably the Supreme Court of Canada, acknowledges that Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights must be interpreted in a liberal manner when s. 35 is invoked.¹² A broad and expansive interpretation of s. 35 enables indigenous peoples to exercise their communal rights in a way that is meaningful to specific communities rebuilding their capacity to function as contemporary societies. However, many cases deal with specific indigenous-state interactions that have broader implications in the constitutional relationship between indigenous people and the Canadian state. In these instances, the judiciary does not recommend litigation as a resource to settle disputes between constitutional relationships. Rather, the judiciary advocates that political negotiations will produce the most meaningful outcomes between the affected parties, especially since s. 35 entails the Crown's duty to initiate and engage indigenous peoples through negotiations in good faith.¹³

The judiciary's decision-making also presents limitations to institutionalizing indigenous perspectives for Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights. The judiciary's recourse to suggesting government negotiations over litigation is a symptom of the unwillingness to replace the government's policy-making role. The judiciary eschews its duty to articulate standards to determine proper protocols when addressing indigenous constitutional concerns. For instance, when weighing the interests of government and indigenous peoples, the judiciary only requires the government to show that its legislative objectives were reasonable, and that the infringement to indigenous peoples is minimal.¹⁴ When infringement occurs, government is expected to deal honourably with indigenous peoples by consulting indigenous communities and, if necessary, providing compensation.¹⁵ These interpretations reveal that the judiciary treats indigenous rights claims as attempts to override or infringe the rights of other Canadians.¹⁶ As a result, the scope of Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights is limited. In this process of balancing interests, the

¹² *R. v. Sparrow* [1990]: 1077.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1105.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1079-80.

¹⁵ *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Ministry of Forests)* [2004], para. 27.

¹⁶ Ardith Walkem, "Constructing the Constitutional Box: The Supreme Court's Section 35(1) Reasoning," in *Box of Treasures or Empty Box? Twenty Years of Section 35*, eds Ardith Walkem and Halie Bruce (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 2003): 201.

judiciary unfavourably places limits on rights claims, creating an unclear vision of how Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights can empower the most marginalized peoples in Canada.¹⁷

The Canadian government does not contribute to clarifying the parameters of just dealings with indigenous peoples. Initiatives to improve the conditions of indigenous communities or to reform reserve governance structures have failed to pass because addressing other political problems generate stronger electoral success. Like the political context of the first treaties between indigenous nations and the Canadian colonial government, the state is only interested in negotiating new treaty relationships when the interests of non-indigenous peoples are concerned.¹⁸ Addressing indigenous peoples' constitutional demands at the behest of non-indigenous interests fails to uphold the judiciary's interpretation of the Crowns' duty to negotiate in good faith with indigenous peoples. There is a tension between the judiciary and the government in their interpretation of indigenous-settler relationships. The judiciary fails to articulate a robust approach to dealing with indigenous rights claims, and asserts the realm of political negotiations will be more productive. However, it has no oversight over the government to force political negotiations to occur. This lack of oversight leaves the government free to pursue political initiatives except in instances in which court decisions directly reverse specific government behaviour. Conversely, the government is also constrained by judicial decisions, which has the possibility of interfering with government initiatives to address indigenous problems. Judicial interference may be productive in advancing indigenous rights claims, because the government has shown a lack of political will to address indigenous-settler relationships. Instead, the judiciary is unwilling to exercise this power to interfere on behalf of indigenous interests, especially when those interests fundamentally challenge Crown sovereignty.

Canada projects an understanding of the struggle for recognition of indigenous rights through the lens of historical institutionalism. Historical institutionalism emphasizes the importance of particular sequences of events¹⁹ that evolves into the contemporary understanding of indigenous political demands. However, some of the dominant perspectives of historical

¹⁷ Ibid., 211.

¹⁸ J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada*, 221.

¹⁹ Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, "Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science," in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 2002): 702.

institutionalism do not adequately address the consequences when constellations of institutions operate in dissonance. According to the theory of historical institutionalism, institutions operate in a relatively stable equilibrium until critical junctures present the potential for institutional change. Critical junctures are decisions that change the path of institutional behaviour and actions so that alternative trajectories of institutional action become closed.²⁰ The existence of critical junctures is often accompanied by the punctuated equilibrium model of institutional change, in which institutions are characterized by long periods of stable equilibrium and short bursts of institutional change.²¹ However, the nature of the Canadian constitutional order, which guides state institutions to interpret citizen-state relationships, is fundamentally contested between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. If the constitutional relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples has persistently been challenged, then it is doubtful that state institutions engaging in the interpretation of citizen-state relations could coordinate their responses to promote a stable equilibrium. As a result, the theory that institutional change resembles a punctuated equilibrium does not adequately fit the case of indigenous-settler relationships in Canada.

The narrative of how Aboriginal Title came to be recognized under Canadian common law through the theory of punctuated equilibrium presents some problematic elements. For instance, the periods of institutional equilibrium would include the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council's dismissal of Aboriginal Title. The JCPC stated the Crown allowed indigenous peoples to occupy the land as a usufructuary²² right.²³ This legal interpretation was compatible with the governments' assimilationist policies under the *Indian Act*, creating the conditions for institutional equilibrium. An identifiable critical juncture that disrupted this equilibrium would be when the Canadian Supreme Court recognized the existence of Aboriginal Title in *Calder v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*. According to the tenets of punctuated equilibrium, this institutional decision to recognize the existence of Aboriginal Title prior to Crown sovereignty²⁴ started a new state of equilibrium in which indigenous peoples would gain more legal recognition for their

²⁰ Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism," *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (April 2007): 342.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 345.

²² A usufructuary right enables indigenous peoples to use the land without holding any title to the land. Under this interpretation of indigenous land use, the Crown owns all the land and simply allows indigenous peoples to occupy the land.

²³ *St. Catherine's Milling v. The Queen* [1888], para. 5b.

²⁴ *Calder v. British Columbia (Attorney General)* [1973], 316.

occupation and use of land. Thus, each decision in which state institutions recognize indigenous perspectives of their constitutional relationship constitutes a critical juncture, leading to a new equilibrium that is more accommodating to indigenous political demands. This understanding of institutional change is problematic because it overlooks the narrative of persistent indigenous resistance that influenced institutions to change understandings of constitutional relationships over time. By disregarding the indigenous narrative of ongoing resistance, the punctuated equilibrium approach to explaining institutional change overlooks the incremental forces that slowly influenced institutional thinking to shift and adjust to new social expectations. Indeed, the punctuated equilibrium perspective may encourage an interpretation of institutional change as a decision made exclusively by the institutions at one moment in time, rather than a process of change that is also dictated and guided by the agency of external actors.

Moreover, the punctuated equilibrium model of institutional change does not sufficiently address how other institutions responsible for upholding constitutional obligations resists the critical juncture of another institution. For instance, it is doubtful if the government obligingly respects court decisions that recognize Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights in all instances. Indeed, indigenous peoples find recourse in the judiciary because the government is not honouring their obligation to consult indigenous nations, failing to recognize s. 35 in a manner that affirms indigenous rights, or fulfill the duty to negotiate and settle land claims in good faith. The theory of punctuated equilibrium does not take into account the consequences of when critical junctures affect only one institution that is supposed to operate alongside other institutions. The resistance of an institution to adopt and accommodate the decisions and behaviours of other institutions may weaken the equilibrium that is supposed to follow a critical juncture. If a state of equilibrium among institutional behaviour does not proceed after a critical juncture, then the resulting tension continues to affect how the constellation of institutions reacts to external shocks and influences. The uneven experience of critical junctures across institutions responsible for upholding the constitutional order results in a tenuous relationship between those institutions as well. In the Canadian context, the judiciary and government vary in their interpretation of a just indigenous-settler relationship. This variance will not be bridged if each institution has a dissimilar interpretation of critical juncture experiences. If institutions are bound by path dependency, in

which taking alternative paths is contingent on a particular sequence of events,²⁵ then the experience of divergence between political and legal institutions in their interpretation of indigenous-settler relationships will widen.

A theory of institutional change that involves the roles of multiple institutions needs to account for the consequences of disequilibrium within institutional constellations. In the Canadian context, disequilibrium is significant because legal and political institutions are expected to provide complementary understandings of Canada's ambiguous constitutional order. If political and legal institutions are in tension, their ability to uphold a flexible approach to addressing constitutional issues through changing social contexts is altered. Each experience that widens the interpretive gap between institutions may result in the creation of complex political problems that have no clear resolutions.²⁶ There may be instances in which the varying interpretations between political and legal institutions results in equilibrium, but the prevailing pattern is one of incongruity. It follows that conflicts among citizens regarding constitutional interpretations will not generate a uniform, cohesive response from the institutions responsible for upholding the rules and expectations of citizen-state relationships.

For instance, the judiciary's interpretation of the Crown's duty to consult indigenous peoples as a part of the fiduciary responsibility denotes certain responsibilities that are inconsistent with the government's policy initiatives. In *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Ministry of Forests)*, the judiciary stated that in some instances, upholding the honour of the Crown requires the government to consult with and reasonably accommodate indigenous communities before benefiting from resources that are the subject of pending land claims; indeed, exploiting a resource during land claims disputes is a dishonourable act because it deprives the indigenous claimant the benefit of the disputed resource.²⁷ If the government wants to pursue a policy for the national interest, the Crown's duty to consult indigenous peoples may be triggered. In these instances, the government must prove that the infringement of indigenous rights and interests is of minimal

²⁵ Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Complex Causal Relations and Case Study Methods: The Example of Path Dependence," *Political Analysis* 14, no. 3 (2006): 252.

²⁶ Robert Lieberman, "Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 4 (2002): 702.

²⁷ *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Ministry of Forests)* [2004], para. 27.

impairment.²⁸ This framework ensures that the government balances their obligation to both indigenous and non-indigenous interests. Such a reconciliation of interests is the judiciary's interpretation of treating distinct indigenous interests with equal respect. Although consultation can also be perceived as a method of assimilation by other means,²⁹ the principle of consultation is understood by the judiciary as a conciliatory gesture.

If the government must consult indigenous nations when those peoples may potentially have rights over disputed land and its resources, it must follow that indigenous nations with settled territories must also be consulted and accommodated if the government plans to use the land for its own policy objectives.³⁰ Nevertheless, the Canadian governments' actions have indicated a flagrant disregard for the principle of consultation as outlined by the judiciary. The governments' budget bill for the 2011-2012 fiscal year was Bill C-45. This was an omnibus bill, which not only outlined the governments' fiscal policies, but also proposed changes to provisions that affected indigenous communities without prior consent. For indigenous communities, one of the main concerns was the proposal to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act. This amendment would remove barriers for firms and businesses to build the necessary infrastructure to transport their goods "in, on, over, under, through or across any minor water."³¹ However, this provision was formulated without the consultation of indigenous communities that rely on the water systems for navigation and cultural purposes.³² This example demonstrates the willingness of the government to pursue economic policies by exploiting particular resources that may prove detrimental to constitutionally protected indigenous ways of life. The passing of Bill C-45 is a direct affront to the threshold of consultation the judiciary established in *Haida Nation*.

Nevertheless, the tension among state institutions on how to resolve citizen disputes regarding the constitutional order is not necessarily an undesirable outcome. The tensions between institutions present new opportunities for citizens to make political demands and influence change

²⁸ Thomas Isaac and Anthony Knox, "The Crown's Duty to Consult Aboriginal People," *Alberta Law Review* 41, no. 1 (2003-2004): 68.

²⁹ James Tully, "The Struggles of Indigenous Peoples for and of Freedom," in *Box of Treasures or Empty Box? Twenty Years of Section 35*, eds Ardith Walkem and Halie Bruce (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 2003): 278-9.

³⁰ *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada (Minister of Canadian Heritage)* [2005], para 35.

³¹ Government of Canada, *Bill C-45* (2011-12), R.S., c. N-22.

³² Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 30 Oct 2012 (Ms. Peggy Nash, NDP), 41st Parliament, 1st Session, Second Reading.

at the institutional level.³³ Institutions can create the conditions for political change if their actions and rules cause external actors to experience acute political pressures and dilemmas.³⁴ Changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act played role in triggering the salient Idle No More social movement. The judiciary presented indigenous peoples with an interpretation of indigenous-settler relationships that constitutes the legal perspective of the prevailing constitutional order. However, the government's policy initiatives conflict with the judicial interpretation in such a way that makes it impossible for indigenous peoples to operate in the constitutional order. This situation presents indigenous peoples with a dilemma because the recognition for consultation gained through litigation is not influencing the decision making of political institutions. In this case, indigenous peoples' response to engage in protest against the government was a strategic decision. Since the government has ignored the principle of consultation outlined by the judiciary, it would have been a waste of political resources to pursue litigation again. Litigation can only be invoked once an actor begins infringing on indigenous lands and resources. If the objective is to prevent the passing of Bill C-45, indigenous peoples' only option is to mobilize. Due to the overt infringement of indigenous interests in Bill C-45 against the judicial interpretation of the Crown's duty to consult, indigenous peoples have used this institutional tension as a political opportunity to mobilize. Although the Idle No More movement would transform to have objectives that departed from working within the institutional constraints of the Canadian state, its initial mobilization stages catalyzed in reaction to specific state decisions. Perhaps due to the ineptness of the government to fulfill indigenous demands, the participants of the Idle No More movement choose to frame their mobilization to achieve indigenous rights outside Canadian institutional parameters.

Citizens who contest their relationship with the state may not only receive a mismatched response from state institutions. Institutions may remain unresponsive to changing citizen demands in which their decision to change behaviour emerges from gradual institutional change rather than an experience of a brief critical juncture. Although institutions are characterized as being stable and durable political entities, institutions are vulnerable to change because they rely on ongoing

³³ Robert Lieberman, "Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change," 703.

³⁴ Ibid.

mobilization of political support.³⁵ The institutions that uphold the status-quo political arrangements must be supported by the same coalition of actors and forces to prevent external influences. Since indigenous peoples persistently contest their political relationship with the state, there are fewer instances in which the political support for a particular pattern of institutional behaviour remain constant and are perpetuated in their entirety across time. Indigenous peoples do not demand the removal of Canadian state institutions in their totality, but rather make claims for institutional transformations. As such, indigenous mobilization that seeks constitutional renewal is concerned with influencing or participating in the political coalition that underpins the survival of institutions. This understanding of how institutions must rely on shifting political support in order to adapt and survive reveals the possibility of gradual and incremental institutional change.³⁶ In the Canadian indigenous-settler context, a theory of gradual institutional change is a stronger reflection of the ways in which indigenous peoples have persistently resisted and contested constitutional relationships.

Indigenous mobilization is receptive to the ways in which institutions react to their constitutional demands. The Idle No More movement is a strong example of how indigenous peoples are framing their objectives and initiatives in response to the governments' policies affecting indigenous peoples. The most prominent feature of the Idle No More movement was the highly visible protests that occurred across the country. Indigenous nations marched in solidarity in various public spaces, including Parliament Hill. These measures were intended to generate an immediate response from the state to reconsider their policy objectives by framing the governments' actions as illegitimate. The solidarity of sustaining the movement across different indigenous nations was highly significant and allowed indigenous nations to draw on the collective wisdom of contention,³⁷ such as the Idle No More protesters' close association with Theresa Spence's hunger strike regarding Attawapiskat's poor living conditions.

³⁵ James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, "A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change," in *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, eds. James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 8-9.

³⁶ Kathleen Thelen, "The Evolution of Vocational Training in Germany," in *Rethinking Political Institutions: The Art of the State*, eds. Ian Shapiro, Stephen Skowronek, and Daniel Galvin (New York: New York University Press, 2006): 157.

³⁷ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 23.

Certainly, these actions were directly bringing attention to the governments' failure to uphold their constitutional duties to indigenous peoples. However, Idle No More also attempts to facilitate long-term institutional change. At the community level, the movement is also responsible for organizing workshops that educate indigenous and non-indigenous peoples about indigenous-settler relationships. These "teach-ins" address the original treaty-relationships and contemporary social issues. The initiatives to educate the new generation of political actors may influence the types of political coalitions that must tacitly support institutional survival. Thus, education is a strategy for pursuing incremental institutional change. The different ways in which indigenous peoples frame Idle No More reveals the movement's flexibility to engage with multiple paths geared towards influencing institutional change. This flexibility is necessary in order to further provoke the spread of critical junctures and incremental change among institutional constellations. The ongoing activities of Idle No More, despite the failure to reverse Bill C-45, reflect the determination of indigenous peoples to pursue decolonization. The process of decolonization begins with the state recognizing that indigenous peoples are bound by constitutional laws that exist outside of a hegemonic understanding of the Canadian constitutional status-quo. Once this recognition occurs, indigenous peoples can develop their relationships with the settler population into the Canadian constitutional order, which would facilitate equal constitutional participation between actors and institutions. This goal will ultimately confront and challenge the assumption of Crown sovereignty. Until this assertion is met with seriousness, it is in the interests of indigenous peoples to mobilize against overtly contradictory state structures and understandings. These may provide indigenous peoples with victories against state power that can provide the foundation for further, more provocative assertions of indigenous sovereignty.

The experience of Bill C-45s' contradiction with the decision in *Haida Nation* reveals that the institutional response to indigenous mobilization is beyond the control of the initial actions of mobilization. Once indigenous peoples mobilize, the political and legal environment they attempt to influence is shaped by those initial actions.³⁸ Therefore, mobilization resembles a dialogue, in which institutions and mobilizers react to the subsequent decisions that each actor makes. The dialogue between institutions and citizens is necessary so that each actor frames their future actions

³⁸ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, eds. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 13.

and behaviours according to the new understandings of the constitutional order. Indeed, this dialogical interaction complements the “living tree” doctrine of constitutional interpretation. The implications for the dialogue mean that constitutional contestation between citizens and institutions will not cease, even if institutions present a coherent constitutional interpretation. This contestation is at the heart of the indigenous-settler constitutional relationship, and other citizen-state relationships. In Canada’s constitutional order, political equals are encouraged to appeal to different institutions so that constitutional responsibilities adapt and reflect contemporary societal expectations. It is the objective of indigenous peoples to reach an understanding regarding their relationship with the state in which they can interact with institutions in a constructive, equal manner. Until this equal political relationship emerges, indigenous peoples will continue to contest their constitutional status, targeting the contradictions of state institutions as the focal point of their movements.

The theory of historical institutionalism has the potential to be a powerful analytical framework for understanding the evolving indigenous-settler relationship if it can take into account more types of institutional change across different institutions. The constitutional relationships between citizens and states in Canada are complicated by the existence of multiple institutions that are obliged to interpret constitutional responsibilities. This situation is compounded by the specific historical circumstances of Canada’s indigenous-settler relationships. The tension between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples exacerbates the tensions between institutional interpretations of constitutional relationships. As a result, institutional change and indigenous collective mobilization are intricately intertwined through the responsibilities of constitutional interpretation. As institutions struggle to recognize indigenous peoples’ assertion of political equality, indigenous mobilization and institutional change will continue to be a dialogue aimed at pursuing a process of decolonization. Indeed, conflict over constitutional interpretation between citizens and institutions is characteristic of Canada’s constitutional tradition. Indigenous mobilization is receptive to the ways in which institutions react to indigenous contention over constitutional relationships. Indigenous peoples must frame future mobilization in ways that address the institutional contradictions over interpretations of indigenous-settler relationships. When the gap between institutional interpretations is bridged by a new decolonized understanding of indigenous-settler relationships, indigenous and non-indigenous peoples can participate as political equals in the process of contestation and adaptation of Canada’s constitutional order.

These patterns between institutional change and mobilization need to be included within historical institutional models to gain a comprehensive understanding of ongoing indigenous-settler contestation.

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